



Northern Ireland
Assembly

OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)
and
**JOURNAL OF
PROCEEDINGS**

Volume 89

(1 November 2013 to 28 November 2013)

BELFAST: THE STATIONERY OFFICE LTD
£70.00

Table of Contents

Assembly Members	ix
Principal Officers and Officials of the Assembly	x
Ministerial Offices	xi
Office of the Official Report (Hansard).....	xii

Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sittings

Monday 4 November 2013

Executive Committee Business

Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013	1
---	---

Committee Business

Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures.....	2
---	---

Private Members' Business

International Mental Health Centre	13
--	----

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	15
Regional Development	21

Private Members' Business

International Mental Health Centre (<i>continued</i>)	28
Oversubscribed Schools	37

Tuesday 5 November 2013

Assembly Business	49
--------------------------------	----

Public Petition: Exploris.....	49
--------------------------------	----

Ministerial Statement

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson	50
---	----

Executive Committee Business

Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013	53
Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013	55

Committee Business

Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage	56
Committee System Review	57

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men.....	65
--------------------------------------	----

Oral Answers to Questions

Education	66
Employment and Learning	73

Assembly Business	80
--------------------------------	----

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men (<i>continued</i>).....	81
Exploris	93

Adjournment

Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice	106
---	-----

Monday 11 November 2013

Matters of the Day

Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer.....	115
Tony McCoy.....	117

Executive Committee Business

Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion.....	118
--	-----

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit	120
--	-----

Oral Answers to Questions

Enterprise, Trade and Investment.....	130
Environment.....	136

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit (<i>continued</i>).....	143
--	-----

Private Members' Business

Insulation: Housing Executive Properties.....	145
---	-----

Tuesday 12 November 2013

Assembly Business

Eddie McGrady.....	157
--------------------	-----

Matter of the Day

Devastation in the Philippines	159
--------------------------------------	-----

Ministerial Statement

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary.....	161
---	-----

Executive Committee Business

UK Intellectual Property Bill: Legislative Consent Motion	166
---	-----

Committee Business

Standing Order 20A(1).....	168
Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply.....	169

Oral Answers to Questions

Finance and Personnel	174
Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	181

Committee Business

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply (<i>continued</i>)	187
--	-----

Private Members' Business

Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign	201
--	-----

Adjournment

Public Sector Jobs: North-west	208
--------------------------------------	-----

Monday 18 November 2013

Matter of the Day

Weekend Violence215

Speaker's Business.....218

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: First Stage219

Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013219

Private Members' Business

Civic Forum.....220

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister230

Regional Development.....235

Private Members' Business

Police Ombudsman's Office.....241

Tuesday 19 November 2013

Assembly Business.....257

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting.....258

North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety261

Community Resuscitation Strategy264

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects268

Oral Answers to Questions

Justice273

Social Development.....279

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission286

Assembly Business.....290

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects (*continued*).....291

Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment294

Assembly Business.....302

Private Members' Business

The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary302

Assembly Business.....315

Adjournment

C S Lewis316

Monday 25 November 2013

Matters of the Day

Father Alec Reid	323
Explosion: Belfast City Centre	325

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance	328
---	-----

Assembly Business	338
--------------------------------	-----

Oral Answers to Questions

Agriculture and Rural Development	339
Culture, Arts and Leisure	346

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (<i>continued</i>)	353
--	-----

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers	359
---------------------------	-----

Tuesday 26 November 2013

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers: Petition of Concern	369
--	-----

Ministerial Statement

North/South Ministerial Council: Education	370
--	-----

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Accelerated Passage	374
Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage	377

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	383
Employment and Learning	389

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage (<i>continued</i>)	395
--	-----

Private Members' Business

Single Farm Payments	397
----------------------------	-----

Adjournment

Ards Peninsula: Economic Development	406
--	-----

Written Ministerial Statements

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Wider Tourism Structures	WMS 1
---	-------

Environment

Creation of a Network of Marine Protected Areas	WMS 2
---	-------

Regional Development

A26 Dualling — Glarryford to Drones Road — Publication of Notice of Intention to Proceed and Making of Statutory Orders	WMS 4
---	-------

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Rare Diseases: UK Strategy	WMS 5
----------------------------------	-------

Committee Stages

Committee for Finance and Personnel

Public Service Pensions Bill CS 1

Committee for Social Development

Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill CS 9

Committee for the Environment

Carrier Bags Bill CS 13

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill CS 15

Written Answers

Friday 1 November 2013

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 1
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 4
Department of Education	WA 8
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 13
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 18
Department of the Environment.....	WA 27
Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 33
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 40
Department of Justice	WA 52
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 111
Department for Social Development	WA 118
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 136

Friday 8 November 2013

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 139
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 144
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	WA 147
Department of Education	WA 149
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 169
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 173
Department of the Environment.....	WA 184
Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 204
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 210
Department of Justice	WA 223
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 229
Department for Social Development	WA 244
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 263

Friday 15 November 2013

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 265
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 271
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	WA 272
Department of Education	WA 275
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 281
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 284
Department of the Environment.....	WA 288
Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 300
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 305
Department of Justice	WA 313
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 317
Department for Social Development	WA 328
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 331

Friday 22 November 2013

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 333
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 334
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	WA 339
Department of Education	WA 340
Department for Employment and Learning.....	WA 362
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 366
Department of the Environment.....	WA 368
Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 371
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	WA 374
Department of Justice	WA 397
Department for Regional Development.....	WA 406
Department for Social Development	WA 420
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 440

Revised Written Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	RWA 1
Department of the Environment.....	RWA 1
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....	RWA 2
Department for Social Development	RWA 3

Official Report (Hansard) Indexes

Members' Index	IDX 1
Business Index	IDX 41
Strangers' Index.....	IDX 51

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Monday 4 November 2013.....	MOP 1
Tuesday 5 November 2013	MOP 5
Monday 11 November 2013.....	MOP 15
Tuesday 12 November 2013	MOP 19
Monday 18 November 2013.....	MOP 25
Tuesday 19 November 2013	MOP 33
Monday 25 November 2013.....	MOP 39
Tuesday 26 November 2013	MOP 45

Assembly Members

Agnew, Steven (North Down)
Allister, Jim (North Antrim)
Anderson, Sydney (Upper Bann)
Attwood, Alex (West Belfast)
Beggs, Roy (East Antrim)
Bell, Jonathan (Strangford)
Boylan, Cathal (Newry and Armagh)
Boyle, Ms Michaela (West Tyrone)
Bradley, Dominic (Newry and Armagh)
Bradley, Ms Paula (North Belfast)
Brady, Mickey (Newry and Armagh)
Brown, Ms Pam (South Antrim)
Buchanan, Thomas (West Tyrone)
Byrne, Joe (West Tyrone)
Campbell, Gregory (East Londonderry)
Clarke, Trevor (South Antrim)
Cochrane, Mrs Judith (East Belfast)
Copeland, Michael (East Belfast)
Craig, Jonathan (Lagan Valley)
Cree, Leslie (North Down)
Dallat, John (East Londonderry)
Dickson, Stewart (East Antrim)
Dobson, Mrs Jo-Anne (Upper Bann)
Douglas, Sammy (East Belfast)
Dunne, Gordon (North Down)
Durkan, Mark H (Foyle)
Easton, Alex (North Down)
Eastwood, Colum (Foyle)
Elliott, Tom (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Farry, Dr Stephen (North Down)
Fearon, Ms Megan (Newry and Armagh)
Flanagan, Phil (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Ford, David (South Antrim)
Foster, Mrs Arlene (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Frew, Paul (North Antrim)
Gardiner, Samuel (Upper Bann)
Girvan, Paul (South Antrim)
Givan, Paul (Lagan Valley)
Hale, Mrs Brenda (Lagan Valley)
Hamilton, Simon (Strangford)
Hay, William (Speaker)
Hazzard, Christopher (South Down)
Hilditch, David (East Antrim)
Humphrey, William (North Belfast)
Hussey, Ross (West Tyrone)
Irwin, William (Newry and Armagh)
Kelly, Mrs Dolores (Upper Bann)
Kelly, Gerry (North Belfast)
Kennedy, Danny (Newry and Armagh)
Kinahan, Danny (South Antrim)
Lo, Ms Anna (South Belfast)
Lunn, Trevor (Lagan Valley)
Lynch, Seán (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Lyttle, Chris (East Belfast)
McAleer, Declan (West Tyrone)
McCallister, John (South Down)
McCann, Fra (West Belfast)
McCann, Ms Jennifer (West Belfast)
McCarthy, Kieran (Strangford)
McCartney, Raymond (Foyle)
McCausland, Nelson (North Belfast)
McClarty, David (East Londonderry)
McCorley, Ms Rosaleen (West Belfast)
McCrea, Basil (Lagan Valley)
McCrea, Ian (Mid Ulster)
McDonnell, Dr Alasdair (South Belfast)
McElduff, Barry (West Tyrone)
McGahan, Ms Bronwyn (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
McGimpsey, Michael (South Belfast)
McGlone, Patsy (Mid Ulster)
McGuinness, Martin (Mid Ulster)
McIlveen, David (North Antrim)
McIlveen, Miss Michelle (Strangford)
McKay, Daithí (North Antrim)
McKevitt, Mrs Karen (South Down)
McKinney, Fearghal (South Belfast)
McLaughlin, Ms Maeve (Foyle)
McLaughlin, Mitchel (South Antrim)
McMullan, Oliver (East Antrim)
McNarry, David (Strangford)
McQuillan, Adrian (East Londonderry)
Maginness, Alban (North Belfast)
Maskey, Alex (South Belfast)
Milne, Ian (Mid Ulster)
Morrow, The Lord (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Moutray, Stephen (Upper Bann)
Nesbitt, Mike (Strangford)
Newton, Robin (East Belfast)
Ní Chuilín, Ms Carál (North Belfast)
Ó hOisín, Cathal (East Londonderry)
O'Dowd, John (Upper Bann)
O'Neill, Mrs Michelle (Mid Ulster)
Overend, Mrs Sandra (Mid Ulster)
Poots, Edwin (Lagan Valley)
Ramsey, Pat (Foyle)
Ramsey, Ms Sue (West Belfast)
Robinson, George (East Londonderry)
Robinson, Peter (East Belfast)
Rogers, Sean (South Down)
Ross, Alastair (East Antrim)
Ruane, Ms Caitriona (South Down)
Sheehan, Pat (West Belfast)
Spratt, Jimmy (South Belfast)
Storey, Mervyn (North Antrim)
Swann, Robin (North Antrim)
Weir, Peter (North Down)
Wells, Jim (South Down)
Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

Principal Officers and Officials of the Assembly

Speaker	Mr William Hay MLA
Principal Deputy Speaker	Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Deputy Speakers	Mr Roy Beggs MLA Mr John Dallat MLA
Clerk to the Assembly/Director-General	Mr Trevor Reaney
Director of Clerking and Reporting	Dr Gareth McGrath
Director of Corporate Services	Mr Richard Stewart
Director of Facilities/Keeper of the House	Mr Stephen Welch
Director of Information and Outreach	Mr John Stewart
Director of Legal and Governance Services.....	Mr Hugh Widdis
Examiner of Statutory Rules	Mr Gordon Nabney
Adviser to the Speaker	Mr Robin Ramsey
Clerk Assistants	Ms Nuala Dunwoody Mr Damien Martin
Editor of Debates	Mr Simon Burrowes
Clerk to the Assembly Commission	Mr Tony Logue

Ministerial Offices

The Executive Committee

First Minister	Mr Peter Robinson
Deputy First Minister.....	Mr Martin McGuinness
Minister for Employment and Learning.....	Dr Stephen Farry
Minister for Regional Development	Mr Danny Kennedy
Minister for Social Development.....	Mr Nelson McCausland
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	Mrs Michelle O'Neill
Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure	Ms Carál Ní Chuilín
Minister of Education	Mr John O'Dowd
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.....	Mrs Arlene Foster
Minister of the Environment.....	Mr Mark Durkan
Minister of Finance and Personnel	Mr Simon Hamilton
Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Mr Edwin Poots
Minister of Justice.....	Mr David Ford

Junior Ministers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Mr Jonathan Bell Ms Jennifer McCann
--	--

Office of the Official Report (Hansard)

Staff

Editor of Debates:..... Simon Burrowes

Deputy Editors: Martha Davison
Patrick Marsh

Assistant Editors:..... Bronagh Allison
Tom Clarke
Brendan Doherty
Gerry Dunne
Neal Flanagan
Phil Girvan
Gail Nicholl
Jonathan Redpath
Catherine Roberts
Carina Rourke
Alison Webb

Parliamentary Reporters:..... Lee Cassidy
Colin Duncan
Glenn Frazer
Luke Gibbons
Keith Gilmore
Sharon McCabe
Shauna McCloskey
Gráinne McGinley
Colm McNamee
Katrina McNeill
Martin Malone
Nicola Murphy
Fintan Murray
Patrick O’Hanlon
Rónan O’Reilly
Simon Shaw
Jack Smith
Barbara Walker

Administration:..... Adam Moore
Danielle O’Neill

Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sitings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 4 November 2013

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):
I beg to move

*That the Child Support and Claims and Payments
(Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the
Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern
Ireland) 2013 be approved.*

The regulations are made under the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 and the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992. The regulations make consequential amendments to various statutes arising from the increase to the flat rate of child support maintenance from £5 to £7. The regulations also make a number of amendments relating to the rules for the calculation of child support maintenance and variations.

I will briefly outline the purpose of the regulations. The minimum amount of liability, commonly known as the flat rate of child support maintenance, is the amount of maintenance a non-resident parent — that is, a parent whose children are not living with them — is liable to pay if they have a weekly income of £100 or less or they are in receipt of certain benefits. It is intended that the flat rate will increase from £5 to £7 later this month when the new 2012 child maintenance scheme is opened to all applicants.

The main policy intention of the regulations is to restore the flat rate to its 2003 real value. At £7, the increased flat rate will be broadly the same as when it was first introduced. For example, when the flat rate was introduced in 2003, £5 represented 9% of the benefit of a single person over 25 on jobseeker's allowance. The annual uprating of benefits means that that same £5 represents just 7% of the benefit of a single person over 25 on jobseeker's allowance. A flat rate of £7 represents 10% of the benefit of a single person over 25 on jobseeker's allowance, thereby restoring the value of the 2003 flat rate. The proposed flat rate increase will also amend the percentages applied to the reduced rate of child support maintenance that is payable if the non-resident parent has an income of less than £200 but more than £100. This means that the maintenance liability of parents on the reduced rate will rise to ensure a smooth increase in liabilities between the flat rate and the basic rate, which is used for parents earning £200 or more.

The regulations make miscellaneous amendments to variations. Variations are the rules that allow for a deviation from the usual child maintenance calculation rules in certain limited circumstances. A variation could increase or decrease a child maintenance liability. For example, if a parent receives unearned income from property, savings and investments, or casual earnings, that could increase their liability. On the other hand, if the parent incurs special expenses, such as the cost of travelling to see a child, that could reduce the liability. The changes in the regulations affect only those variations that increase liability.

The proposed changes will allow my Department to determine unearned income by reference to information supplied by the parent on the most recent tax year. That option will be utilised only where information cannot be obtained from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. This change will allow for a more efficient means of obtaining reliable information on unearned income and will, therefore, provide a more accurate maintenance calculation that will be fairer to and better for the children. In addition, the amendments will clarify that, even when a variation is agreed, the resulting maintenance calculation cannot be less than the flat rate. This will maintain a balance between reducing liability to take account of special expenses and ensuring that children continue to benefit from some financial support. A non-resident parent on the flat rate cannot apply for a special expenses variation.

The regulations will ensure an appropriate increase in the amount of maintenance that flows to children. They will also provide for a more efficient and accurate variations regime.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I take this opportunity to apologise to the House for failing to be in my place to ask a topical question two weeks ago. Thank you for your indulgence.

At its meeting on 27 June 2013, and subsequently at its meeting on 12 September, the Committee considered the SL1 pertaining to the statutory rule. As the Minister indicated, the regulations will come into operation on 25 November 2013, and we are being asked to approve that. The Committee has confirmed its support for the regulations and asks the House to do likewise.

Mr McCausland: I am pleased that there was consensus at the Social Development Committee. I thank the Chair and his colleagues on the Committee for the positive way in which they have dealt with this.

The regulations mainly deal with the increase of the flat rate from £5 to £7. They will provide for a more efficient

and accurate variations regime. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Committee Business

Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 15 minutes in which to propose and 15 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Spratt (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Regional Development on its Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with the relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations.

At the outset, I want to condemn whoever was responsible for leaking the draft report to the press. It was discourteous to the House, to Members of the Assembly, to the Committee and to the witnesses who gave of their time to contribute to the inquiry. Importantly, Mr Speaker, they have shown total disregard and contempt towards the employees of Translink, who have had to endure the rumour and innuendo arising from the inaccurate reporting of the leaked document, and who have been told that their jobs are on the line because the Committee wants to privatise the services that they provide. I want to nail that spurious accusation. At no time during the inquiry or in the reporting of the Committee findings and recommendations have I, the Deputy Chair or the Committee called for Translink to be privatised. The words “privatise” or “privatisation” do not appear in the body of the Committee report for the simple reason that they were not used. They have been used mainly by the press, not the Committee. I will, therefore, clarify what the Committee actually said and do so in the forum in which it should have been done in the first place — this House.

Paragraphs 36 to 48 set out the Committee logic in calling for more competition in the delivery of public transport. Those paragraphs state very clearly that the 1967 and 2011 Transport Acts state that the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company provides most of the public transport requirement. The Acts do not, however, state that all public transport should be provided by the holding company. Indeed, the 2011 Act specifically endorses the concept of competition, in that it allows for new service delivery arrangements to contract with public transport operators. The Department for Regional Development (DRD) sat in front of the Committee on many occasions and cited the fact that competition is permissible under the legislation. The Department’s publications, in the guise of its strategic business case, stated:

“Research conducted for the European Commission suggests that the introduction of competition can generate cost savings of 10–20% when only minimal restructuring of the industry is required. Savings of 35% or more have been achieved where greater restructuring was required.”

The public transport reform consultation summary document sought to maximise:

“efficiency and value for money through the use of benchmarking, continuous improvement of services and, where necessary, competitive tendering for some transport services.”

The Committee undertook study visits to Dublin, Glasgow and Arnhem, where it experienced at first hand the positive effects of regulated competition in systems that saw the likes of community transport organisations freed from the shackles of inane and outdated licensing regulations similar to ours and playing an integral part in securing jobs in public transport services by linking more people to the core networks, thus creating more demand. In Dublin, the Luas system is franchised to a private operator but regulated by government.

We have the legislation in place, a Department that repeatedly heralds the potential for competition and examples of positive competitive provision being applied daily in an efficient and effective manner. How does the Department deliver against its legislation and its strategic business case? It awards Translink a 10-year contract that will run into hundreds of millions of pounds and, on top of that, promises it a lucrative contract to deliver Belfast rapid transit. Where is the opportunity for competition in that? Where is the drive to effect meaningful efficiency? It is nowhere, because the Department has taken the easy option. It had the opportunity to make a real difference but, I suggest, chickened out for convenience sake.

12.15 pm

Yes, the Committee has called for competition. Yes, we have suggested that a means of doing that is to bundle together routes, profitable and unprofitable, and offer them to the market, a market in which Translink is protected by law and is secure in the knowledge that it is guaranteed the majority or most of the provision. That would be a competitive market, not a monopoly or a privatised market. The Committee believes that this, either through franchising or competitive tendering, is the best way to effect real and meaningful efficiencies in Translink to the benefit of the users of these services.

I move on to a further example of the Department saying one thing and then doing something totally different. I refer to Transport Northern Ireland. At the Committee Stage of the 2011 Transport Bill, the Department came to the previous Committee and proclaimed:

“The main new element in that structure is the agency, which will be a part of DRD and will be responsible to the Minister and the Assembly for the delivery of the proposed transport functions.”

The establishment of an executive agency within DRD was considered to be fundamental to the success of public transport reform proposals. The outline business case for public transport reform stated that the agency would result in benefits such as efficiency and improved service. It envisaged:

“a single client body with expertise in the specification of integrated transport services and facilities, and in procurement and contract management ... to achieve

and sustain the best possible value for money over the long term”.

The Department emphasised that it would be an independent body that would bring stakeholders together. Importantly, the proposed agency model was consulted on and agreed to by the previous Minister, the Department and the key stakeholders. However, and for reasons that I hope the Minister will explain, that is not what we have. The Minister chose to go against the advice that his officials provided to his predecessor and ignore the approach agreed by his Department and the very stakeholders that the agency was supposed to try to bring together. The Minister chose to disregard the model presented to the previous Committee and the House during the passing of the 2011 Transport Act.

Instead, we have Roads Service with a few other bits and pieces of policy bolted on and a new name, Transport Northern Ireland. The Minister might say that it is something completely different, but the reality is that it is still Roads Service. It does not have the experience or expertise that is necessary. Its ethos and branding do not give hope that it will champion public transport. It does not provide the clarity of role and function to which stakeholders attached so much importance during the consultation. It does not provide the coordination and integration that is necessary. It fails to rectify the conflicting anomaly whereby the Minister is the public owner, policymaker and part regulator of public transport in Northern Ireland.

The Committee is in agreement that the new Transport Northern Ireland model falls significantly short of the proposed and agreed agency model. Having stressed the need for any new body to be independent, the Department, without consultation, has now implemented a model that fails to provide the independence claimed for the agency model. The Committee is also in agreement that the revised arrangements are not consistent with the goal of maximising the efficient and effective delivery of public transport legislative and policy objectives.

The Committee has recommended, therefore, that the Minister and the Department revert to the agreed agency model as described during the public transport reform process and presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the previous Committee for Regional Development during the passing of the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

In addition, we made suggestions about the skill sets that would be required to effectively challenge the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company and Translink.

I will now turn to governance in the holding company and Translink. As I indicated, the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 established the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company as a public authority charged with the delivery of public transport services. The holding company delivers on that responsibility through three subsidiary companies — Northern Ireland Rail, Citybus, which is branded as Metro, and Ulsterbus — under the overall brand name of Translink. The chairmanship of the holding company is a non-executive position appointed by government and, like the other directors, is appointed for a renewable term of three years. The group chief executive and chief operating officer of the subsidiary companies are also members of the holding company board.

The Committee is not content that the current holding company structure is fit for purpose in delivering a modern, integrated public transport service. Conclusions that were formed during the public transport reform process indicated that there was a distinct lack of clarity about the holding company's relationship with the Department, its three subsidiary companies and its other commercial concerns. The Committee is also concerned that the group chief executive and chief operating officer sit as board members and that, despite significant investment since devolution in 2007, the Northern Ireland Audit Office does not have access to the holding company or Translink accounts or those of the subsidiary companies.

We have recommended, therefore, that the Minister commission an urgent and fundamental review of the holding company structures against requirements of existing and developing EU transport regulations, the Programme for Government and the investment strategy for Northern Ireland commitments, as well as 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: A New Approach to Regional Transportation', to ensure that it is the most efficient and effective model to meet Northern Ireland's future public transport requirements. In addition, we are agreed that, as an additional layer of scrutiny, the group chief executive and chief operating officer cease to be full members of the board of the holding company, instead leaving themselves accountable to the board for operational matters. The Committee is agreed that, given the significant levels of public grant and subsidy to the holding company and Translink, the Minister should assess the legislative considerations that need to be put in place to allow the Audit Office full access to the holding company accounts and to those of the three subsidiary companies.

In undertaking the inquiry, the Committee hoped that it might unravel some of the common misunderstandings about the governance of Translink, in particular its relationship with the Department and the operation of the three subsidiary companies. We also wanted to see whether those structures were fit for purpose in delivering modern, integrated transport. Significantly, the conclusion that the Committee reached does not match the aspirations that were expressed at the outset of the inquiry. The Committee believes that the relationship between the Department, the holding company and Translink, often described by Members as "cosy", is not sufficiently challenging, due to the departmental governance model and the absence of relevant and key experience and expertise in the Department.

We are not content that the proposed service level agreement meets with the requirement for a public service contract as defined in European regulations. That could leave the Department open to infraction proceedings. We are also opposed to the automatic renewal and award of contracts, which limits competition and disincentivises the effective delivery of transport in Northern Ireland.

The Committee welcomes the opportunity to debate the issue in the House today, as it is the proper place. I move the motion.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. First, I welcome the review. I want to echo the Chair's words and deal with the media reporting earlier this summer on the recommendations.

Reports were not only misleading but misrepresented the Committee's position. At no time did the Committee, as the Chair said, agree to a privatisation of our transport system. The terms of reference set out by the Committee have clear objectives for improving transport solutions for all of society.

It is time to review the public transport system and who delivers it, to maximise the organisation and delivery structures and to improve efficiencies. Nowhere in the terms of reference was the concept of privatisation mentioned. In the 21st century, public transport should be people's first choice, not their last resort.

Our public transport legislation is outdated: it is over 40 years since the last major review. The recommendations, if implemented, will ensure the provision of a customer-focused, high-quality and integrated public transport system that will put a greater focus on delivery and efficiency and on the provision of affordable services that are responsive to local needs.

Public transport should continue to operate within a regulated system, and Translink, the publicly owned transport operator, must remain the main provider of public transport. However, procurement needs to take into account alternative providers, including taxi firms and community transport. I am talking about transport providers that provide not-for-profit services.

Until the public transport network is tendered, we will remain within the constraints of a system installed many years ago. For example, community transport providers are excluded because of the current tendering conditions. Another example of where tendering could be opened up is for the West Belfast Taxi Association: the link routes in the west of the city from the new rapid transport system will hopefully be in operation in the next couple of years.

The public transport reform document of 2009 stated that there should be a new organisation and new governance arrangements involved in the setting-up of a new departmental public transport agency. That agency would be responsible for specifying service requirements and securing provision for public transport operators who would deliver the service. In my opinion, that would be the best model to follow to enable the implementation of the reforms needed and to ensure that improvements continue over the long term.

Sinn Féin is against any proposals that will break up and privatise the public transport system. Doing so would devastate a system that has escaped the ravages endured by sectors elsewhere. Privatising or selling off profitable routes, and practices geared to the interests of competing companies rather than the customer, would be to the detriment of isolated, dependent and at-risk groups. Private sector operators will prioritise the acquisition of lucrative routes and seek to restrain scheduling in unprofitable periods. That is not the way to go.

That having been said, we recognise that there are major difficulties associated with the current management of Translink. In particular, there is a real lack of accountability and transparency.

Mr Dallat: I welcome the report. I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women who have manned our public services for the past 40 years. That is part of a proud heritage that every single member of the Committee acknowledges. No member of the Committee would want

to do anything to undermine the courage of those people who, in carrying out their duties, have had their buses, and at one time trains, burned, and so on. Even today they are still running risks.

The report is a statutory requirement of the Committee: it is our duty to publish it. I hope that the report has a fair wind and is tracked to ensure that the recommendations contained in it are debated and addressed. I think that that is fair.

12.30 pm

Thanks to new investment, technology and communication systems, public transport has improved immensely, but has it met the new challenges? Has it put all of that new technology to best use to ensure that the people who use our public transport can use it more often and more efficiently? I believe that the answer is no, not because of the men and women I have referred to who drive the buses and trains, but because senior management has not matched what is available.

Where new investment has been made in public transport, the results have been remarkable. I make no apology for, yet again, singling out the Belfast/Derry railway, which, today, is carrying more passengers than the Belfast/Dublin Enterprise, which, in itself, is a tremendous public service.

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dallat: I will indeed.

Mrs D Kelly: I am sure the Member will want to join me in putting on record that it was this Minister who ensured the viability and security into the future of that particular line.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Dallat: Mr Speaker, I am fed up acknowledging the Minister on this one. I am now on to the bypass and the Derry railway station. Even today, the split in transport is 20:80: 20% into public transport and 80% into roads. I think that that needs to be seriously addressed.

The Assembly has made some good achievements. One of the best was the introduction of the senior citizens' passes. However, what good is a senior citizen's pass if public transport is not integrated? The Committee travelled to Cardiff, Glasgow and Dublin — some members even went to the Netherlands — to see how that could be best achieved. I am convinced that public transport can be made more attractive to many more people, particularly those senior citizens living in the rural areas that I represent who find that it is not much good if you cannot get to the main line stations or the bus terminus where the transport is.

The Chairman has covered a couple of the points that were causing concern to the staff. I am glad that he referred to two acts that ensure that public transport is largely provided by Translink and not by private enterprise. This study is not about privatising Translink; it is about ensuring that the £200 million that goes into public transport every year is better invested for the people who use it.

The Assembly will produce reports that are controversial. Hopefully, we are not nodding dogs and that we can examine how best to use public money and track it from source to where it is spent. It is not only the Public

Accounts Committee that has a responsibility for doing that. Every Committee has a responsibility to do it, and, in this case, the Department for Regional Development has done that.

The Committee certainly questioned a 10-year contract with Translink, because it is concerned that it would, yet again, stifle the opportunities that exist to develop integrated transport, not just through a little pilot scheme down in Dungannon, but across the whole of Northern Ireland. It is working successfully in Dublin, Cardiff, Glasgow and other places. Why not here? I know that people might be concerned that Translink does not get a 10-year contract; that in itself would cause instability in the industry. All of those things need to be addressed. Of course, they will be, because, hopefully, this report is the beginning of a process that will satisfy everyone, particularly the people who use public transport, whether they are young or old, and, most importantly, the people whom I began my speech on — those who currently man it.

Mr Speaker: Time is almost gone.

Mr Dallat: Thank you.

Mr Hussey: I begin by apologising to the Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development for not being here at the start of the debate. I support Mr Dallat's praise for those who worked for Translink during some of the most horrible times in our history and congratulate the Minister for Regional Development on the Belfast to Londonderry rail line. Mr Dallat was incorrect when he mentioned some other place — it is Belfast to Londonderry.

The inquiry was beneficial in that it provided a forum for discussion of the issues. One of the main points in the terms of reference was that the inquiry should shed some light on the legal and governance relationship between the Department for Regional Development and the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo), better known as Translink. The relationship has often been subject to rumour, misunderstandings and ambiguity. The inquiry, at least, offered the opportunity to explore that, and I hope that it has done so. As a member of the Committee for Regional Development, I welcomed the inquiry. Unsurprisingly, I am not as content with some of the report's recommendations as others.

The first recommendation raises the issue that the Minister for Regional Development is both a policymaker and part regulator of public transport. I accept that that may raise some procedural eyebrows but ask what the alternatives are. An agency model is certainly an idea, but I have concerns about the establishment of yet another almost arm's-length body that would obviously require its own administrative set-up costs. There may be issues with DRD holding direct responsibility for public transport, but my opinion, for what it is worth, is that it is better to have an Executive Minister who can be held directly accountable for it than not. We must also remember that administering public transport in Northern Ireland is no small task. Just last week, the newly published Northern Ireland road and rail transport statistics revealed that a weekly average of 1.38 million public bus passenger journeys were made in the April to June 2013 quarter.

The main recommendation on which I wish to focus is the report's fourth, which explicitly calls on the Department to offer private operators the opportunity to deliver our public transport requirement. I have major concerns about

this recommendation, which I simply cannot support. It may be that Belfast and the larger towns would get away unscathed from such a development, but, in constituencies such as mine, services would, effectively, disappear overnight. It is a simple reality that rural routes are often not economically sustainable. Although I do not always support state subsidisation — that is a good word — the present situation allows Translink to absorb some losses on those rural routes by making a profit on those more fruitful. How would rural routes be protected in this proposed new model? In my opinion, they simply would not.

The inquiry managed to move the debate to the privatisation of Translink. I cannot support that, and I will look with interest at how other parties in the House respond on the issue.

Mr Spratt: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hussey: I would rather not at this moment, thank you. If I had to get up, I would not be able to get down again.

The inquiry was useful and raised a number of points worth further discussion. I thank the Committee staff for their usual dedication and the important role that they played during the inquiry. Unfortunately, I cannot support the full report.

Mr Dickson: I also thank the Committee staff and Chair for the way in which the report was prepared. It was a very professional exercise indeed. I should also point out that I am no longer a member of the Committee, having been replaced by my colleague Mr Kieran McCarthy. However, I was very much involved in the formation of the inquiry and the investigations that took place.

I will pick out a number of the report's key recommendations. One concerns the agency model, and other Members referred to that. The Alliance Party firmly believes that the Department needs to look seriously at the issue of independence raised in the report. It has to answer questions about what exactly that body is, what it has been doing since it was established and what difference it has made. We received notification that it was coming into existence, but, as the report says, we were not consulted and have received no information about its activities since it was created.

Another recommendation in the report is that the Department should recruit qualified and experienced personnel, and the Committee requested information about the limited expertise in local transport planning, contract specification, performance and contract management, and fare regulation. We note the intention to procure an expert transport modelling and planning service, yet it is disappointing that that did not begin some time ago. How we are expected to have an efficient, effective and coordinated transport system with no transport planners in place is somewhat of a mystery, and it was a mystery to the Committee.

I support the Committee's call for investment in appropriately qualified and experienced personnel. I also call on the Transport Holding Company to afford employees appropriate opportunities to feed back into the system ways in which their organisation could be run better. In recent days, I have spoken to drivers, other Translink personnel and their trade unions, who shared their frustrations with me. They know the routes, the systems and their jobs, yet rarely is their advice on how

improvements could be made taken into account. By and large, it is ignored.

It is also worth pointing out that we should completely debunk the notion that the report is anything to do with the privatisation of public transport in Northern Ireland. It is about providing appropriate competition and ensuring that Translink delivers the best possible public transport system for Northern Ireland.

The balance between public transport and roads has been referred to, and it has been mentioned that the split is somewhere in the region of 80:20. The recommendation in the report is to give a greater proportion to public transport, which is an argument that I made throughout my time on the Committee.

I am glad that the Committee is behind the report, because when I raised the imbalance with the former Finance Minister earlier this year, I was told not to complain because I support the upgrade of the A2. That was a poor response. This is a long-standing problem and little has been done to rectify it.

The Committee took evidence on the Programme for Government commitments on 12 December 2011. Concerns were expressed that only 14% of DRD's capital spending was allocated to public transport, when the regional transportation strategy states that there should be a 65:35 split between roads and public transport. The Minister will probably come back on that and say that more money has been allocated since then through monitoring rounds. However, our public transport network should not be thrown scraps from the tables of other Departments. There needs to be an increase through a long-term commitment, and that has to be demonstrated through an appropriate budget.

Considerably less is spent on public transport per person in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in the United Kingdom, and all too often it is sliced more than other areas when cuts are made. That is not to take away from the welcome investment in buses, trains and Wi-Fi in recent years, but, if we want to see a major shift towards sustainable transport, we need a serious policy that is backed by serious investment. Regrettably, for the report and those who compiled it —

Mr Dallat: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: I will.

Mr Dallat: I know that the Member has left the Committee, but would he agree that, in his experience, a very good relationship has developed between the Committee, the Department and Translink that can only result in a better public transport service for those who want to use it.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Dickson: Thank you. I wholeheartedly agree with Mr Dallat in that respect. If that relationship is built on, we will be able to deliver a quality public transport system, which will allow us to move into those rural and difficult-to-get-at areas and allow people to connect to the public transport system. The Committee saw innovative ways in other places where that is being achieved.

The challenge is now to the Minister to take up the report. I encourage him to take the comments in the report that he may feel are critical and those that he may feel are positive and run with them. He should also work robustly with the

Committee to deliver on the recommendations of a report that I genuinely believe has the potential to deliver a quality public transport system for everyone in Northern Ireland.

Mr Easton: The relationship between the Department and Translink is not sufficiently challenging due to the Department's governance model and the absence of relevant and key experience and expertise in the Department. Members are not content that the proposed service level agreements meet the requirement for a public sector contract that is defined in the regulations and feel that they could leave the Department open to infraction proceedings.

12.45 pm

I would recommend that the Minister and the Department revert to the agreed agency model as described during the public transport reform process and as presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the previous Committee for Regional Development during the passing of the Transport Act 2011. That would rectify the conflicting abnormalities, whereby the Minister is the public owner, policymaker and part regulator of public transport.

The Transport Act further protected the Translink position as a monopoly, ensuring that it would deliver most of the public transport requirements. That was presented as a defence by departmental officials on a number of occasions during the inquiry and the subsequent evidence sessions on the proposed new contract to Translink; namely, that the previous Committee and the House had passed the Transport Act. However, as previously stated, Members voted the Act through on the basis that an independent agency would be in place to ensure appropriate segregation to avoid the situation where the Minister is the public owner, policymaker and part regulator of public transport.

I would also recommend that, given the significant levels of public grant and subsidies to Translink, the Minister assesses what legislative considerations need to be put in place to allow the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) full access to NITHCo's accounts and those of the three sub-companies. We are not content that the current NITHCo structure is fit for purpose to deliver a modern integrated public transport service. Conclusions formed during the public transport reform process indicated that there was a distinct lack of clarity with regard to NITHCo's relationship with the Department, its three sub-companies and its other commercial concerns.

Based on the Department's preferred cost-effectiveness measures, that is, operating costs per passenger, there is a considerable gap between the performance of Translink and the performance of operators in Wales and in some non-metropolitan areas of England, even after adjusting for costs involved in delivering certain head office authority functions within Translink. The differential in costs per passenger between Translink and comparable areas has shown little sign of narrowing in recent years. The cost-effectiveness of Translink is undoubtedly affected by a public service obligation whereby it is required to provide a comprehensive network of routes and services across Northern Ireland, many of which attract low passenger volumes. That is illustrated by the evidence provided by Translink, which indicates that 85% of its routes are unprofitable. That means that they have to be cross-subsidised by a small number of profitable routes from

Translink's other commercial activities and from the capital subsidy from DRD.

I do not support the privatisation of Translink but am happy to explore how the rapid transport system and the bus hubs can be funded. I, however, do not support any situation that would place Translink in financial difficulties or lead to any job losses.

Finally, I am annoyed that the Committee has been accused of calling for the privatisation of Translink. That is simply not true. Nor have the Committee reports even mentioned Translink staff's pensions, pay or conditions, which some people from the union said on Facebook that we had discussed as well.

I am also unhappy with the make-up of the membership of the NITHCo board, which includes the group's chief executive, the chief operating officer of the subsidiary companies and other members of the NITHCo board. Are there any ordinary workers from the coalface or even a member of the union on the board? As far as I am aware, the answer is no. I believe that that needs to be rectified.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion. Obviously, the current structures that we are looking at are not fit for purpose. That was identified during the public transport reform process in 2009, during the inquiry and during the previous inquiry that we carried out during the year into the better use of public transport.

Quite a lot of this has been covered, but I want to focus on one of the recommendations, which is the proposal to revert to the agreed agency model, and which was identified during the reform process in 2009. Much of that process is reflected in the Transport Act 2011. During that extensive process, which was a product of extensive consultation, the agency was considered crucial for an effective transport system.

The idea is to embed the agency within DRD. It would, effectively, rest in a three-tiered system between the Department and Translink, with Translink having responsibility for delivery. The agency model that we are looking at was envisaged to include functions such as operational policy and have a panel of people with specialist skills in planning, procurement, research, market regulation and many other matters. That should have been set up in mid-2011. Had that been done, it would have enabled Translink to focus mostly on delivery. Members voted for the Transport Bill in 2011 on the basis that the agency would be in place to ensure the segregation of roles and responsibilities.

I want to touch on the topic of privatisation, which we reject. We do not support privatisation at all and the privatisation of Translink was not in the inquiry. It should be noted, however, that, in the Transport Act 2011, which was passed by the Assembly and became law in March 2011, opportunities are envisaged for operators to apply for permits within a regulatory framework. During the inquiry, we heard from organisations such as the West Belfast Taxi Association and the Community Transport Association (CTA) that they would like to be able to tender for routes in certain areas to complement the existing public transport system. Equally, that would apply to hard-to-reach rural areas such as west Tyrone, where I am from.

I support the Committee's view that the new Transport NI model that has been set up falls short of the agency

model that was envisaged during the reform process. It does not currently have the capacity to meet the goal of efficient and effective delivery of public transport. During the inquiry, information from the Department proved to the Committee that there is a dearth of skills in Transport NI, compared with what was envisaged in the agency model.

I support the motion and reiterate the call to revert to the model that was identified and agreed during the transport reform process in 2009.

Mrs Hale: I welcome this debate on a very important issue for the future of transport structures in Northern Ireland. Like my colleague Mr Spratt, I wish to record my disappointment that the contents of the report were leaked to the press. It is important for the very function of government to be able to have a proper debate on any embargoed report before it enters the public arena. I, too, condemn those responsible because they have shown total disregard for this House and Translink staff.

I welcome the report. The inquiry allowed the Committee to examine whether Translink's structures are fit for purpose to deliver a modern, integrated and efficient transport service for Northern Ireland. I, too, share the concerns of many Members that the 2011 Act is being used to ensure that Translink is the preferred public transport operator, preventing competitive tendering for new or additional services. This means that Translink will continue to provide the majority of public transport requirements but will be required, like all bidders, to show value for money and efficiency as part of the tendering process.

We must be careful because transport deregulation can cause issues such as turf wars between operators that lead only to short-term benefits. However, at least it means the prospect of operators nipping at each other's heels, preventing comfortable inertia. I also accept that, in backing such a stance, we must be careful that operators do not make a dive for only the profitable services. Indeed, any such move would require both profitable and unprofitable services to be franchised together. That point was echoed by the Office of Fair Trading.

Although I do not want to get into the issue of creating a monopoly in transport, I will say that, whatever we do, we must ensure that any future transport development offers value for money, efficiency, and a service that maximises potential for rural and urban dwellers. Importantly, it must be modern and fit for purpose. The final arbiter on that, of course, will be the public. They expect the Government not only to scrutinise decisions but to ensure that public money is spent in the most cost-effective way, as well as ensuring that a quality product is delivered. That is why competitive tendering for the Belfast rapid transport project must be a priority. That is not only my point of view, which is shared by the Consumer Council, the Office of Fair Trading and the CTA, but the view of countless individuals who responded to the consultation.

I, too, question why the Minister for Regional Development went against the advice of his officials, his Department and key stakeholders and ask how he intends to be public owner, policymaker and part regulator. I find that stance somewhat perplexing, and I am sure that the public will find it equally confusing and, indeed, conflictual.

I share the view of my colleague, the Chair of the Regional Development Committee, and wholeheartedly back what he said here today.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle.

I also associate myself with the sentiments of the Chair, the Deputy Chair and, indeed, others about the report being leaked and the subsequent press reports. That caused quite a bit of consternation among employees, who are very stressed about other aspects of their job at the moment. Indeed, we met the employees and the unions to discuss the issue. The unions told us that Translink's senior management have not met them in three years, so perhaps they would like to look into this.

From the outset, the report operated within the constraints of the Transport Act 2011, as my colleague Declan McAleer mentioned. That was supported at the time by most parties here and was in line with the implementation of EU regulation 1370/2007 on competition. The purpose of the inquiry was to address long-standing concerns about transport structures here. As the Chair said, the Committee visited systems abroad, across the water and in the rest of the country. We saw multifaceted efficiencies across the board, at every level, as well as measures that we would like to see here. We also had a number of concerns regarding the governance of Translink and the NITHC and their relationship with the Department.

All of us, whether urban- or rural-based — those from rural constituencies would obviously say that they are even more disadvantaged — can see the shortcomings in the delivery of a comprehensive transport infrastructure. In our constituencies, those shortcomings are often glaringly obvious. My constituency, which is a small but highly populated rural area that you would know, a Cheann Comhairle, is 15 miles from the main hospital at Altnagelvin, and to access Altnagelvin, you are required to take a bus to the village of Claudy, a second bus into Derry city and then another bus out to Altnagelvin. So to get to an appointment, you are required to make six separate bus journeys. At the Causeway Hospital, a bus drives past the front gate, so you must either take a taxi or have some other way of getting to the hospital.

Some villages served by school bus services are maybe only a couple of miles apart and have a round trip of 10 miles, while other villages served by a different route might have a round trip of some 30 miles. That can be seen across the board, whether in health, education or public transport delivery. There is no consistency. There has been little or no discussion with other transport providers such as the community transport sector or community interest companies such as Belfast Taxis to deliver the public transport requirement, even though they are very keen to take up the slack.

A pilot scheme was rolled out in the Dungannon area. It opened on 30 September after much delay and with little in the way of consultation. Thus far, it seems that the scheme is little more than a rejigging of the school runs in the Translink timetable, but we will have to wait and see.

There has also been no buy-in from the Health Department and minimal contact with community transport organisations. What we do not want to see is a dog-in-a-manger attitude to the delivery of transport in the community.

Recommendation 17 calls for the introduction of short-term contracts to allow for the development of transport bundles based on local plans, which is a very prudent approach.

I thank the Committee staff, the Chair, the Deputy Chair and all those who worked on the delivery of the report and the recommendations.

Mr Byrne: I joined the Committee recently, so I came to the inquiry at a late stage, but I have to say that I largely support the report's recommendations and welcome the fact that the report opens up a debate about the efficiency and effectiveness of the public transport system here.

It is fair to say that the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, with the three subsidiary companies of Northern Ireland Railways, Citybus and Ulsterbus, has a very tangled web of governance. It is a cumbersome structure, and it is difficult to comprehend the workings and interrelationships of this transport system. That is what the report is largely attempting to deal with.

1.00 pm

As my colleague Mr Dallat said earlier, £200 million a year is going in as a subvention for public transport, so the Assembly has a legitimate interest in how that money is managed, invested and used to improve the service. A lot of capital moneys and revenue moneys are provided by government on an ongoing basis. We all want a quality public transport service. We want it to be effective and efficient, and we want it to be able to meet the objectives of most MLAs, who want to retain a public transport system. Rural transport, however, has to be improved. Many rural people feel that they do not have a good bus service. It is an equality issue for them, and we need a more integrated system, including linking into, and integrating with, the community transport network that has largely been developed by the voluntary and community sector over the past 20 years in Northern Ireland.

We have had 40 years of what I would call a reliable bus service. We have to be thankful for men such as Mr Werner Heubeck, a strong-minded CEO who, despite the Troubles and the attacks on the buses, kept the trains and buses operating to provide a service that has largely been reliable and effective. Over the past 10 years, greater improvements have been made to infrastructure for railways, and we have had new trains and buses. The Goldliner service between provincial towns and the cities of Belfast and Derry is very reliable and very efficient for the users.

As I said, the report is timely and relevant. The agency model is a suggestion to streamline the management structure and functions relating to the public transport system in Northern Ireland. It would be more streamlined and responsive in terms of investment decisions and may be able to borrow money on the capital markets. The agency would perhaps free up the cumbersome structure that has bedevilled some of the innovation now required. I largely support the motion and the report and I am glad that the debate is now opening up.

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the Committee for Regional Development's report on transport delivery structures. I have been very interested in, and have listened attentively to, the contributions made by all Members, and I hope that, in this response, we will deal with many, if not all, of the points raised. I, too, pay tribute to all the staff and workers involved in public transport over generations and assure them that their work is valued.

Regrettably, as the Chairman said, the report was subject to comment before it reached the Assembly for debate, and headlines of "Privatisation of Translink" have created a considerable degree of unease, uncertainty and confusion, not only for staff but for the general public. I have listened carefully to the debate, and I have to say that the confusion has not been caused entirely by media comment. Unfortunately, the report itself has brought some confusion.

Let me set the scene for public transport provision in Northern Ireland. Journeys have been growing at an unprecedented rate. There were 66.9 million bus journeys last year, which is up 300,000 on the previous year. There were 11.5 million rail journeys, which is an increase of 800,000. This year, rail journeys have continued to grow by a further 15%. Bus journeys are up again too, and I expect journeys to increase again by well over one million to take us beyond 80 million, which is a figure that many said we would never reach.

Independent reviews of punctuality, reliability and customer performance show that Translink is ticking the boxes. Importantly, fares for passengers compare incredibly favourably with the rest of the UK. Rail fares in Northern Ireland have not increased in real terms since 2005. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, fares have increased by between 15% and 23%. Bus fares in Northern Ireland have fallen in real terms since 2005. In Great Britain, they have increased by around 10%, and, south of the border in the Republic of Ireland, fares have increased substantially.

As transport Minister, I am proud of that record. I am pleased that we have an increasingly efficient and affordable public transport network that is serving growing numbers of passengers.

The report makes recommendations about internal departmental structures. Let me stress that at no time, either in this mandate or, indeed, the previous mandate, has there ever been any proposal for an agency that is independent of the Department. The setting up of a small, independent agency to carry out public transport authority functions would, I think, be an unduly expensive approach.

With devolution, Departments have moved to enhanced control by local Ministers, rightly making us more accountable. In turn, I am accountable not only to Executive colleagues but to the Committee for Regional Development. I think that we have built up a very good relationship, and I pay tribute to the Chairman and the other members for their contribution in achieving that.

During the recent consultation on reform, the very clear proposal was for a departmental agency that is answerable directly to the Minister. That is the position that we now have. The proposal combines roads and public transport functions in a single organisation. So, I have to say that there seems to be a misunderstanding both of the original proposals and the current position. Transport NI is our new public transport authority, and I believe that its staff has the significant financial, governance and contract management experience required to operate the reformed system and structure.

The Committee's proposal for a review of future budget allocations on the split between roads and public transport is also already happening with the 'New Approach to Regional Transportation', on which, I understand, the

Committee was briefed as recently as October. Developing a connected, integrated and sustainable transport network is my priority in striking the best balance between roads and public transport expenditure.

The one recommendation that is not currently happening, and the most controversial, of course, is competitive tendering and the franchising of the existing network. As members are aware, Translink is required to run a comprehensive network of services, using the profits from the well-used routes to cross-subsidise the less well performing, many of which, as we heard and as I concede, are in rural areas. Such arrangements are absolutely typical of regulated markets and are particularly valuable, given the relatively high proportion of rural routes.

Although profitable routes may be attractive to private providers, the privatisation that the Committee suggested would inevitably result in widespread service cuts, which is something that I am not prepared to support. I think that some Members are getting confused by the difference between privatisation and what is called franchising out both profitable and unprofitable routes; there seems to be little difference in the suggestion or its implication that that is a form of privatisation. The recommendation further fails to answer the question of transitional costs. The report ignores the fact that there are likely to be significant costs from introducing and managing competitive tendering and contracts.

Even if there were merit in this recommendation, I think that there is an issue of timing. Private operators would want to specify all requirements for a contract period that is greater than five years. At a time when my Department and others are involved in planning better integration of local public transport services, the Committee's report is wholly inconsistent with that approach. The Committee had been interested in and vocally supportive of the pilot work that we are doing in Dungannon/Cookstown. I am sorry that Mr Ó hOisín seems to take quite a cynical view of that, but we want to continue with it and examine its results and analysis.

As things stand, private operators that can identify gaps in the market can apply for a licence to operate a new commercial service. So, Translink is kept on its toes as it is.

The report recommends that Belfast rapid transit (BRT) be included in the competitive tenders. The Committee is well aware that that possibility was investigated and that private sector operators were reluctant to take on the operation of the BRT service. Among other issues raised, they wanted full control of fare rates.

Why does anyone think that private sector operators would be concerned about the Department controlling fare levels? Is it because they would want to have lower fares? I think not. Privatisation elsewhere was followed not only by service cuts but by rampant fare increases. The outline business case for the project recommending the award of the contract for BRT to Translink was approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) in August 2012, and the Committee was briefed at the time. In November 2012, I presented a paper to the Executive and received full support across all parties for a Belfast rapid transit system based on the outline business case recommendations. Our public transport system is more comprehensive and integrated than those in many other jurisdictions, a point that is often overlooked.

A review of NITHCo structures was undertaken prior to the introduction of the Transport Act 2011. That review rejected the idea of the transport holding company being responsible for the public transport authority. Translink is currently bound to performance and financial arrangements set out in the management statement and financial memorandum (MSFM). That set of controls is significantly more exacting than those normally applied to a statutory public corporation. The Committee's report asserts, wrongly in my view, a lack of clarity in relationships between the holding company and the Department and its subsidiaries and other commercial concerns. There is real clarity. The corporate planning process, the MSFM and the associated monitoring returns provide huge detail on Translink's financial plans and operational performance.

Let me nail any suggestion that there is somehow a cosy relationship between the Department and the holding company, or, indeed, between the Minister and the holding company. It is, as it should be, a professional relationship that challenges and ensures that all aspects of public transport are properly conducted.

The Committee also recommends that the group chief executive and its chief operating officer cease to be full members of the holding company board. However, acknowledged best practice in the public and private sectors makes clear the importance of boards having an appropriate balance of executives and non-executives. We currently have that balance, and I am not prepared to depart from best practice.

Lastly, the Committee suggests that I need to put legislation in place to allow the Northern Ireland Audit Office full access to the holding company's accounts and those of the three subsidiary companies. That is perhaps the most obvious evidence of a flawed report. The existing powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General allow the Audit Office full access to any and all financial or non-financial information. The Comptroller and Auditor General has powers of access for value-for-money examinations, including those specifically relating to NITHCo's use of resources. He also has power of access to NITHCo relating to the audit of the departmental accounts. Using his existing powers, the Comptroller and Auditor General has carried out value-for-money reviews of grants to the holding company, specifically on the Belfast to Bangor rail project in 2007, and carried out a review of the governance of the holding company, which was published in November 2012.

Mr Dallat: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Kennedy: I have to make progress. The NITHCo annual accounts are already audited by a firm of professionally qualified accountants. They provide a regularity opinion on the holding company's accounts, as agreed with the Audit Office.

1.15 pm

I confess that I am disappointed by the thrust and quality of the report from the Committee. I have acknowledged, and continue to acknowledge, the valuable input and support from the Committee in the past on other issues, but there is simply nothing in this report that I can properly take forward. I hope that the Committee will therefore review its conclusions. I have no intention of legislating for powers that already exist or reviewing something that was so

recently reviewed. I am certainly not prepared to privatise Translink. My focus is on a programme of improvement over the coming years that will lead to the even better use of public money and the further improvement of services for passengers. On that basis, and because of the wording of the motion, which seeks to approve the report and implement its recommendations, I will oppose the motion. I am, however, happy to liaise with the Committee on all these matters as we move forward.

Mr Spratt: I thank the Minister and Members for their contributions to the debate. I also take this opportunity to thank the members of the Committee, the witnesses, Hansard, the Committee researcher and the Committee team for their valued contribution in bringing this report to the House today.

The Committee is unanimous in its conclusion that the current Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company/Translink structure is not fit for purpose. The Committee reached that conclusion based on the evidence that was provided by the majority of witnesses who wrote to or came before the Committee. The Department and Translink came and sang their own praises, pointing to their charter statistics that showed them to be whiter than white and the favourite of their customers. I remind Members of the famous Disraeli quote about there being three types of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics. Mark Twain said that facts are stubborn things but that statistics are pliable. Here are the facts: the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company structure is approaching 50 years old. It is out of date with modern transport requirements. It is a monopoly that feels that it is without any challenge. Even today, it is reported that it has not responded to a freedom of information request to have a consultation document on the siting of the Londonderry line realised some eight months after the consultation was completed. It heralds the fact that it transports 77 million or 78 million passengers a year, but that target has not changed for over a decade. Is that an example of an organisation being progressive or one that is staid and static?

Since devolution, the Northern Ireland Executive have pumped over £1 billion into Translink in the form of new buses and train rolling stock. However, has Translink or the Department achieved any significant degree of model shift away from cars to public transport? It has gained in the form of new stock but it has failed to produce. I would have thought that an organisation that is protected by law, is told that it will be gifted with the majority of its business and is not challenged for not producing would welcome the opportunity and the challenge that competition would bring. However, the fact is that it does not, and you have to ask yourself why. It is full of bravado, telling us how wonderful it is. However, as Oscar Wilde once said, there are many things that we would throw away if we were not afraid that others might pick them up. The fact is that it is afraid of competition and challenge. It is afraid that it is not the package that it wants us to believe that it is.

I now turn to some of the comments that were made during the debate. Seán Lynch, the Deputy Chair, said that the focus must be on the customer and that implementation of the report's recommendations would achieve this while updating structures that are over 40 years old. He highlighted the difficulties with governance in Translink and the absence of credibility.

I fully endorse Mr Dallat's comments on the role of Translink staff and the risks that they have taken over many years and continue to face. That is a given, and I think that no group of workers has done more in the face of the many difficult situations that they were in.

Ross Hussey, who has now gone, welcomed the report, but he has done a U-turn. The Minister must have got to him at some stage. He fully endorsed the report. He got the papers from any meetings that he was not at and was asked for any comments. No comments came at any point, so I can only assume that the gremlins got at him at some stage since the document was printed.

Stewart Dickson said that the independence of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company needed to be addressed. He supported the procurement of appropriate expertise and highlighted the fact that only 14% of the capital budget is allocated to public transport, when the Programme for Government target is 65%. This is a failure of real significance.

Mr Easton raised concerns that the proposed public service contract might not be sufficient to avoid EU infraction proceedings, and he called for the introduction of appropriate legislation to ensure regular access to Translink accounts by the Audit Office. My understanding is that the Audit Office does not have access to all Translink accounts or to its subsidiary companies' accounts, so we propose that it get access to all accounts. Given that the Executive have put some £1 billion into Translink over the past number of years, it should be open to transparent public scrutiny.

Mr Dallat: Will the Chairman give way?

Mr Spratt: I am happy to give way.

Mr Dallat: Was the Chairman astonished that the Minister, when talking about accountability, referred to the Belfast to Bangor line, given that, in fact, the accounts were put in a skip and the people involved had a long weekend in County Wicklow, using public transport?

Mr Spratt: I fully agree with the Member. He has raised that on a number of occasions. I noticed that the Minister sidestepped that particular remark. In fact, he sidestepped allowing you in when he had time left at the end of his speech.

Declan McAleer agreed that there was extensive consultation on the agency model and that this was deemed fundamental to the delivery of transport. He emphasised that his party was opposed to privatisation but that the inquiry did not recommend this.

Mrs Hale pointed out that profitable and non-profitable routes should be grouped to allow for greater efficiencies.

Mr Ó hOisín highlighted the effective and efficient systems witnessed by the Committee when visiting the other areas that I mentioned, and he was critical of the inconsistent routes in rural areas.

Joe Byrne spoke of the cumbersome system in place and the need for more integrated transport systems. He said that the agency model would free up the cumbersome system and allow more initiative.

I must express my disappointment that the Minister and his party cannot support the report, particularly after, as I said, the UUP Committee member fully endorsed its various stages. As I said, he had an opportunity to respond to the draft document. He was not at that particular meeting

but he got the document and passed no comment back to the Committee Clerk. That is not a very good way for a Member to do business on a Committee.

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Spratt: No, I am not giving way.

I strongly refute —

Mr Swann: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I am being very careful here, because, quite obviously, the Member who has the Floor has not given the Floor. I hope that the Member does not feel that he should raise a point of order to try to use the Floor. If it is a genuine point of order, I will certainly listen to it, but if it is anything to do with the Chair of the Committee, to me that would certainly not be a point of order. It would be abuse of a point of order, since the Member cannot get in on another issue.

Mr Swann: Mr Speaker, I ask you to review the Hansard report in regard to the Chairman's comments and how he has referred to a member of the Committee.

Mr Speaker: I always review the Hansard report, but I must say to the whole House that this is the cut and thrust of debate more than anything else.

Mr Spratt: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will not comment on that, but it is typical, coming from the Member that it has just come from.

The Minister stated that the agency would be expensive, yet he ignored the efficiencies that his Department concluded, in the initial report to the Committee in 2011, would be forthcoming. It said that there would be major efficiencies within the Department, but the Minister failed to spell any of that out today. He stated that the most controversial recommendation, that of opening up to competition, could not be supported. That is very disappointing. He and his officials seem to have completely misunderstood the bundling of routes. I suggest that the Department needs to do a great deal more investigative work on where that is working and working well. We saw examples of that in Scotland, Arnhem and, indeed, in Dublin. I hope, Minister, that that was reported back to you. Rural transport feeds into the main routes and actually enhances the main networks. Translink, in this case, would be the operator and would actually feed into that. The Department is already paying for those rural transport schemes, so a lot of very effective work could be done.

Effective work could also be done with other Departments, such as Education and Health, which require buses for transport, and in many other areas that the Executive are already pumping substantial sums of money into. There is a very real opportunity for that to happen.

I have already touched on the intervention from Mr Dallat in relation to some of the stuff found by the Audit Office. Again, it is evident that the Department has misunderstood the report. The Committee calls for regulatory examinations. The Minister also referred to privatisation of Translink. Minister, that does not help the situation. What we are talking about is competition, which is not wrong, and which your Department officials have said in the past is not wrong. Competition actually makes many people sharpen their pencils. The Department should actually welcome competition in contracts, and not contracts for 10 years. I think that, in a previous debate in the House, the

previous Finance Minister was clearly not happy about 10-year contracts being automatically awarded to Translink, and that is what is being promised.

You mentioned the market being tested for rapid transit. That was only soft testing. Those are not my words. They are the words of your officials who are sitting in the box today, who said that they were only soft tests. In our view, those are not open, competitive and transparent procurement procedures, and that is why the Committee raised those issues.

The Committee is unanimous in the view that the current Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company structure is not fit for the purpose of delivering a modern, integrated public transport service and that a review of its and the Department's structures is fundamental. We are of the view that competition is needed, not privatisation, but competition, and I re-emphasise that. To a degree, what you were doing today was trying to jump on a bandwagon that is wrongly out there due to the document that was leaked and how the press have presented that document. That is totally wrong. No one mentioned privatisation at any stage. We believe that this will create more demand, more efficiencies and the basis for a significant and sustained model shift within a modern and dynamic transport provision.

1.30 pm

I ask the House to accept the Committee motion and this report.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 84; Noes 14.

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Byrne, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCreagh, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Newton, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Lynch and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Beggs, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Elliott, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McGimpsey, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mrs Dobson and Mrs Overend.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Regional Development on its Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with the relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations.

1.45 pm

Private Members' Business

International Mental Health Centre

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Nesbitt: I beg to move

That this Assembly recognises the high prevalence of poor mental health in Northern Ireland; notes that a previous world mental health survey stated that the Province has the world's highest recorded rate of post-traumatic stress disorder and that violence had been a distinctive cause of mental health problems here; acknowledges that trauma is one of the most hidden legacy issues of the Troubles; accepts the need to support and restore good mental health for people with difficulties; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to support the creation of a new international mental health centre for Northern Ireland that would be a world-class facility for all.

It is a pleasure to introduce the debate and commend the motion to the House. I am sure that in the next while, we will hear many statistics in this area, and I have a few myself, but I will start more anecdotally.

There is a man who was already a victim when an episode occurred to him quite recently. An old acquaintance, someone who he had been at primary school with, I believe, and who he knew for 50 years, asked for a quiet word. When they found a quiet space, the acquaintance told the man that 35 years ago, on a particular day, he had been given a gun and instructed to go and kill him. The acquaintance had indeed found the man, but he was standing and talking to people on a busy thoroughfare under a street light. So the acquaintance hid in an alleyway, cursing the man for not wrapping up his conversation and moving on so that he could do his deed. Eventually, worried that the police would catch him red-handed with a gun, the acquaintance went home.

The reason he was imparting all this information to the man 35 years later was, obviously, because he was feeling guilty and could not sleep at night, racked with guilt as his own mortality weighed heavier upon him. He simply, it seems to me, transferred all that angst to the intended victim, who then had sleepless nights thinking of how often over the past 35 years he had befriended the acquaintance.

I mention this because it gives some illustration of the complexity of what we are dealing with here with the legacy of the Troubles, poor mental health and well-being. It relates to the first statistic that I would like to offer to the House, which comes from research between 2006 and 2012 by the now-defunct Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma and Transformation (NICTT) in Omagh and the Bamford Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing at the University of Ulster. They determined in their research that people with mental health disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) seek help on average 22 years after first displaying symptoms.

It is appropriate to mention this today because, for the past couple of weeks, we have been commemorating the twentieth anniversary of what happened on the Shankill Road, in Greysteel and the murders in between. So the logic of that research suggests that there are those who may have been traumatised at Greysteel, Shankill and the rest who have yet to come forward to ask for help. So it is not right to assume that, at this stage, everybody who needs help has already come forward.

Other statistics from that NICTT/Bamford research show that 40% of adults have had one or more traumatic experiences linked to the Troubles. A world mental health survey concludes that Northern Ireland has the world's highest 12-month and lifetime PTSD level. A previous study by Kessler et al showed that one third of PTSD sufferers do not recover without access to appropriate therapeutic services. However, only one third of those surveyed who met the criteria for PTSD say that they got what they considered to be helpful or effective treatment.

The latest raw data were presented to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister a fortnight ago by the new Victims and Survivors Service. It is important to say that the representatives presented those data by saying that it was probably the first comprehensive set of data that we have had on who victims are, where they live and what their needs are since 'The Cost of the Troubles Study' (COTTS) was conducted in 1999.

It might be appropriate to refresh our memories on the COTTS, which established not only that there are individual victims and survivors but that we can justifiably claim that there are victim communities. COTTS divided Northern Ireland geographically into three categories by electoral ward: high-, medium- and low-intensity areas based on the number of Troubles-related deaths. It established clear links between those living in high-intensity areas and incidence of PTSD, showing a clear correlation between them.

The Victims and Survivors Service, in conducting an individual needs review between 1 April last year and the end of June this year, said that of those who completed a general anxiety disorder test, which is a standardised measure of anxiety, over half — 53% — scored in the highest category, which is severe anxiety. Furthermore, some 94% reported identifiable signs of trauma, although I stress that that conclusion is not a robust indicator of PTSD.

Every postcode is covered by these data. Postcodes showing the highest demand include BT5, which is in the First Minister's East Belfast constituency; BT13, which covers west Belfast; and BT14 and BT15, which cover north Belfast. It is pervasive.

Before moving away from Troubles-related mental health issues, I want to acknowledge how often republicans have made the point to me that there is an uneven playing field in seeking and acquiring diagnosis. They argue that former members of the security forces have direct access to certain areas where experts will give an immediate PTSD diagnosis, whereas others must go to their GPs, who are not necessarily qualified to make the diagnosis, and start a referral process, which means that it can take months to get access to the help that is required.

I acknowledge, in the context of an international mental health initiative, that the support groups serving former

police and army personnel that I have spoken to have no difficulty with a new mental health initiative that is for all who have been impacted by the Troubles.

Of course, poor mental health is not specifically related to our Troubles. In the past 10 days, the media have reported on an initiative from the Agriculture and Rural Development Minister, Michelle O'Neill, who is dedicating funding to suicide prevention work in rural areas. The BBC has covered a World Health Organization report that characterises youth unemployment across the United Kingdom as:

"a public health time bomb waiting to explode".

We all know about the issues of self-harm, including completed suicide, among the young people of Northern Ireland.

'The Sunday Times' has been investigating the suicides of army personnel who were stationed at Ballykinlar Barracks in County Down. It has reported a three-fold increase in suicides among serving soldiers in the past three years and a doubling in the number of cases of post-traumatic stress disorder in the past six years. It is, quite simply, all around us: all ages, all classes, all religions and all political affiliations.

I acknowledge the fine work undertaken by my colleague Michael McGimpsey in this area during his time as Health Minister. It was on his watch, beginning in 2007, that Northern Ireland saw significant increases in funding for mental health and the delivery of the Bamford report. I also recognise that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety spends hundreds of millions of pounds on tackling poor mental health and well-being. I also acknowledge the current Health Minister's previous statements in which he affirmed the pervasive nature of this problem. Edwin Poots has said of mental ill health:

"It will affect most of us at some point in our lives either through ourselves, family, friends or work. That is why it is so important that we address this issue."

In another statement as Minister, he pointed out that one in four of us will experience some form of mental ill health at some point in our life. He said that more needs to be done to tackle the issue.

My proposal is a declaration of intent. It is a practical legacy project for the Troubles. It is also a serious attempt to give meaning to priority 2 of the Programme for Government, which includes the commitment to improving health and well-being.

We should back this. If we are having a centre, I understand that, wherever it is located, it can be no more than a hub. It is simply not right to ask people to travel. We must get the expertise on to the ground locally. I am reminded of a man who survived three assassination attempts in Fermanagh. He used to come up to the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (PRRT) at Maryfield. His driver was his daughter, who said that, when they left the PRRT, he was in great form, but, by the time that they got to Augher and Clogher, she could see that the good of the day was unravelling. By the time that they got back to Fermanagh, he was no better than he was when they had left eight hours earlier.

Since making the call a fortnight ago, I have been overwhelmed by the support for the initiative in principle,

if we can work out the details. Let us, please, discuss this now on its own merits.

In 'Great Expectations', Charles Dickens wrote:

"That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day."

Mr Speaker, victims were subjected to thorns and to iron. This could be a memorable day, by committing to a centre that would create a chain of gold and of flowers. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr Speaker: Question Time commences at 2:00 pm, so I suggest that the House take its ease until that time. The debate will, of course, continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be Gordon Dunne.

The debate stood suspended.

2.00 pm

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Narrow Water Bridge

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liomsa fiafraí den LeasChéad-Aire an bhfuil sé féin tiomanta go pearsanta don droichead ag Chaol Uisce?.

1. **Mr D Bradley** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they are personally committed to the bridge at Narrow Water. (AQT 281/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): The short answer to that is yes. I am absolutely committed to the construction of the new bridge at Narrow Water. I do so on the basis of the tremendously successful contribution that a very small bridge in my city has made to the life of that city. Something like £17 million was spent on it, and it has had a massive impact on the city. It effectively represents a new, iconic image for the city. Likewise, the construction of a bridge at Narrow Water would have a similar effect for the people of north Louth and south Down. It would add immensely to the tourism potential in that area.

All of us in the House understand the difficulties around the tendering process and the scale of the tender, which was way in excess of what was expected. Since that, there have been a number of discussions about whether a remedy could be put in place. Caitríona Ruane and I were involved in discussions in Rostrevor with the Taoiseach, and I have been involved in other discussions with very senior advisers to the Taoiseach. I know that, in the background, there is a sense of some remedy for the difficulties that exist.

It is absolutely important, in the context of the next very short while, that we establish whether enough funding can be put in place to ensure that the bridge is constructed. The next important step in the process that I would like to see is a commitment from the Government in Dublin, in conjunction with other aspects flowing from the councils on both sides of the divide, on whether the scheme will go ahead. I certainly would like to see it go ahead, and I am very much committed to it.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an LeasChéad-Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Bhí mé féin i nDoire le déanaí agus aontaím leis an méid a dúirt sé faoi Dhroichead na Síochána ansin.

I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. Indeed, I was in Derry recently and I walked over the Peace Bridge to Ebrington to see the Turner Prize exhibition. I must say that I was more impressed by the bridge than I was by some of the works in the Turner exhibition.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member come to his question, please?

Mr D Bradley: That being said, will the deputy First Minister recommend to the Minister of Finance and Personnel that he should provide the funding that would fill the existing gap in the Narrow Water project?

Mr M McGuinness: First, I, too, have visited the Turner Prize exhibition and I was very impressed. I know that something in the region of over 1,000 people have visited it each day. There is tremendous interest in it, and I would encourage everybody to go to the city to see the Turner Prize exhibition for the first time ever outside England.

In the context of the second part of Mr Bradley's commentary, I think it would be wrong to identify our Finance Minister as the problem with regard to Narrow Water. There is, effectively, a responsibility on the Irish Government, ourselves, the Special EU Programmes Body and the councils on both sides of Narrow Water to come up with a solution. I do not know whether that solution can be found. I would like to hear the Irish Government say more about it. In my discussions with the Taoiseach in Rostrevor a number of weeks ago, it was indicated to me that he intended to say something about it but, thus far, there has been silence.

I hope that, in the next short while, we will hear whether a solution can be found to the problems presented by a tender that was wildly beyond all our expectations.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member who was to ask question 2 has withdrawn his name.

Desertcreat

3. **Mr I McCrea** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress that has been made on the community safety college at Desertcreat. (AQT 283/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: As a colleague of mine in the constituency, the Member knows that I am very keen for the project to be brought to fruition. Of course, there have also been difficulties with the project, which are in the same realm as the discussions that we have just had over the Narrow Water bridge tender. I know that refinements and amendments have been made, and I have a very full and clear expectation that the community safety college in Cookstown will go ahead. I fully and absolutely support that.

Mr I McCrea: The deputy First Minister will know that the local economy needs this important college. Will he give details of when an announcement will be made about the proposed start date? Will he also give an assurance that the work will be done as quickly as possible to ensure that there is no further delay?

Mr M McGuinness: I absolutely agree with the Member about the contribution that the construction of such a community safety college will make to the citizens of Cookstown, no doubt bringing much economic benefit to the area. The discussions that have taken place thus far have progressed the project. I believe that we are very close to seeing the project commence. I also believe that we can have reasonable expectations that the problems that have afflicted the project over the past number of months will be resolved and that work will begin as soon as possible, hopefully around the beginning of next year.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member who was to ask question 4 has also withdrawn his name.

The Disappeared

5. **Mrs Hale** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given the deputy First Minister's republican background and the fact that he will be well aware of those whose loved ones are known as the disappeared, what particular help he can offer to enable and ensure that those bodies are returned for family burial. (AQT 285/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: My full sympathy and compassion are with all those families. They are far and away the most important people in the discussion. I believe that what happened to those families was totally and absolutely wrong. I believe it was cruel; I believe it was unjustified; and, of course, the IRA was responsible. Over a number of years, other Sinn Féin leaders and republican leaders and I have been involved in exhorting anyone with any scrap of information about the location of the bodies to bring it forward. That has brought considerable success for some families but, sadly, not for others. I again reiterate my appeal to anyone in the community who was involved in any way in any of those situations to bring that information forward. They should bring it forward to the commission, to anybody in a responsible position in society and to republican leaders, who are, I think, very anxious to see the situation resolved.

My full compassion and support are with the families. It has been a terrible ordeal; it has been a despicable ordeal. There is a huge responsibility on everybody, including me as a republican leader, to appeal to anybody who can assist the families out of the nightmare that they face daily.

Mrs Hale: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. Given that answer, how can he explain the conflicting reports emanating from the republican movement about why the murders were committed and by whom?

Mr M McGuinness: I think that that is another matter altogether, on which, undoubtedly, people will have their own opinion. The families, at this stage, who I have listened to appear to be more concerned to have the recovery of their loved ones. That is where the big focus is at this time. There is a huge responsibility on all of us to support those families and to support them towards the resolution that they seek, which is the return of their loved ones. As I said, there has been considerable success, but there are families who are still suffering. In the interviews that they have given, including some in the past couple of hours, their big focus is on the recovery of the bodies as opposed to anything else.

Disclosure of Information

6. **Mr Storey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following the question from my colleague Brenda Hale and given all the public concern that has been expressed over the past weeks and months about the disappeared and the activities of the president of his party, what action the deputy First Minister has taken to ensure that all relevant information is made available to the courts and the Police Service of Northern Ireland and that any scrap of information that is referred to in relation to the

allegations about Gerry Adams and in regard to the terrible death of Jean McConville and the other disappeared is brought to the courts. (AQT 286/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The issue around the terrible circumstances of child abuse has been well articulated and well aired in recent times. Gerry Adams has made public his position in relation to the role that he played, given that it was first reported to the social services and the RUC in 1987. There is a huge responsibility on everybody in society, without exception, that whatever information they have in regard to situations of child abuse has to be brought forward to the proper authorities. Over many years, many organisations have learned a lot from the quite scandalous cases that have been thrown up over the past 10 to 15 years and have put in place procedures to ensure that — I hope that this applies to all political parties; it certainly applies to my party — anybody who has possession of any information whatsoever in relation to the abuse of children has a duty and a responsibility to bring that forward to the Police Service.

Similarly, in relation to the issue of the bodies that have not been returned to loved ones, I wholeheartedly and earnestly appeal to anybody with any scrap of information whatsoever, if they are out there, to listen very carefully, not so much to what I have to say about it but to the families, who have very eloquently and very passionately argued the case for information to be brought forward. People are out there with that information, and they have a duty to bring that information forward to alleviate the nightmare that those families are going through.

Mr Storey: Does the deputy First Minister, following on from his logic when he called for the cardinal to resign, given the allegations in relation to child abuse in the Roman Catholic Church, now believe that it is time for his party president to resign and to ensure that there is transparency, openness and consistency in the approach to what is a heinous and evil crime — the abuse of children?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that we are questioning the deputy First Minister in his role as deputy First Minister. I put it over to you, if you wish to respond.

Mr M McGuinness: I am prepared to answer the question.

I do not believe that there is any similarity whatsoever between the cases of the cardinal and Gerry Adams. In the case of the cardinal, a child was sworn to secrecy; in Gerry Adams's case, Gerry Adams was fully in support of his niece, travelled to Bunrana, confronted his brother and supported his niece and her mother when she reported the abuse to the social services and the RUC. The other thing that is missed is that you can clearly see that sometimes, in situations such as this, people like to take political advantage without recognising, for example, the trauma that Gerry Adams's family went through as a result of the abuse that was inflicted on them by their father and the many ways in which that entire family are victims, including Gerry Adams. People need to understand that, and they need to place themselves in that situation where, quite clearly, something was happening in that family that was terribly, terribly wrong. The two situations — that of the cardinal and that of Gerry Adams — are not the same.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of topical questions to the deputy First Minister. We now move to questions for oral answer.

2.15 pm

Executive Office: Brussels

1. **Mr Dunne** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the successes of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels. (AQO 4880/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Recent successes of the Executive's Brussels office, in partnership with relevant Departments, include helping to secure from the EU €150 million for a fourth Peace programme; avoiding EU infraction proceedings in relation to Strangford lough; ensuring regulations provide the potential to fund our regional roads infrastructure; and securing timely state aid decisions that safeguard jobs and investments. In addition, since the move to new premises in 2010, some 6,288 visitors have attended meetings, events, briefings and cultural activities in our offices. We believe that such success is delivered only through the local efforts of our office in Brussels, which helps us navigate the complexity of the EU institutions. It is a resource for government and civil society alike. The office is our eyes and ears in Brussels and supports all Ministers in their European engagements.

Success is about getting our way in Europe with decisions that favour us by our making the right arguments at the right time to the right people. The office uses the Barroso task force to get priority access to influence commissioners and senior officials in Brussels. This has not only enabled a full understanding of our situation but triggered quick decisions on state aid when needed by our businesses. The task force also gives us leverage to get commissioners and commission officials over here, and the Commission has recently chosen Belfast as the host site for the international Smart Specialisation conference.

The Brussels office projects a positive image of our region by featuring our achievements in the policy arena and in culture and arts. The office also provides an excellent business environment in which to work. Reputation is a key to successful influence in Brussels and the EU, and I think that our standing there is very good. We are now firmly on the Brussels map. I think that we punch above our weight, and I consider that to be a huge success.

Mr Dunne: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. How do we encourage local businesses to link with the bureau in order to get maximum funding from Europe to support such businesses? I recognise that it is an excellent facility, having visited it last year with the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee. It is well worthwhile.

Mr M McGuinness: Since the visit that the First Minister and I were involved in where we met Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, we have been able to apprise businesses here in the North and, indeed, our own Departments about the importance of ensuring that they are consistently engaging with the European scene. I suppose that, in the past, Europe frightened a lot of people off because of the complexity of the institutions there, but I think that we are breaking that down. Increasingly, we see our businesses collectively going to Brussels, and we see Commissioners coming here. For example, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn came here and addressed the business community in a way that, I think, simplified the procedure and demystified the approach to Brussels. We have to keep that going, and we in government have a key role to play, as have our Departments. They are all now very

much engaged in ensuring that we draw down the best that we can for our area.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. Will the deputy First Minister give us an update on the development on the Peace V programme?

Mr M McGuinness: The multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020 allocated €150 million to the Peace IV programme. The British Government's economic pact has allocated a further €50 million to the programme from the overall European territorial cooperation budget. Officials are working with the Special EU Programmes Body on the preparation of a draft operational programme based on research and initial public consultation. Policy areas currently under consideration include young people, shared space and services and civic leadership. It is important that that aligns with the new good relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community. The additional €50 million is linked to an Executive commitment to utilise it, where appropriate, in support of the strategy's United Youth programme. Prior to finalisation, the draft operational programme will be subject to full public consultation. Final approval by the Executive, the Irish Government and the European Commission will, of course, be required.

Mr McKinney: The deputy First Minister may be aware that an official recently advised the OFMDFM Committee on the Executive's ambition for funding drawn down through Horizon 2020. Given that Dublin's drawdown from the previous R&D fund — FP7 — was significantly and commensurately more than Northern Ireland's, does he agree that our ambition is weak, low and needs to be challenged?

Mr M McGuinness: Our Barroso task force desk officers and the Invest NI European Union research and development executive based in the office of the Executive in Brussels are part of the recently established Horizon 2020 contact point network. The first meeting of the contact point network was held in Brussels in June 2013 and was attended by representatives from the European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. The contact point network provides practical support to potential Horizon 2020 applicants from the North. That includes assisting with the facilitation of visits to Brussels, supporting project applications, establishing links with other international partners and, more generally, helping to create a closer relationship with key Directorate-General for Research and Innovation staff in Brussels.

I believe that the Executive office could improve how it operates for the benefit of all of us. The Member raised the issue of Irish Government's drawdown, as opposed to ours. Obviously, that represents a huge challenge for us, which I think all our Departments are up for. There have been a number of discussions in the Executive about how people should become more proactively involved with Europe, recognising the opportunities that can be presented, not least by Horizon 2020.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I advise Members that question 10 has been withdrawn and requires a written answer.

Economic Pact

2. **Mr Cree** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on progress on the economic pact. (AQO 4881/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The Executive and the Government continue to make progress towards the commitments made in the economic pact. We have delivered a successful G8-branded investment conference, with Tourism Ireland developing a considerable PR campaign to build on the G8 legacy.

Securing the right policy levers, particularly the devolution of corporation tax powers, remains a priority for the Executive. We continue to advance the case for the devolution of corporation tax powers within the time frame set out in the pact. We have confirmed that we will continue to benefit from 100% assisted area status until at least 2017. We are undertaking analysis to help inform any decision on the establishment of enterprise zones, and officials have had discussions about establishing enterprise zones, including engagement with England, Scotland and Wales.

The joint ministerial task force is examining whether tailored support is required for local banks and how support for local businesses can be maximised to improve access to finance. An access to finance implementation panel has been established, as recommended in the economic advisory group's review of access to finance for business here. The first meeting was held on 3 October 2013, and work is under way to address barriers to access for tourists such as visa recognition and processing, building on the success of the visa waiver system.

The Executive have agreed the asset management strategy, which includes recommendations to improve processes and deliver significant projects that will unlock value through more efficient and effective management of assets. We have also made good progress with the Better Regulation Executive to progress a review of business red tape in the local economy.

Mr Cree: I thank the deputy First Minister for his full reply. Minister, you referred to the fact that the economic pact outlined a new way forward on enterprise zones. The zones would allow Northern Ireland businesses in designated areas to benefit from enhanced capital allowances. Will the Minister outline the nature of such a scheme and explain what work is being taken forward at this time?

Mr M McGuinness: The Government's economic pact set out proposals on the potential establishment of enterprise zones here. The majority of initiatives available in enterprise zones in Great Britain are, with the exception of enhanced capital allowances, already devolved policy areas, and the Executive have taken steps to support businesses using those levers. Enhanced capital allowances are a potential new lever but would be of benefit to larger capital-intensive projects only. We are exploring that aspect as well as others to see how we can move the project forward.

Mr Lyttle: Does the deputy First Minister have any concerns that delays in finding suitable sites for shared housing and shared education could jeopardise the £100 million additional borrowing powers that the economic pact allocated for that purpose?

Mr M McGuinness: No, I am quite satisfied that the work of the respective Ministers on that issue in the context of Building a United Community is moving forward satisfactorily, with a full ability to ensure that the funding that will be made available can be spent. People

will know that huge progress has been made, even in recent weeks, with the Lisanelly project, and I know that the Minister of Education and the Minister for Social Development understand the importance of ensuring that their Departments are in a position to provide the necessary projects that can ensure the success of the Together: Building a United Community process. A lot of work is being done, and people are exercised to ensure that we take best advantage of shared housing and shared education. In the next number of weeks and months, all will become much clearer, and, when that happens, Members will be very satisfied that both Ministers who have a responsibility for shared housing and education have come up with the projects that we think we need.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an LeasChéad-Aire chomh maith. The deputy First Minister referred to corporation tax. What is the agreed projected figure of the cost of corporation tax to the local economy?

Mr M McGuinness: It is important to say that we remain fully committed to taking responsibility for corporation tax as the single measure with the greatest potential to stimulate growth in the local economy. We wrote to the Secretary of State on 24 September to emphasise the need to work towards taking a decision immediately after the Scottish referendum. We believe that the legislative process could not be completed in this parliamentary session if a decision is left until the 2014 autumn statement, and that has implications for the work programme. It is critical that relevant Executive Ministers and our officials are fully involved in the ongoing work by Treasury and HMRC on design issues, given that we will have responsibility for the tax. Our letter highlighted the importance of our officials being briefed on progress and agreeing a process and timetable to reach agreement on the outstanding issues. Many figures have been thrown around over the past couple of years on costs, and all of us clearly understand that, in the final analysis, when we get the Scottish referendum out of the way and hopefully get a positive decision from David Cameron, we are into a renegotiation on the cost. At this stage, in my answer to the Member, it would be a mistake on my part to outline a figure that could conceivably change as time moves on.

2.30 pm

Urban Village Regeneration

3. **Mr Spratt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the urban village regeneration projects. (AQO 4882/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I will ask junior Minister Jennifer McCann to answer the question.

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): As set out in the Together: Building a United Community strategy, four urban village regeneration projects will be created in targeted areas of deprivation. Our aim is that each urban village will be designated as a development zone and a local board created. The board will be tasked with coordinating and overseeing the planning and design of the urban village. It will be given powers to enable large-

scale urban village development in a coordinated manner, with a strong focus on the needs of the local community.

A design group has been set up to progress the high-level development of the urban village programme. It will produce indicative costs for the proposal. We are currently considering where best to situate the urban villages to achieve maximum benefit from the proposal, and we intend to make a further announcement on the detail of those in due course.

In making the final decision on which areas should be chosen as urban villages, we will take into account a range of factors including community relations issues, antisocial behaviour, deprivation, limited commercial heart and services within that community and the community appetite and the infrastructure for improvement in that area.

Mr Spratt: I fully urge the Department to consider the Sandy Row and Donegall Pass areas for potential inclusion. Will the Minister confirm that the schemes will be taken forward through a cross-departmental and cross-agency approach?

Ms J McCann: As I said, the potential sites for urban villages have been examined. There is no definitive answer that I can give you today on where those urban villages will be, but we are very keen to make sure that there is regeneration, particularly in areas of deprivation. We will obviously consult local communities around that. You will also be aware that a lot of community plans are already in place for different areas. So, that is what we will look at, but we will certainly look to engage with all stakeholders in this exercise.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the junior Minister. As she said, the projects are to tackle deprivation and dereliction, as is the social investment fund. The junior Minister says that we will have a board to advise on urban villages: how will that board interact with the zonal advisory panel that was set up to distribute the £80 million of social investment fund money? Will there not be an inevitable tension between the two? How will she manage it?

Ms J McCann: The Member will be aware that the best way to deliver anything in local communities is in a strategic fashion, which means tying all the area plans together. You mentioned the social investment fund. There are seven design groups in the Together: Building a United Community strategy, and they have been doing a lot of work. They have already been networking with local communities and the boards that you talked about that have been set up for the social investment fund. So, it is about working together and not about having something up here and something around there. That is the way that we are going forward with this, and those conversations have already taken place.

Mr Dallat: I welcome the junior Minister's response, and I find urban regeneration programmes fascinating. However, will the Minister tell us what will happen after the new trees, paving stones and all that have been put in to ensure that there is a neutral environment where real regeneration can take place and people feel confident to shop in towns and villages where they feel inhibited now because of flags and kerbstones, irrespective of the colour of the flag or the kerbstones?

Ms J McCann: The whole background when we brought forward Together: Building a United Community was about

creating that shared space, particularly where the urban villages are concerned. This will come from the community up, as opposed to from top to bottom, if you like. That is part of the consultation, and we will be tied in with all those other groups and organisations that have already done a lot of work in some areas on these issues, particularly local councils in going forward with community planning.

None of those strategies can sit outside each other or in isolation; they all have to be tied in. So, we will look at the advice of the people who we see as the experts in that field. They are the people who live and work in those communities and who have the plans already there. We will consult with them, and it will be about creating a shared and neutral environment so that everyone can feel safe and be comfortable when they are in it.

Play and Leisure Strategy

4. Mr Hazzard asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on their play and leisure strategy. (AQO 4883/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, with your permission, junior Minister McCann will answer the question.

Ms J McCann: The Executive's play and leisure policy statement, which was published in 2009, has been delivered through the play and leisure implementation plan, which runs until 2016. Delivery against the plan is progressing well to further support the implementation plan and build on its achievements. On 8 October, we announced our agreement to invest up to £1.6 million over three years to enhance opportunities for play and leisure here. That will be provided as a signature programme through the Delivering Social Change framework.

As local communities are best placed to identify their own needs, working closely with and supporting them will be a critical part of this programme's success. The play and leisure signature programme is intended to deliver three key outcomes: promoting play to ensure that everyone is aware of its value and benefit; greater local access to space for play; and making planning and support for play central to all our councils' thinking and work. Our Department is working with other Departments to finalise arrangements for the delivery of the signature programme, and we expect to announce details shortly. That demonstrates how we remain committed to supporting the Executive's commitment in the policy statement to deliver on children and young people's play and leisure needs and their right to engage in those activities.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I thank the Minister for her detailed response. The news of the investment is certainly welcome. I am not sure whether this will be possible, but will the Minister outline a timeline for the delivery of this project?

Ms J McCann: Obviously, as I said, communities will be critical in the delivery of the programme. That is why we are very keen to ensure that the community and voluntary sector will be able to avail itself of the funding of those initiatives right away. I really think that working in partnership with other Departments, such as the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), the Department of the Environment (DOE) and the Department

of Health, is necessary. However, we also need to work with councils, because quite a lot of work has already been done, particularly in those councils that have already set up the play partnerships. Once that is achieved, we would like to see the money hitting the ground as soon as possible.

Mrs McKevitt: I thank the Minister for her response. Has any research been carried out to assess whether the implementation of parking charges across the region has made it more difficult for parents and children to access local play parks, for example?

Ms J McCann: We have looked at funding, particularly in the councils, in the context of mapping out what is available. Certainly, that would be a part of the process of mapping out parking availability. You are 100% right. We are very keen that there is access to play, because it is a key area in a child's development, and it carries on right into their adulthood, if you like. I think that it is very important that we map out the existence of amenities that are already there and that we look at providing access to them. So, the funding, and particularly the funding that we are directing towards the councils, will come in on planning and everything around it.

Teachers: Signature Project

5. Mr Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the signature project to appoint 230 additional graduate teachers. (AQO 4884/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will ask junior Minister McCann to answer that question. She is getting a hard time today.

Ms J McCann: Work on the implementation of the six Delivering Social Change signature programmes, which the First Minister and the deputy First Minister announced on 10 October 2012, is progressing well.

The Department of Education is leading on the signature programme to improve literacy and numeracy levels in primary and post-primary schools. The programme will see approximately an additional 233 recently graduated teachers not currently in work being recruited to deliver tuition to children in a total of 267 primary and post-primary schools to assist them in achieving higher grades. It is proposed that 82 of the posts will be filled in primary schools, with the remaining 151 posts being based in post-primary schools. Recruitment began in June this year. As of 25 October, 188 of the posts have been filled. Of those, 67 are in primary schools and 121 in post-primary schools. The posts will run for two academic years, ending in August 2015.

Mr Storey: I thank the Minister for her reply. Concerns have been raised about the 70 posts that have not been filled and over the fact that we have now progressed into the second term of schools being back for business. As such, will she give an undertaking that the schools that have missed out on the having the programme available to them for the full time, given that it is due to end in August 2015, will be given an extension so that its benefits can be ensured and there can be tangible outcomes for the pupils for whom it was originally intended?

Ms J McCann: I assure the Member that we are keen to get the programmes and teachers into the schools as quickly as possible. Given the figures that I have just

quoted, I can say that the Education Minister has done very well.

A number of other signature projects that are the responsibility of the Health Department and others have not done just as well as the educational one, so we are very keen to make sure that the family support hubs and the social economy hubs that other Ministers have responsibility for are brought forward. We will monitor those and try our best to get them achieved.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for her answers. Will she tell us whether any additional measures are being proposed to improve literacy and numeracy?

Ms J McCann: We hope that signature programmes from Delivering Social Change are not seen in isolation, as we hope that other Departments will take forward programmes as well. I am pleased to say that, in June this year, the Education Minister agreed to fund an expansion of the Delivering Social Change project to support literacy and numeracy with a further injection of over £2 million from his Department. That will support another 21 newly qualified teachers in 33 schools. That is a welcome investment, as it represents supporting literacy and numeracy. However, it also demonstrates — this is very important — that we do not want to be seeing the Delivering Social Change signature projects in isolation. We want Ministers and other Departments to come forward with their proposals. Those will tie in with the overall objective of Delivering Social Change, which is to change the quality of life of people in our communities.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for her answers. Will targets and timelines be put in place? Will it be a zero game to make sure that everybody is literate and numerate at the end of the period?

Ms J McCann: It is very important that we do. A lot of research has been done into the gap between children who achieve at school and children who do not. It is proven time and again that, if you are from a poorer family, you have half the chance of children from more affluent families. I think that the figure is 34%, compared with 68%. International experience has shown us that resources need to be directed at children who are disadvantaged and from poorer backgrounds. Not only does that enhance the achievement levels of the children from poorer families but it raises the bar for all children. So we are very keen to see that happening. That is why we are targeting the need to where it needs to go. I know that the Education Minister has done this; he has looked at it in terms of targeting those resources where they need to go.

2.45 pm

Regional Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: Again, we start with topical questions, and I call Dominic Bradley.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. That is twice in the one day that I have been called first. I think that I will do the lottery.

Car Parking: Newry

1. **Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the parking situation in the city of Newry. (AQT 291/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I am grateful to the Member for his topical question. I assure him that I am very much aware of the issues in relation to car parking across Northern Ireland and, of course, in Newry city. I know that he recently held a meeting in the Arts Centre with traders and local representatives. As a result of that, a request has been made to meet me to discuss the issue.

The Member will know that the parking arrangements in Newry have been greatly enhanced recently by the new car park facility at North Street and, indeed, the car park in the vicinity of the Catherine Street area. The Member also knows of the Department for Social Development (DSD) scheme, which is currently under way and which will, in fact, reduce the number of available car parking spaces. That scheme is the responsibility of DSD, in conjunction with the local council. *[Interruption.]* I can compete with many things, but I am afraid that I cannot compete with a mobile phone. Would somebody ask to put salt and vinegar on their chips, please?

Back to the issue of car parking in Newry: I am happy to meet the Member and local representatives. My door, as always, is open.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind all Members to turn their mobile phones off.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister respond positively to a suggestion put forward by local traders that an hour's free parking should be available to shoppers in Newry?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for the point that he raises. I have made the suggestion, and my door remains open to the prospect, that local councils can help to offset car parking charges for particular periods of time, say the run-up to Christmas. Indeed, Newtownabbey Borough Council has successfully negotiated with my officials an arrangement for Ballyclare. Therefore, that facility is available for local councils to assist the local economy in the run-up to specified periods such as Christmas. If that is a solution that is helpful in the Newry context, I am happy to explore it.

Giro d'Italia

2. **Mrs Overend** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department will be in a position to take the lead on the Giro d'Italia legacy, given the Minister's commitment to cycling, the announcement of a new cycling unit and the recent excitement, in which I shared, about the Giro d'Italia coming to Northern Ireland. (AQT 292/11-15)

A Member: Will we see you in Lycra?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her enthusiastic response to the Giro d'Italia, which I am particularly enthusiastic about. In advance of the final decision being made by the racing authorities to bring it to Northern Ireland, I had an opportunity, along with Minister Foster, to impress the need for such a prestige event to take place in Northern Ireland. Of course, with the

advent of my new cycling unit, I strongly believe that we have the potential to lead on that initiative. Members were discussing among themselves whether I was ready for racing in pink Lycra. I can tell you that I am, and that I have my jersey ready.

On a serious point, I think that the Giro d'Italia will afford cycling the opportunity for worldwide promotion as well as showing off some of our great tourist sites and infrastructure, not least in and around Belfast, along the Antrim coast and in my constituency of Newry and Armagh. I very much hope that Members and the Executive will take the opportunity. If it means that active promotion is better done by my Department as a result of the new cycling unit that I have formed, that is the way forward.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for that response. If the Regional Development Minister were given the leading role in building that Giro d'Italia legacy, what would his priorities be?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary. I think that we are embarking on a cycling revolution, and I hope that everyone will embrace it with the same enthusiasm as I have and see it as an opportunity. I was recently involved in discussions with Transport for London on the delivery of its cycle hire scheme — the Boris bikes, as they are called — and the legacy approach that it took to hosting after the success of the Tour de France.

Perhaps it is the case that many people do not realise the potential impact of the Giro d'Italia, not only on cycling but on tourism and in creating a feel-good factor. I think that it is on the scale of the World Police and Fire Games and the Irish Open, and it has the potential to be even bigger than either. I therefore want a cycling legacy to be carried forward after the Giro d'Italia.

Roads: North-west

3. **Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Regional Development what importance he attaches to upgrading the strategic roads infrastructure on the north coast and in the north-west in general. (AQT 293/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. Of course, the Member will know of the very good recent announcement that the A26 stretch of road to Glarryford has been given approval by the Finance Minister. I am very pleased that that is the case. I made very strong representations around the Executive table and, indeed, to the Finance Minister himself. I know that success has many fathers, and the number of people who have claimed credit for the A26 is astonishing.

I am reminded of the legendary story about Conrad Hilton and Zsa Zsa Gabor, who were married for a while, but the marriage failed. Zsa Zsa was asked on the steps of the court why the marriage had failed, and she simply said that she and her husband had only one thing in common: his money. I perhaps have more things in common with the Finance Minister, but I am glad that he accepted my arguments on the A26. It will enhance and improve the strategic road network there, not least for tourism facilities. I think that everyone broadly welcomes the fact that the A26 will be a reality.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Minister for his response and the positive outcome of the A26 announcement. Does he agree with me that the more that we can do as an Assembly and Executive, and he as roads Minister, to improve the continuity of the A26 as far as the Causeway Hospital, as well as the impending A6 scheme between Dungiven and Drumahoe, the more we will be able to set at ease those who have concerns that money is not being spent on the north coast and in the north-west?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for the point that he raises. Clearly, as transport Minister, I am a very strong believer in improving the strategic road network and improving and enhancing the connectivity all over Northern Ireland. That is why I am pleased that, as part of the October monitoring exercise, some money has been set aside to bring forward the A6 scheme. I know that other Members are enthusiastic about that scheme, as, indeed, am I. Generally, the economics make pure sense. It simply means that, if you improve connectivity with all parts of Northern Ireland, you create greater job prospects and the ability to move people and goods in the easiest possible manner. That is in addition to the jobs that improved connectivity undoubtedly creates in the road construction industry.

Unadopted Roads

4. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for Regional Development, following the Committee's report on unadopted roads, which contained the recommendation that the Department should work with NILGA on a prioritisation audit, for a progress report and to state whether he has met with representatives from NILGA. (AQT 294/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for raising that issue. He will know that there is a substantial issue around legacy projects in unfinished developments with roads that need to be adopted. I have had discussions with various interested bodies. I know that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) is interested in the issue. Indeed, I have discussed it with NILGA and hope to carry forward those discussions.

I have to say that there is a price tag, a very high price tag, on possible upgrading. Were the Department asked to do it, we simply could not afford to do it. I doubt whether the Executive could afford to do it either. It is working in partnership with those who are directly involved in the issues that can, hopefully, lead to an improvement. I understand the frustration and problems that many householders face when living in estates with unfinished road and water infrastructure. It is important that we try to make progress on this. However, it is not one for an easy solution.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. He has clearly outlined that it is a difficult situation. Many people are complaining about developments not being finished. When does he propose to meet NILGA? When does he propose to bring forward a solution, working with partners as he has indicated, to try to resolve those problems?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I assure him that I am, and will be, directly engaged in working with everyone who has a contribution to make to try to bring about a solution to

this issue. I know that it is raised with Members on all sides of the House in their correspondence and in dealing with constituency matters, as, indeed, it is raised with me regularly through my work in the Newry and Armagh constituency.

Tourism: Strangford/Portaferry

5. **Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister for Regional Development to update the House on what he is doing to resolve the access and security issues that have arisen alongside the recent tourism benefits being experienced in Strangford and Portaferry due to the arrival of cruise ships. (AQT 295/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his interest in the matter and the helpful attitude that he has adopted to it. He will know that, at my request, officials from the Whitehall Department for Transport met my officials at Strangford to examine my proposal to use the existing pontoon fenced-off area as a temporary restricted area. It was agreed that, with prescribed management procedures, the existing fenced-off area would suffice as a restricted area. On that point, I am hopeful that we will be able to secure agreement with the owners of the pontoon. If agreement cannot be obtained, I have established a fallback position of a temporary fence mechanism that would facilitate individual cruise ship visits.

It is important, as the Member underlined, for me to ensure that that important area continues to benefit from cruise ship passenger traffic without that providing any adverse visual impact to one of Northern Ireland's most scenic areas.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Minister for his answer, which is a positive contrast to some of the media reporting. Does he agree that it was regrettable that the public debate got ahead of the facts?

Mr Kennedy: I very much agree that it was very unfortunate that a particular spin on the story was put out before we could find the accurate explanation. However, I am satisfied to say that that gave me the opportunity to bring forward, I think, a very good and positive solution. I am pleased that we secured agreement on a mechanism of compliance without visual impact. Like him, I am committed to Strangford. I am committed to cruise ship access to the area and, as he will also know, I am committed to the local ferry services, which, as the Member is aware and I am pleased to say, we are en route to replacing.

3.00 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of topical questions. We now move to questions for oral answer. Question 1 has been transferred to the Department of Finance and Personnel for a written response, and question 3 has been withdrawn.

NI Water: Chief Executive

2. **Ms Brown** asked the Minister for Regional Development why, after a thorough HR process, the Department did not appoint a chief executive of NI Water. (AQO 4896/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The board of Northern Ireland Water (NIW) is responsible for the employment of a suitable chief executive and appointed Penna plc as an executive search company to support it in the recruitment process.

Following an extensive assessment exercise, four of six shortlisted candidates were interviewed for the post, and two candidates withdrew prior to interview. The interview panel considered that no candidate met the full competencies required for the post, and no appointment was made.

My Department and NI Water are liaising on the way forward for the appointment of a new chief executive. The NIW board has appointed an interim chief executive pending completion of the recruitment process.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Minister clarify if any questions have been grouped?

Mr Kennedy: Yes.

Ms Brown: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he outline how much the failed process has cost the public purse? When will the new chief executive be in post?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary question. I can confirm that costs to date are in the region of £70,000. Obviously, strenuous efforts will be made by the board of Northern Ireland Water, in conjunction and consultation with the Department, regarding how quickly we can move forward to resolve the situation.

Mr Hussey: Does the Minister agree that it is better to wait for a candidate of the right standard than appoint a top applicant who falls short of the required standard?

Mr Kennedy: I agree absolutely. It is always important to secure the best candidate for any position, particularly that of the chief executive of Northern Ireland Water. The principle of merit should always be the abiding principle.

Mr Dallat: Does the Minister agree that, given the performance of some previous chief executives of Northern Ireland Water, there must have been someone in that pile who was up to it? Does he agree with other Members that £70,000 is money that Northern Ireland Water can ill afford to squander on a process that delivered nothing?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. In my tenure as Minister for Regional Development, I was nothing but impressed by the performance of Trevor Haslett, who retired recently as chief executive officer. It may well be that the Member is referring to a different time period, but I was certainly very satisfied by the leadership, confidence and dedication of Trevor Haslett as he brought NI Water forward after a very difficult period.

It is important that we get the right person. I can tell the Member that a total of 84 candidates expressed interest in the position, but after careful consideration, the panel concluded that it was not satisfied to make an appointment. I of course regret the potential cost, but, ultimately, everyone is agreed that, when the appointment is made, it has to be the right appointment.

Comber Greenway

4. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department would consider extending the Comber greenway to link with Comber town centre. (AQO 4898/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department co-funded and facilitated the construction of a new cycle bridge across Ballyrainey

Road in partnership with Sustrans and Down Rural Area Partnership. The works were completed in March 2012. Regrettably, by virtue of the provision of the new bridge, associated earth works and embankments meant that it was not possible to retain the existing accesses.

Over recent months, officials have investigated the possibility of providing an alternative access point onto the greenway cycle route in the vicinity of Ballyrainey Road junction. A number of options are being explored. However, alternative walkway access options that have been considered to date are proving financially prohibitive; they are estimated to cost £160,000. Land implications are also proving difficult because there is a need to purchase additional lands that are not under public ownership. Unfortunately, my Department has no funding source available to pursue the matter further at this time.

Miss M McIlveen: I appreciate the Minister's response. He has answered what was going to be my supplementary question. Is he considering extending the Comber greenway to link it with Comber town centre?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary question. Obviously, there is a strong desire to establish that link at some point. It is not proving easy, financially or pragmatically, to do that at present. However, we will continue to work with the local group and the various interests to see whether we can identify a means of moving forward.

Mr McCarthy: I must express some disappointment at the Minister's response in relation to access at Ballyrainey Road. There was access at Ballyrainey Road prior to the bridge being built, and that was convenient to a car park —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Can we have a question, please?

Mr McCarthy: Will he continue with his efforts to ensure access at that very important junction?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. It seems that he is criticising me for carrying out the work to get the bridge in place. Now that the work is done, there are pragmatic problems. Some of those problems are outside the direct control of the Department. However, we will continue to explore avenues by which we can, hopefully, resolve the issues. I am simply highlighting the fact that it is not within my immediate gift to create those accesses because there are land ownership issues and financial restrictions.

Mrs Overend: We have talked already today about the Regional Development Minister's commitment to cycling. Can the Minister detail the rationale behind his £2 million bid for cycling funding in the recent October monitoring round?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for her supplementary question and her interest in all these matters. My Department applied for £2 million in the October monitoring round to supplement funding to provide infrastructure in and around schools that are participating in the active school travel programme. Unfortunately, the bid was not successful. However, a very limited funding package was made available by way of the local transport safety measures, which may support infrastructure close to schools that are participating in the active school travel programme.

A1: Hillsborough

5. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the volume of traffic using the A1 flyover into Hillsborough, County Down. (AQO 4899/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following completion of the flyover-type junction at Dromore Road in Hillsborough, traffic surveys were carried out to establish the level of usage. Those surveys, which were undertaken between 17 and 23 October 2012, indicated that the two-way traffic on the new flyover is 5,681 vehicles a day.

Officials are aware that, during the morning peak period, some northbound traffic chooses to leave the A1 at the junction, travel through the centre of Hillsborough village and rejoin the A1 to the north of the village at the roundabout. That is considered to be partly as a result of traffic delays experienced at the Hillsborough roundabout.

As the Member is aware, I have met her and concerned representatives, and I understand the nature of the situation. However, it is difficult to find a practical solution to the difficulties. Officials from my Department's Roads Service have looked at a number of options to improve the traffic capacity of the Hillsborough roundabout to reduce delays and discourage strategic or through traffic from diverting off the A1 and travelling through the village.

Officials believe that the situation could be significantly improved in the short term by the installation of traffic signals at the roundabout to minimise delays during the morning peak. A scheme to provide part-time traffic signal control has been designed. It has not, however, been progressed, as initial informal consultation indicated that there was limited support for the scheme among the various parties. Officials remain of the view that a scheme to provide part-time signals on the Hillsborough roundabout would be of benefit and help towards reducing traffic going through the village during the morning peak.

Officials planned to convene a meeting with local representatives to determine whether a way forward could be found. However, that has not progressed as quickly as I hoped, and I have asked officials to contact you directly within the next two weeks to arrange a suitable date and time to meet.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for his detailed answer. Given that the flyover at the A1 has increased the traffic into Hillsborough by 124%, would you agree that an impact assessment to include noise pollution should be carried out in Hillsborough village, as it is a major thoroughfare for events at Hillsborough Castle and the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society at the Maze? Furthermore, will the Minister clarify what long-term traffic management plan he has in place other than traffic lights for Hillsborough village?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary question. Longer-term plans to try to ease or resolve the situation would include the grade separation of the junction as part of the M1/A1 Sprucefield bypass proposals. It is intended that those proposals will also consider congestion at the roundabout junction on the A1 at Hillsborough.

Roads Service has commissioned consultants to consider a range of options and to evaluate all the viable options for capacity enhancement along the route. We will

continue to do that and to consult with local groups and representatives as we move forward.

TEN-T Regulations

6. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister for Regional Development why, prior to a negotiated amendment, Northern Ireland would have been forced to spend £1.46 billion on the rail network and £13 billion on the roads network under the European TEN-T regulations. (AQO 4900/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) regulation articulates the European Commission's vision for the creation of a seamless Europe-wide transport infrastructure that must be in place by 2050. That vision brings many requirements, and those applying to the core network must be in place by 2030. In delivering this vision, the European Commission estimated that the cost of implementing the first financing phase for the core network for the 2014-2020 period to be in the region of £212 billion.

As first presented, the TEN-T regulation imposed many requirements in the shape of new technical standards, infrastructure enhancements and unrealistic deadlines on the United Kingdom as a member state, and thus on Northern Ireland as a region. I have taken a robust approach with the European institutions to ensure that the regional circumstances of Northern Ireland have been understood and taken into account. I have worked closely with Westminster to present a strong and united member state position. I have secured the support of our Members of the European Parliament and met key contacts in Europe, including Siim Kallas, the vice-president of the European Commission, and Brian Simpson, the chair of the European Parliament's transport committee.

The reality of our actions is that, without successfully securing exemptions, including the isolated network status for our rail, we would have been forced to refocus investment in our transport network away from planned and appropriate improvement to reach the required standards, despite there being no economically viable case for us to do so. My interventions have made sure that the tremendous progress that we have made in growing public transport passenger numbers is not placed in jeopardy.

Mr B McCrea: If I understand the Minister correctly, he is arguing that he has successfully reduced the amount of investment required and that that is a good thing. Does he believe that Northern Ireland has adequate levels of investment in its transport network to remain competitive? Would he care to comment on the recent Confederation of British Industry (CBI) report that highlighted concerns among the business community at the lack of a pipeline of infrastructure projects?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question, although he appears to have misunderstood the thrust of even his own question and certainly the extent of my answer. [Laughter.] The point that I made is that, as a result of the work that I brought forward in Europe and the representations that I made to senior European figures in the Commission, Parliament and other places, it was no longer necessary for Northern Ireland to spend vast sums on improvements that we feel were unnecessary.

It was better to spend it on upgrading and on providing new and better services. That is why I take satisfaction from the work that we have carried out: that we are not having to spend more money on improving things and can move on, and build on, the progress we have made.

3.15 pm

I was interested in the CBI report, and I agree very much that spending money on key infrastructure projects is key to regenerating the economy here. As transport Minister, I see that as my role at the Executive table, and I want to carry forward those projects for the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. Has the Minister had any success in having the Trans-European Transport Network extended beyond the eastern seaboard and into the west?

Mr Kennedy: As a member of the Regional Development Committee, which we have had good assistance from when it comes to making representations, the Member will know that rather than dealing with the core network, the comprehensive network, which involves upgrading schemes to the benefit of all parts of Northern Ireland, is going to be the key feature moving forward. The issue is to attract European assistance and investment for that. I am not precious about where the schemes take place, as long as they do take place and upgrade the overall network infrastructure of Northern Ireland. My record as Minister proves that.

Mr Byrne: I welcome what the Minister has said and thank him for his lobbying in Europe for TEN-T funding. What are the chances that Northern Ireland will obtain TEN-T funding for roads rather than rail?

Mr Kennedy: Again, we have helped to inform Europe of the nature of our road and rail networks. For example, no freight moves on our railways, and our rail gauges are different sizes, so we can never have high-speed railway connections between Belfast and Dublin because the cost would be prohibitive.

We need assistance to improve infrastructure, such as the link between Belfast and Dublin. That particular service could do with an investment of moneys, as could the various road schemes that will improve connectivity throughout Northern Ireland.

Wind Turbines

7. **Mr Wilson** asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he has had with NI Water regarding the location of wind turbines on sites under its control. (AQO 4901/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have had no discussions with NI Water regarding the location of wind turbines on sites under its control. The Department has been engaging with NI Water and other stakeholders on future investment priorities for the water sector. That includes exploring the options for renewable energy to help manage costs and meet the Executive's Programme for Government and strategic energy framework commitments. I plan to consult shortly on draft social and environmental guidance, setting out all our priorities.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Minister for his answer. The Regional Development Committee has been told by NI Water that it intends to look at erecting 350-foot-high turbines in the Silent Valley area. Will the Minister give an assurance that he will actively discourage a development of that nature, which would destroy the landscape in the area, hurt the tourist industry and, of course, damage his own constituents?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question and for the opportunity to set the record straight on this matter, because I believe that there has been some unhelpful and misguided comment on it. I confirm that Northern Ireland Water has no such current proposals. I confirm also that I have no proposals or plans for wind farms in the Mourne. NI Water has advised that it does not foresee the development of wind farms in the Mourne. Of course, the Member will know that any such proposals would need to go through a business case and regulatory and planning approval processes. I am very happy to place on record that I have no intention of putting forward such proposals for an area of outstanding natural beauty in the Mourne, and I do not believe that NI Water has either.

Mr Eastwood: The Minister told us about the Mourne, so will he expand a bit more on some other areas and tell us what efforts Northern Ireland Water is going to make to try to provide renewable energy in an attempt to provide lower bills for many overstretched customers?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. Of course, the Member will know that the Executive's strategic energy framework includes a target to generate 40% of our electricity from renewable sources by 2020. The Programme for Government includes a commitment to continue working towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% on 1990 levels by 2025. The Member will also know that renewable energy and emissions targets fall under the remit of the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and of his party colleague the Minister of the Environment.

Ballymoney Railway Station

8. **Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Regional Development what further action can be taken to assist passengers with a disability who are experiencing difficulties in using the new bridge at Ballymoney railway station. (AQO 4902/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In November last year, I officially opened the new walking and cycling railway bridge in Ballymoney. I am aware of a recent case that was brought to the Member's attention, and I am naturally sympathetic to people who are in that situation. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the new footbridge was taken forward in partnership with Ballymoney Borough Council and Sustrans and was designed in compliance with Disability Discrimination Act regulations.

Safety of the public is paramount. That is why the bridge replaced the unmanned level crossing. It provides safe access to and from the town and gives greater opportunity for people of the community to walk and cycle to work or school as part of their daily routine. Prior to this, passengers had to cross the tracks to access both platforms via a temporary footbridge or a barrow path at track level.

I am happy to meet with any member of the public who is experiencing difficulties using the new bridge to discuss how we can assist them in making their journey more easily.

Mr Storey: I thank the Minister for his reply. I place on record the appreciation of the constituents who have contacted me about the way in which Translink has at least accommodated initial meetings, although it is unfortunate that the outcome is still the same. The issue remains that there are people with disabilities who cannot access in a practical way the new bridge, which is, I believe, something of worth and value to the station. We have a situation whereby Translink, thankfully, removed a possible prosecution of a disabled person for crossing the line —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member come to a question?

Mr Storey: — because they could not access the new bridge. I appreciate that the Minister has agreed to meet, but will he give an assurance that an alternative can be put in place to facilitate that small number of my constituents who are set at a disadvantage because of the current arrangement?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I have genuine sympathy for the case that was brought forward. I am glad that Translink officials adopted a very sensible and sensitive approach in the handling of this case.

I suppose that it comes down to the fact that it is about reducing the dangers involved with having to cross the tracks, which was the historical way that people went across that route. It is also about improving the safety conditions that are involved. As I said, I am happy to meet the Member and any constituent about the matter.

The new bridge complies with disability legislation and is an impressive structure. The Member will accept that Ballymoney station is the better for it. We will continue to look at the issues raised, but it is difficult, because safety has to be the paramount concern.

Mr Swann: What is being done to assist people with visual impairments to use public transport in general?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I am happy to confirm that last year, in conjunction with Guide Dogs and Translink, my Department completed the evaluation of a pilot project involving the provision of audiovisual information systems on a Metro bus service and at a number of designated bus stops. I am pleased to report that the evaluation highlighted the benefits of audiovisual systems for all passengers but particularly for people with visual impairments and older people. Indeed, the vast majority of respondents stated that audiovisual announcements made journeys easier.

The Department and Translink continue to explore potential funding for the provision of audiovisual systems on the bus network, including any additional solutions that could be provided through advances in technology, particularly through the use of smartphones. It is disappointing that the bid that was submitted for 2014-15 to enable my Department to begin implementing audiovisual systems has not been met. However, my Department is also in discussions with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) about options for a travel aid for visually or hearing-impaired people or for people with

communication difficulties that will allow them to seek help from transport staff.

Mr Allister: Are there any plans to deal with overcrowding, which evidences itself at peak times on this route the closer that it gets to Belfast?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. It is some way removed from disabled facilities at Ballymoney station, but it is an important question nonetheless. Of course, the Member has been ingenious as usual.

One of the products of rail's success has been the increased numbers of passengers. I was waxing lyrical in the earlier debate about the increased numbers of people that are using trains, which are at record levels since 1967. That presents us with the question of whether we can transport all those people safely and comfortably. I am interested in bringing that issue forward with Translink to ensure that the maximum level of comfort for the passengers who want to use our trains in increasing numbers can be afforded to them. I will note the Member's concerns about that line.

A5: Public Consultations

9. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister for Regional Development on which dates public consultations will commence on an appropriate EU habitats directive assessment and an addendum to the environmental statement on the A5. (AQO 4903/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During my predecessor's time, a decision was taken not to carry out full appropriate assessments on the potential impacts on the various designated sites arising out of the A5 western transport corridor (WTC) project. We are now dealing with the consequences of that decision. Four reports are currently being developed to inform habitats regulations assessments of the potential impacts on the various designated sites arising out of the A5 WTC project. It is proposed that the consultation on those reports will commence in spring 2014.

Following the declaration of reduced budget requirements in 2013-14 and 2014-15, my Department has received funding to progress the A31 Magherafelt bypass and the A26 Frosses Road dual carriageway. To comply with the judgement, my Department needs to proceed carefully. Therefore, the issues and timing associated with updating the environmental statement are still being considered and developed, and it is not possible to finalise a programme at this time.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Can the Minister outline when he expects the project to commence?

3.30 pm

Mr Kennedy: As I said, bearing in mind the judgement that was handed down on those issues, it would be wrong for me to speculate on the timescales. I have simply outlined to you that we are developing the four reports into the habitat directive assessments. I am also aware of other impacts that need to be assessed. It is very important that we give due care and timely consideration to all those things and work our way systematically through a process that complies with the judgement.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends Question Time. I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments while we change the top Table.

*(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin]
in the Chair)*

Private Members' Business

International Mental Health Centre

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly recognises the high prevalence of poor mental health in Northern Ireland; notes that a previous world mental health survey stated that the Province has the world's highest recorded rate of post-traumatic stress disorder and that violence had been a distinctive cause of mental health problems here; acknowledges that trauma is one of the most hidden legacy issues of the Troubles; accepts the need to support and restore good mental health for people with difficulties; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to support the creation of a new international mental health centre for Northern Ireland that would be a world-class facility for all. — [Mr Nesbitt.]

Mr Dunne: I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. Mental health is an ever-increasing issue and, unfortunately, one in four people will experience some kind of mental health problem. Practically every family in Northern Ireland will be affected by mental health issues, with women more likely to be treated for a mental health problem than men. Self-harm and suicide statistics are also linked in many cases to mental health issues.

The facts that 10% of children have a mental health problem and that depression affects one in five older people highlight the startling fact that mental health issues know no boundaries of age, race, class or gender. It is vital that services are in place to provide care and support to patients, carers and families who are affected by mental illness, and that those services are consistent across all trust areas.

There is no doubt that the Troubles have had an impact on the mental and physical well-being of our population. The legacy of the Troubles lives on. The loss of family members through shootings, bombings and other attacks has left its mark on society. Given our troubled context and the trauma that has been experienced by so many, there will be no quick solution to the challenges that we face.

The main idea of the motion has some merit. Obviously, an initiative that has the potential to improve services for sufferers of mental health problems has to be considered. However, it is important to note that the idea of a trauma centre is not new. Several years ago, a similar centre was run in Omagh, funded by the Department of Health and the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). However, for various reasons, that centre closed its doors.

I know that the Minister has taken an active interest in developing mental health services across Northern Ireland. I also know that he will continue to pursue what is best for the people whom we represent. The Bamford review set out a theme of improving community-based services for mental health. It also set a clear vision for a shift towards community-based treatment. With that vision, it is essential that the right network exists to support

patients, with carers and families at the core. Sufferers and their families must have a full range of professionals within accessible reach to get help and support. Given that mental health is a wide-ranging issue with many contributory factors, a joined-up approach involving different agencies and Departments from all levels is essential. However, as with many issues, funding is unfortunately limited and challenges remain to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our mental health services.

I have become very aware of the widespread impact of mental health through the many evidence sessions that the Health Committee has had at our meet-the-consultant workshops, which we attend regularly. Recently, two mothers met us and detailed in a very personal way the struggles that they face in knowing where to get the right help and support to assist family members who have had various drink, drug and mental health problems. Their loved ones need and deserve proper diagnosis, support and treatment.

I commend the work of many local charities that do such an excellent job in difficult circumstances. They include local organisations such as CAUSE, which brings much-needed support and compassion to sufferers, and Action Mental Health, which does so much important work in providing care and help through its New Horizons programme. Northern Ireland has a high prevalence of poor mental health and high levels of post-traumatic stress. We must all continue to work to reduce the burden of mental health across our land.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the proposer of the motion and welcome the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

Although we recognise that there are many excellent examples of good practice in the field of mental health, there is much room for improvement. None of us would disagree with the points in the motion. We all accept that there is a high prevalence of poor mental health in the North, and no one can doubt that it is conflict related. However, as the proposer said, the motion is a declaration of intent. Therefore, we need to develop the concept, and we need to be very clear about central issues, such as who the centre will be for, what the outcomes will be, where it will be located and how it will be funded. As we move on in this important debate, we need to put more meat on the bones in developing all those proposals.

It is important to reflect that the statistics speak for themselves. As many as one in four will suffer from mental illness in the North. Recent research shows that treating people at home and in the community now accounts for 55% of the budget, a rise from 40%, with treating people in hospital now accounting for 40%, a reduction from 60%. In the past five years, admissions to hospital under the mental health programme of care (POC) has decreased by 0.7%. However, the number of admissions for day care treatments has increased markedly from 1,494 in 2008 to 3,324 in 2012-13. All of that may reflect the need for a centre of excellence or new facility.

It is worth pointing out the figures for the average overnight beds available across the mental health specialities: the highest figure of 90.7% was reported in the mental illness speciality; the lowest figure was reported in the child and adolescent psychiatric speciality.

The Minister's draft strategic implementation plan for Transforming Your Care in October 2012 referred to the resettlement of all people currently living in mental health hospitals to be completed by March 2015 and a regional reduction in the number of acute mental health inpatient beds over the next three to five years. Therefore, to address the issues of prevention, recognition, early intervention and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, a multiagency public health approach is, indeed, required. Current research tells us that there are around 150 long-stay patients, and we have allocated £2.8 million in the current spending review for the total cost of resettlement. However, I am sure that we all agree that the total cost will be significantly higher.

In the Twenty-six Counties, £30 billion is spent on mental health, and funding for mental health across the island is still comparatively low.

The Centre for Cross Border Studies and the Institute for Public Health in Ireland, who conducted a feasibility cross-border mental health study, indicated the concept of promoting an all-Ireland mental health strategy in 2007. The University of Ulster stated that post-traumatic stress disorder cost £172 million and that nearly 40% of the population had had conflict-related traumatic experiences.

As we move away from the medical model in dealing with mental health issues, we cannot or should not ignore the specifics of coming out of conflict. It is well documented that this issue needs to be recognised when resourcing and funding the sector is being debated. Equally, issues are now coming to light around the protection of children in care who have mental health difficulties, and I recognise that a statement will be made on that in the next few days. While supporting the principle of the motion, I suggest that we need to develop the debate around location, who the centre is for and its funding and outcomes.

Mr McKinney: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the very important issue of mental health. We have heard that one in four of us can expect to face some form of mental illness in our lifetime, and the motion also recognises the harsh reality that our past has left a heavy burden of mental stress. That is why we should, in fact, think of providing better support services as part and parcel of dealing with the past. To the best of my knowledge, it is a non-contentious part, and I hope that it will remain so. I believe that it can and should become an exemplary part where we meet the urgent needs of our most vulnerable without question or equivocation. It should also be exemplary in consulting those most directly involved.

The SDLP supports the concept of a mental health centre of international standing, but we want to design such a facility alongside those who will avail themselves of its services. A collaborative effort must be sought. This is not a case of "Build it, and they will come"; it is a case of designing it to its best capacity so that it will deliver in a more comprehensive way.

The issue of mental health is so far-reaching in our society that we cannot afford to wait until a new centre is built before we start to seriously tackle the causes and effects of mental illness. We do not have the luxury of time with this issue. That can be seen if we look at our suicide rates, particularly among the young.

Research tells us that the total cost of mental illness in Northern Ireland is estimated at £2.8 billion. That includes

cost of care, loss of output and human cost. That is the cost, but just think that 30% of our GP visits are related to mental health. We must recognise, too, that, given the prevalence of mental ill health, we will need a coordinated action plan to develop comprehensive mental health promotion strategies to reduce the future incidence of mental health problems.

Mental health promotion is key to helping to reduce the incidence of mental ill health. It is also relevant to a wide range of policy initiatives, not just around health but around social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal, community strategies and health at work. It is another example of an area where we can think about greater joined-up government. There is still significant work to be done around removing the taboo surrounding mental illness. We, as elected representatives, must show leadership by ensuring that mental illness is tackled sensitively and that the necessary processes and procedures are put in place to ensure that no discrimination on the grounds of mental health is encountered by sufferers.

The SDLP believes that the recommendations made in the Bamford report must be followed through if mental health services are to improve in Northern Ireland. We must also start to focus quickly and much more comprehensively on the issue of increasing cases of dementia. We must also remember the important role played by the carers of those experiencing mental ill health. Carers are central to the treatment and well-being of people with mental health needs. Any facility would have to incorporate advice and support for those with caring responsibilities for a person with mental ill health. We must ensure that carers have access to interventions that enhance their quality of life and emotional well-being.

Such a centre would be making a point though, and I vouch that it is an important point, much bigger than just dealing with the problem of mental ill health. Surely for it to work as a beacon in an international context, we would have to establish it against a backdrop of saying that never again will we allow our people to endure what so many had to. How can we properly say that we are treating vulnerable people with mental illness and urging them to return to their community to be cared for when that community itself is still torn by division and strife? How could such a centre enjoy any international reputation if, for example, it was operating against the backdrop of what we have had to endure over the past year, with division dominating the headlines?

We have a political priority here as much as a health one, where we put trust, tolerance and participation as targets for our ambition for individuals, communities and government and where we could claim not only that a mental health facility is world-class but that it exists in a society that is itself world-class. It is not that long ago that the Health Minister was reflecting on how, in respect of health spend, mental health services were the poor relation. It will take some determination to go from poor cousin to world-class, but it could and should be done if we are to properly address not just our mental health issues but the causes of them. We support the motion.

3.45 pm

Mr McCarthy: The Alliance Party welcomes the opportunity to have this debate this afternoon. Although we are somewhat sceptical of the motion and the manner in

which it has been formulated, we are content for the issue to be given further consideration.

At the outset, it is important to stress a number of points. First, we need to invest more in mental health services across the board. Mental health and learning disability have always been the Cinderella of the health service. Northern Ireland has a relatively high incidence of mental health conditions. As has been said, over one in four people will experience mental health difficulties at some time in their life. Around 60% of people in Northern Ireland have experienced trauma at some point in their life. As a consequence, Northern Ireland has one of the world's highest rates of the more specific post-traumatic stress disorders. Our conflict and the result of the hideous violence have played a central role in the significant proportion of those suffering from PTSD. Apart from the futility of the violence and its effect on innocent victims, there is an economic cost to the situation in unfulfilled lives and lost productivity to our economy. I note that the Executive will shortly publish a draft strategy on economic inactivity.

Despite this situation, Northern Ireland has historically spent a lower proportion of its overall health budget on mental health services than other parts of the UK. Although it is only right to acknowledge that the situation has begun to improve in recent years with the Bamford review and successive action plans, there is still a long, long way to go. There are questions to be addressed in considering the creation of a dedicated international mental health centre. The motion, it seems, comes in the context of the UUP's misguided and opportunistic campaign against a peace and reconciliation centre at the Maze. As I understand it, the UUP has put forward this proposal as an alternative to that development. Let me be clear: this should not be framed as a choice; there could and perhaps should be room for both.

Mr Nesbitt: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCarthy: I will wait to the end to see how I get on, Mr Nesbitt.

Without addressing the past and acknowledging not only the hurt and damage caused but the degree to which it influences the tensions and disputes of the present, we risk repeating past mistakes. Addressing our past is, therefore, central to the process of reconciliation. Alliance does not believe that a peace centre at the Maze would have become a shrine to terrorism, and we fear that yet another opportunity to promote reconciliation has been lost. We think of the multipurpose stadium that never was. There should be space for full consideration of a mental health or trauma centre based on its particular merits and need. Similar ideas have been put forward, including by the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors in a response to the consultation on the EU peace and reconciliation programme, Peace IV.

There is a debate to be had about whether it is better to build a dedicated trauma centre or to better mainstream and integrate trauma services throughout existing mental health provision. I understand that there is already a trauma unit in each trust area. It is unclear how much discussion the supporters of the motion have had with the victims sector or mental health professionals and what engagement there has been with the Department of Health and the Health and Social Care board.

'Transforming Your Care' states that the current trend in expenditure is towards the provision of services in a community setting. There are also capital schemes to support mental health services, including one not far from here in the vicinity of the Ulster Hospital. We very much welcome that. If there is to be a new dedicated facility, there needs to be an understanding of precisely who it would be for, whether it would deliver acute services and whether it will be a residential facility. What about physical well-being? Recovery from trauma is also about physical health. There are risks that the use of such a centre could inadvertently introduce labelling and reinforce a stigma —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Could the Member bring his remarks to a halt?

Mr McCarthy: — for some with mental health conditions. What discussions have taken place with professional researchers —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Sorry. Your time is up, I am afraid.

Mr McCarthy: The Alliance Party is content for further debate to occur on the proposals in a wider field. I am sorry, Mr Nesbitt.

Ms Brown: I support the motion, which, for the most part, I suspect few people would disagree with or fail to support. Mental health issues are suffered by many but understood by few. Unlike physical injuries, there are no stitches or plasters, but the scars run deep and the effects last for years. Most people do not mind giving up an hour or two to visit people in hospital, but the long-term effects of years of mental ill health place much more strain not just on the sufferer but on those who love and support them. From that point of view, I support the idea of properly addressing the issue. There are, of course, temptations, perhaps on all sides of the House, to focus on the conflict-related aspect of the motion and to begin, yet again, the never-ending "whataboutery" of who is to blame. However, that merely adds to the pain of the sufferer, and it is perhaps best that we avoid it and instead concentrate on what can be done for those who continue to suffer in silence.

One aspect of looking back that is important is funding and support for mental health. As a region, Northern Ireland has received billions of pounds on the basis of being a post-conflict society, and the observation has been made that much of that funding has gone to communities where much of the suffering continues. What have those people got in return for that funding? Where has the money gone, and how has it been spent, if the difficulties are still so prevalent? It might be time, 15 years into the process, to properly address the needs of sufferers. That is not to ignore the fact that those who played a part in the conflict may be suffering from mental health issues. However, perhaps it is time to take a fresh look at how post-conflict funding can be properly focused and delivered to the benefit of the whole community, not just a chosen few.

Mental health issues, including depression, anxiety and stress disorders, affect one in three people. As with many health issues, men are particularly affected, with mental health issues prevalent among young men aged 18 to 25. It is vital that the stigma attached to mental health is addressed urgently to bring us to a situation where men and women of whatever age can freely express their feelings and seek help before it is too late. In many households, mental health is the unspoken subject in the

room. Poor mental health and stress disorders are still a prevalent feature of our society, and it is only right that we see adequate and highly professional services developed and delivered here. Many such services already exist in the health service, but I am conscious of the demand placed on them.

I know that the Minister wants only the best for the people of Northern Ireland in the available services and support. In fact, he made that very point in May at the Royal College of Psychiatrists conference:

“Investment in community based mental health services, and in specialist services such as CAMHS, eating disorders, personality disorders and psychological therapies, has risen from 40% of the overall mental health budget at the time of Bamford, to 55% today.”

I am keen to see further investment in our mental health services and adequate support provided for those in need, particularly in areas affected by years of terrorism. I do not think that it particularly matters where the services are delivered, as the most important thing is to help those in need to rebuild their life.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I also welcome the motion, but, at this point, I think that the provision of a centre of international excellence is probably aspirational. It would be a good idea for us to apply ourselves to dealing with the increase in the number of people with mental health problems here in the North and then go on to develop a world-class facility.

Mr Nesbitt was light on the detail. What is the international component about? Is it to provide services to people here or services to others? How would it sit with the work that has already gone on among various organisations to address the mental health needs of victims and survivors? We need a lot more detail in that respect.

Over the past five years, the number of admissions to hospitals under the mental health programmes of care decreased by 0.7%. However, admissions for day-case treatment increased from 1,494 in 2008-09 to 3,324 in 2012-13. Statistically, on the basis of comparable studies across the world, we have the highest level of 12-month and lifetime post-traumatic stress syndrome in the adult population. As many as one in four people here will suffer mental illness. Nearly 40% of the population has experienced conflict-related trauma.

In October 2012, the draft strategic implementation plan for Transforming Your Care referred to completing the resettlement of all people living in mental health hospitals by March 2015. Regionally, there would be a reduction in the number of acute mental health inpatient beds over the next three years to March 2015. Six inpatient acute mental health units for those aged 18 and over are to be developed.

If the issues of prevention, recognition and early intervention and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder are to be addressed, a multiagency approach is needed. The spend on mental health represents approximately 7% of the health budget; in the Twenty-six Counties, a much larger proportion of the health budget is spent on mental health issues. Funding for mental health services is low and needs to be increased. In 2007, the Centre for Cross Border Studies and the Institute of Public

Health conducted a feasibility study of cross-border mental health promotion and recommended the concept.

A couple of months ago, I attended a seminar facilitated by Action Mental Health on mental health issues, and one of the things highlighted was the number of children, some as young as six, who have mental health problems. Many issues are coming to light around protection and guidance for children in care who have mental health difficulties. A number of children and young people in mental health facilities are vulnerable and need protection under the law. There is a lot of concern that the proposed Mental Capacity Bill will exclude the voices of under-16s. It is essential and a matter of urgency that the Bill is brought to the Assembly as soon as possible.

We also have the proposed introduction of benefit cuts under so-called welfare reform. This, should it come to pass, will impact on the most vulnerable and will no doubt increase trauma and stress for many and increase the number of those who will continue to suffer mental health problems. The reality of all this is that we do not deal adequately with mental health issues and treatment here. It is very much the Cinderella of the health service. Of course let us develop centres of excellence, but let us start to deal with and support the problems that need to be dealt with here in the North and put our own house in some semblance of order.

4.00 pm

Mr D McIlveen: I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion. It is appropriate that we have this debate today. It is almost 10 years since the concept of a one-stop centre for mental illness in Northern Ireland was first discussed. Given the time that has passed, it is maybe helpful that we look at the issues again in a holistic way.

There is no doubt that the premise of the motion is interesting. Day and daily in our constituency offices, all of us who are elected representatives meet people who are struggling with mental health issues. The thought of Northern Ireland becoming a world leader in these services is certainly food for thought, and I do not think that anyone in the House would not aspire for us to reach that level. However, we have to be careful as to how we proceed. We have to make sure that whatever concepts or initiatives we launch are effective. It is easy to make broad statements and give sound bites about certain issues, but, when we are dealing with a very personal issue and a very traumatic time in the life of those who suffer from mental health problems and their families, it is vital that we look for effective solutions and something that will inevitably work and help people who need the help and the support of government. I think that the Department —

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr D McIlveen: Yes, I will.

Mr Beggs: Does the Member accept that, with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder in particular, there are undoubtedly lessons to be learnt and things could be done better? As we suffer the highest level of PTSD in the world, we may well have something to learn for ourselves and something to offer the rest of the world.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr D McIlveen: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I agree entirely with the Member, and I thank him for his intervention. Post-traumatic stress disorder is an incredibly horrific illness for anyone to suffer. Given the history of our society in Northern Ireland, we all know the causes for the higher rate of post-traumatic stress that occurs here and the background and reason for it.

The Department should be commended for the work and investment that has already gone into dealing with particular mental health issues such as PTSD. Although we are playing catch-up to an extent, there is no doubt that the Department's action in addressing the previous funding imbalance between community and hospital services has been crucial. The Minister has committed to implementing the Bamford principles, and Transforming Your Care supports and reflects that approach.

As I said, the concept of an international mental health centre is interesting, but we need to focus on what Bamford recommended. A key recommendation is that there should be evidence-based services to address psychological trauma. "Evidence-based services" means providing a service for which there is evidence that it will work. I remind the Members who tabled the motion that the former Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma and Transformation in Omagh has already attempted to provide such a service. At that time, the demand to sustain it did not seem to exist. So, before we launch into creating another such centre, we need to be convinced that it is the right thing to do.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he consider the raw data coming from the Victims and Survivors Service to be, at least, a foundation for providing the evidence that, he says, is lacking?

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Member for his intervention. We have to accept all the data that is out there. A number of studies have been done across the board on the issue. I do not oppose the establishment of another trauma centre; what I say is that we have to be clear that it will work. In that vein, Bamford also recommended that home treatment services are an effective way to deal with these issues. It is established that community services and home treatment are the most effective ways to treat many mental health problems. For that reason, as I have mentioned, the Minister has addressed the funding imbalance, and 56% of the mental health budget is now spent on community-based services.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on mental health and bring the issue and how we address it to the Assembly. However, I caution against the desire to create a central hub for mental health services when the research and evidence points us towards community services as the most effective way of treating the vast majority of mental health problems that we have to face in Northern Ireland.

Mr Copeland: The human mind, no matter how undamaged or damaged by experience and life, is more complex and valuable than the most expensive computer that has ever been built or is ever likely to be built. When it goes wrong, it is very, very hard to fix. Mental illness has been around for a very long time. It was treated differently in the past in some ways, because the availability to treat it was different.

My father, upon being promoted to shipyard foreman, went in on the Sunday before he was due to start his new job on

the Monday. A man, whom I will call Sammy, congratulated my dad on his promotion and said, "Mr Copeland, I am the only sane man in Harland and Wolff". My father, intrigued, asked how he could make such a statement. Sammy pulled from his pocket a sheet of paper that was given to him when he had left Purdysburn, as it was then, stating that he was sane. My father, in the twilight of his life, said to me that, if all the 37,000 men who worked in that place at that stage had been lined up, it would have been true that Sammy was probably the only one who could prove that he was sane. He benefited from employment in a society that was different in its nature, hopes and aspirations from that that we currently inhabit, and he made his way in the world.

Today, it is different. How, sir, in the name of God, is it possible for a son or daughter of this city, which is the fourth provincial capital of the seventh wealthiest nation on the face of this earth, living less than a mile from here, having suffered an incident in their childhood and reaching 22 years of age without receiving any help that amounted to anything, find themselves deprived of the £57 a week that the state says that they need to exist or of the value that the state puts on them and being reduced to living in a third-floor flat with no gas, no electricity and no food, making toast with candles?

The system does not cater well for those who suffer mental illness. It leaves them in a cold, dark, lonely place. Some survive; some do not. I am thinking of a son of this city who was buried on Saturday week ago. He was 31 years of age. He worked all his life, but he then lost his job and applied for state support through disability living allowance, which, in my view, he was entitled to. He visited my office to ask whether I could represent him at an appeal. Unfortunately, it was on a day on which the Committee sits in here, so I could not. We agreed that we would get it rejigged. However, he could not wait; he had literally given up. I know that, sometimes, I think that I am the only one who gets cases such as that, but I am not. I know that we all have them. I know the guilt that we all bear and feel when someone does something that we think that we could have prevented.

The Troubles bear a responsibility for a lot of the current situation, but they are not solely to blame. There is the impact of welfare reform. In my view, Westminster legislation brought over here and converted to a Northern Ireland Executive Bill almost verbatim does not adequately address the differences that exist in the nature, the structure and, most importantly, the history of our society.

Those who suffer mental illness generally do so alone. Many are not capable of earning a living. Many turn to the temptations of life to blind the sorrow, be it drink, drugs or company that does them no good. If that centre can save nine lives, according to a figure that the Minister gave me some time ago, the saving to the state would be £1.5 million for each suicide. That will be money well spent. If we in this place can do something — anything — that alleviates the loneliness that those people suffer, they will have been well served.

Mr McCallister: It is unfortunate that the idea of this being an alternative to the Maze centre and the issue of mental health have been mixed together in the debate. It is unfortunate, because what I have heard from all sides of the House on what we need to do on mental health issues has been very encouraging.

Regarding where the proposal came from, I will quote from the speech that Mr Nesbitt, the proposer of the motion, gave to his party conference:

“What is missing from the Maze debate is an alternative to a peace centre at that most controversial venue.”

During that speech, he went on to propose this trauma centre that we are debating today. It is unfortunate that that has become mixed up in this, because, in all the controversies about the Maze centre and whether you are for or against it, the one thing that this debate highlights is that we stand united as an Assembly in thinking that we should do all that we can to address the scourge of mental ill health. It is quite interesting to note how we got to this point and the price that we probably paid for the Maze centre being put on hold or completely scrapped, whatever your viewpoint is on it.

Mr Nesbitt: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCallister: The dysfunctionality of the Executive is part of the reason that we got to this stage, and there is the cost of that.

I am happy to give way to Mr Nesbitt after I point out that work is very good on mental health. If we have thrown away the opportunity for 3,500 jobs at the Maze centre, that will be a huge regret to us all.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Member for giving way. Will he accept that the Maze, the peace centre and everything that he is talking about are not in the motion? The motion is about mental health on its own merits.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCallister: With the greatest respect to Mr Nesbitt, this is the one idea that he announced in his party conference speech. This is his one big cherry on the cake. It is his flagship policy, yet he has suddenly come around less than three weeks after his party conference to the idea that the two are not related. In proposing the motion, he talked at length about doing more for victims, which all sides of the House will agree with. He suddenly says that the two are not related, and I find it a little strange that he would even suggest such a thing.

I hear from all sides of the House about dealing with mental health. When I was a member of the Assembly's Health Committee, a rough rule of thumb was that the spend on mental health here is about half of what it is in other parts of the country yet our need is twice as much. It does not take much of a genius to work out that that will not deliver the outcomes that you want.

In dealing with various issues around mental health, such as tackling the stigma, how we deliver in the community is important. I am encouraged that Minister Poots and his predecessor, Mr McGimpsey, bought into the Bamford review and pledged to deliver it. In fact, Mr McGimpsey and Mr Poots have directed moneys at how we deliver it. We have a long way to go. We need to do more, and we need to do better. I am not quite sure how many discussions Mr Nesbitt had with Mr McGimpsey about this proposal. Minister Poots said in May of this year:

“Our services are moving to a model of treating more people in their own homes and communities,

something very important to service users and their carers.”

4.15 pm

It will be interesting to hear whether that is still the policy of the Minister. Is he still committed to the facilities in Craigavon, the Downe, Beechcroft and the various centres that we are setting up? The issue I have with moving away from that model to a central location, as Mr Nesbitt suggests, is how you deliver that. The most obvious example is the so-called centre of excellence for autism at Middletown. It has changed so much over the last 10 years, and whether anyone has got any good out of it has been left up for debate.

What we need are services. We do not actually need more bricks and steel in buildings. We need services in the communities and we need to make sure that people can access them at the appropriate time, speedily and readily. We need to do much more to lift the blight of mental health.

Mr Lyttle: I too welcome the opportunity to support longstanding calls for improved mental health provision in Northern Ireland and to consider the issue of a regional trauma centre to help address complex needs in our community. I find myself agreeing with John McCallister, though, that the proposers of the motion seem to have conflated the issues of mental health under-provision, addressing a legacy of trauma that has been bestowed on our community as a result of years of futile and heinous violence in the community, and the proposal for a centre for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Those are separate issues that we need to address on their own merit.

I do, however, say fair play to Mike Nesbitt for putting this issue on the agenda. As members of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister — Mr Nesbitt as Chair and me as Deputy Chair — we have heard serious concerns in recent weeks regarding the services currently provided to victims and survivors in Northern Ireland 40 years after the outbreak of the Troubles here that have traumatised individuals quite intensely across our community. The Victims' Commissioner has proposed a round-table event to which she would invite the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the Victims and Survivors Service, the victims' forum, the victims and survivors themselves, obviously, and Members of the Assembly. I hope and believe that every party should support that practical event, which could consider this type of proposal, and, indeed, the services that we are calling for here today, in more detail.

This is not a new issue or a new idea, nor should it be politicised into becoming a zero-sum choice between this proposal and a peace and reconciliation centre. The Victims' Commissioner's response to the call for ideas for the European Union Peace IV programme in Northern Ireland in November 2012 and, indeed, the Cost of the Troubles Study surveys in the 1990s put forward the need to address health and well-being among victims and survivors and to address the psychological impact of the conflict here as the number one need. Victims' Commission research has found that approximately 40% of our adult population — over 500,000 people — have experienced one or more Troubles-related traumatic events.

The Victims' Commission recommended that Peace IV deliver a major project that provides for specialised services to treat chronic mental ill-health, a care pathway to deal with complex mental health issues in conjunction with the Departments of Health in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, family therapy services and, indeed, consideration of a world-renowned regional trauma centre to serve Northern Ireland and the border region. However, as the Chair of the Health Committee said today, we need to take great care in considering that type of proposal. We need to consider it in line with other reviews, such as Bamford, and get into the detail of who exactly we hope it will serve and what format it should take. Should it have a holistic approach in terms of finance, housing, mobility assistance and pain clinics? What should the role of the faith community be? Where should the location and access be and, obviously, how will it be funded? Of course, it must, if brought forward, be based on victims' needs rather than on what others say that they need.

We know and have known that the Troubles left an enduring legacy of mental and physical health need in our community. It is high time that we got on and got serious about urgently meeting this need in a decisive and comprehensive way.

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I am grateful to the honourable Member for raising this important issue and welcome the contributions made by Members today.

It is widely recognised that Northern Ireland has higher levels of mental ill health than any other region in the UK. It is estimated that around one in four adults in Northern Ireland will suffer from a mental health problem at some stage in their life. I would have preferred it had the motion today, as opposed to calling upon me to support the creation of a new "international mental health centre" for Northern Ireland that would be a world-class facility for all, called for the development of mental health services that would be a world-class facility for all. I do not think that the creation of a new building will create a world-class service, but I do think that we can, should and must create and develop world-class services. We have many good services in Northern Ireland. That can be done without the development of more buildings or the identification of a single building for mental health services. I will deal with that in a little more detail later.

The impact of the conflict here on the health and well-being of our population has been the subject of much research and debate. Although there is some discrepancy in the conclusions of the studies, most researchers agree that the Troubles have had an effect on the health and well-being of our community. The extent of their impact on our mental health has been debated. A research study in 2011 found that Northern Ireland had the highest occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) of more than 30 countries surveyed worldwide. It found that, in more than a quarter of the PTSD cases examined locally, the conflict here was a contributory factor.

The impact of the Troubles on the mental health of the population was acknowledged by the late David Bamford in his review of mental health services. He recommended that evidence-based services be developed and expanded to address psychological trauma. In accordance with clinical guidelines, the recommended treatment for psychological trauma is primarily through psychological

and social interventions: in layman's terms, talking therapies. There is, for example, considerable evidence that the use of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder is beneficial.

I am pleased to say that there has been progress in the development of our psychological therapy services in recent years. In 2010, my Department published a strategy for the development of psychological therapy services, which the Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency are implementing. The strategy was underpinned with recurrent funding of £4.4 million, which provides for around 80 staff delivering around 50,000 therapy sessions a year. Today, some £6.5 million is spent on those services. This funding provides a range of services, including psychology, psychotherapy, CBT and trauma therapy, and provides psychological care for those with PTSD.

Recent investment has been focused on the training of existing staff in psychological therapies and the establishment of primary care talking therapy hubs. The aim is to provide support to people at an early stage and in their communities to prevent their problems from escalating. That is in line with Bamford's focus on early intervention and was reinforced in Transforming Your Care. The improvements in mental health services and the recommendations that flowed from the Bamford review have become the map for the reform and modernisation of our modern mental health services. They were supported by the previous Minister, as Mr McCallister said, and are supported by me.

The Bamford vision is that people with a mental illness should be treated in the community, close to their families and friends, unless there is a clinical reason for not doing so. Inpatient care should only be provided for acute cases or where someone needs to be detained for their own safety.

Since embracing the Bamford report in 2008, an additional £40 million has been invested recurrently in mental health services, bringing current expenditure to £240 million a year. At the time of the Bamford review, we were spending 60% of the mental health budget on hospital services and 40% on community services. That balance of expenditure has shifted. Last year, we spent 44% of the mental health budget on hospital services and 56% on community services.

Better community-based services have brought about a reduction in the number of people having to be hospitalised for mental health treatment. The development of crisis response teams, home treatment teams and community mental health teams has meant that earlier intervention has prevented conditions from becoming acute. The development of those teams has also meant that people who need inpatient treatment can be discharged from hospital sooner because they now have access to better support in the community.

Transforming Your Care supports that approach. Some people still need inpatient treatment. For that reason, we are currently replacing old, out-of-date, asylum-type psychiatric hospitals with modern, state-of-the-art, acute facilities associated with our hospitals. For example, we have the Bluestone unit in Craigavon, Grangewood at Gransha and the child-and-adolescent facility at Beechcroft already open. New units are planned for the Ulster Hospital and Belfast City Hospital. It is important that buildings do nothing to further stigmatise mental

health patients. The days of the big, old asylums are over. They are gone, and I would not support any proposal that would support anything akin to that kind of facility.

While our mental health services have come a long way since Bamford, we still have much more to do. Further reform will require further funding. Some of that can be found from efficiency savings. However, new money will also be needed. That is difficult to find in the current economic climate and given the range of pressures across the entire health and social care system.

In addition to statutory mental health services, the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) was established in 2012. The aim of the VSS is to contribute to the health and social care needs of victims and survivors through the provision of individualised courses of treatment and care, and support is provided on the basis of assessed need. The VSS provides support in three areas: health and well-being, social support and individual needs. Of the individual needs conducted to date, 17% of applicants required a more detailed stage 2 psychological assessment, just over 50% are already in contact with mental health services, and 50% have severe depression and/or anxiety. The HSCB is in discussion with the Victims and Survivors Service about how statutory mental health services might be developed for people identified as having complex PTSD needs by the VSS.

Service personnel, veterans and their families also require mental health services. Armed forces personnel returning to the UK from operations have access to outpatient, day-case and inpatient treatment as necessary from the Defence Medical Services' occupational psychiatric service. On their return to Northern Ireland, armed forces families and veterans have access to mental health services within the Health and Social Care system on a similar basis to other members of the Northern Ireland population. The Royal Irish Aftercare Service and a number of voluntary organisations also offer services to address the mental health needs of returning service personnel and veterans, and much of that is dealt with in the Department-led Armed Forces Liaison Forum.

In respect of the new international mental health centre, the proposal put forward for a dedicated centre is not a new one. The Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma and Transformation operated from October 2002, promoting psychological therapy, in particular CBT for the treatment of PTSD. However, after the previous Minister — a UUP Minister — withdrew the funding in 2010, it ceased to exist.

I am somewhat perplexed by the fact that the proposal before us today is so similar to what was in existence when the Ulster Unionist Party held this portfolio. I am not criticising the previous Minister for making the decision that he made. It appears that the centre did not get the support or the numbers of people coming through that it had anticipated. Despite having on its board of trustees people of some standing, such as Professor Fabian Monds, the Duchess of Abercorn, Professor Roy McClelland, Professor Paul Seawright and Mr David McKittrick, it did not work. Today, three years after the Ulster Unionist Party withdrew funding for such a centre, I am yet to hear the argument that the big idea is to have another centre and establish it somewhere else. I am somewhat confused. Hopefully the case will be made much more convincingly in the winding-up speech than it was in the initial proposition.

4.30 pm

The organisation has seen a decline in the demand for its services. We are sitting with a recent application for Peace IV funding that contains a similar proposal to that set out in today's motion. The NICTT, which is now closed, was to do things like undertake research and promote innovative practice. The proposal before us is for a programme for research and innovation, trauma therapies and training in humanitarian relief. The NICTT was to provide trauma-related training and education programmes and assist with humanitarian relief internationally. Areas of focus in the new proposal are addressing conflict-related trauma, peace-building and building social and economic sustainability. Health, universities, the voluntary sector and international elements are to be involved. Of course, the University of Ulster, through the Magee campus, was also involved previously. I get more and more confused about what was wrong with the previous one and what was so different from what is proposed now. Evidence of that has not been presented to us today.

We know that conflict-related trauma can take many years to manifest itself symptomatically. We also know that there are transgenerational aspects to such trauma in families that deal with these issues on a daily basis. Bamford acknowledged the benefits of psychological therapies such as CBT in the treatment of PTSD. The development of these therapies has been a priority. Appropriate training and supervision in the use of the therapies is ongoing to ensure that staff are competent to practice.

Our services use evidence-based interventions that are outcome-focused. Research is an intrinsic element of mental health service development. The arrangements for implementing Bamford include research and development as a key strand of that work. It is essential that we use interventions that have been shown to improve the lives of those who receive them. At the same time, we are embedding in our mental health services a recovery ethos whereby people can take control of their own life and live a purposeful life in their community.

Support for people with mental illness is much wider than health; it is a societal issue and, therefore, a government-wide issue. It is about education and training. It is about housing. It is about employment. It is about the day-to-day issues that are important to us all. That is why the Bamford action plan, which my Department published on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, is a cross-cutting document. Its five key themes are those that are important to people with mental health problems and their carers: promoting good mental health and well-being; supporting people through education, housing etc; supporting carers; better mental health and learning disability services; and better structures and joined-up working between Departments and agencies.

We are still developing our mental health services. Mr McKinney raised the issue of dementia. A joint mental health promotion and suicide prevention strategy is being developed. It will be published for consultation by the summer of 2014. Kieran McCarthy mentioned that the Victims and Survivors Service had submitted a similar proposal for a world-class centre; I have dealt with that. Members also talked about a multiagency approach. We have a strong voluntary sector in mental health. It receives funding of £6.76 million each year. So, that is something

that we are practising. We are still developing our mental health services, and much needs to be done.

I recognise that there are those in our communities who will need help and support to deal with the trauma of the past. I can assure Members that service development will be informed by the issues that were raised today. It is important to recognise that we may do many things well but can still fail people, so let us identify how we can do well for everyone who comes to us, and let us ensure that people who suffered the trauma of the Troubles get the quality support that they need.

Mr Beggs: I thank everyone who contributed to the debate. It is very healthy that we are talking about these issues. On reflection, we should all have spent more time trying to bring about improvement before now because, as we learned from Mr Nesbitt, 22 years is the average time that someone suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. When you think of the events that happened 20 or more years ago, there is no doubt that victims have been suffering in silence, along with their families. More people will come forward if we encourage them to do so by ensuring that we have the proper treatment and support to help them to regain their full mental health.

It was interesting to learn that Northern Ireland has the highest preponderance of post-traumatic stress disorder in the world. It is higher even than America, which has suffered huge numbers of casualties in Iraq and Iran, and higher than Lebanon and Israel, where there has been ongoing conflict over very many years. There is a particular problem in our midst that we need to address.

Mr Nesbitt mentioned the postcode areas of BT5, BT13, BT14 and BT15. There was a concentration of pain and suffering in those areas throughout the Troubles. Undoubtedly, that has contributed to ongoing issues of mental ill health and post-traumatic stress disorder. The Bamford report indicated that wars and serious societal conflicts:

“tend to lead to the breakdown of infrastructures, loss of social capital and lead to major risk factors in terms of psychotic morbidity and suicide.”

Therefore, it is an issue that was predicted to an extent. It is for us to move forward and address it.

Gordon Dunne highlighted how local charities work to address mental health issues and made particular mention of CAUSE and Action Mental Health. Maeve McLaughlin accepted that post-traumatic stress disorder was a major issue and there could be a need for a specialist centre. She also highlighted the need for a multiagency approach to address mental health needs. If you read the literature and the best advice available, you see that the multiagency approach seems to work best. She also highlighted the importance of working in the community. That was a theme that many Members and, indeed, the Minister commented on.

Fearghal McKinney backed additional support for post-traumatic stress disorder and said that those who are suffering should be consulted on the design of any new service so that it best meets their needs. He warned that time is of the essence in these matters, particularly as poor mental health can result in fatalities. Kieran McCarthy sounded sceptical about the idea, but he said that he would like the Maze peace proposal as well as a trauma centre. He asked -who such a centre would be for and

what purpose it would serve. Those are valid questions. If he had listened to the debate, he would have heard about the number of people who suffered quietly and whose needs have not been addressed. Only about one third of those who meet the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder to be clinically diagnosed have received support that they found useful. A huge reservoir needs to be addressed, and we as a community ought to work to do so.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beggs: Certainly.

Mr Lyttle: Does the Member accept that the debate has drawn out a dispute not about the extent of need but about the best way to respond to that need?

Mr Beggs: The debate has been well balanced. Undoubtedly, there is a need to go in the direction of the Bamford report. That was started under Michael McGimpsey, with the recognition that centralised hospital support was not the best treatment and that care in the community played a vital part in improving mental health. Nevertheless, there is a need for learning and best practice and for a centre where that learning can occur and be passed on. It is not enough to say that we should work in isolation. Clearly, there is something particular to Northern Ireland, and, although there has been a fair amount of research, further support is needed to bring about improvements in our service and meet the needs in the community. David McIlveen seemed to ask why we needed to go in a centralised direction and said that the health service was treating those with post-traumatic stress disorder well. Again, the facts do not back that up.

Interestingly enough, I recently visited a new centre in my constituency called Blossoms. It did not come about because the health service recognised that there was a need or because of Peace funding. Essentially, it involves horticultural therapy, which works well in Scandinavian countries and is recognised as working particularly well with post-traumatic stress disorder. The centre came about in Northern Ireland because of rural development funding and the foresight of a family at Larne Lough Nurseries, Maureen Hanvey and her daughter Liz. It creates a garden environment in which treatment takes place, and it has been successful. We need to pick up on best practice elsewhere and adopt it here.

Michael Copeland, in his usual way, highlighted some of the plights that the most underprivileged in our society have suffered as a result of mental illness and falling foul of welfare reform. John McCallister and Chris Lyttle seemed to question the need for such a centre. There is undoubtedly a need to address the complexity of the issue to find better ways to deal with it.

I go back to the fact that we suffer the highest levels of post-traumatic stress disorder in the world, which involves a large number of people. Reports such as the excellent 'Economic Impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Northern Ireland' state that, although the numbers are large, that is not the only issue. In the past 12 months, some 18,000 adults will have been identified as having had post-conflict-related trauma events. The numbers are large, but we must keep our focus on all those individuals and their families. Reports refer to the millions of pounds that mental health issues cost the health service through medication and the millions of pounds that are lost to our economy, but it is also about individual lives and people

who continue to suffer. If those people can be identified and given support, an eight- or 10-week course is relatively inexpensive and can dramatically improve the life of many people. It is important that we look at what we do.

4.45 pm

The Minister recognised the need to improve the service, and he questioned the need for a building. Undoubtedly, we want to have the service. If the number of people amasses, the need for a building will materialise. There is no doubt that Bamford, in his report, saw that there was a need for that. The Minister also highlighted the fact that he had transferred money from one part of the mental health service — the hospital service — to the community service. What I did not hear, however, was whether the envelope had increased. Are we actually dealing with the huge numbers of people who continue to suffer mental illness? Have we invested? That has not occurred on the scale that is needed. Certainly, I understand that it is one of the reasons why Michael McGimpsey may not have developed the service that the Minister talked about. At that point, there was a lack of funding. Mr McGimpsey was under significant pressure from the Finance Minister and was unable to fully address the needs of our health service and the mental health of our constituents. We need more funding as well as a change of direction.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly recognises the high prevalence of poor mental health in Northern Ireland; notes that a previous world mental health survey stated that the Province has the world's highest recorded rate of post-traumatic stress disorder and that violence had been a distinctive cause of mental health problems here; acknowledges that trauma is one of the most hidden legacy issues of the Troubles; accepts the need to support and restore good mental health for people with difficulties; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to support the creation of a new international mental health centre for Northern Ireland that would be a world-class facility for all.

Oversubscribed Schools

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Storey: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the increase in the number of children who are seeking a place in primary schools; and calls on the Minister of Education to review the current enrolment procedures to ensure that all children are able to attend their local schools.

Over the past number of years, the House has witnessed a number of debates on the importance of dealing with surplus places in our schools. However, the way in which it has been handled at times has broadened to the extent that it could be described as farcical.

We have been treated to examples of 80,000 surplus places in the system, and we have been encouraged to have a picture in our mind of large numbers of teachers standing in front of empty classrooms all over Northern Ireland. At one stage, there was panic around the issue, as we were encouraged by the Minister and his officials to engage in wholesale closure using area planning as the vehicle. That was another wonderful scheme from Sleepy Hollow in Bangor. The hit lists were published in the press, and all of us received correspondence from our constituents about the future of their school. The Education Committee wrote to the Department about the statistics and, of course, discovered that the 80,000 was not really 80,000. Suddenly, we did not hear that statistic any more.

Of course, we now know that the number of teachers is linked to the number of pupils and that the system regulates that very effectively on an annual basis. We also know that savings achieved from closures are often minimal and that school closures have more to do with a doctrinaire view about school size. In recent years, that was influenced by Montgomery County. We also know that there is no direct correlation between school size and educational outcomes. Because of the complicated procedures developed by the Department of Education over many years to progress — or to prevent — the building of new schools in many areas, we have many old school buildings that no longer reflect the needs of their communities.

We have also learned that school populations rise and fall. Between now and 2020, it is estimated that there will be approximately 13,000 more pupils in the primary system. By 2025, the post-primary population will be the same as it was in 2012, despite the present decline, and, even in periods of decline, there are areas where there is constant growth. I admit that managing this is complex and needs a little more sophistication than has been shown in some of the current attempts by the Department.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate the point that I am trying to make here this afternoon. Victoria Park Primary School in east Belfast is a good example of how not to manage enrolments. The school is an example of an amalgamation of three primary schools in east Belfast: Mersey Street, Sydenham and Strand. At the time of the amalgamation in 2005, a new school was promised. The

Belfast Education and Library Board gained planning permission for a 14-class school, which was considered to be a sensible number of classrooms for a new urban school. It was in the process of undertaking site works at Sydenham to begin the preliminary work, when the Department announced a moratorium on all school capital projects in 2008 — surprise, surprise. Despite that setback, the new school, which had moved a number of its pupils into temporary accommodation to facilitate the capital works, continued to flourish. The creation of a new school coincided with an increase in the number of young families in the area to the point where, every year, 60 children are being enrolled in P1 and a number of children who live beside the school cannot now get into that particular provision.

Here is the point: the BELB has now been given the go-ahead to begin the work on the new school, which, we hope, will open in 2014. However, on the day that the news was relayed to the board, the school received a letter stating that its P1 intake had been cut from 60 to 50. Everyone was astounded, except the Department, which, despite being shown figures to the contrary, has always believed that the school should now have only 12 classrooms and not 14. To make it fit, it needed to reduce the intake, resulting in composite classes. Who in their right mind approaches planning a new school in an urban environment with 12 classrooms? There are more people who live beside the school in Connsbrook Avenue who are unable to get their children into the school, and, most likely, there will be 17 pupils standing with their teacher in the schoolyard on the day that the new school opens, because there is no space for them in the new provision. Surely that is not how we plan our schools estate. That is called snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. What should have been a good news story has all the makings of another disaster from the Department. So, even when everyone works to achieve the Minister's policy of school rationalisation and the board of governors and the principal of the school effect a very successful amalgamation, there is total frustration with the Department's approach in the area and uproar that there are no places for local children.

Is that an isolated incident or a blip in the system? No. Last summer, we were treated to the spectacle of children in the Western Education and Library Board area whose rural school had been closed and whose homes backed onto Edwards Primary School being told that they could not attend the school. It was their nearest school, but the Department told them that they had to attend a school nine miles away. It took lobbying for most of the summer to sort that issue out. On this occasion, I thank the Minister for the Department's intervention when, at last, good sense prevailed.

Those are just two examples of an increasing number of cases that, I am sure, Members will endorse and rehearse from their own experience. What is the solution? We need a better way of managing school enrolments, and we should stop trying to manage them from Rathgael. We are continually told that the Department is becoming responsible for policy and strategy, yet the officials seem happiest when they meddle in operational issues. Enrolments used to be managed locally by boards that knew the circumstances and were responsive to population changes.

The Department should issue clear guidance to primary school boards of governors to ensure that criteria reflect reality. The top criterion should be that children should be admitted to their local school. Finally, the Department should abandon the phoney area planning process, which is an attempt to close schools. It should institute a proper, locally based procedure involving school authorities where local areas can properly plan the enrolment of pupils for their locality with the appropriate flexibility without the threat of wholesale closures, which we all know are unlikely, and without operational interference from the Department.

Before I came to the House this evening, I met a member of the board of governors of Ashfield Girls' High School, which is not far from this Building.

Today, Ashfield Girls' High School received a letter from the Department telling it that it will reduce its intake. The Minister is aware of the issues around the future of Knockbreda High School and Newtownbreda High School and of all that is going on with Orangefield High School. Part of the arrangement was that there would be an increased enrolment for Ashfield Boys' High School and Ashfield Girls' High School. Now we are told that those schools will not be allowed to do that. Will someone please get a handle on the Department on those issues? Rather than this ill-thought-out, ill-prepared and ill-planned process, the Department should work with schools and local communities.

The Minister has rightly encouraged area learning communities. However, when it comes to area plans, it seems that the two worlds are far apart. There needs to be a change of focus and emphasis. We need to instil a process in our system whereby local children have access to their local primary school in a way that ensures that the school estate is maximised to its best potential.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Member opposite for tabling the motion. Indeed, I am content to support it. However, I am sure that he will not be surprised that I wish to raise what I think are some pertinent issues that have emanated from his words.

I also very much support the principle of children attending their local primary school. Indeed, I am convinced that the sustainable schools policy and the area planning process will help to create a school estate that facilitates the preferences of as many parents as possible. Moreover, as hundreds of millions of pounds have been invested in the local school estate in recent years, it is prudent that we invest our resources in the best way possible and in the right places so that current and future changes and demographic patterns can be forecasted and facilitated.

That context has informed a wide-ranging discussion around area-based planning and the future of education provision in local communities across the North. Thankfully, that discussion, to a large extent, has accepted the rationale for change and grasped the need to address scenarios with innovative and, most importantly, locally based solutions. The notion of locally based solutions is crucial when we explore the connected issue of school enrolments. As the Members opposite will be aware, local schools set admissions criteria, as they are best placed to reflect local need.

Having dealt with a number of admissions issues over the past year, I reiterate the message that local schools and boards of governors should look to ensure that all criteria are sustainable, strategic and reflect local need. With that in mind, I am happy enough to acquiesce to the proposer's wish for the Minister and the Department to initiate a review of enrolment procedures. Undoubtedly, if it is possible to increase the number of children who are placed in their preferred local school, that would be a welcome development.

Of course, we must bear in mind that we are referring to a very small number of cases: perhaps as little as 2% or 3% of pupils do not receive a place at one of their preferred options. I am not sure of international averages on admissions. However, in anyone's book, surely 97%, 98% or 99% of pupils being placed in a preferred option is a long way short of the negative situation that has been portrayed from across the Chamber. Perhaps we need a bit of perspective when we discuss the issue. That is not to belittle the experience of many parents who patiently go through the process. As I outlined, if it is possible to further increase the 98% to 100%, that, of course, would be welcome.

We must be aware of the knock-on effects of schools hiking up admissions with their back to other schools. Very often throughout the North, schools with low numbers have been impacted on by neighbouring schools' enrolments. The success of area planning and the long-awaited establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will not only help facilitate parental preference but will do so in a manner that protects the sustainability of the entire school estate.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

The DUP should not look at the proposed review in isolation from the need for reform across our education system, be that the need to move ahead with ESA, to create a sustainable and fit-for-purpose series of area plans or, indeed, to move away from academic selection in totality. The third is a pressing need. If it is right for primary pupils to attend their local school, surely it is only right that post-primary pupils be afforded a real and tangible opportunity to attend their local school.

5.00 pm

Mr Rogers: I am pleased to support the motion. Starting school is one of the great milestones in a child's life, and that period of transition can bring a lot of stress for parents and guardians of young children. When they do not get into the school of their first choice, it can create a lot of trauma. Indeed, all the parents I know want to be able to access comfortably the local primary school that meets their expectations and their child's needs.

The oversubscription of primary school places and, for that matter, nursery school places, is, unfortunately, no stranger to many parts of Northern Ireland, including south Down. Every year, many distressed parents of vulnerable four- and five-year-olds contact me to seek reassurance, comfort and support. I am sure that many other Members of the House have the same experience.

Parents are concerned that their child will have to travel a significant distance — indeed, distances that they may perceive to be intolerable — to get to a primary school.

In all those cases, the child has been rejected by one or maybe two of their closest schools — the school that would be physically, mentally and emotionally best for them. Mr Hazzard talked about 2% in that category; I think that that 2% must have rung me. I have been inundated with parents from places as far apart as Eglis, Carryduff, Loughbrickland, Newcastle and my area of Brackenagh, who were very distressed to be informed by the Department of Education that their child was being denied their first preference place.

That resulted in parents who wished to send their child to a particular type of school having a severely restricted choice and having to contemplate sending their little P1 on a journey of some miles to the nearest accessible school. I think that rural areas suffer disproportionately. The problem is intensified by the lack of transport and the distance between primary schools. That affects all sectors.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Department of Education and the boards appear to continue to fail to respond to a strategic or long-term view. We need a joined-up approach between the three of them. While that failure is allowed to continue, oversubscription and excessive demand for school places will be an even bigger problem year on year. The Minister will tell us that there are thousands of empty seats in our primary schools, but the way to fix them is not to force children to travel to a school that has falling rolls.

There is a very strong parental demand for school places in the maintained sector of the Catholic ethos. That is not always for religious reasons, I must add, but it is often driven by high-quality education.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that the current proposals that the Minister has consulted on in relation to the common funding formula will add an added dimension to the future of those schools, given the fact that, in the Western Board area, particularly in the maintained sector, you still have 76% of schools that will lose a substantial amount of their income?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Member for his intervention. I agree fully with him.

We believe that the situation cannot be allowed to continue. Minister, I realise, as other Members have said, that this is a very difficult issue. The idea of a temporary variation is fine in the short term. Time does not permit me to go through all the examples, but to take just one or two.

St Ita's was grateful for its temporary variation, but, year on year, it is oversubscribed, just like its colleagues in St Joseph's in Carryduff. Because of such demand, local children cannot attend their local school. What is that doing to the community? What is it doing for parental choice? Schools such as Brackenagh West have places for seven classes, but are being treated as a six-classroom school. They do not need more space; they just need increased enrolment figures. Roan St Patrick's in Eglis is just baffled as to why its proposal has been rejected, when a nearby one has been successful.

Minister, we need a strategic approach that takes on board all the factors: data, both census and Church data; the availability of alternative schools in the area; the effect on the community and so on. We must manage our schools estate effectively, especially in rural areas, and we must

ensure that our children can attend their local primary school. We must provide a sustainable and fair solution to this annually recurring problem.

Mr Kinahan: I, too, welcome the motion, especially the call to review the current enrolment procedures to ensure that all children are able to attend their local school. We support the motion, and I am glad to hear that the Minister is happy to instigate a review, if I heard correctly.

The motion is a noble idea, if only the landscape was clear and the direction that we are going in was clearly signposted. I will deal with the debate mainly at a strategic level. At the weekend, I started a jigsaw puzzle, and, as always, I tried to do it without looking at the picture. That is when I realised that that is what our schools are doing. They have a picture in their mind based on how they have seen things in the past. What they know and have experienced have helped to form that picture, but in area planning, five education and library boards are all parts of the picture. All are told that they fit together, but no one has any idea what the whole picture looks like. We all know that it is a slow process, but there is absolutely no time frame to work to, which means that everyone is going at different speeds, if, in some cases, at any speed at all. Most people complete the edges first and then fit their picture into the frame. However, in our education system puzzle, we not only have no idea of the picture but we have no idea of the framework or the edges of the individual parts, and it is very likely that the school or library board next door has the pieces that belong to our picture. Until this framework is known and understood, area planning should be put on hold. I agree with Mervyn Storey on that. We should review the numbers going into primary schools once we have a proper framework.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Today's debate is rather similar, except that we are debating how to set the framework for each smaller individual picture: the relationship of the primary school in our area with other primary schools and their relationship with all the other schools in Northern Ireland. Once again, we have no idea where the boundaries are or who holds that information. In the midst of that, we now have a move towards shared education. So the original picture to which everyone is trying to work — let us describe it as black and white — is suddenly being changed. Yet all anyone knows is that the change is as broad as it could be and that the picture is probably now in colour.

Today, we call for a review so that all children can go to their local school, but there is no framework to work within. As already touched on, the original picture or puzzle was based on some 85,000 empty places when the Committee studied it. When we looked at the figures in more detail, the number ended up being closer to 65,000. When we then looked at predicted future trends, we realised that, by 2025, we were back to the same figures that we started with. I am not quite sure where our framework is or that the direction and number of places are known. It is all appallingly vague. We seem to have set ourselves on a course based on macrofigures rather than individual school numbers, and it is here that we need the dynamic, flexible system that allows schools to adapt to changes in numbers as they arise. As Mr Storey said, it is a complex system, but it need not be. It just needs the will to make flexibility work. That is how we should do it. Schools have

to do that all the time with their budget because we have a Department that changes everything all the time.

I will mention three further factors. We have a disastrous development proposal system that flags up possible changes or school closures before decisions are even made. That ends up being death by a thousand cuts. That, too, needs to be totally reviewed and become more flexible. We also have schools with numbers that are capped or changed in line with the politics of the Department or Minister or for other reasons. This capping must be more flexible. We also have, in a little more detail, the guidelines on how children are to be allowed into schools, which, as we heard from Sinn Féin, are allowed to be different in every area. That may sound sensible, but, at the same time, there is no consistency in that, and we find that many parents are left outside.

We must not forget parental choice, as I think that we all believe in that here. In reality, today's motion wants every child to be able to go to their local school but no other.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Kinahan: We have to be careful what we ask for. What we really need to be able to solve this problem is the framework and the picture. I support the motion.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Mr Lunn: I think that this is a timely motion, given that the timetable for applications and admissions is about to click in, and I am very happy to support it. It is a fact that most children do achieve a P1 place in the school of their parents' choice. To me, the motion highlights the difficulties encountered by a small but significant number, as Mr Hazzard said, who do not achieve that. Indeed, in some extreme cases, the process does not really deliver a remotely satisfactory outcome.

I wonder why we are in this situation, given that there are whatever number of empty desks; I have heard 80,000, 85,000 and 65,000 mentioned. The Committee never did get to the bottom of that, but I think we established that there are around 50,000 empty desks in primary schools and that the primary population has risen by only about 1,000 pupils in the past five years. So, why is it so difficult? That small rise, which represents 0.6% of the population, was entirely predictable from available data such as birth rates and census figures. We must be able to plan ahead.

I want to talk about the Department's temporary variation policy, which does seem to work at times. I acknowledge the Minister's use of that policy to relieve pressures, and he used it again this year. The anomalies are there every year and are caused, in my opinion, by too rigid an application of the rules. The policy outlines a number of factors that the Department does not consider to be sufficient reason to grant an additional place if there are alternatives available in the area, and I will just list them. They are: the pupil's residence in a particular parish; the fact that the pupil is an eldest child; a pupil who has a sibling connection with the school but who is not next in line for a place; a pupil who has listed the school as their first preference; and previous attendance of other family members or any other connections with the school. Those are the reasons that the Department does not want to take into account, but they are actually the reasons why you should allow admission or temporary variation, and,

leaving out the parish consideration, they apply to both sectors.

Also, in the case of maintained schools, the Department does not take account of parish boundaries. That brought about a situation in my constituency where the Department insisted that a child should apply to the nearest Catholic school, which was actually in the next parish, only to be turned down by that school because they do not live in the parish. Where is the common sense in applying a policy like that? Mr Rogers talked about St Ita's in Carryduff. You are not the only one who got phone calls about St Ita's. One child who was turned down by St Ita's and two other Catholic schools in the area has, as far as I know, finished up in a controlled primary on the outskirts of Belfast. That is hardly satisfactory.

Staying with the maintained sector, I wonder whether the Department really understands the strength of loyalty to the parish that exists and the strong desire of Catholic parents to see their children educated in the primary school attached to their home parish. I also wonder if it realises what effect it has on a second or third child when they have to go to a different school from that of their elder brother or sister. Indeed, that is not solely confined to the maintained sector. In September, some schools will have to decide whether to admit siblings or children who reside in the parish. They will undoubtedly have to prioritise parish residents, but, according to the very rigid guidelines, that is not a clear case for a sensible temporary variation.

I look forward to hearing the Minister's comments today. I hope that he will agree that a measure of common sense would cure most of these problems, as, indeed, would — I will watch for Mr Storey's reaction — passing the ESA Bill and taking a realistic approach to area planning. We need to do these things in sequence; we always come back to that. I will leave it at that. I look forward to hearing from the Minister. We support the motion.

Mr Craig: I support the motion. I listened with interest to what Members said. I think that we all recognise that there are, indeed, some complexities in planning school systems and that birth rates and population movements in different areas have to be taken into account. The desirability of schools is an unknown factor that is down to parental choice, and we also have to consider different sectoral needs and how those change in geographical areas. Speaking as someone who has a bit of experience of doing complex project work, I can say that it is doable for the reason that the information is there. There have been a number of debates in this Chamber in recent years on the issue, and the thing that gets me is that the information is sitting there. A lot of it, such as birth rate trends, where people live and where they are moving to, is held by local government. A lot of it is out there. Government have those statistics and those facts and figures.

5.15 pm

The real in-depth issue is this: how do you plan all of this — planning is critical — and how do you match up the birth rates, the figures and where they are likely to want to go to school with the existing school infrastructure? This is where we get into what I call reality. I remind the Minister that, three years ago, we got ourselves in a situation, particularly in Lagan Valley, when we looked at preschool provision. All of a sudden, we ended up with hundreds of places short. The question in my mind was

this: how did the planners in education allow that to occur? It took three years for that situation to be turned around and fixed. Minister, surely alarm bells should have gone off in somebody's head about the issue of primary school provision. It took three years to fix the preschool issue, and you do not need to be a genius to work out that, all of a sudden, this year, those children started flooding into our primary schools in Lagan Valley, and lo and behold, we found underprovision in primary schools right across Lagan Valley. With the exception of one or two primary schools, all of them were oversubscribed. If that came as no surprise to me, having watched the previous three years' figures, how come the Department was caught out? There is something fundamentally wrong with the way the Department is planning the provision, Minister. I plead with you to look at that and get it fixed, because, if it is not fixed, we will end up with schools closing down and, a few years later, us ultimately going in and building new schools to replace the ones that we just closed.

If you do not believe that that happens, let me give you a very clear example of what was proposed in Lagan Valley. About six or seven years ago, a proposal was put on the table to amalgamate four schools in the south end of the town into one because of falling enrolment numbers. At the time, that looked sensible until people started to look at it in more depth. Today, three of those schools are now filled to the brim, and there is only one with underprovision. What would have happened if we had amalgamated those four schools? There would never have been the capacity in the single school to take the pupils that are now there. Thankfully, that never happened, because people with local knowledge intervened and tried to stop that. I now see a similar proposal coming on secondary provision. There is talk about amalgamating secondary schools to create a school with 1,400 pupils, but the figures show that, within five years, —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Craig: — there will be almost 2,500 pupils at that school. Planning needs to be real and local, and it needs to deal with local people and local facts.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Mr Craig: That is where the system is failing at present.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I support the motion and welcome the opportunity to speak. All board areas have schools in the primary and post-primary sectors where demand outstrips availability. All schools have an admissions criteria guide. The main criteria that are used to select a child to attend a school include the catchment area and family relationships such as whether any siblings attend.

Parental preference may not always match the end result for some families. In certain schools, enrolment figures can outweigh the admissions criteria. It can be frustrating for many parents when provision is made or priority given to those who attain compulsory school age at the time of admission or whose siblings are already at the school.

Members have given examples, and I have witnessed many situations when it came down to two remaining places, with children from different families having the same priorities. Those schools had to make the hard decision of choosing one child over another. From listening to parents, I know that those decisions can have

devastating consequences not just for the family but, in some cases, for the school. When a family has lost out on a place, I am aware of conflicts involving parents, schools, boards of governors and principals, with parents threatening to cut all family ties with a school. The obvious fallout is that a generation of children will miss out on attending a school in their local community.

Recently, I heard from a parent that a principal informed her that, if she sent her child to a certain nursery school, there would not be a place for that child in his primary school. That school is bursting at the seams. It should not be up to any one individual in a school to apply the admission criteria. That should rest with those who are tasked with and delegated the authority to apply a school's admissions criteria properly. They should do that within the guidelines, but that is not always the reality.

I welcome the Minister's work to date to ensure that some schools have been allowed to expand to meet growing demand and increase enrolment. Pragmatically, though, considerable work still needs to be done, and the Department needs to rise to the challenges. I would welcome a review of the current enrolment procedures so that children entitled to provision in their community have their needs met and their families do not have to make lengthy trips to schools that, in certain cases, are 10 to 15 miles away. As a member of the Education Committee, I have raised that issue with the Committee and, indeed, with the Minister. I have also raised the issue of the decline of the small rural Protestant schools along the border.

In my own area, the parental preference of some families is to send their children to a school in the controlled sector a few miles across the border in Strabane, as opposed to one that is 15 or 20 miles the other way. Those parents view their nearest controlled school as the one that is two miles across the border. In any review, cross-border provision also needs to be addressed.

Although the motion looks at oversubscription in the primary-school sector, we cannot lose sight of the issues that also exist in the post-primary sector.

Mr G Robinson: As someone who represents an area where educational challenges are commonplace, I believe that the debate is a pointer to how we deal with pupil attainment in schools in such areas. There are two oversubscribed schools in my constituency, which means that parents are spending cash that they can ill afford to take their children to schools further away. That only deepens the problems of deprivation. It is, therefore, essential that an attempt is made to fund places in schools that are tagged as being oversubscribed.

The very fact that schools are oversubscribed is proof that local people see them as an essential part of the community because of the high standard of education that they deliver. Enabling children to attend their local school is a real benefit for a deprived area because parents will have additional money that would otherwise be spent on transport. This is a means to protect employment locally and to ensure that children receive the best possible education so that they can maximise their chances of obtaining good employment and help to reduce educational challenges.

I understand that it is not cost-effective for some schools to stay open, but those schools generally suffer a shortage of pupils. The debate is about schools that are

oversubscribed. It is essential that our young people learn the basics of education in surroundings close to home, with suitable funding and prospects of ultimately benefiting their local, and the Northern Ireland, economy.

The Minister must review enrolment policy to ensure that our children and their future benefit by attending local schools. I support the motion.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an díospóireacht agus roimh an deis labhairt inniu. I welcome the debate and the opportunity to speak in it.

There has been a slight increase in the number of children seeking places in primary schools. There have been some difficulties for children in accessing the school of their choice or, should I say, the school that is the preference of their parents. However, as in a lot of the debates that take place in the Chamber, we should not exaggerate the problem. There are enough problems in education without exaggerating issues that are not really a problem.

The most recent figures inform us that 158,914 children are in the primary education system. Of that number, 865 did not get their first-choice school. That is unfortunate, but it is not a major problem. Sean Rogers effectively dismissed the statistics in a flippant remark to the effect that the 2% who do not get their first choice have been in touch with him.

It is unfortunate that not every child gets the school that is the first choice, but it is only a small percentage overall. Of course, we should always seek to make improvements to the system, where and when we can, because, although statistics tell a story from a certain perspective, they do not convey the disappointment or anguish of the parents whose child cannot get enrolled in a local school. Furthermore, statistics do not tell the full story of the inconvenience for parents whose child may have to travel a considerable distance to attend another school. Nevertheless, it is difficult to envisage a system in which the preference of parents can be guaranteed at all times. Unfortunately, on some occasions, that will just not be possible.

Jonathan Craig spoke about examples in his constituency whereby proposed planning for schools, had it taken place, would have resulted in chaos and mayhem. However, the fact is that that did not happen. The system has been flexible and agile enough to take local difficulties into account and, on most occasions, that happens.

Mr Craig: I thank the Member for giving way. As for flexibility, in Lagan Valley, ESA not being implemented created the inertia in the education system, which has now been rectified by the population increase. It was not good planning or listening to locally elected Members or anyone else that allowed schools to be maintained; it was a lack of inertia in the system.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Member for his intervention. I am not qualified to speak about issues in his constituency, but I will reiterate the figures. Around 600 children out of nearly 160,000 did not get a place. That is not bad going by any standards. If the Minister were to get a report on how he had done, I would say that it would be "excellent so far". Perhaps there could be slight improvement, but it would be very difficult.

5.30 pm

The way to address this issue is through the area planning process. It is through area planning that we are most likely to identify the projected need in any given area, and it is in the context of area planning that schools should be allowed to grow and expand.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Éirim le tacaíocht a thabhairt don rún seo. I support the motion.

The best way to illustrate the issue is by reference to examples of what is happening on the ground with individual schools. I have been approached by a number of schools in my constituency, including St Brigid's in Glassdrummond and St Patrick's Primary School in Crossmaglen. The board of governors of St Brigid's tells me that it is extremely concerned that it can admit only some of the children in its catchment area and has to refuse others. However, all those children are part of the local parish and community. Children are being separated from their peers at a very important stage in their development.

The board of governors also expressed concern about the distances that some children will have to travel. Indeed, the principal has been in correspondence with the Department over a number of years and has achieved temporary variations, one in 2012-13 and another in 2013-14. In 2013-14, a temporary variation was granted to admit 22 children, but, unfortunately, that left eight children who wanted to attend the school but who did not gain access. The baptismal records from the local church clearly indicate that there were 42 baptisms in 2011, and the likelihood is that all those children will be seeking places in the local primary school. There is also substantial house building in the area, so it is very clear that the trends are there. Where there are strong trends, the Department needs to respond to them in an adequate way and not just by temporary variation.

The capacity of St Patrick's Primary School in Crossmaglen, based on the number of classrooms, should be 377. The current admissions number is around 305. Obviously, the school wishes to assert that it has the capacity to admit all the pupils who apply but, unfortunately, is unable to do so. One of the criteria for admission to the nursery in St Patrick's is that children are admitted ahead of others if St Patrick's is going to be their feeder primary school. It seems unfair and illogical that children are being denied access to the feeder primary school that, one year previously, was the same primary school that was the basis for their admission to the nursery.

Despite being acknowledged as an area of social deprivation, Crossmaglen is a very vibrant area with a strong proud people. It has a great sense of community and collegiality, and there is great support for the local school. There is a deep sense of unfairness when children who live within a few hundred yards of the primary school do not gain admission to a school that their relations, neighbours, family and parents attended and instead have to attend another primary school that is sometimes in the region of three to six miles from their home.

St Patrick's Crossmaglen is a growing school. The Minister will know that; he has visited it. Over the past five years, enrolment has grown. The school has increased by over 20%, and temporary variations have been granted in three

of the past four years. So, obviously, there is a very clear trend there, and the Department needs to respond to it.

Both schools wish only to be in a position to admit children who are within their catchment area. They are not seeking to take pupils from any other primary school. So, I ask that common sense prevails in these and all cases and that the Department recognises the trends in population and attendance and responds appropriately to them.

Mrs Dobson: I also welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion. I know that I am not the only MLA who has been contacted by bewildered parents who have previously been given the news that no place was available at their local primary school for their child.

The House is often told about the endemic problem of empty school places. It is a problem for the current Minister in particular, as it has come to the fore under successive Sinn Féin Ministers. Yes, our school estate is unbalanced, and the area planning process could, and should, have been the major solution to that. Unfortunately, as it has transpired, the process that is in operation is almost as inept as the way that the Department first handled it. So, yes, there is a problem with empty spaces, but, as the motion states, there are also schools that are coming under greater pressures as local demand increases. It is really not that difficult a logic to understand. Local children should, of course, not only be entitled to a place at their local primary schools but actively accommodated to attend them. I accept that some primary schools are under greater demand than others and that there are cases where, for whatever reason, parents prefer to send to children to other schools. Naturally, those cases are more difficult to accommodate.

Therefore, I will keep most of my comments to local children not being awarded places at their local school. I will raise the case of one specific school. Last year, Donacloney Primary School had a P1 admission number of 30 pupils and an approved enrolment number of just over 230. The Minister will be well aware that, over recent years, places at that school have been coming under greater strain. Therefore, the Southern Education and Library Board produced a development plan that proposed increasing the school from eight classes to nine. Yet what did the Minister do? He rejected that proposal. His excuse at the time was to say that increasing the approved enrolment number would have had the potential to impact adversely on other schools in the area. The Minister will be able to confirm this, but is it not the case that, before making any development proposal, education and library boards are required to consult any schools that may be affected by the proposal? Of course, had it been the case that any of the children who were unsuccessful in getting a place at Donacloney were at least able to have been accommodated locally, some of the local anger would have been lessened. However, that was not the case. Why, Minister, did parents have to look as far away as Hillsborough for available places?

Donacloney is only one example. Others are facing the same problem and are getting treated in exactly the same way by the Department. There is a stubbornness in the Department of Education. I am not exactly sure to what extent his senior officials contribute to this attitude, but we have a Sinn Féin Minister who frequently points the finger of blame but rarely listens to genuine proposals. He may stand up here today and tell us that oversubscribed

schools are a relatively isolated problem but that, on the whole, there are more spaces available than young people to fill them. That may be the case, but, very much like his posturing over the provision of preschool places, it often comes down to a postcode lottery. Unless those excess places exist in the towns and villages that have oversubscribed primary schools, it is a total irrelevance to even mention them.

As I said earlier, it should not be a difficult logic to grasp. Primary school place provision should reflect local demand. If demand exceeds supply and there are no other schools in the immediate location, why, circumstances permitting, should schools not be allowed to increase their enrolment? It is simply indicative of the stubbornness of the Department. It does not suit its skewed outlook, and it is about time that the Department recognised the damaging impact that this is having on some of those local families unfortunate enough to find themselves a victim of it. I support the motion.

Mr Allister: I declare the interest of being chairman of the board of governors of Moorfields Primary School. Indeed, I will use Moorfields to illustrate some of the points that I want to make in the debate. It is a rural school about five miles east of Ballymena, serving a large rural hinterland. Its experience demonstrates the need for maximum flexibility with enrolment. It generally has an enrolment of about 200 or 210, with seven classes, but at the end of June this year we said goodbye to a double P7 class, because seven years ago flexibility was permitted to deal with a particular spike in demand. We were permitted to cater for two P1 classes at that point, and that worked itself right through the school. That meant that many local parents did not have to be disappointed when it came to being able to send their children to what they saw as their local school.

I question and wonder whether, if that situation had arisen in 2013, not in 2006, those parents, under this Minister, would have been disappointed, because the rigidity and necessity of control is such that their parental choice, which seems in every sphere to mean virtually nothing to the Minister, would have ranked so lowly. It is important that, in a school situation, where you have unexpected ebbs and flows, the school itself, which is seen by the locals as the hub of their community, can and should be able to accommodate their needs. It worked magnificently for Moorfields — yes, it required flexibility by staff, squeezing accommodation and all those things — and delivered to the parents the service that they require and are entitled to expect. That is how it should be, but I fear that under the present regime things would not be so. Indeed, it seems to me that the control mentality and the driven agenda are such that, very often, common sense is driven out the door.

I will illustrate that with another situation in another country school in the north-eastern area, Culcrow Primary School in the Aghadowey district. Five years ago, Culcrow Primary School was on its knees. It had something over 30 pupils. It was facing closure. Today, having got a new principal who pulled it up by the bootstraps, it has in excess of 80 pupils. It is growing year on year, yet, under another ambit of the Minister's policy, the culling of the small schools subsidy, he is set to remove £42,000 from that school. What is that going to do to a school that has proven its capacity to grow and be a success and that is bringing

a tremendous reformation to education in that country district? Suddenly, all of that is to be put at risk by the top-slicing of £42,000 of funding. That means at least a teacher. It probably also means a classroom assistant. That means that a school that is currently in an upward growth cycle is about to be curbed and sent back into the downward spiral from which it previously rescued itself.

That is why I say that you need both flexibility and common sense if we are going to have an education system that works and delivers.

5.45 pm

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Fáiltim roimh an deis an t-ábhar tábhachtach seo a phlé inniu, agus gabhaim buíochas leis na moltóirí ar an taobh eile den Seomra as an rún seo a chur os comhair an Tí. I welcome the opportunity to debate this important topic. I thank my colleagues, the proposers from across the Floor, for bringing the motion before the House.

The motion was introduced by Mr Storey, who went on to lambaste me about my failure to carry out policies — clueless, confusion — and say that nothing in the Department was working properly. Look at the motion: it calls on the Minister of Education to

“review the current enrolment procedures to ensure that all children are able to attend their local schools.”

The motion does not present a DUP proposal on how we ensure that all local children attend their local school; it calls on me, as Minister, to do that — the person who, he spent the opening part of his speech telling the world and its mother, cannot run the Department. That seems a wee bit of a contradiction in the motion, but we will return to that as we move on.

I would like to see the day when we come into the Chamber and Members propose motions that actually set out a proposal on how to do something and how they would resolve the issue that causes them concern. Mrs Dobson, two minutes into her speech, suggested that I would stand up and tell the House that everything was OK and did not need changed even though it did need changed. So I waited, in the last three minutes of her speech, for her to tell me how I should change it. Alas, in the last three minutes of Mrs Dobson's speech, there were no proposals on how to change the system that, she says, is so deeply flawed.

Mr Storey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: I will come back to you in a minute.

Perhaps we need to reach that stage. I think that some of you have been in opposition for too long. For too long, you have got away with saying what you believe to be wrong with the situation, when, really, you need to put forward proposals that, in your opinion, would rectify the situation. Every time you make a decision, particularly a political decision, somebody will agree with you and somebody will disagree with you. That is fine. Every time you put forward a proposal, somebody will agree with you and somebody will disagree with you. When you are dealing with the admissions process for 850-odd primary schools — 24,000 individual cases each year — and you change that system, I guarantee now that at least one person will

disagree because their child has been affected by the change in the system.

Mr Storey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: The difficulty for Members opposite is this: they do not wish to make a decision, because they have not got the proposals to make the decision. They have been in opposition that long that they have got to the position where they listen to the last lobby through the door. The position of the last lobbyist through the door is their position. They will defend that position, put forward proposals and amendments on that position and say, "That is our position now". The difficulty with that is that the next person coming through the door might have a different opinion. I am happy to give way to Mr Storey.

Mr Storey: Is the Minister telling the House today, in the light of the lecture that he has given us, that, on computer-based assessments, the Department got it right; on levels of attainment, the Department got it right; on the common funding formula, the Department got it right? If he is, he really is not living in the real world. He is the Minister, and he knows that he is in the wrong.

Mr O'Dowd: On computer-based assessment, the providers did not get it right. We are now going through that.

Not only have I proposed levels of progression, but, let me think, the Education Committee agreed with the levels of progression and sent them to the House having agreed them. So, the Education Committee —

Mr Storey: You brought them —

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Committee agreed with my proposals on levels of progression and passed them through to legislation. I believe that the Member is the Chair of the Education Committee.

The common funding formula is out to review. I spent my weekend off studying the DUP's response to the common funding formula. I was no more enlightened at the end of the weekend than I was at the start of the weekend in relation to a contrary proposal from the DUP on that matter. I plan to spend my next weekend off in a more productive fashion.

The motion asks the Assembly to note the increase in the number of children who are seeking a place in primary school. The figures produced by the Statistics and Research Agency show that the number of children starting school has, indeed, risen, but it appears that this trend has already plateaued, with projected figures showing that the number of children due to enter primary school over the next five years will remain stable at around 24,000 a year.

The motion also calls for a review of the current open enrolment procedures to ensure that all children can attend their local primary school. We are dealing with figures of around 24,000 a year. I have never distanced myself from the 80,000 empty school desks figure. It is an accurate figure that we need to deal with, and I believe that we can do so through area planning, which is proceeding to plan. It is not about providing a list of schools for closure, but it comes back to this point: when you are in a position to make decisions, you have to make decisions. Not everybody will agree with my decisions, but, if you

disagree with them, come forward with an alternative because I would be keen to listen to it.

I listened to several Members speak about individual schools in their area, which, I suspect, is them producing a press release for their local paper. They will be able to get up and say that they defended St Patrick's in Crossmaglen, St Brigid's, Donacloney Primary or the schools in North Antrim that Mr Allister referred to and that they told the Minister that the numbers in those schools had to increase. That will all look very well in the local paper, but what you did not provide me with was this: what schools in your area do you want me to take the pupils out of? If I am to increase pupils in St Patrick's, in Dollingstown or Donacloney or your local school, you need to give me a list of schools that you want me to take pupils out of. If we are to continue with a 24,000 intake every year, the pupils have to come from somewhere. So when you are writing your press release for this week's local newspaper on what you told the Minister, include an extra wee paragraph and list the schools that, you suggest, the Minister take the pupils out of so that they can be sent to your local school instead. That would be a very interesting press release. You stand up in here and identify the pupil numbers of individual schools, but the pupils have to come from a school in that locality. I suggest that as the way forward for your media strategy this week.

Legislation requires the Department to set enrolment and admission numbers for each school. The numbers are set each year in consultation with boards of governors, CCMS and the education and library boards. The open enrolment policy was brought in to enable parents to express their preference for the school that they wish their children to attend, and, in the vast majority of cases, it works. Over 96% of applicants in the 2013-14 academic year got a place in their first preference school. I am happy enough to go with the motion and review the enrolment policy, but, when reviewing it, I want to be assured that we hit at least 96% because, if we change it and do not hit 96%, it will not have been a change for the good. In fact, over 98% of children have been placed in their first, second or third preference school.

As part of the open enrolment policy, the Department is responsible for setting admission numbers for each school. We do that by taking account of the teaching accommodation available and the physical capacity of the school. This is a straightforward process, and most schools can work well within their allocated number. The difficulty arises when schools receive more applications than they have places. Under the current legislation, schools are required to set and publish criteria that will be used to determine which pupils to admit in the event of a school being oversubscribed.

Setting criteria is the responsibility of the school. The criteria must be clearly defined and defensible because parents have the right to appeal to an independent tribunal if they consider that the board of governors did not apply or correctly apply its published admissions criteria. Local admissions criteria are down to the board of governors, who come from the community. Different boards of governors may have different definitions of local, but I have challenged a number of schools that have come to me looking to increase their numbers, saying that wee Jonny and Jane live very locally and cannot get in. When I go through the addresses of all the other pupils, I identify

children who travel in from other areas, so I ask the school how, if one of their main criteria is that wee Jonny and Jane who live locally should get into the school, a pupil travelling for three or four miles got in ahead of them. The response might be, "Well, we need to get people in. There are numbers; that is our catchment area". I will ask, "Which is it? Is it numbers, pupils or the local area?". At the end of the day, it is boards of governors that decide. If wee Jonny and Jane cannot get in and children from a greater distance away are being allowed in, it is the admissions criteria of the school that are at fault and not the legislation.

As regards the admissions criteria set by schools, the Department has no role in the process other than to provide advice. I believe that, if a school sets its criteria correctly, most children will be allocated a place at their local school and the problems that we have encountered, particularly in the last year, with schools having to approach the Department for temporary variations to accommodate children that their criteria rejected will be resolved. It has been suggested to me in previous correspondence that the Department should take responsibility for setting criteria across the board. That would require a change in legislation and a standard set of criteria that may not meet the priorities and local circumstances of each and every school.

In September, my officials, along with representatives from the education and library boards, held a series of workshops with all primary school principals and boards of governors. Members were invited. The purpose of the workshops was to discuss the admissions process and the role of boards of governors in that process and to support them in drawing up admissions criteria that are fit for purpose and reflect the needs of individual communities.

Various Members referred to the temporary variations process, which we have used this year. We received 1,050 applications for temporary variations, 637 of which were granted. Mr Allister referred to what happened with his local school in 2006, which perhaps relates to development proposals. We say to schools that come forward with temporary variations regularly that, if there is a regular oversubscription to your school, the best way to deal with that in the long term is through a development proposal that can deal with all the issues.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr O'Dowd: Just give me one second.

A development proposal has to go through the processes and be advertised. The final decision is mine. I make that decision on the basis of the evidence presented to me by my departmental officials. It takes into account all the issues relevant to the area. It comes back to the point that I raised at the very start: if I increase the numbers at one school and do not take into account the effect that will have on the other schools around it, that decision can have a very serious and detrimental impact on other schools in the locality. As regards Donacloney, there is a school in that vicinity with only 50 pupils in attendance. If I were to increase numbers in Donacloney and not take that other school into account, I suspect that I would receive a delegation asking me what will happen to that school. So, we have to take into account all the numbers around the school.

I think that Mr Storey wants back in.

Mr Storey: In the case of Donacloney, why, as the Member said, did you, as Minister, reject the development proposal after the education and library board had recommended it and gone through the consultation process?

Mr O'Dowd: I suspect that, sometimes, it is left to the big, bad Minister to make the negative response. In fairness to the boards, they recognise the fact that the final decision is with the Minister. They go through their processes and present an argument to the Minister. It is up to the Minister to agree with it or not, but that is the process. The process was followed correctly in that case.

I want to refer to Mr Allister's local school. He suggests that the process that that school went through in 2006 might have been looked at differently by this Minister. This Minister works under exactly the same legislation as was in place in 2006. There has been no change to the legislation. I have to look at a development proposal or temporary variation through that lens and come to a decision as to whether or not a school should expand. I am not sure what you mean by that. What is your local primary school called?

Mr Allister: Culcrow.

Mr O'Dowd: Culcrow. I have not removed the small schools subsidy. There was a proposal in the common funding formula review from Sir Bob Salisbury. However, I have not removed it, so I am not sure what you suggest by that.

In conclusion, what I say to Members is this: when you are dealing with around 24,000 applications every year and you introduce a formula or criteria for entry into a school, you will ultimately run into a number of difficulties in not meeting the circumstances of individual pupils or families. That is the reality of the situation. I believe that the formula and the legislation that we have in place is working well, with 96% getting into their first preference school and 98% getting into their second or third school of choice. Of course, I have no difficulty in reviewing it to ensure that we increase that rate and, if there are any anomalies in the system, that we identify them and move on. As I said at the start, however, it would be nice to come into a Chamber where somebody comes forward with a thought-out proposal rather than simply coming in and telling the Minister that he does not know what he is doing but asking him to go and review it to see whether he can find a solution to the problem in the first place.

6.00 pm

Mr Newton: I thank everyone who took part in the debate. Generally speaking, it was moderate and even-tempered. Members expressed their concerns for their constituency, though this is a problem that is not tied to one constituency. When children approach those first formal steps to get into the system of education, two concerns face parents, and those were highlighted across the Chamber. The first is that parents want their child to get into the school of the parents' first choice. The second is that they want their children in a school where classroom numbers are manageable. The solution to the second concern seems to be so simple that it is only common sense, and common sense was highlighted during the debate rather than rigid dogma, which is, perhaps, being applied. The way to deal with overcrowding is to add classrooms and hire some of the 240 teachers supported by the OFMDFM initiative for a fixed period.

The formative years of a child's education are vital for their success in their future education, academic success in later years and success in their future employment, whatever that may be. Building a positive relationship of trust between teacher and pupils in the very early years in a class of manageable numbers is essential for future educational success. It is critical that teachers are in a classroom that has a manageable number and where they can deliver the quality of education that we want. It is critical that the teacher is able to perform his or her task in a professional manner.

The squeeze in primary school places comes from a rising birth rate. I accept that a rising birth rate is not common the whole way across Northern Ireland, but there are areas in Northern Ireland where there are significant rises in the birth rate that must be taken into account in the planning situation. Mr Storey highlighted one of those situations in my area of east Belfast, where, three schools having closed, a newbuild school was promised. In fact, there were two newbuild schools: Strandtown was promised as a newbuild school by your predecessor, and Victoria Park Primary School is supposedly a newbuild school. All the figures indicate that there is going to be a 14% rise in the birth rate. There was a 14% rise over the past five years, but, all of a sudden, the 14 classrooms that the BELB proposed were reduced to 12. All of a sudden, on 10 October, the principal receives a letter saying, "By the way, principal, your admissions number has been cut from 60 to 50". Given the circumstances, where is the common sense in that?

The Minister, responding to a question from Lord Morrow on 4 September, which was just a few weeks ago, confirmed that 150 children in the controlled sector in the Belfast Education and Library Board area did not get their first choice of primary school, and 72 in the Catholic maintained sector did not get their first choice over the past five years. Let us examine the 150 who did not get their first choice. The Minister made much of the statistics. A total of 62 of those pupils who did not get their first choice were in East Belfast, the constituency where the 12-classroom primary school is to be built instead of the 14-classroom one. In East Belfast, 45% of children did not get into their first-choice school. The general trend in the number of children aged nought to four years in Northern Ireland is upward, and all the statistics indicate that.

I turn to some of the points that have been made by Members. Minister, the debate, as I have said, was extremely moderate. Real concerns were expressed by Members about schools in their area, recognising that area-based planning is a difficult and complex task. However, it is not, Minister, made any easier when your immediate response is to defend the status quo.

The Chairman of the Committee outlined a way forward. I have no doubt that, when you check Hansard, you will see that. His interest in this area goes beyond politics: he has a passion for the education of children and for the education system of Northern Ireland. He dropped the bombshell about Ashfield Girls' High School. A few months ago, representatives of the BELB were going around telling the schools in second-level education that they were going to lift the cap. Now, Ashfield Girls' High School is to have a reduction in numbers.

Mr O'Dowd: Will the Member give way?

Mr Newton: I am happy to give way.

Mr O'Dowd: I am not aware of the letter, and I have asked my officials to look into that in further detail. If Members could pass me a copy of the letter, I will investigate that further. I am happy to engage in more detail with Members about that matter.

Mr Newton: Mr Hazzard supported the principle of children attending local schools. He said that he supported area-based planning and felt that locally based solutions were necessary. I do not think that anyone in the Chamber would argue against that. In fact, that is what people were arguing for. In the BELB area — you know the situation in that board, Minister — locally based solutions are denied because locally based political representatives are refused the opportunity to take part in the debate on policy. That is because you have excluded the four eligible nominees from Belfast City Council. In the South Eastern Education and Library Board, decisions are being taken without any input whatsoever from politicians. There are three commissioners who were appointed years ago, and no attempt has been made to rectify that situation. Every decision on a school in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area is made without any local representatives having a voice. That, Mr Hazzard, indicates that there is not the local input that is necessary.

I have great respect for Mr Rogers because of the professionalism that he brings to the debate due to his background in education. He said that the first steps in education represented a major milestone in a child's life, as well as for parents. He made the case for rural schools and the need for a joined-up approach. He gave examples and emphasised the need for strategic planning. That is something, Minister, that Members seem to have identified, but they cannot see that that strategic approach is being put forward.

Mr Danny Kinahan, the Deputy Chair of the Education Committee, treated us to his jigsaw analogy. It was a very good analogy.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Newton: I accept all his points about the overall picture. I apologise, because very good points were made by a succession of Members across the Chamber.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the increase in the number of children who are seeking a place in primary schools; and calls on the Minister of Education to review the current enrolment procedures to ensure that all children are able to attend their local schools.

Adjourned at 6.10 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 5 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is it not a comment on the relevance of this House that, today, after last night's devastating programme on the disappeared —

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Allister: — there is no opportunity to raise the matter —

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Allister: — even as —

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Allister: — a Matter of the Day?

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Allister: Is that not a shameful dereliction in this House?

Mr Speaker: Order. I ask the Member to take his seat or leave the Chamber. The Member knows quite well that he is totally out of order. Well he knows that. It is not — *[Interruption.]* Order. It is not in order to question such decisions. I will leave it there.

Public Petition: Exploris

Mr Speaker: Mr McCarthy has sought leave to present a public petition in accordance with Standing Order 22. The Member will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject.

Mr McCarthy: The petition to save Exploris contains the signatures of over 11,000 people from all walks of life who have one thing in common, which is their demand that the Assembly and different Departments provide regional funding and work with officers in Ards Borough Council to draw up a plan and a vision to enable Exploris to continue to operate in Portaferry as the Northern Ireland aquarium.

Exploris is one the top 10 tourist attractions in Northern Ireland. It is sited in Portaferry on the edge of Strangford lough and has been in existence since 1987. At its height, it was capable of attracting over 100,000 visitors per annum. The aquarium has a fantastic array of local fish, and Exploris takes visitors below the lough to experience the habitat and existence of a wide variety of marine life. In addition, of course, we have the famous seal sanctuary. The 100,000 visitors contribute to the economy, not only of Portaferry but of every small village in the Ards peninsula. They use the Strangford ferry and contribute to the economy of the village of Strangford and beyond.

Exploris is a world aquatic site in Northern Ireland. Our appeal this morning is to do what is necessary to save Exploris. Mr Speaker, I will also hand you an A3 page containing the signatures of a dozen local schoolchildren who are desperate to save their fish and their seals. Let the Assembly listen to the cry of those dozen children and the 11,000 adults who have signed the petition and prove that we are a listening Assembly that can rise to the challenge and save Exploris.

Mr McCarthy moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Speaker: I will forward the petition to the Minister of the Environment and send a copy to the Chair of the Committee for the Environment, Anna Lo.

Ministerial Statement

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make the following statement on the independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Northern Ireland.

In my written ministerial statement of 25 September 2013, I indicated that, following the appointment of the independent chair to the inquiry and agreement of the terms of reference, I would make a further statement on the independent inquiry and the thematic review by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI). I advise the House that I have appointed Professor Kathleen Marshall to lead the inquiry into child sexual exploitation. Professor Marshall has a long and distinguished career as a practising and academic lawyer. She is a former Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland. She was part of the team that undertook the youth justice review in Northern Ireland, which reported in 2011. She also chaired a statutory inquiry into child abuse in children's homes in Edinburgh, which resulted in a published report.

Professor Marshall will lead an inquiry board, which will include the chief executives of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI). I am also confident that we will secure the involvement of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) with the agreement of Minister O'Dowd. The board will be supported by an inquiry team, which will include individuals with experience and knowledge of child protection.

The methodology will be a matter for the chair to decide. However, I understand that it is intended to hold an initial summit this month. I also understand that it is intended that calls for evidence will be made and that key stakeholders will be involved throughout the process of the inquiry. I have emphasised the need to ensure that the views of children and young people are considered and given due weight. I met Professor Marshall yesterday. Among other things, we discussed and agreed the terms of reference for the inquiry.

As agreed with Professor Marshall, the inquiry will seek to establish the nature of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland and a measure of the extent to which it occurs; examine the effectiveness of current cross-sectoral child safeguarding and protection arrangements and measures to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation; make recommendations on the future actions required to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation and on who should be responsible for those actions; and report the findings of the inquiry to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Minister of Justice and, with his agreement, the Minister of Education within one year of the commencement of the inquiry. In addition, I have agreed that the inquiry should consider specific safeguarding and protection issues for looked-after children, taking into account the SBNI's ongoing thematic review; seek the views of children and young people in Northern Ireland and those of other key stakeholders; and engage with parents to identify the issues that they face and seek their

views on what needs to be done to help them keep their children safe from the risk of CSE.

The inquiry will not focus on the circumstances and/or responses to the 22 children who are part of the ongoing police investigation known as Operation Owl. That will be the focus of the separate thematic review that is being undertaken by the SBNI. However, available learning that is generated from that review will be taken into account by the inquiry. The terms of reference reflect that this is a wider societal issue affecting children in a variety of circumstances, not just those in the care system.

I expect the inquiry to conclude and report before the end of 2014. Where learning is identified by the inquiry, it is essential that it be shared and acted on quickly. I want to ensure that, as far as possible, we prevent further sexual exploitation of children and young people in Northern Ireland. I also want to ensure that our child safeguarding systems are sufficiently robust across all sectors. In particular, it is essential that those who are responsible for exploiting children in that way face the full rigours of the law.

I have agreed with the inquiry chair that information will be made available at appropriate junctures; for example, at the end of the call for evidence strand of the inquiry and when the inquiry board and team have analysed evidence that has been provided. An inquiry website will be established to facilitate the sharing of information throughout the process. Of course, any evidence that emerges throughout the process that indicates that immediate action is needed to protect children in the here and now will be made available to the appropriate authorities, that is, the police and/or social services.

Members are aware that the SBNI is being directed to conduct a thematic review into the 22 cases that triggered the ongoing police investigation. As I am required to in law, I have consulted the SBNI on the terms of the direction. Consultation is ongoing, and I hope to be in a position to report further to the House on the terms of reference for the review in the near future. The SBNI review is a complex piece of work in the sense that it interfaces directly with an ongoing police investigation. So, we need to be assured that the risk of interference with that investigation is kept to an absolute minimum. That is the ongoing discussion with the SBNI.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his statement. I welcome the appointment to what is a critical piece of work into safeguarding our children and young people. The Minister will be aware that the Committee has written to the Department three times in the past six weeks asking for sight of the terms of reference in advance of it coming to the House. Therefore, why has the Minister chosen to simply ignore that offer of assistance and has, effectively, undermined the Committee's scrutiny role? Will the inquiry have powers to address the failures in the system that have been identified throughout the process? What powers will be in place to deal with that?

Mr Poots: First, we agreed the terms of reference last night with Kathleen Marshall, who is going to head up the inquiry. The terms of reference were then agreed with the Justice Minister, and they have also been sent to the Education Minister. If the Committee wants to draw the process out, elongate the process and slow down the

inquiry's actually starting, I could have started engaging with it on that basis. However, in that respect, I think that there has been adequate opportunity for key people to be involved in identifying the terms of reference for the inquiry. As the Committee looks at the terms of reference, I think that it will see that it is a process that is inclusive, a process that will involve the Committee at appropriate stages, and a process that all Committee members can participate in in a very fulsome way. This is not a process about exclusion. I want it to get started. I would have liked to have started it quicker, and I do not want further delay. So, without being disrespectful to the Committee, that is my line of thinking. I think that it is important that we get the process under way and that the work is done and that, if there are failings and weaknesses, they are identified at an early point so that we can seek to close those gaps.

Mr D McIlveen: I, too, welcome the Minister's statement. Will the Minister advise us who will be on the inquiry team that is to be established?

Mr Poots: The inquiry team will include experts in the field of child safeguarding and protection, as well as professionals from each of the three organisations that are involved in the inquiry, that is, the RQIA, the CJINI and ETI. Other experts and professionals may be co-opted and brought on for support when required. That will be in the hands of the inquiry team, led by Kathleen Marshall and those support organisations, to facilitate.

Mr McKinney: The SDLP would also have liked to have seen the terms of reference presented at the Committee. We welcome the inquiry and the appointment. Given the way that it is designed, in thematic form and inquiry, will the Minister assure the House that we will not end up with simply a narrative about the nature of child sexual exploitation, as opposed to a robust inquiry drilling down into accountability?

10.45 am

Mr Poots: It is important to identify the fact that there are two different inquiries on two different streams. The Safeguarding Board will carry out a thematic inquiry that will focus on the 22 cases that were reported and that the police are investigating. So, you have a police investigation, and running alongside that you have the Safeguarding Board's inquiry. That will be very important in order to see where particular weaknesses can be identified in those cases. The inquiry that we are conducting will be more policy-driven, and, therefore, we need to look at how policies are implemented on the ground and see where those changes need to be made. Two different and separate inquiries are taking place. It is important that there is no considerable overlap and that each inquiry covers all the relevant issues that are of concern to Members and ensures that we have better safeguarding procedures in future.

As to the results of the inquiry, I am not sure whether our failings are significant. I do not think that we should prejudge it. However, one way or another, 22 children have been the subject of sexual exploitation. Even if many of them have been willing participants, we need to do more to protect them. It is important that we try to get to all these issues and discuss this in a very open and honest way in an honest framework to ensure that those who have an opportunity and need to say something about it will have a chance to do so.

Mr Beggs: I, too, thank the Minister for his statement and welcome the appointment of the chair. In his original statement, the Minister announced, just like today, the close involvement of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and Criminal Justice Inspection. He also expressed an aspiration that the Education and Training Inspectorate would be involved. How have you engaged with the Department of Education and the Minister, and why are they not yet on board?

Mr Poots: My officials and I have engaged with both Departments. We have been in regular correspondence on the issues, so a course of work has happened. Justice was able to come on board with the issue, and I think that Education will come on board. I honestly do not believe that Education can sit outside the process. We are looking at a situation where around 20% of children who are being exploited are in the looked-after sector, but 80% are not. Where are those 80%? Most, if not all of them, will or should be in the education system. Can Education afford to sit outside the process? I do not think so.

Mr McCarthy: The Alliance Party also welcomes the announcement this morning and the appointment of Professor Kathleen Marshall. Does the Minister agree that we should examine past practices while we await the outcome of the review? What assurances can the Minister give on measures being taken now to ensure the protection of vulnerable young people in care?

Mr Poots: We will certainly look at the past. Of course we will look at the past; we have to. A number of people have responsibilities for giving protection to children and young people now: social services; the people who look after the care of those children; the PSNI; and others. It is important that we recognise — it is one thing that I am very interested in seeing in the report — that children have human rights, but those who care for them have responsibilities. Sometimes, that responsibility may supersede what is perceived to be a human right for the child. I do not believe that 14- or 15-year-olds in a family household would generally be allowed to go out at 11.30 pm or go out with strangers. An argument can be made that you are denying that child their rights, but I also think that there is an argument to be made that you need to ensure the safety of that child first and foremost. You hear accusations, and the review needs to identify, in the first instance, whether they are valid. We can then perhaps take actions to strengthen the confidence of the staff working in these facilities and dealing with young people with the plethora of legislation that exists and the challenges that they face, in particular, from human rights legislation.

Ms Brown: I also welcome the Minister's statement and, indeed, the appointment of the chair of this important inquiry. Will any children or young people be involved in the inquiry?

Mr Poots: It is absolutely essential that children and young people are involved and that their voices are heard. We know that many of these young people are very vulnerable. The inquiry will give early consideration to the most effective and, indeed, ethical ways of involving children and young people in its work and gaining their perspective on the issues. I have discussed this with the chair, and she is fully committed to a meaningful engagement with children and young people. She has experience of that, having been Commissioner for Children and Young

People. It is intended that some engagement will also take place through our schools.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I, too, thank the Minister for his statement. In your statement, Minister, you talked about the ongoing police investigation known as Operation Owl and said that it will be the focus of a separate thematic review by the Safeguarding Board. You referred to 22 children. Can you confirm that only 22 children are involved in that operation, or are more likely to become involved?

Mr Poots: As far as I am aware, that is the figure; that is what has been presented to me. I do not know whether there will be any change to that, but I do not think it is appropriate for me to speculate. What I do know is that there are evil, wicked people out there. There are predators out there, and predators always look for the vulnerable. Children who are looked after are amongst our most vulnerable. We need to recognise that. We also need to recognise that a lot of people have a responsibility to those young people, so, if they see things that perhaps should not be happening, they should report it, and, if they see things that could go wrong, they should seek to use the appropriate interventions through the appropriate authorities. It is incredibly important that we all recognise that vulnerable young people — vulnerable people in general — need to be protected, as far as possible, from predators. We all have some work to do on that front.

Mr Dunne: I, too, thank the Minister and welcome his statement on a most sensitive issue of great concern to the public. If, as a result of the inquiry, major non-conformances are found that highlight system failures, what actions will the Minister take?

Mr Poots: If system failings or concerns about any agency's actions or, indeed, inactions are identified, they will be referred to the relevant organisation's senior management. The appropriate governance and accountability arrangements will then be enacted. Concerns may also need to be referred to the Safeguarding Board so that it has the opportunity, through its member organisations, to cascade learning appropriately on a wider scale. I should say that that may apply not just to major failings; it may apply to minor failings as well, because a series of minor failings can often lead to major consequences.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra agus as an fhógra go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his announcement. I go back to a point that Mr McCarthy touched on earlier: will the Minister expand on what specific measures his Department has taken in its areas of responsibility to ensure that the abuse alleged in those 22 cases does not happen again?

Mr Poots: A number of measures were taken on the back of the Barnardo's report of 2011, including the establishment of the Safeguarding Board. A series of measures were taken in line with six recommendations, one of which was for the police, and five of which were for my Department. All those measures have been acted on. Most have been implemented in full, and some are being completed. Members should take some comfort from the fact that one key area that we have implemented is the close liaison and the embedment between the police and social services, which is absolutely essential. I know that

many parts of GB will look on quite enviously at the close cooperation between those organisations in Northern Ireland. Much has been done, but do I think that more could be done? I will be very surprised if we do not identify areas of weakness, vulnerabilities and gaps that we can close to provide greater support to these young people.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for his statement. Will he give a commitment that the inquiry will focus on ensuring the safety of children through critiquing current practice as opposed to simply apportioning blame?

Mr Poots: This inquiry is about a critique of practice; the Safeguarding Board will be more associated with the 22 cases and that course of work. This inquiry is more policy-focused. When people fail, blame often has to be applied. However, the inquiry has not necessarily come about because of a series of individual failures; it is more down to a series of very challenging circumstances. People often believe that they are doing the right thing, but it may not necessarily be the right thing. The inquiry will focus strongly on policy and on identifying what more could be done. It will look at interpretation of the law and ensure that staff interpret the law appropriately so that too much weight is not given to one aspect of the law to the detriment of young people. I assure the House that all those things will be looked at.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for the statement and welcome it. This is a grave issue, and it is important that there is full and proper public scrutiny. In light of that, what steps does the Minister intend to take to ensure that the House is kept informed of progress?

Mr Poots: I will make regular statements to the House on the progress of the inquiry and the review in so far as my doing so will not compromise the integrity of the process. Members will appreciate that I want to be fully advised by the respective chairs on an ongoing basis, and I expect that I will receive topical and listed questions from Members because the issue is of importance to the public. It may not affect a large number of people, but, nonetheless, the effects on the relatively small number need to be felt by all of us, and all of us must ensure that we do as much as we can to make sure that it does not happen as regularly as it has in the past. I do not believe that we can entirely eliminate it, but we need to do everything that we can to mitigate the circumstances of vulnerable young people and to ensure that predators do not find easy access to them.

Mr Givan: The Health Minister and the Justice Minister have made it clear that any form of child abuse should be reported to the appropriate authorities immediately. Given that, how concerned is the Minister that, yesterday, the deputy First Minister compromised that message by defending Gerry Adams, who clearly failed to report the abuse of his niece to the appropriate authorities? Furthermore, what steps can be taken to educate not only politicians but parents and the public about the risks associated with child sexual exploitation?

Mr Poots: I was somewhat struck yesterday by the views expressed by the recently retired Director of Public Prosecutions in GB, who indicated that those who fail to report child abuse should be prosecuted for such activity and that the law should allow that. We should all reflect on that. It is wrong for people not to report child abuse. It is one of the most obscene things that anyone can do,

and those who have failed to report it have to live with their conscience. I also think that the PSNI and the Public Prosecution Service need to ensure that nobody is above the law, otherwise the law is diminished in the eyes of the people.

11.00 am

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his statement, and, along with my colleagues, I welcome it. The appointment of Professor Marshall is indeed a wise appointment, given that she was a former Children's Commissioner, a member of the youth justice review in Northern Ireland and led an inquiry into sexual abuse in Edinburgh in Scotland. Given that and the timetable that the Minister has laid down, is there not a greater urgency to get a report earlier rather than in about a year's time? These issues are very urgent and need a focused, sharp report. Would the Minister respond to that?

Mr Poots: I would, because I asked the same question myself: why do we have to wait a year? The argument was made very strongly by the RQIA that, after all its consultations and the work that it had done, it will reasonably take from nine to 12 months to produce the report. That disappoints me, because, when we did the Troop review, which was a different course of work, we had an initial report in three months and the final report in six. I have agreed with the inquiry team that, where key findings come to light, they will be made available to us so that we can act on them. The fact that the inquiry will take a year should not stop us taking action where it is identified that action should be taken. I take some comfort from that. I asked the same question myself, and a strong and convincing case was made that it will take this length of time to fully carry out the work that is required.

Mr Allister: Going back to the comments of Keir Starmer, does the Minister think that the term of reference that says:

"make recommendations on the future actions required to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation"

is adequate to permit a recommendation that, as Mr Starmer suggested, failure to report child sex abuse should be made a criminal offence? Is that term of reference adequate for that, and, if it is not, will the Minister look further at that particular term of reference?

Mr Poots: The Member will know, because he practised for many years, that people were prosecuted under the legislation in respect of the withholding of information on wrongdoing. Therefore, I do not accept what some in the PSNI seem to think, which is that withholding information on child abuse is something that is untested. In fact, withholding information on criminal activity has been tested, and people have been found guilty of it. It is absolutely essential that the police and prosecution service do not in any way give succour to people who withhold information of any kind on criminal activity: terrorism, child abuse or otherwise. They should come forward and make what they know known to the police and the Public Prosecution Service and allow justice to flow from that.

Executive Committee Business

Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I beg to move

That The Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

The fishing boats scheme forms a part of the package of strategic assistance I announced for the sea fish catching sector earlier this year. You will recall that, on 21 October, the Assembly approved a scheme to assist the fishing industry with the cost of harbour and landing dues in response to the difficulties caused by unusual weather in the first quarter of 2013 and adapting to the challenges of reducing fish discards under the reformed common fisheries policy. I said at that time that it was appropriate to look at the needs of the fleet in a strategic way. These two schemes form part of that package of measures.

As part of the requirements of the common fisheries policy, fishing vessels over 12 metres in length must fit satellite-tracking devices and transmit their position every two hours to the fishing authorities. That has been a requirement for vessels over 15 metres in length since 2005 and for smaller vessels since 2011. Larger vessels have been using such equipment since 2006, while smaller vessels have yet to be equipped. In order to meet the new requirements for smaller vessels, a new generation tracking device has been developed and is now available. As well as sending the vessel's position, the new system has the capacity to send electronic logbook transmissions via satellite link to the authorities if the vessel is out of range of mobile phone transmission. Our intention is to equip the smaller vessels with this new system as soon as possible and to offer larger vessels the opportunity to fit the system. That is because the older systems have been operating for some years and are nearing the end of their operational life, so they will be liable to more breakdowns and expensive repairs.

In the context of the provision of strategic assistance to the fleet to help it to adapt to change, I decided that it was appropriate that the Department should fund not just the first-time installation for smaller vessels but the replacement of the older systems for larger vessels. Funding has therefore been secured from Europe for 90% of the cost, with 10% coming from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The European funding is being provided through a fund for financial assistance for expenditure on fisheries control, inspection and surveillance and is separate funding from the European Fisheries Fund.

The cost of the systems will be around £1,500 per vessel. That includes reasonable installation costs and a three-year warranty. Arrangements have also been put in place to pay the supplier directly once the system is installed so that vessel owners will not have to pay any money up front. All the vessel owner has to do is complete an application form and arrange with the supplier for a suitable date to fit the equipment.

We intend to launch the scheme on 1 December. We encourage any eligible vessel to apply as soon as possible, so that installation can take place in a planned way over

the winter months. I estimate that the final amount of grant awarded under the scheme will be approximately £200,000. I believe that that assistance will be a welcome boost to our fishermen to assist them with the costs of complying with the common fisheries policy. Therefore, I recommend the scheme to the House.

Mr Frew (The Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development): As Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate on this motion. The statutory rule is ultimately about European requirements for inspections and enforcement of EU rules that apply to fishing boats. Whilst that is not necessarily something that the fishing industry is keen on, I think that all recognise the need for it. If it has to happen, at least this statutory rule will allow the affected fishing boats to avail themselves of 100% funding to ensure that they comply with the regulations.

The Minister has already outlined the EU regulation that requires all fishing vessels over 12 metres to have a vessel-monitoring system capable of allowing the fisheries management authorities to automatically locate and identify the vessel. Vessels of 12 to 15 metres will be fitting such tracking devices for the first time, while those over 15 metres will have older devices that need replaced. The scheme will be funded by a 90% grant from Europe and a 10% grant from DARD. In total, DARD has secured some £294,000 for the scheme.

The Committee initially considered the statutory rule in May 2012. We noted that it was not progressed at that stage because of consideration being given to extending it to allow for the replacement of the older devices on boats over 15 metres. DARD has indicated to the Committee that some 120 boats will be able to avail themselves of the scheme. We look forward to getting an update on how many actually did. Once the decision had been made to allow for replacement on over-15-metre boats, the statutory rule came back to the Committee at its meetings of 2 July and 10 September 2013. At that point, the Committee indicated that it was content.

Mr Byrne: I, like the Chairman, welcome the statement by the Minister and, indeed, the merits of the scheme. It is an EU regulatory scheme that is desirable for a number of reasons for the commercial fishing industry in Northern Ireland. Better tracking helps safety-at-sea requirements and ensures that fishing regulations such as days at sea and total allowable catch are being complied with without doubt or unease. The proper documentation of fishing catches is necessary for the scientific monitoring and recording of fish stocks. If we want to see a proper fishing development plan for our fishing industry, centered around the three fishing ports of Portavogie, Kilkeel and Portaferry, this satellite-monitoring scheme is desirable and worthwhile for the industry in the long term. I welcome the fact that DARD has secured EU grant support funding for the scheme. I wish the fishing industry well in implementing it and look forward to the improvements that can accrue from it.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for her statement, which I also welcome. When our boats leave Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel to go out to fish, they can be dealing in four different fishing areas in Scottish waters, Irish waters or English waters. I am hopeful that these devices and the

EU legislation will be applied uniformly across the four jurisdictions.

Mrs O'Neill: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank all the Members who contributed to the debate, and I think that this sends out a very strong message to the fishing community that the Assembly and the Executive are committed to demonstrating our commitment to the ongoing sustainability of the fishing industry. Thank you for the contributions.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That The Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the draft Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

I seek the Assembly's approval to introduce the aforementioned statutory rule. Subject to the Assembly's approval, the rule will amend the Pharmacy (Northern Ireland) Order 1976. I will now explain briefly to Members why the amendment is needed.

There is currently no consistency across the nine statutory healthcare professional regulatory bodies with regard to legislation or guidance on the need to hold appropriate indemnity cover. In the past, concerns have arisen about the fact that some healthcare professionals practise without cover or with insufficient cover and that, in such circumstances, those whom they treat may be left without the means to seek redress in the event of a negative incident occurring that was caused by the negligence of the healthcare professional. In light of these concerns, the UK Government commissioned an independent review of policy on insurance and indemnity cover for healthcare professionals led by Finlay Scott the former chief executive of the General Medical Council.

In June 2010, the independent review group reported. It concluded that requiring healthcare professionals to have insurance or indemnity cover in place as a condition of their registration was the most cost-effective and efficient means of achieving the policy objective that all registered healthcare professionals have indemnity cover to ensure that individuals harmed due to the negligent activities of healthcare professionals can seek redress through compensation. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, along with the other three UK Health Departments, accepted the recommendations of the independent review group and undertook to introduce legislation to implement them at the next most appropriate opportunity.

During the review, negotiations were ongoing in Europe on a directive on patients' rights that raised, amongst other topics, the question of professional indemnity. On 28 February 2011, the European Union Commission, Parliament and European Council formally adopted directive 2011/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. This directive came into force on 9 March 2011. The directive places a requirement on member states that, by 25 October 2013, they have transposed into domestic law:

"systems of professional liability insurance, or a guarantee or similar arrangement that is equivalent or essentially comparable as regards its purpose and which is appropriate to the nature and the extent of the risk, are in place for treatment provided"

in member states.

As the majority of the regulation of healthcare professionals is performed on a UK-wide basis, the Department of Health has been proceeding with the transposition of the EU directive on behalf of all four administrations for these individuals.

The Department of Health in England recognises that it will not be able to make the 25 October 2013 date work. However, work is ongoing, and it anticipates that the requirement to transpose into domestic law will be met by mid-February 2014.

11.15 am

However, the regulation of pharmacists in Northern Ireland is currently undertaken by a separate statutory body, the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland — the society. Pharmacists in Northern Ireland are currently regulated under the Pharmacy (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 as amended and the supporting subordinate legislation. It is anticipated that the order will come into operation in Northern Ireland approximately two weeks after the required transposition date. It is anticipated that the risk of infraction proceedings by the EU Commission in the intervening period is relatively low.

My Department therefore proposes to meet the requirements of the EU directive by transposing article 4(2)(d) through this draft amendment order, which requires practising pharmacists to have appropriate cover under an indemnity arrangement. The draft order permits the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland to make regulation on certain provisions of the order; for example, what information they will require and when to ensure that practising pharmacists have indemnity cover in place.

The proposed legislation will have little or no financial impact on the vast majority of pharmacists. It will also permit the society to take action against a practising pharmaceutical chemist in the event of there not being an indemnity arrangement in place, a failure to comply with the information requirements or a failure to inform the registrar if an indemnity arrangement ceases. The action may be to remove the pharmacist from the register or to take fitness-to-practise action against them. The changes that are being proposed mirror changes that are proposed for the regulation of pharmacists in GB.

In summary, what I am proposing by requiring practising pharmacists to have indemnity cover in place as a statutory condition of registration will enhance patient and public confidence in the pharmacy profession and will provide a means of redress for patients in the event of a negative incident caused by negligence. Implementation of the amending legislation will have little or no effect on the vast majority of pharmacists in Northern Ireland, as insurance or indemnity cover is currently a professional requirement, which, in the majority of instances, is provided for by a pharmacist's employer.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for the statement. The Minister explained the purpose of the draft statutory rule, which requires the Assembly's affirmation before it can come into operation. The regulations, as the Minister said, will ensure that pharmacists have insurance or indemnity cover in place as a condition of their registration with the Pharmaceutical Society and will also reconstitute the council of the Pharmaceutical Society and extend the council's regulation-making powers on discipline.

The Committee initially considered the proposed legislation at its meeting on 18 September 2013 and the draft order at its meeting on 2 October 2013. The

Committee agreed to recommend that it be affirmed by the Assembly. I therefore support the motion on behalf of the Committee.

Mr McCarthy: I welcome the Minister's statement, and I am sure that all pharmacists in Northern Ireland will do the same. I spent last Friday morning in a very busy pharmacy in Ballynahinch, and I assure Members, if they need any assurance, how dedicated the people behind the counter are. Their minds have to concentrate on the work that they are doing for fear of some slip-up. I assure the Members that all the pharmacies in Northern Ireland are up for it. This will give them support and backing, and I support the statutory rule.

Mr Poots: I thank the Members for their comments and the Committee for its work in helping to progress this. I fully agree with Mr McCarthy that pharmacists play a very important role in society. The indemnity that will now be required if the proposal passes will not be a professional but a statutory requirement. I think that it is very important that that is the case and that pharmacists receive that support and indemnity on a statutory footing.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Committee Business

Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I beg to move

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 11 April 2014, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill [NIA Bill 26/11-15].

The Committee Stage of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill began on 25 September. The Bill consists of 19 clauses and covers four main areas: offences; assistance and support; the protection of victims of trafficking in human beings in criminal investigation and proceedings; and prevention and reporting.

The Committee appreciates the interest there is in this Bill, in particular around clause 6, which makes it an offence to purchase sexual services. The Committee has therefore written to a wide range of organisations and key stakeholders inviting comments and views to assist its scrutiny of the Bill. We have also placed notices in the local newspapers and on the Assembly website. To date, the Committee has received in excess of 120 submissions from a range of statutory and voluntary organisations and numerous individuals, many of which make substantial comments on the Bill.

While the closing date for written submissions was last Friday, a number of organisations have requested an extension to the deadline to enable them to submit evidence this week. Therefore, the number of written submissions is likely to rise further. The Committee will take oral evidence on the Bill from the end of November onwards. With the volume of written evidence received, the oral evidence sessions are likely to take some time to complete.

Given the level of interest in the Bill and the need for robust and detailed scrutiny of the areas that it covers, at the meeting on 17 October, members agreed to seek an extension to the Committee Stage until 11 April next year. This extension would enable the Committee to undertake a visit to Sweden to meet relevant officials and representatives to discuss the outworkings of its legislation, which is similar to that provided for by clause 6 of the Bill, and to meet the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality to discuss its report on a review of legislation on prostitution, in which it has recommended adopting a similar approach to the Swedish model. These meetings will greatly assist and inform members' consideration of the issues. While the extension would result in a relatively long Committee Stage, we do have to deal with a range of other criminal justice issues during this time, including other Bills to be introduced by the Department of Justice in the near future.

As indicated during Second Stage, the Committee has made it clear that it wants to see the strongest possible legislation introduced in Northern Ireland in relation to human trafficking. The Committee wants to give the Bill the detailed scrutiny that it merits and will require time to

discuss the issues covered within it. The Committee will report to the Assembly on the Bill as soon as possible within the proposed timescale of 11 April 2014.

I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 11 April 2014, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill [NIA Bill 26/11-15].

Committee System Review

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee Review Group): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee review group entitled 'Review of the Committee System' (NIA 135/11-15).

Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. It is my pleasure to move this motion on the work of the Committee review group (CRG) looking at the Committee system.

The need for the review came from a recommendation made by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee that it would be:

"prudent for the Assembly to make an early start to a review of the Assembly Committee System and that the CLG should have an important role in this review."

On the foot of this recommendation, the terms of reference for a review of the Committee system were agreed by the Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG). The review was undertaken by a Committee review group made up of one Chairperson from each of the political parties represented on the CLG, and three expert advisers. Those advisers were Dr Ruth Fox, director and head of research of the Hansard Society; Mr Art O'Leary, secretary of Constitutional Convention Ireland; and Mr Trevor Reaney, Director General and Clerk to the Northern Ireland Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks, on behalf of the CRG, to the expert advisers and all the other staff and officials for sharing their expertise and contributing so willingly to the review.

In undertaking the review, the CRG met regularly over a six-month period. We commissioned research on Committee systems in other legislatures and considered briefing papers on membership turnover scenarios, with different numbers of Committees and members. In addition to the research and discussion papers, the CRG of course drew on the experience and knowledge of members themselves.

I would like to point out that, while Committee reviews have been undertaken in the past, this was the first such review to take an integrated approach across all aspects of the Committee system. In addition to reviewing the structure of the Committee system, the CRG looked at options to enhance the Assembly's political policy development, scrutiny, consultation and legislative roles in the short to medium term. The group focused its deliberations on developing a vision and principles for the Committee system; identifying and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in the Committee system; and recommending areas for improvement. The CRG provided regular updates to the CLG on our progress and the emerging findings of the review. We also consulted the five political parties represented on the CRG on the emerging findings and outline proposals.

Having looked at examples of other Committee systems, nationally and internationally, the CRG was largely content with the overall architecture of the current Committee system. Key strengths identified were that Committees

have a wide remit, with powers to call Ministers and Departments to account, hold inquiries and shape legislation. It was felt that, informally, Committees have significant influence in their relevant sphere of policy and, apparently, compare favourably with other legislatures. Committees are also accessible and have a high level of engagement with the public. That is evident in the number of external visits and meetings that Committees undertake and the innovative ways in which Committees engage and collect evidence. I think it is fair to say that that is not widely acknowledged.

The CRG was mindful of the prevailing political and constitutional climate in which there has been considerable debate about proposals to reduce the number of MLAs and to reorganise and perhaps reduce the number of Departments. The CRG agrees that that would have clear implications for the Committee structure. Therefore, the group concluded that it would not be prudent at this stage to propose any fundamental changes to the Committee system of the Assembly.

In that context, the CRG considered what aspects of the Committee system it wished to retain and identified what aspects would benefit from improvement or enhancement. For example, a major conclusion of the review was that the link between each Committee and a single Executive Department should be retained. The CRG regards the organisation of Statutory Committees, which mirrors the machinery of the Government, as a key strength that clearly finds its origins in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

A Committee's ability to provide direct oversight of a Department and its ministerial team underpins the Committee's capacity to conduct focused and effective scrutiny. In considering the case for change, the CRG looked at other legislatures where the Committee structure is based on thematic policy areas or where Committees cover a multitude of departmental briefs. However, in those cases, the Committee can find it difficult to hold a relevant Minister and Department to account. The CRG also noted that the Assembly framework of one Committee for each Department is built to accommodate the consociational framework of Committees.

The Chairpersons of Statutory Committees are from a different political party than the corresponding Minister. That clear delineation might be blurred if Committees were merged. In fact, that could be detrimental to the independence of the Committee in question. However, in coming to that conclusion, the CRG agreed that there would be merit in revisiting structural issues in 2015, in advance of the anticipated changes in 2016. The CRG also agreed that the current composition of Committees is in broad proportion to party strength in the Assembly and therefore recommends that Statutory Committee membership should be retained at 11. However, that should also be reviewed in advance of any institutional changes in 2016.

In proposing no major structural changes, the CRG recognises that that consequently places limits on the scope and extent of other proposals that it can recommend at this time. The CRG considered whether any aspect of Committee work would benefit from the creation of additional powers, but concluded that Committees are currently equipped with adequate powers. Although the CRG did not see any value in extending Committee

powers to amend legislation, it agreed that Committees could do more to ensure that potential amendments are fully discussed and considered at Committee Stage, and reported to the Assembly. While acknowledging that Committees have sufficient powers, the CRG agreed that a key constraining factor to more effective and strategic working is that Committees face too many demands, with limited resources and capacity to fully utilise those powers.

A number of measures were discussed to address how to make the best use of Committee powers and resources. Those included a recommendation to improve the operation of meetings and attendance; strengthening existing protocols between the Executive and the Assembly to improve the quality and timeliness of information to Committees from Departments; and for the Assembly to initiate a dialogue with the Executive on protocols to improve appropriate access to Ministers and/or officials.

11.30 am

A key theme running through the review was the need for Committees to apply a more strategic and systematic approach to their work. Members agreed that there would be value in exploring how to develop a more strategic approach to the planning of Committee business, prioritising specific areas of work and allowing capacity for particular issues to be explored in greater depth. To support that approach, the CRG recommends that a set of core tasks are developed to guide Committees' forward work programmes and that Committees should develop strategic plans that set out key priorities, objectives and targets within a core task framework.

The Committee review group considered the role of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group and did not see merit in formalising its role in Standing Orders. However, it agreed that the role of the CLG could be expanded and could be an effective mechanism to support Committees in adopting a more strategic and systematic approach to their forward work programmes. As a point of principle, however, although the CRG sees the benefit of standard procedures and adopting best practice, it is also keen to maintain the autonomy of each Committee in determining its own forward work programme and priorities.

Although the CRG concluded that public engagement is a key strength of the Assembly's Committee system, it identified a need for Committees to maximise the use of technologies to engage to an even greater extent with the wider public and what are described as hard-to-reach groups.

I will now pass over to my Committee review group colleagues for them to outline in more detail other issues and recommendations in the report.

Miss M McIlveen: I welcome the review and endorse the report's recommendations. I thank the staff who were involved in producing the report. Others will look at certain aspects of the report, but I want to draw attention to the review's work on public engagement, which was identified as a key strength of the Committee system. Committees are doing much to engage with the public, and that is demonstrated by the number of external meetings, online broadcasting and access, stakeholder events and an increasing use of social media networking sites.

Statutory Committees undertake a wide range of activities, from formal weekly meetings to external meetings, visits and stakeholder events. Committees strive to be accessible and in addition to holding formal Committee meetings in Parliament Buildings, undertake meetings and visits in a multitude of venues and locations across Northern Ireland.

Although 81% of visits undertaken by Committees are in Northern Ireland, they are doing much more to be accessible beyond Parliament Buildings and Northern Ireland. It is fair to say that the evidence backs the claim that Committees are committed to ensuring that as many people as possible have an opportunity to take part in the work of the Assembly and to opening up opportunities for local communities to influence the work of Committees. That was seen, for example, in June and October when 14 Committees took part in two joint visits to Londonderry to mark the UK City of Culture.

Assembly Committees have become known for using innovative methods to engage with stakeholders. There are numerous examples of Committees successfully using a range of internal stakeholder events in Parliament Buildings and external venues to target their engagement with key stakeholders, including children and young people, academic and educational institutions and key interest groups in the private, voluntary and community sectors. Those are examples of Committees not only engaging with the public but doing much more collaborative working across a number of cross-cutting issues such as health; justice; education; culture, arts and leisure; and the environment.

However, the CRG identified a need for Committees to maximise the use of technologies to engage to an even greater extent with the wider public and hard-to-reach groups. A strategic balance also needs to be struck between facilitating as many stakeholder groups and meetings as possible and ensuring that maximum value is extracted from each one in the interests of members and the public. The need for that balance should be considered as part of each Committee's strategic plan and emerging work programme.

Although not part of the terms of reference, concerns were raised about the operation of all-party groups (APGs) at the Assembly. In particular, there was concern about the growth of APGs and how that could impact on Committee business. Frustrations have been expressed about the scheduling of APGs when they clash with formal Committee business. Given that Committees are already stretched, that places further pressure on members' time.

Concern was also expressed about the inappropriate use of APGs. That was in relation to the secretariats for those groups, which are not Member led but can lead to issues around transparency, agenda setting and the control of access to APGs. There is also concern about the appointment of secretariats and how that can create the perception of hierarchy within sectors whereby a group administering an APG could be seen as being favoured.

There are 35 APGs registered that are researching issues and putting forward proposals outside the formal Committee network. CRG considered whether there should be a limit on the number of APGs in light of ongoing concerns about transparency. I therefore welcome the recommendation in the review that the issue of the number

and governance of APGs and their secretariats, including their role and appointment process, is referred to the Committee on Standards and Privileges.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome this review and endorse the recommendations in the report. In particular, I draw attention to the need for Committees to manage their resources more efficiently and effectively and use Committee powers to greater effect.

As the Chair already outlined, CRG concluded that there was no need to expand Committee powers. However, Committees do not always make the best use of the powers that they have. That can be largely down to limited resources and heavy work programmes. One way of dealing with that is for Committees to take greater control of their agendas and work programmes. The benefits of adopting a more strategic approach to work programmes were alluded to as one way of dealing with that.

In terms of making the most of Committee powers, Committees can be extremely influential. For example, the statutory power to compel the production of persons or papers confirms the important role that Committees play in ensuring accountability, but it is notable that that power has not yet been exercised to its full extent. That may be due to the fact that the threat of invoking the power is sufficient, or, on a more positive note, it could be a reflection of the general positive, productive and professional relationships that Committees have established with stakeholders, including Departments. That is sometimes due to the experience of those Departments, but, having served on the Public Accounts Committee, I know that that sends out a very sharp message.

However, whilst it is fair to say that Committees are normally successful at obtaining the information they require, one factor that can have an adverse effect on that positive relationship is the late delivery of requested papers by Departments, which gives members insufficient time to consider them before questioning witnesses. A fortnight ago, the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee received papers from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister that were 10 months late. Late access to budget papers and departmental delivery plans have been quoted as examples of the capacity of Committees to fulfil their statutory functions having been adversely affected.

While there are protocols in place on timescales for interaction between Assembly Committees and Departments, CRG recommends that CLG strengthens the protocols between the Executive and the Assembly to ensure the quality and timeliness of information provided to Committees by Departments.

Another issue that the CRG looked at was the appearance of relevant officials before Committees and departmental controls on that. There have been instances in which a Committee may have had difficulty in gaining access to an official who was best placed or most suited to provide the relevant assistance and detail to it in its enquiries. Due to departmental machinations and the transfer of staff, that person was not made available. Further problems can arise when officials have moved on and, as a result, the full facts, as they were at the time, are difficult to establish and the chain of accountability can become blurred.

CRG recognises that it is normally appropriate for Ministers to determine who should represent them at Committees. However, it also concluded that from time to time Committees should be able to request and, if necessary, insist on the attendance of specific officials or Ministers to assist them in their enquiries. I therefore strongly support the recommendation that the Assembly initiate a dialogue with the Executive in order to agree protocols about appropriate access to officials and/or Ministers in pursuit of full accountability.

The issue of resources, and the challenges that it presents to Committees, was also discussed at length by Committees. There is no doubt that Committees consume a large amount of members' time and that of Ministers, departmental officials and stakeholders. For example, Committees held 1,182 meetings from the beginning of the current mandate until June 2013. On average, Committee meetings last approximately two and a half hours, and it is estimated that almost 3,000 hours of time is devoted to attending Committee meetings. In addition, Committees travel to external venues for meetings, undertake visits, hold stakeholder events and informal meetings. That increases the time commitment required by members, but it was regarded as a very important aspect of Committee work, as it allows greater access to Committees and assists them and, indeed, members, in understanding and exploring a range of issues that cannot always be covered within the formal Committee proceedings.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr McGlone: I support the report.

Ms Lo: I welcome the report. On several occasions, the CRG discussed the importance of Committees needing to be more strategic. I will say a few words on the recommendations regarding strategic planning.

We recognise that, by necessity, Committee work plans are often dictated by the timetable for scrutiny of legislation and regulations, and that they therefore tend to follow the pace of the Department's forward work programme. However, we also recognise that Committees need to have a wider perspective on what they do and how they link into each other's policies and objectives as a whole.

I support the recommendation that the CLG should define a set of core tasks to assist with strategic and systematic planning, including scrutiny of the Programme for Government, as well as post-legislative scrutiny, which is an issue that the Environment Committee has referred to many times. The CRG also recommends that Committees should develop a strategic plan that sets out its key priorities, objectives, targets and planned outputs within the core task framework. Many businesses or voluntary sector organisations do that on a regular basis to give them the direction of travel to achieve their set goals. Why should we not?

Another recommendation is that a planning day, or days, should be held at the start of each Assembly session to inform the strategic approach of the Committee. The Environment Committee has fully embraced that suggestion, holding its first planning day in the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre on 19 September. It was held as a formal meeting which was also minuted. The minutes set out in some detail the format of the meeting, as well as the agreed outcomes, and they provide a concise and publicly available record of what the Committee hopes to

achieve over the coming year. That was a useful outcome of holding the planning day as a formal meeting, albeit in closed session. I know that some of the other Committees did not do that and, subsequently, found it difficult to ratify the decisions taken at an informal planning awayday.

The use of a location outside Parliament Buildings, particularly one which allowed much more informal engagement between members than our usual venue of the Senate Chamber, was worthwhile. It also meant that there were fewer distractions for members, such as Long Gallery events, as we all know. We also found it useful to have the planning day as a pre-determined date for considering the Committee's workload. That meant that members were able to flag up areas which they believed were worth more detailed scrutiny.

Members were then confident that these issues would not be lost in the pressure of business in the coming days.

11.45 am

We also discussed the need for preparation before the planning day. We needed to identify the mandatory areas of our work, such as the scrutiny of legislation, and then decide possible areas of focus. We had to clarify and agree the scope and timescale of those areas. For example, the Committee debated which inquiries, if any, should be undertaken. After considering possible topics, it was agreed that a short scrutiny of wind energy should be undertaken before Christmas and a more detailed inquiry into water quality in Lough Neagh should happen next year.

To fully consider these, an adequate level of background information was provided in the pack for the planning meeting. This structured method, no, methodical, approach — I need my glasses, but I am just too vain — *[Laughter.]*

Mr McGlone: Is there a resource issue?

Ms Lo: No. That would defeat the purpose. So, this structured and methodical approach ensured that the planning —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Ms Lo: — day did not degenerate into an undisciplined expression of wish lists with no factual background or evidence.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Ms Lo: I therefore recommend a good planning day to all Committees.

Mr Hilditch (The Deputy Chairperson of the Audit Committee): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate. The report of the Committee review group talks about expanding the role of the Audit Committee, and I want to set out the Audit Committee's position on the principles underpinning that recommendation.

It has been the Audit Committee's long-standing position that the Northern Ireland Audit Office should be not just independent of the Executive but actually responsible for scrutinising the financial performance of Departments and should not have to rely on the Executive for its funding. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 already recognises this in providing for the Audit Committee, in place of DFP, to agree the annual Estimates of the Audit Office and lay them before the Assembly. On various occasions,

the Audit Committee has sought to have this principle reinforced in the Budget process, and it looks forward to that being the case in the forthcoming memorandum of understanding between the Executive and the Assembly on the Budget process.

Of course, given that the ombudsman and the Assembly are also independent of the Executive and, in their respective ways, responsible for holding the Executive and Departments to account, it is sensible that similar mechanisms should be put in place to ensure their financial independence. The Audit Committee looked at that issue earlier this year and last year. At the time, we wrote to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to confirm that we were content that the Audit Committee should agree the annual Estimate for the use of resources for the proposed Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. The recommendation in today's report is consistent with our position on that.

Just because a body is financially independent of the Executive does not mean, of course, that it should be any less accountable as a result. The Audit Committee is committed to ensuring that the Northern Ireland Audit Office is fully accountable to the Assembly for its financial performance. In fact, the Chairperson of the Audit Committee is meeting the Public Accounts Commission in Westminster today to see if there are any lessons to learn from the new governance arrangements in place at the National Audit Office. Equally, if the role of the Audit Committee is expanded to cover the ombudsman and Assembly, it will be important to ensure that those bodies continue to be accountable for their financial performance.

The report also talks about how secretarial support for the new single Committee should be managed within existing secretariat resources, which I welcome. When the Audit Committee agreed that it should agree the annual Estimate for the ombudsman's use of resources, it did not anticipate that a significant additional resource would be required. It is important, particularly in the current climate, for our reforms to be at least cost-neutral where possible.

On behalf of the Audit Committee, I welcome the report's recommendations on expanding the Committee's role.

Mr Ross: I welcome the opportunity to speak about the report, and I do so as Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges. Although the Committee was not formally consulted or involved in the review, the report contains a few issues that are relevant to our Committee's work.

Page 30 of the report, particularly paragraphs 149 to 152, refer to all-party groups, which my colleague Miss McIlveen outlined. A number of Chairpersons have expressed concerns in the report about the operation of all-party groups. Most Members are members of at least one all-party group and are aware of the positive work that many all-party groups can do, but I recognise that there are concerns about the growth in the number of APGs and how that could impact on Committee business. It is important to say that members of all-party groups have a responsibility to ensure that the work of those groups does not impact on official Committee business. Members of all-party groups have a responsibility to ensure that there is no clash of meeting times or that the work that they do does not interfere with official Committee business.

The report also refers to allegations about all-party groups that have been made in other places. I am sure that we are all aware of the considerable media attention that has been focused on all-party groups, particularly at Westminster. I am not sure that any of us in this House have been offered such glamorous holidays with any association that we have here, but, nevertheless, it is a concern that, I know, the media have picked up on. Therefore, the public will rightly ask what the situation is here in Northern Ireland. The report also claims that secretarial support for all-party groups is not Member-led and that that can lead to issues about transparency, agenda-setting and the control of access to all-party groups.

First, I welcome the fact that the Committee on Standards and Privileges will be asked to look at this. As a Committee, we have always been open to having issues referred to us and to giving that confidence to the Assembly that we will look at them. On the issue of the number of APGs, the Committee currently has to approve the creation of all-party groups. I am not sure whether it would be the appropriate Committee to prevent an all-party group if it meets current criteria. However, we are keen to look at that, and I pledge to do that.

It is also important, however, to make the current provision clear and to perhaps provide some reassurance to the Assembly. We already have in place measures for all-party groups in the Northern Ireland Assembly that are more robust than those at Westminster. That is a result of the changes in 2010 to the current rules on APGs, as, indeed, paragraph 150 of the report acknowledges. Prior to the introduction of the rules, membership of all-party groups was open to outside individuals and organisations. Since then, membership of APGs has been limited to Assembly Members. In making that change, the Committee on Standards and Privileges wanted to ensure that all-party groups could not be used by outside parties in a way that would either be inappropriate or, indeed, undemocratic. The current rules allow for outside organisations and individuals to attend all-party group meetings and to inform and support their work. Whether and how that is done is a matter for each all-party group to agree. I must be clear: any organisation or individual invited to attend or support an all-party group meeting cannot be regarded as a member of that APG and cannot vote at any meeting on any issue.

It is also the case that the secretariats to all-party groups have no powers. The only role that they have is the role that the MLAs on that group give to them. That means that transparency, agenda setting and control of access to an all-party group are already matters that rest firmly in the hands of the MLAs who sit on that group. There is a responsibility on MLAs to ensure that they assert that authority when it is needed. I have heard anecdotally of concerns that certain groups perhaps monopolise all-party groups. It is up to the members of those groups to ensure that that does not happen, and I hope that that is the case.

It is permissible for all-party groups to receive financial support or material benefits from outside interests, provided that those benefits are properly registered and their receipt in no way breaches the advocacy rule. I hope that all Members in the House are aware of the code of conduct, the statutes that are on the books at present and how we have to register those things. The Assembly, of course, maintains a publicly accessible register of all-

party groups that sets out any benefits that the group has received. It includes details of the secretarial support that third parties have provided to all-party groups.

Mr Speaker: The Member must draw his remarks to a close.

Mr Ross: I do not want to pre-empt the outcome of any discussions that our Committee has, but it is important to put on record the steps that have already been taken on all-party groups. I look forward to examining this more closely as part of the Committee on Standards and Privileges.

Mr A Maginness: Lloyd George said that a camel was a horse designed by a committee. The question that is before us today is this: do we produce camels, or do we produce horses? I am certain that all of us want to produce horses. The question that therefore arises is this: do we have the capacity to do that and the resources to assist us in doing it? This is, therefore, a very timely debate to examine the effectiveness of our Committee system.

I believe that the architecture of our Committee system is as good as it is going to get. We have quite considerable powers, but I do not think that we have used them particularly well. Nonetheless, those powers are there, and we can use them. What is required is a good look at ourselves. The report does that, but we need to look at our individual professional capacities as representatives of the people in the House. For example, how well do we use our time on Committees? I think that we could use our time much better.

The Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, of which I was a member for a long time, is the best Committee in the House, as you will know, Mr Speaker. It may well remain the best Committee in the House despite the fact that I am not on it. I note that that Committee has looked at how it times those who want to give evidence to it and those who wish to ask questions and interrogate the witnesses. That is a very important and basic step, but it is very helpful. In this Chamber, we normally have five minutes to speak, which is a good discipline, and we all fall into that discipline. In Committee, if we were given a minute or two minutes to ask questions, maybe that would be a much more effective way for us to use our time and the capacity that we have.

I pay tribute to Politics Plus, which is doing a tremendous job for us as legislators. It is very helpful with our techniques and so forth, and long may that continue. It improves our quality as representatives, particularly on Committees but elsewhere as well.

Resources are very important. Our biggest single resource is our staff, who service our Committees extremely well, but I detect that we are stretching our staff too far and that we are perhaps overloading and overburdening them. That arises from the constraints that we have on our budget. There is a cap on the recruitment of staff. I hope that I am not straying too far, but I know that the Commission has agreed a policy of capping staff numbers. That is all very well in theory, but in practice it leads to problems with resource management in Committees and the Assembly as a whole. My view is a personal view and not a party one, but I think that we should look at those budgetary constraints again. We should look at the cap on the recruitment of staff because that will give us the flexibility that is necessary to fill in those gaps and reduce

the burdens and the overstretching of our staff. I invite colleagues to consider those points afresh. The time for those constraints has passed, and we should look afresh at that. I believe that that would help us to have good resources and to produce the horses that we want instead of the camels that unfortunately may be produced from time to time.

Mr McCallister: I agree with Mr Maginness. We certainly all want to produce horses and not camels.

I will use some other quotations. It will come as no surprise to Members that I am in favour of having a proper opposition here. Hopefully, when the House passes my private Member's Bill, we will have that.

12.00 noon

As Benjamin Disraeli once said:

"No Government can be long secure without a formidable Opposition."

One of the concerns that I have about the report is that the main structure for opposition in the Assembly is our Committee system. There are things that we should be doing better and changing to make our Committees as effective as possible. We have identified some of the weaknesses of the structures. In his contribution, Mr McGlone said that the Assembly and the Executive need to have a conversation. We should remember who the Executive are accountable to. They are accountable to the House. They are all part of the House, and we should not lose sight of who works for who in this set-up. We should always remember the rights of Committees and Back-Benchers in the Assembly, and that the Executive are held accountable by them and must report to the House.

We often see examples of officials failing to turn up to Committees and almost displaying contempt for the Committee structure. At times, Ministers do not turn up, fail to respond to debates or give late replies to questions. All of that shows a contempt for the Assembly that should not be tolerated. Other Assemblies and Parliaments throughout the UK and, indeed, these islands would not tolerate that. We should not accept a second-rate service. We expect the Assembly to function and to hold the entire Executive to account.

There are other changes that would be helpful to the Committee structure. When we eventually start to look at a proper opposition here, and more parties buy into that concept, we need to look at how the chairmanships of Committees are given out. There is a strong argument that opposition parties should have more chairmanships to strengthen scrutiny. I also have to state that, even in the current structure, the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee should not be held by a government party; it should be held by a Member from the opposition Benches and a non-Executive party. Sinn Féin got into some difficulties when it held the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee after it carried out an inquiry into Northern Ireland Water. That is a clear example of why the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, a Committee that is pivotal in holding public bodies to account, should not come from Executive parties. That is a key point.

During the debate, Members mentioned the work of Politics Plus and the bringing in of outsiders to help with the training of Members to build up their capacity and that of Committees.

One of the events that Politics Plus ran was a session on the way that the Scottish Parliament works. Part of every Bill in the Scottish Parliament — the financial memorandum — is referred to its Finance Committee. That session looked at how detailed the financial memorandums of the Scottish Parliament are, compared with those of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Those are all things that we should be looking at to lift the work and working knowledge of the Assembly and its Committees. Committees should not just be there to nod compliantly when their Ministers are before them. They are there because they are charged with a scrutiny role. That is why —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr McCallister: — some aspects of the report are a missed opportunity.

Mr Allister: We are told that the review group worked on this report for six months. It worked for six months to produce nothing. After labouring for six months, what has it produced? No change. Mr Maginness talked about whether we wanted a horse or a camel. I am afraid that we did not even get a mouse — not even a mouse that squeaks. There is not a squeak in the report about change. That is no surprise, of course, because the vested interest right around the House is for inertia and no change. Oh yes, it is very fine when it comes to elections to produce manifestos that talk about reducing Departments to eight or to six or to say that, by 2015, as the DUP manifesto stated, we would have to have an Assembly reduced to 80 Members. Here we are, halfway through the mandate, and there is no prospect of, or desire or vision for, change. I repeat the point: the inertia and the status quo suit the vested interests of the House.

The Chairman of the review group tells us that we do not need legislative change for Committees because they are doing a fine scrutiny role. I suggest that it is time that he read the legislation because, if he did, he would discover that Statutory Committees have no scrutiny role. Yes, the Belfast Agreement, for all its faults, promised in paragraph 9 of strand one that there would be scrutiny Committees. However, when it came to section 29 of the 1998 Act, conveniently, the designation of scrutiny was dropped, and we established Committees simply with the statutory ambit "to advise and assist" Ministers. Far from being scrutiny Committees that might dare to challenge, their statutory purpose is specified as being "to advise and assist" Ministers, which again is part of the same vested interest. Therefore, even the teeth that were in the Committees in the Belfast Agreement had to be pulled by the time it came to the legislation. It is little wonder that the House is generally held in such public contempt. It is little wonder that poll after poll illustrates that the people whom we are supposed to be serving in the community have little time and regard for the House and hold it in abject contempt on many issues, while the House is complacent and happy to have its arrangements unaltered, even though they are not working with the community out there. It is that same vested interest.

Mr McCallister rightly raised a point about the Public Accounts Committee. Can anyone tell me of another legislature in the Western World in which a government MLA chairs the Public Accounts Committee? It is standard practice across the democratic world that someone from outside the government parties chairs a Public Accounts Committee, but oh no, you could not have that in Stormont.

Oh no, that might threaten the institutions and the process. So let us sacrifice that basic modicum of the modest idea of scrutiny by ensuring that even the Public Accounts Committee is chaired by someone who can be relied on, because they are a government member in that they belong to a government party. That is how bad it is for the construction of the House.

I regret the fact, but I will not pretend to be surprised —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Allister: — that no change is the order of the day, because no change is what the vested interests of the House require.

Mr Swann (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee Review Group): It is clear from the debate that there has been value in bringing this issue to the House. It has provided all Members, not just those on the Committee review group or, as Jim referred to, those from government parties, with an opportunity to look at whether our Committee system is fit for purpose and where further improvements can be made to enhance the effectiveness of Committees in undertaking their key policy, consultation, legislative and scrutiny roles. Mr Allister referred to Committees not being able to scrutinise, but I have chaired the Employment and Learning Committee, and his putting himself down like that by saying that he did not scrutinise Ministers or departmental officials is, I think, doing himself, as well as many other Members, a disservice. I have sat on a number of Committees that were able to scrutinise and hold Ministers and their officials to account.

I welcome the report's recommendations, which provide a useful focus for Committees to achieve the vision that it sets out: the Assembly should have an outstanding, progressive and resourced system that enhances the capacity and effectiveness of Statutory and Standing Committees in delivering their statutory and other functions. I also welcome and endorse the group's main conclusion that the direct link between each Executive Department and its corresponding Statutory Committee is at the heart of the Committee system. It has been identified as a key strength that should be retained, and I hope that it was not one of the changes referred to earlier. The group discussed whether we should move to thematic Committees. However, we felt that one of the strengths that we had here, a strength enshrined in the Belfast Agreement, was that each Committee reflected directly to its Minister and was able to hold him or her accountable, if its membership was willing and able to do so. This system provides Committees with opportunities, which are not enjoyed to the same degree in other legislatures, to provide the direct oversight of a Department that leads to focused and, importantly, effective scrutiny. The Committee review group concluded that the Committee structure should remain as it is. As outlined by the Chair, the review group regarded it equally important to retain Committee membership at 11, as that is in keeping with the broad proportion of party strengths. That is at the heart of the Belfast Agreement and is also covered in Standing Orders 46 to 64C.

One of the group's key debates was on Committee membership. Alban referred to the time constraints put on Members, and we looked at all sorts of models that would reduce membership. Unfortunately, those who would have lost out were the non-Executive parties. The Committee

review group thought it crucial that we kept Committee membership at 11 so that all Members had the opportunity to hold Committee seats.

As the Ulster Unionist representative on the group, I also strongly support the view that the Committees have sufficient powers. However, having been a Committee member since 2011 and the Chair of the Employment and Learning Committee, I think that it is fair to say that Committees do not always make the most of their powers. Committees should consider how to use their powers more effectively. That is referred to at paragraph 11 of the report. Committees have the ability to call people, and they should not always have to rely on whoever the Department or Minister wants to send. As Committees and as Committee Chairs, we should ensure that we make the most of that ability.

I will now refer in more detail to other contributions. The Chair highlighted the fact that the CRG was content with the architecture, structures and number of members in the Committee system. I mentioned that alongside the reasons why CRG wish to see no changes to the structures of the Committee system. However, Mr Maskey made the point that there would be merit in revisiting these structures and issues in 2015, in advance of anticipated changes in 2016 with the reorganisation of Departments, to see whether there should be a reduction in membership. Mr McCallister asked whether there should be provision for an opposition. That is the correct time for putting those procedures in place, not now. He also pointed out that one consequence of making no major structural changes was that it placed limits on the scope and extent of other proposals that could be made at this time. Although proposing no extension to Committee powers, he pointed out that Committees were not making the most of their powers. That view came through from a number of Members. That is a key factor in the role of a Chairman and one that I intend to take forward as Chairperson of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group. Chairpersons should make sure that Committees make the most of those powers. However, this had to be viewed in the context of limited resources: for example, Members find themselves overstretched and having to deal with competing demands on their time, including heavy Committee work programmes, multiple membership of Committees and party and constituency work. However, one key role of an MLA is to be on a Committee, which is as important as speaking in the House or constituency work. We are Members of a legislative Assembly, and legislation comes in front of the Committees as well as the House. That is where our role should be.

12.15 pm

Added to those demands is the growth in all-party groups, which Michelle McIlveen mentioned and Alastair Ross supported. We have to be careful that all-party groups are managed properly and that, despite having a vested interest in certain issues, their work does not conflict with that of Committees. The Committee on Standards and Privileges has promised to look at that, and I welcome the Chairman's pledge to take it on. It is that Committee's role to register all all-party groups in the House, so the provision is already there.

Anna Lo said that improvements in strategic planning are another way to make the most of Committee resources. Strategic planning is a vital tool that all Committees should use. Day and daily, each Committee receives a request

either to visit somewhere or to hold another meeting or evidence session, and unless a proper structure is put in place prior to that, a Committee's workload could end up running away from it, and that does not serve any purpose.

Patsy McGlone outlined the measures to improve Committee resources and raised a very important point about the late delivery of requested papers, especially those on budgets. He also referred to the fact that — this is, I think, the phrase that Patsy used — officials move on, but what he did not say is that sometimes officials are moved on by certain Ministers so that they do not come in front of certain Committees. We should have and use the ability to call all people and papers.

Mr Hilditch welcomed expanding the role of the Audit Committee, specifically under recommendations 31 and 32. The Chairperson is currently at Westminster to look at that. Therefore, to say that the report has produced nothing is unfair and unjust, because there are recommendations in it that will move us forward.

Alban referred to the architecture, support and structure that we have. I know that Mr Maginness sought to make sure that he did not stray too far from the subject matter, but, as the Chairperson of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group, I am willing to raise the issue of capping of staff numbers with the Commission, because the last thing that any organisation or business needs is demotivated staff. We cannot afford to have that in the Assembly or on our Committees, because our staff are crucial to the work that we do.

I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the staff who worked through the different requests that all Members submitted and the experts who came in to advise us on how things work in different places. One of the things pointed out was that in another place, south of the border, they have changed their Committee structures time and time again, to the point at which they are now using the same structure that they used 10 years ago, and everybody thinks that it is great. Therefore, producing a camel instead of a horse can be an ever-evolving process in which we end up with neither.

John McCallister mentioned the failure of Ministers to show up in the House and their late replies to questions. Unfortunately, that does not fall under the remit of the Committee review group. Speaking as a party rep and as Chairman of the Employment and Learning Committee, I know that it is a concern that respect is not being shown to the House. I know that you, Mr Speaker, have taken that on as well.

I look forward to looking at the recommendations in more detail in my capacity as Chair of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group and of the Employment and Learning Committee. I support the notion that Committees should ultimately maintain their autonomy and determine their priorities, but I also agree that they should strive to adopt work practices that continually improve and enhance the effectiveness of Committees while also striving to provide an outstanding, progressive resource system in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland. I commend the report to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee review group entitled 'Review of the Committee System' (NIA 135/11-15).

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for this debate. Two amendments have been selected and published on the Marshalled List, so an additional 15 minutes has been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes in which to propose and five minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the ruling of the High Court on the decision to ban blood donations from gay men; further notes with concern that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's decision was found to be 'irrational', and to have been taken 'in breach of the Ministerial Code'; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to lift the ban and outline what steps he will take to build public confidence in relation to statutory equality duties.

I welcome the opportunity to propose this critically important motion to the Floor of the Assembly. We will also support both amendments as tabled.

Equality is the responsibility of us all, and discrimination against any section of our society is not only morally wrong but is legally wrong and contrary to the equality duties and equality legislation. In October this year, Mr Justice Treacy held that the Health Minister breached the ministerial code by failing to take the issue before the Stormont Executive. Mr Justice Treacy found that the Minister's decision was unlawful pursuant to section 28A of the NI Act 1998 by virtue of him having failed to secure Executive approval for the decision, contrary to the requirements of the ministerial code, and by section 20(3) and/or section 20(4) of the 1998 Act as the decision was controversial and/or the decision was in respect of a cross-cutting matter.

The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) recommended that, in addition to the technological advances in quality control, there have been significant cultural and legal challenges since 2001 that need to be considered when reviewing blood donor systems. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

This issue was brought to the Health Committee on 26 October 2011, when it was noted that the advisory committee was set up to advise the devolved Administration and is therefore the expert body on questions of blood safety. The Health Minister noted:

"The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs ... advises the four ... Health Ministers on how to ensure the safety of blood, cells, tissues and organs for transfusion and transplantation".

The Minister has indicated that, normally, fewer than 100 units a year were received, and the indication is that we receive two lots of 40 units. However, the Minister then confirmed that the Department did not request that blood

from England does not come from the men who sleep with men (MSM) category. The Minister indicates that the risks are diminished greatly by the small amounts that we receive. However, if the 12-month deferral was introduced, the risk would be 0.228 per million donations. The current risk is 0.227 per million donations. That would be a rise of 0.001 per million donations. That is recorded on page 24 of Justice Treacy's findings. It goes on to say that if there is an enhanced compliance with having a 12-month ban instead of a lifetime ban, it would reduce the risk of infection considerably, probably by one third. Even figures from the Department show that the compliance rules would be enhanced if we were to go down that route.

In an e-mail dated 9 June 2011, the Blood Transfusion Service stated that senior medical officers in Departments confirmed that, in relation to suggested changes to the lifetime ban, the blood service would have:

"no particular issues about this change",

and, furthermore, it was, in its words:

"well linked into the UK work... and will be ready to implement the change from the beginning of September [2011]."

The issue is deemed significant and controversial, and, through the findings, it is therefore clearly outside the scope of the agreed programme that is referred to in paragraph 20 of strand one of the agreement, which states that it shall be brought to the attention of the Executive.

It is illogical that blood should be imported from elsewhere to maintain the ban in the North of Ireland, and designation of MSM category blood as "high risk" has a disproportionate effect on gay men and therefore indirectly discriminates. It is also noted that the policy is contrary to the EU principle of non-discrimination in article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The issue at hand has been through the courts. It is controversial and cross-cutting, and that is acknowledged in the SaBTO report. It is also acknowledged that the matter touches on equality issues. Furthermore, it deals with the implementation of the EU directive, and, as such, it is suggested that the Minister had no authority to act without bringing it to the attention of the Executive Committee.

Let me deal with potential prejudice. In his findings, Justice Treacy, at least implicitly, doubted whether or not the Minister's decision was motivated by a genuine concern about the safety of MSM blood donation, given the grave defect in logic apparent from that decision. In paragraph 138 of the judgement, the judge placed emphasis on the word "genuine". I suggest that it is unusual, or perhaps highly unusual, for a High Court judge to suggest, however implicitly, that a Minister might not have been acting out of a genuine concern in making a controversial statement.

Let me deal with the powers of the Assembly.

Mr Givan: I thank the Member for giving way. She referred to paragraph 138 of the judgement. I refer her to paragraph 141, which deals with discrimination. Can she point out anywhere in the judgement where the judge finds against the Minister on grounds of discrimination, prejudice or bias? I do not see that stated anywhere in this judgement.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I thank the Member for his intervention. I hope that he was listening to the comment

that I made. It is clearly and specifically stated in paragraph 138, where the judgement, through the High Court, specifically references, underlines and highlights the genuine concern.

I want to move on to the issue of the Assembly holding the Minister to account. The decision in the High Court found not only that the Minister had acted irrationally but that he had acted without lawful authority and was, therefore, in breach of the ministerial code in respect of a sensitive and very important issue. Those actions have caused much controversy and continue to cause much concern. They have attracted a great deal of public concern and legitimate public interest. In my view, the Assembly must now hold the Minister to account, and ensure that, as part of that process, the Minister provides the legal advice that he has received and that, until now, has refused to provide. The Assembly must also ensure that he makes that advice available to it and that he justifies his decision to maintain a lifetime ban on MSM blood donations when it is public knowledge that he received advice from the Attorney General on that issue in October 2011.

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension. I propose, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. When the House comes back, the first item of business will be Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.30 pm.

On resuming (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Education

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry

1. **Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Education, following the Health Minister's announcement about the inquiry into child sexual exploitation, what communication has taken place between the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Education and whether he has agreed to the inquiry's terms of reference. (AQT 301/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I have to say that communication between the two Departments has been poor. I have been informed about the establishment of the inquiry largely through the media. I found out through the media that the Minister was hoping to involve the Education and Training Inspectorate. I was informed at the same time as all other Members this morning about the Minister's statement. I now have a copy of the terms of reference. I will study them and respond to the Health Minister in due course.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for that clarification. One of the issues in moving forward is to ensure that the voices of children and young people are included in the inquiry. What can the Minister do to ensure that those voices are heard throughout the process?

Mr O'Dowd: The heart of the inquiry has to be the protection of children, particularly the most vulnerable in society: children in care. Clearly, I am keen to play a positive role in the inquiry to ensure that the lessons of the past are learned and that, if mistakes were made, those responsible are held to account. We must protect our children, going forward. My Department has included children in several consultations that it has carried out. In particular, we have used the offices of the Children's Commissioner to ensure that the voices of children are heard. I will study the terms of reference with a view to ensuring that there is a mechanism for the voices of the children affected and children in care to be heard throughout the inquiry.

GCSEs/A Levels

2. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Education to update the House on the fundamental review of GCSEs and A levels and to confirm that the recent announcement by Ofqual in England relates to England only. (AQT 302/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I launched a consultation process — I think I spoke to the House on 30 September — relating to a report by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) on the qualifications that we have here. The recent announcement by Ofqual affects only what happens in England. It does not affect our jurisdiction or Wales, and, indeed, Scotland has its own exam system.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Is he confident that we can retain a robust and transferable qualification system in the North of Ireland, irrespective of what happens in England?

Mr O'Dowd: I remain very confident that we can do so. We have an ongoing consultation that follows on from the CCEA report, which found that there was not an appetite to follow the example of England at this stage. The consultation has put options to educationalists and the wider community on the direction of travel for our exams. I am very confident that we will continue to have robust exams in our society and that they will be transportable and will hold currency, regardless of where the student or potential employee wishes to travel.

Pupils: Educational Attainment

3. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Education whether he is aware of the most recent report from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission in Britain and what it has to say about narrowing the achievement gap and the resources that are needed for deprived and low-attaining pupils. (AQT 303/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission's first annual 'State of the Nation' report, which details its assessments of child poverty and social mobility in Great Britain and the efforts of the English, Welsh and Scottish Governments in that regard. Although the report does not include an assessment of the position here, the commission's recommendations to raise the bar in standards and to close the gap in attainment for those from low- and average-income families are of particular relevance to my Department. Indeed, they are of particular relevance to the ongoing debate on the common funding formula review.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat arís. Do other factors contribute to the gap in educational attainment as well as the socio-economic conditions?

Mr O'Dowd: Local and international studies show that the single greatest determining factor of a child's educational outcome is socio-economic background, but we have to challenge that and resource our schools to face up to the challenge. We must also encourage communities and families to become reinvolved in their children's education. There are far too many examples of families or parents who have had bad educational experiences and are reluctant or are not equipped to become involved in a child's education. We have to correct that, and we have community funding initiatives that enable parents and families to do just that. We want to ensure that the greatest determining factor in a school is the quality of the teacher in a classroom and the quality of leadership in the principal's office. We are lucky to have many highly qualified and dedicated school leaders and teachers in our classrooms, and we must continue to improve on that and learn lessons. At this stage, a child's socio-economic background is the biggest factor determining a child's outcome in our society. We have to face up to that challenge.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members and Ministers that questions and answers should be addressed through the Chair.

Dundonald High School

4. **Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the progress made by Dundonald High School in achieving its set goals and the implication of that on the continuance of the school. (AQT 304/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is clear that Dundonald High School has made strides forward through a combination of the dedication of the senior management team and the involvement of the local community. I referred to local communities taking ownership of their schools, and that process has clearly taken place in Dundonald. I have to make a decision on development proposals affecting parts of south Belfast and east Belfast that include Dundonald High School. I am deliberating on whether the turnaround in the school has taken place in time to ensure that there is a sustainable future for it.

Mr Copeland: I thank the Minister for his encouraging words. Can he inform me what ingredients will be necessary to assist him in taking that decision?

Mr O'Dowd: One reason for the delay is that, during the preconsultation, the Belfast Education and Library Board did not consult schools affected by some proposals in the South Eastern Education and Library Board's proposals. That has now been rectified. Those discussions came to conclusions in late September. My departmental officials are now analysing all the data, and I understand and appreciate the frustrations of the schools involved that a decision has not yet been made. I want to make the right long-term decision that gives certainty to the community affected by such decisions on the location and quality of those schools in the future.

Primary School: South Belfast

5. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Education when the new consolidated primary school in south Belfast, encompassing Fane Street, Donegall Road and Sandy Row, will be included in his capital programme, given that another milestone has been reached, with planning permission being granted for the application from the Belfast Board. (AQT 305/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: We continue to engage with the five education and library boards and CCMS on the next announcement on the capital build programme. In January or February, I hope to be in a position to make another announcement to the Assembly about a further programme of builds going into the future. I will keep in mind the issues raised by the Member about schools in south Belfast. I accept that there have been delays in the past and that expectations have arisen in that community about a newbuild programme, but I want to ensure that, whatever announcements I make, it is definitive that the school building will go ahead within a reasonable time frame.

Mr McGimpsey: I thank the Minister for that answer, which I see as very encouraging. To reiterate what he said, are we now saying that the new consolidated primary school will be in the mix for the allocation of the capital programme stage when it is made? In other words, is our name now in the hat?

Mr O'Dowd: There are a significant number of names in the hat. I assure the Member that, when I make my deliberations about an announcement around the schools, the schools and amalgamations he refers to

will be in my considerations. I am acutely aware, through representations from him and other Members, of the need to move on to confirm a building programme for that area.

Mobile Classrooms

6. **Ms Brown** asked the Minister of Education for his Department's assessment of the sharing of mobile classrooms by P6 and P7 pupils at Ashgrove Primary School, Newtownabbey. (AQT 306/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I missed part of the question; the sound does not seem to be good. Is it an assessment of the sharing of mobile classrooms for P6 and P7 pupils? I do not have an assessment of that matter. If the Member wishes to write to me and give me more detail on the subject, I will happily correspond with her or, indeed, meet her on the issue.

Ms Brown: I thank the Minister for his answer and appreciate that he does not have the background information here. I am sure that he appreciates that each class requires its own classroom in which pupils can receive the tailored teaching that they deserve. I would be happy to follow up with the Minister and would be keen to see if he would be—

Mr Deputy Speaker: Can we have a question please?

Ms Brown: — amenable to additional funding being made available to the school so that it can end the practice of sharing a mobile.

Mr O'Dowd: During the last announcement on building programmes, one of the issues we took into account when considering eligibility for announcement was schools with a high percentage of accommodation in mobile classrooms. I do not have the details about the school you refer to, and I have not finalised the criteria that we will use for the next announcement either, but we clearly want to take our young people out of mobile classrooms and put them into permanent structures.

A significant number of our schools have composite classes in the sense that they share P6, P7 and other classes. It depends on the number of pupils at the schools. It suits some schools to do that because of the numbers that they have, but I certainly do not want to see a large concentration of pupils in any classroom. I want to ensure that the accommodation for our children is fit for the 21st century.

Numeracy and Literacy

7. **Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the Delivering Social Change numeracy and literacy project, including the recruitment of recently graduated teachers. (AQT 307/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The programme is moving forward well. It has been a huge task to take forward. It is an example of how, when the Executive and our Departments work well together, we deliver change for the communities we serve.

As of 25 October, there were 209 full-time equivalent teachers appointed out of a total of 273 teaching posts for the First Minister and deputy First Minister's DE schemes. The schools continue to advertise, and interviews continue to take place to put newly qualified teachers into post. It has been a very successful scheme. I have met a number of the appointees on my visits to schools. Their enthusiasm is clear, as is the delight of the schools in being able to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. It certainly sounds as though the scheme has got off to a very positive start. If that is the case for the duration of the scheme, is it the Minister's intention to extend it?

Mr O'Dowd: It is certainly one of the schemes about which I would like to approach the First Minister and deputy First Minister in the future, if there are further funds available through the Delivering Social Change programme to increase the number of newly qualified teachers we are using through the scheme. Indeed, in my Department, I have allocated £2.3 million to expand the scheme for another 36 teachers to be put in place. It is a scheme that has been warmly received by our schools and by the newly qualified teachers. It is a scheme that makes a real difference to young people's lives, and, as I said, it is an example of how, when the Executive work well together, we can make a difference to young people's lives.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Lord Morrow is not in his place. David McIlveen is not in his place.

School Starting Age

10. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister of Education for an update on flexibility of school starting age. (AQT 310/11-15)

2.15 pm

Mr O'Dowd: I have asked my officials to come forward with proposals on how we can introduce flexibility into the school starting age. Although we have a very young school starting age, I believe that the foundation stage allows our young people to develop at an appropriate rate in the appropriate education stage for their age group.

Officials are examining proposals for exceptions in the flexibility of school starting age where parents can identify that, in their opinion, a child is too young to start school. One example is that of the Scottish Borders. There, a panel is established and evidence is presented to that panel about the ability and needs of the child and whether they should or should not be allowed to attend school at the regulated school starting age. So, I am looking at that to see whether we can introduce a similar system here so that parents who are concerned about their child's ability to start school at the regulated starting age may be allowed to hold the child back for a year, either in nursery provision or through some form of home tutoring.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of topical questions to the Minister of Education. We now move to questions for oral answer. Questions 1 and 14 have been withdrawn. Alex Maskey is not in his place to ask question 2.

Common Funding Formula

3. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Education, given the public anger caused by the proposals contained within the common funding formula consultation, will he agree to extend the consultation period. (AQO 4912/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I agreed to extend the consultation on the proposed changes to the common funding scheme for a further week until 25 October 2013. I am delighted with the outcome of the consultation. For the record, over 14,000 responses have been received, 3,000 of those from young people. I thank all those who took the time to respond to this very important consultation. I will take

my time studying the responses before announcing how the final changes to the formula will be incorporated and what effect the additional £15.8 million will have on each school's budget.

The core principle of my proposals, which is to break the link between social deprivation and educational outcome, has not been challenged, even by my political detractors. The fact remains that those schools with higher levels of social deprivation face the biggest challenges. Therefore, they require more resources to tackle those challenges. I have been accused by some of taking money off schools to give to other schools. However, no school's annual budget is confirmed until my Department does so. Therefore, the moneys that I plan to use are not any individual school's; they are from my Department's central aggregated schools budget of £1.1 billion and will be, as in any year, distributed under the common funding scheme when confirmed by me. The proposed changes to the common funding scheme for 2014 will, when confirmed, see more money from the aggregated schools budget going to schools with higher levels of social deprivation.

We as an Executive, and indeed as a society as a whole, are either serious about tackling inequality and social disadvantage or we are not. I am serious about it. The Programme for Government commits me to doing so.

Mrs D Kelly: I certainly welcome the Minister's commitment to tackle social deprivation, but I am at a loss to understand how taking money from St Teresa's, Tannaghmore and Drumcree College, which are in the heart of his own constituency and in an area of social deprivation, is actually going to work.

The Minister mentioned £15.8 million. Is that a one-off injection of cash? How are schools going to respond to their budget the following year? Are they to work month to month, with their hand out and a begging bowl to the Department?

Mr O'Dowd: St Teresa's and Tannaghmore are the two new schools that I am building. There will be brand new buildings for both those schools.

In her question, the Member stated that there is community anger out there.

Mrs D Kelly: No I did not.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: It was something to do with anger; "anger" was in the question somewhere. I do not have the question in front of me, but it relates to the word anger. Maybe people get angry when they meet her.

Throughout the consultation, when speaking to educationalists, pupils, principals, parents and people who are interested in social justice and equality, I have found that they approach me in a rational manner, have rational discussions with me and put across their point of view in a very rational, considered manner. Some agree with my proposals, and some do not agree with my proposals.

As I said in my answer to your original question — perhaps the SDLP is going to challenge me on this — social deprivation is the biggest indicator of a child's educational outcomes. That needs to be challenged.

Therefore, a school with high levels of social deprivation requires more funding to ensure that it has the resources

available to give equality to all the children whom it is there to serve. If the SDLP is opposed to that, it needs to state why it is opposed to it. If the SDLP is opposed to my common funding formula proposals, it needs to come forward with alternatives. I read the SDLP's submission to the common funding formula review and did not see any alternatives in it.

Mr Newton: I have to say, Minister, that you are not winning the argument out there in the schools.

What will the Minister's attitude be when every school principal at primary and special school level in a constituency rejects the common funding formula on the principle that they do not wish one school to be advantaged over another school that will be a loser?

Mr O'Dowd: The scenario that you paint for me is in place. Some of our schools have an advantage over other schools that are at a disadvantage. The schools that are disadvantaged are those schools with high concentrations of children who get free school meals. All the evidence points us towards that. I have not heard an outcry from any of the Benches about that. I have not heard an outcry from any of the Benches about the fact that a child who gets free school meals is 50% less likely to succeed in education than a child who does not get free school meals. That is what should be annoying people and getting them angry. That is what should be concentrating people's minds.

I am not taking money off an individual school to give it to another school. The money is coming out of the Department of Education's £1.1 billion aggregated schools budget. It is a matter for the Department of Education, after consultation, to decide how that money is best spent. The Programme for Government sets very stringent targets for me for children who get free school meals. The Programme for Government tells me that I have to increase the educational attainment of those young people. The Programme for Government, in its opening paragraph, states that we have to tackle social disadvantage. We can produce glossy documents and distribute them to the public. We can talk about tackling social disadvantage or we can do something about it. I intend to do something about it.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Is the Minister still confident of making the required changes before the start of the new financial year?

Mr O'Dowd: Yes, I am. It is important that the changes be made. There were 14,000 consultation responses: 3,000 from young people and 11,000 from interested individuals, schools and parties out there. Those responses will all be given due consideration. They will be reviewed to seek out alternatives to, and unexpected consequences of, any changes to the formula and to ensure that the objectives of my proposals are met and do not have unintended consequences.

The figures that schools are currently working to do not take into account the £15.8 million that is to be injected into the system. Mrs Kelly asked whether that is a one-off payment. The funding confirmed for the Department of Education runs up to 2014-15. Beyond that, we will be into negotiations with the rest of my Executive colleagues about funding for education. I hope, and I expect, that those negotiations will ensure that education funding is increased, because if we are to tackle social disadvantage and grow the economy, education has to succeed.

Schools Enhancement Programme

4. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of Education for an update on any planned investments as part of the schools enhancement programme. (AQO 4913/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The schools enhancement programme (SEP) is designed to enable the refurbishment or extension of existing schools. I announced recently that 51 schools have been informed that their applications have been successful at the first stage of assessment. Those projects have been demonstrated to be consistent with emerging area plans. The schools have been asked to prepare economic appraisals as part of the next stage of the assessment process.

Decisions on funding will be made when the economic appraisals for the selected projects have been assessed. It is anticipated that those decisions will be made in the new year. The scale of the potential investment in the SEP underlines my continuing commitment to improving the schools estate.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he explain and outline some of the reasons that 16 of the applications were unsuccessful?

Mr O'Dowd: There were numerous reasons why several applications did not go through. There were established criteria against which the projects were judged. Unfortunately, 16 did not meet the criteria. I am reviewing my capital budget and hope to be in a position early next year to announce another tranche of funding under the schools enhancement programme. It is open to the schools that were turned down this time to reapply if they believe that they will meet the criteria and, indeed, to schools that did not apply this time.

Mr Storey: I declare an interest as a member of the board of governors of Ballymoney High School, which will receive money under the schools enhancement programme. However, that means that its newbuild is in serious jeopardy. What assurance can the Minister give that newbuilds will not be displaced as a result of schools being successful in applying to the schools enhancement programme?

Mr O'Dowd: The Member will appreciate that each case will have to be looked at on its merits. A number of projects agreed under the schools enhancement programme are hopeful of newbuilds, but immediate work needed to be carried out on those schools to ensure that children were taught in a proper environment. It is only right and proper that we make significant investments, even if only for the short to medium period, to ensure that young people are taught in proper premises. A number of schools that have applied to the schools enhancement programme have decided that it is the way ahead for them instead of a newbuild programme. That is their decision, and perhaps other schools will make similar decisions in future. As I said, each case will be judged on its merits.

Mr Cree: When will the Minister produce a transparent matrix of all planned investments and, indeed, the hierarchy of the projects in that matrix?

Mr O'Dowd: I would suggest that I have. Each time that I make an announcement on capital build programmes, I announce those that were successful and the matrix

against which they were judged. Of course, I understand that, when a school is not on the list, it will be deeply disappointed. There may be a variety of reasons why a school did not make it onto the list, including the fact we did not have enough money for capital build programmes in our schools estate. Something in the region of £400 million from the schools capital programme was taken off us by the Tory Government when they came to power. That has had a significant impact on our ability to deliver newbuild programmes. I would certainly argue that we are open and transparent about how and why we select schools for new capital build programmes.

Mrs McKevitt: I would like to push the Minister a wee bit more on a previous answer in which he spoke about the 16 schools that did not meet the criteria. Is there an appeal mechanism for schools such as St Louis in Killeel that thought they did meet the criteria for the enhancement programme?

Mr O'Dowd: No, there is not an appeal mechanism. The criteria are there, and we judge schools against them. I will not go into the case of a specific school on the Floor of the House, but perhaps the Member would like to ask herself why she believes that St Louis in Killeel meets the criteria.

Schools: 14-19

5. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Education to outline his understanding of a bilateral 14-19 school. (AQO 4914/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While a 14-to-19 school is clearly one that operates within a two-tier system of junior and senior high schools, there is no official or legal definition of a bilateral school. It is a term that is used by schools in their description of themselves but can mean different things for different schools. Some schools that use the term operate a partially selective admissions process for pupils; others use non-academic criteria to admit pupils and stream them on the basis of a test once they are in the school.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given his answer and the fact that that type of school does not successfully exist anywhere in Northern Ireland, what evidence is there that such a school will improve and enhance educational performance in the Dickson plan area, which is above the Northern Ireland average?

2.30 pm

Mr O'Dowd: There may not be another bilateral school for 14- to 19-year-olds, but there are certainly bilateral schools, and they are very successful in their delivery of education to all the young people they serve. If the Southern Education and Library Board comes forward with an option for a 14-to-19 bilateral school, all the evidence about whether that school will be able to deliver high-quality education to all the young people it serves will be taken into account before any decision is made.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Does the Minister agree that the educational arrangements in the Dickson plan area do not meet the growing needs of our children and young people?

Mr O'Dowd: I agree. There needs to be a fundamental overhaul of the Dickson plan to ensure that all the young people in that area are served with high-quality education and high-quality educational facilities. At present, it

creates an inequality in our education system that is completely unacceptable.

Mrs Dobson: Minister, nowhere else in the world does a bilateral school in the 14-to-19 age range exist, so I struggle to see on what sound evidence such a proposal could have been based. Can you assure us that, when the SELB is forced to remove option A, your Department will not interfere and force a new system until agreement is reached amongst the schools involved?

Mr O'Dowd: That is a big statement: nowhere else in the world does a bilateral school for 14- to 19-year-olds exist. I hope that the Member can stand over that statement. I am not going to argue with her, but it is a very big statement, considering the diverse education systems that exist throughout the globe.

Very few places in the world — I can stand over this — select children and divide them up into different schools at post-primary level. The most successful economies in the world do not do it, and the most successful education systems, which are related to the most successful economies in the world, do not do it, so I am in bewilderment as to why the Member continues to insist that you have to divide children up into different schools, whether it is at the age of 11 or 14. There is no evidence to support her analogy in relation to that.

I note the term the Member used. She talked about when the SELB is “forced” to remove the proposal. That reflects some of the language and the actions in the debate in the greater Craigavon area. People feel intimidated by the actions of those who claim to support the Dickson plan. Parents have come to me feeling concerned that their voices are not allowed to be heard. Speakers at prize-giving nights are heckled from the floor because they dare to express an opinion different from that of those who support the Dickson plan. Teachers, members of boards of governors and principals all face significant pressure not to open their mouth from those who support the Dickson plan. So, let us not use force; let us use reasonable argument to win the day. Let us use evidence to win the day, and let us be prepared to stand up for all the young people in the Dickson plan area rather than the few.

Common Funding Formula

6. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education, in light of Sir Robert Salisbury's independent review of the common funding formula, what examination his Department has carried out on alternatives to free school meals as an indicator of social deprivation. (AQO 4915/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has identified that the most effective indicator of social deprivation among pupils should have the following characteristics: it needs to relate to information that is personal to the pupil's family circumstances; that information needs to be capable of independent validation; it needs to be up to date; it needs to be capable of being updated annually; and it needs to be easily gathered at school level. Free school meal entitlement is the only reliable measure we have been able to identify that meets those requirements. The view of the independent review panel was that free school meals entitlement provided an indication of the relative concentration of potentially disadvantaged pupils in a given school in a way that no other indicator does. Additionally, statistical analysis shows a strong correlation between

the entitlement to free school meals and the multiple deprivation measure. I remain open to hearing suggestions of other indicators that meet the characteristics that I have just outlined. To date, I have received no suggestions that do that.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his response. In light of the recommendation that the Department should look at alternatives, what alternatives has the Department looked at in relation to free school meals? In light of the Minister's response, does he believe that the Warnock factor should be reinstated into the budget?

Mr O'Dowd: One of the elements I am looking at as part of the consultation responses is the Warnock element. That has been raised with me at a personal level by principals and teachers and as part of the consultation responses. So, we will certainly look at that.

Those who stand up and criticise free school meals have, to date, not given me a valid reason why they are ineffective. Free school meals identify the individual child; they identify the circumstances of that child; and they can be monitored on a yearly basis. There have been no comments, apart from the comment about the Bristol university report, which refers to the English system. Our free school meals entitlement is much broader and wide-ranging than the English system. Indeed, the Bristol report states that we should use working tax credits as an identifier: our free school meal system does use working tax credits as an identifier of social need.

Somebody needs to come forward with a reason why free school meals are not the best indicator for the individual child and the broader circumstances. They identify the individual child, and, when you see the correlation between significant numbers of children with free school meals and areas of higher social deprivation, you see that they clearly indicate that they are matched. So, come forward with a valid reason not to use free school meals, rather than what I have heard thus far, which has been rumour, innuendo and people saying, “This one said it” and “That one said it”. No one has come forward with a research piece of paper saying that our free school meals entitlement is the wrong way forward.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Has the Minister considered the South Eastern Regional College's study on measuring social deprivation as something that might complement the free school meals index?

Mr O'Dowd: I am not aware of the South Eastern Regional College's report on the matter. If the Member wishes to share it with me or to send on more information to me, I will be happy to read it and to take a look at it. Again, it would have to follow the characteristics that I have set out: that it identifies the individual child; that it can be annually reviewed; and that it is information that is capable of independent validation. If those characteristics can be matched and if it matches our ability to identify social need, I will take a close look at it.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. Can the Minister confirm for me — I have this feeling after all the shouting that takes place from the opposite Benches — whether any other political party in the House has presented him with any option other than free school meals? [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: I have studied the five political parties' responses to the common funding formula scheme. None has yet presented me with an option in relation to their —

Mr Storey: Absolute nonsense.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr O'Dowd: None of the political parties has presented me with an alternative to free school meals. I assume that all the political parties are more than happy to publish their responses. Publish your responses. If the Member across the way says that I am speaking absolute nonsense, people can study his response and ask, "Has he presented the Minister with an alternative?". They will make up their own mind with regard to that matter.

The most important thing is this: no one has been able to come forward and say why they are opposed to free school meals. No one has been able to come forward and give a valid reason why they are so vehemently opposed to free school meals. It is worth noting that, in 2006, when a direct rule Minister introduced a targeting social need formula as a result of work that Martin McGuinness had done during his term in office — it was only a minor increment for free school meals and a minor increment for targeting social need — the DUP objected. The DUP, through its education spokesperson, Sammy Wilson, objected on that occasion as well.

Lord Morrow: How do you know?

Mr O'Dowd: I read the statement from Sammy Wilson; that is how I know. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Dowd: There are parties in the Chamber who lean to the right, and perhaps that gives their philosophy around free school meals. However, there are parties in the Chamber who lean to the left, and there are parties in the Chamber who have "social democrat" in their title: they need to come forward and state why they are so opposed to targeting free school meals.

Mrs D Kelly: Six years of education chaos.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, Members.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Kieran McCarthy.

Mr McCarthy: May I ask question 7, please?

Mr O'Dowd: What?

Mr Hazzard: Question 7.

Mr O'Dowd: Sorry, I could not hear with Gregory grumbling in the background.

Mr Campbell: Get used to it. *[Laughter.]*

Mr O'Dowd: I got used to it a long time ago. There is — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask Members to be respectful to other Members in the Chamber.

Mr O'Dowd: I did get used to it. You used to grumble that you would never share power with us, and then you did share power with us. Do you remember that grumble? Do

you remember grumbling, "We'll never share power with you"? There you are, sharing power with us.

7. Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Education when he will bring legislation to establish the Education and Skills Authority. (AQO 4916/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My aim is to have the remaining stages of the Education Bill completed in the coming weeks. However, I need agreement from my Executive colleagues to bring forward the Education and Skills Authority Bill; I cannot do this on my own. If the Bill is not brought forward within the next weeks, we will not reach our Programme for Government commitment to establish ESA in 2013.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he accept that the lack of a fully functional Education and Skills Authority means that area planning is happening on an ad hoc basis? What impact will that have on overall funding for schools?

Mr O'Dowd: No, I do not accept that area planning is happening on an ad hoc basis. The five education and library boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the integrated sector and the Irish-medium sector are all involved in the strategic planning of area planning, so it will not have an impact on that basis. However, the fact is that ESA is a Programme for Government commitment. I hear comments from Members on the Benches opposite that they are glad that it is not moving forward. Why did they sign up to the Programme for Government? There are two issues that we have found out about today: they are not that fussed on targeting social need; and they heckle me from their Benches, saying that they are happy that ESA is not moving forward. That is another Programme for Government commitment that they signed up to and committed to, and now they say that they are happy that it is not going ahead. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* Order, Members. Does a Member wish to be named? I call Cathal Boylan.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answers. Will the Minister outline the importance of the proposed Education and Skills Authority?

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Skills Authority was designed to modernise the management of our education system, which dates back to 1973. In fairness, we have the five education and library boards, which, through quite difficult times, provided education in our society. That management style is now outdated. Having a 35-person board to run the education system five times over does not make sense. A number of structures are no longer required, and it would be more effective and efficient to bring them under one umbrella. That is what the parties agreed to and the reason that the parties agreed to the Programme for Government commitment to establish ESA in 2013. It is up to them to explain why they believe that to be no longer relevant.

Significant savings are to be made if ESA is brought into play. Those savings can be redirected into front line education. Another topical issue, considering the alleged concerns of some Members about funding going to schools, is that I would much prefer to use the £20 million that we could save annually through ESA in front line

education services. Perhaps some Members believe that keeping their fellow councillors on education boards is a more effective way of spending that money.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that. Will he confirm whether the Education and Skills Authority proposals are part of any internal discussion with the First Minister and deputy First Minister in and around that deal or any other deals that may be proposed?

Mr O'Dowd: That is a question best placed with OFMDFM.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as na freagraí go dtí seo. How much has been spent so far on the exercise to establish the ESA?

Mr O'Dowd: I do not have exact figures in front of me, but too much has been spent on it. Not only is ESA in this Programme for Government, it was in the last Programme for Government. When a commitment is made in a Programme for Government, there is a duty on the relevant Minister to prepare for that commitment to be met. Minister Ruane in her time and I have lived up to our commitments under the Programme for Government to prepare for the establishment of ESA. However, if the Members on the Benches opposite are now telling me that they are happy that ESA is not moving forward, we will have to seriously review whether we want to spend any further money on a Programme for Government commitment that those Members clearly do not wish to proceed with.

2.45 pm

Common Funding Formula

8. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Education to outline the response to his proposal to change the common funding formula thus depriving many schools of funding. (AQO 4917/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: No schools have been deprived of funding. There has been widespread consultation on the proposals for change. As I have stated previously, I am delighted to report that 11,000 responses have been received to the main consultation and 3,000 responses to the tailored consultation for young people. I welcome the very high level of responses received. Clearly, it will take time to analyse those and summarise the key points.

Mr Allister: Would the Minister like to explain to the parents of children in all our constituencies who are not able to take up free school meals, why, under his proposals, their children should be less valued and have less financial investment than other children, since he is a Minister who belongs to a party that claims to believe in equality? He dodges the matter by pretending that it is not a redistribution, but it patently is, because that will be the impact on existing budgets.

Mr O'Dowd: It is a redistribution of Department of Education funds; I have never dodged that issue. To create equality, sometimes you have to target resources specifically at one sector or group. You do not create equality by treating everyone the same. If the Member is serious about social deprivation and about deprivation in working-class Protestant communities, he will agree that the best way out of that is through education. As I have pointed out, a child who is on free school meals is exactly half as likely to succeed in education as a child who is not. If the Member wants to get

flustered and angry, he can get angry about that and then he might be able to resolve something.

Employment and Learning

BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training

1. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to state whether he will fully fund BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training for Northern Ireland students, which has been an issue for a constituent recently. (AQT 311/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

I thank the Member for his question. He has been in correspondence with my officials and me on that matter. He will appreciate that my Department funds UK courses. However, when part of a course is funded or takes place outside the UK, a different funding regime is in place. The overall student support settlement, as agreed by the Executive, is now in place until 2015. We can, of course, look at changes thereafter.

Mr G Robinson: Can the Minister assure me that he will pursue equality of funding with the rest of the UK to prevent further disparity for Northern Ireland's students?

Dr Farry: Again, I say to the Member that there are areas where there are disparities between the student support regime as it applies in Northern Ireland and that which applies in other parts of the UK. However, the biggest disparity is, perhaps, the fact that we have frozen tuition fees at £3,500, whereas they go up to £9,000 in other parts of the UK. Therefore, a fixed amount of money is available to the Executive. Choices have to be made about what we can do about other elements of student support. Of course, we can look at all the issues in the future. In a context where more resources are available to us, we can drive out more and more anomalies.

Investment: DEL Support

2. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning about his recent skills mission to the United States of America where, as I understand it, he met companies in New York, Washington and Chicago and to detail what support is available from his Department to companies that chose to invest here as distinct from support from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. (AQT 312/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. Although it is an appropriate question to ask, I stress that we will discuss Assured Skills during the formal questions.

In essence, my Department works in conjunction with Invest Northern Ireland. We have a very good relationship. More and more investments that come into Northern Ireland are attracted by the existing skills of the workforce and our potential to invest further in skills. That is why we have the Assured Skills programme. A core part of our trip to the United States was talking to existing investors to ensure that things are going well for them, talking to potential future investors in Northern Ireland and showing them the bespoke approach that we take to investing in skills, which gives Northern Ireland a major competitive advantage in attracting investment at present.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Following on from the US mission, are any further visits of that nature planned, perhaps to other countries?

Dr Farry: No formal trips have been added to the diary at this stage, although I anticipate that there will be some follow-up missions to the United States or to other parts of the world to showcase our skills further. We uncovered a large number of leads during our trip to the United States through engagement not only with companies but with government. It is fair to say that the United States Government in particular remain very keen to assist Northern Ireland not only with the political process but with economic issues. There are opportunities not only through company support but through exchanges for individuals where they can focus on their skills and experience different business environments.

South Eastern Regional College: Theatre

3. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide detail on the recently announced theatre at the South Eastern Regional College in Bangor. (AQT 313/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am happy to do so. This project was taken forward by my Department, and we have been very closely involved. Members will recall that the project was first mooted in the last Assembly, but, for various reasons, my predecessors in the Department decided that they did not have the resources to take the matter forward. We have revisited the situation and identified the capital resources available for the project.

I am very pleased to say that we have been able to make this important investment, which is good not just for Bangor and the wider South Eastern Regional College (SERC) catchment area but for all of Northern Ireland. We are investing in the future of our economy, particularly the creative industries, which, we all know, is an important growth sector. Hopefully, the project will also be of benefit to the town of Bangor, which has been looking for a theatre for many years. A 350-seat theatre will be made available as part of the development, and, although it is formally part of SERC and is there primarily for the use of students, the college will make it available for use by the community.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for his answer and welcome the investment in Bangor, specifically in a theatre, which, as he mentioned, has been required for a long time. What engagement took place with community groups to ensure that they can make use of the theatre and it is not solely a SERC facility but will be of benefit to the wider community and meets the community's specification?

Dr Farry: That is a useful issue to explore. This will be taken forward over the coming months. We expect it to be delivered in a fairly short time frame, and there is the prospect of construction beginning in early 2014 so that the theatre can open in 2015. As I stressed, it is open for commercial bookings via the college. The precise details of how that will operate will need to be taken forward by the college itself. However, discussions are also taking place with North Down Borough Council, which has responsibilities for the development of the arts scene in that community. It is for the council to come to an arrangement with the college on how they

can best support and facilitate subsidies for some of the community-based organisations to allow them to access the theatre facilities. I stress that those are dedicated theatre facilities of a proper standard, and it should be a lucrative venue for a range of organisations and drama groups in particular.

Careers Review

4. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his plans to review the careers policy. (AQT 314/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her question. The careers policy is held jointly by my Department and the Department of Education. John O'Dowd and I are committed to a major careers review in 2014. At present, the Committee for Employment and Learning is finalising its review of careers policy, and we look forward to receiving that report. In the past, we have systematically gone through Committee recommendations in other reports, and we will no doubt wish to do the same with the forthcoming report.

Ms Lo: I thank the Minister for his reply. What does he believe will be the main themes of the review?

Dr Farry: It is fair to say that almost every time you have a deep conversation with the business community and others about economic policy and skills it goes back to the issue of careers being the foundation stone on which a good economy is built. One of the key outcomes we will want to see will be ensuring that careers advice is much more in tune with accurate labour market information. Although it is always for individuals to make decisions about their future, those choices should be informed by the best information about where the emerging prospects lie in the economy, so that people are fully aware of the opportunities that are available to them.

In preparation for that, we are taking a number of actions. I will take the opportunity to highlight the fact that we are placing careers advisers in industry. We are encouraging companies to offer placements to our careers advisers so that they can spend time with the companies and understand fully how they work and the future opportunities there will be not just for young people but for everyone. This is a good example of how the public sector works with business to ensure that we properly plan ahead for the future needs of the economy.

Careers Guidance

5. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he believes that it is appropriate that careers guidance is steered in the direction that he talked about based on the needs of the employment market. (AQT 315/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her question. It shows that careers are always very topical, and Members' interest is very welcome in that regard.

I will answer the question: we need to strike the appropriate balance. We need to respect the fact that people will, ultimately, make decisions for themselves. They have that autonomy, and it is not for us to direct them. However, that said, it is important that we encourage people by illustrating where the opportunities lie. Whether we are talking about the Programme for Government, the

economic strategy or my Department's skills strategy, we have clearly set out the areas in which we expect our economy to grow in future years, and we know the sectors that are set to expand. They include information and communication technology (ICT), engineering, agrifood and the creative industries. There is a wealth of opportunities for young people, and it is often a source of frustration when we have skills shortages or skills mismatches. We sometimes have high unemployment and, at the same time, employers suggesting that they cannot get people to fill certain vacancies because they have not chosen the right type of subject or have not expressed an interest in a certain career.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for that very detailed answer. To follow on from that, will he expand a little on how we can make this more relevant to the needs of industry in general?

Dr Farry: It is an area in which industry needs to illustrate its needs by working much more with the careers service and whatever future models are put in place. The example of placing careers advisers in industry is a very good way of copper-fastening that type of cooperation. Ultimately, what we do in careers has to be about servicing the economy. That means servicing the needs of individual businesses and other organisations.

Living Wage

6. **Mr Newton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to state how many companies in Northern Ireland that are aided by his Department are paying a living wage, given that he will be aware of the topical debate around the minimum wage versus the living wage. (AQT 316/11-15)

Dr Farry: I cannot give the Member a comprehensive answer on that point today. I also imagine that there may be difficulties in collating the information in any comprehensive way in the short run. However, I can say a few things to give him some assurance. First, we have spoken to the further education colleges and universities, and they operate in a responsible manner in that regard. We also pay the minimum wage for apprenticeship support, which is a reflection of the situation that pertains in the wider market.

I think that, overall, it is important that we are realistic about all this. The minimum wage is set at a UK-wide level, and it has been increased recently. There is a case for making further adjustments upwards to the minimum wage. If we were to come in and argue for artificially setting a living wage level that is much in excess of where the appropriate level would be for the national minimum wage, there could be unforeseen circumstances where we would be denying opportunities for employment or, indeed, for creating opportunities for skills and work experience or apprenticeship opportunities. So, it is something that we need to take a very rounded and balanced approach to. Obviously, it is not a matter simply for the Assembly; it is a matter to be addressed at a UK level.

3.00 pm

Mr Newton: I thank the Minister for his answer. Towards the end of it, he did, indeed, touch on my concerns. I accept that there would be areas in the UK where the living wage may be just more appropriate as an incentive to attract people. Is it not possible that, in that attraction, we

would start to lose those skilled employees that we have who are perhaps on a minimum wage but are better-quality candidates who would be attracted towards the living wage?

Dr Farry: Again, I reinforce with the Member that it is something that we need to look very carefully at. There will be different contexts in different parts of the UK. Clearly, there are pressures, particularly in London and the south-east, with the cost of living relative to what people are earning, that are not quite as acute in Northern Ireland. However, in saying that, I by no means diminish the very challenging circumstances that people who are on the minimum wage often find themselves in.

It is important that we have a focus on trying to create job and training opportunities for people. However, as an Executive, our ultimate focus has to be on creating job opportunities and growing and transforming our economy. As we move up the productivity charts, we will see wage levels being driven up. The more that we invest in skills, the more that we will drive up the average pay that pertains in our economy. So, there are ways in which we can drive up wages that are different from artificially setting a wage floor.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for topical questions. We will now move on to the questions for oral answer that have been listed. Questions 2, 3 and 15 have been withdrawn.

Skills Gap

1. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the concerns expressed recently by a locally based recruitment agency of the skills gap for highly skilled welders and associated professions, as well as a shortage of skilled workers for offshore oil and gas installations. (AQO 4925/11-15)

Dr Farry: When approached by companies, my Department responds through tailored training programmes that are aimed at meeting specific employer needs. My Department has anecdotal evidence that companies that are based in Northern Ireland experience difficulty recruiting some levels of welding expertise. The recruitment agency suggested that that appears particularly evident in offshore work. My Department has worked with the recruitment agency for some time to establish the actual demand for offshore welding and related trades. As a result, a pilot Bridge to Employment programme was completed to recruit unemployed people with basic skills and to upskill them to work as scaffolders and pipe fitters. That was done on the basis that vacancies existed that the individuals would be eligible to fill. To date, the scaffolding and pipe fitting elements have been completed, and those who have finished the relevant training are available for employment offshore. My Department awaits confirmation from the recruitment agency that offers of employment have been made to the individuals.

The welding element has proved difficult, as arrangements for the provision of the relevant training have not been finalised. That centres on the identification of a suitable training provider. My Department remains in discussion with the recruitment agency on that.

Offshore welding requires high levels of precision and quality and certification to the appropriate offshore

standard. The working environment also places additional demands from a health and safety standpoint. Where jobs exist, we will work with the business to recruit and train individuals to work offshore.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Will he agree with me that there are obviously great opportunities here in training and employment, and will he suggest ways of bringing some of those industries together to try to exploit that? I am talking about taking a proactive approach.

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for that. Let me stress that we are being proactive in two different respects. First, I stress that we are here to respond to demand from businesses and the wider economy. We are not here to artificially say where training should take place; we are here to respond to the needs of business. Our various programmes, including Skills Solutions, are there to respond to the needs of business.

We can also be proactive in trying to plan ahead. I chair an engineering and advanced manufacturing working group, and those types of skills are touched on there. I have also asked my officials to conduct a health check on our engagement with the renewables sector as a particular subsection of engineering and manufacturing to make sure that we are doing all that we can. I also stress that we have a good footprint, particularly in the further education (FE) sector, and I highlight what the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) is doing on training people on renewables, whether at the Newtownards centre or, more recently, at the GreenTEC centre that was opened at the Newry campus of the Southern Regional College.

Mr Swann: The Minister mentioned a lack of suitable training providers. Is he aware of the work that the Belfast Met does on welding and courses of a similar nature? Those courses would be suitable for training people not only for offshore oil and gas work but for offshore renewables energy. There is a big market that we can tap into.

Dr Farry: It is about matching up the various training providers, which can be the FE colleges or some of the private sector organisations, with the particular needs that exist. We are committed to working with the different companies that come forward looking for upskilling to make sure that we can signpost them to the most appropriate area. Beyond that, we also look to see where we can make further investments in the supply and capacity of our education system to respond to the needs of business.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Several weeks ago, our Committee received a presentation from a group called Copius Resources who spoke of the possibility of 50,000 jobs being required offshore over the next five to 10 years. However, as Sammy and Robin said, the group stressed that the level of training and education here is not suitable to bring people to a level that will allow them to tap into those jobs.

Dr Farry: The question and my original answer are very much framed around the particular organisation that the Member refers to.

It is fair to say that we must ensure that what we hear about potential can be delivered and that we, in turn, have the flexibility in our training system to meet the demands. We are having discussions with the relevant recruitment agency in order to ensure that we are matching what it is

producing. To date, the practical demands have not been of the scale that the Member suggested. I do not mean to diminish the longer-term potential that the Member outlined, but the current levels of demand are not of the quantum that he suggested.

Mr McKinney: Given the specific needs gap that has been identified, has the Minister taken into consideration any special training for reskilling those people who have found themselves victims of the recession? Will he consider funding that?

Dr Farry: To broaden this out from the particular issue that we are discussing, we do invest in reskilling. If Members recall the situation that pertained last year to FG Wilson/Caterpillar, they will recall the heavy discussions about what could be done to offer reskilling opportunities for those individuals. We worked closely with Northern Regional College and Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) in that discussion.

It is also worth stressing that people have often been with companies for a long time, having perhaps been recruited straight from school. They may not have gone through a formal process of qualification but are competent in their particular skill or trade. We have to find a way to get that training accredited. It may not just be a question of their being reskilled but about getting their existing knowledge formally recognised so that those skills can be transferable to other companies.

Additional Support Fund

4. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many places at regional colleges, for people with learning difficulties, will be created as a result of the increase of funding for the additional support fund. (AQO 4928/11-15)

Dr Farry: The additional funding is initially intended to provide colleges with the appropriate means to address the technical and personal support needs of existing students with learning difficulties and of students wishing to enrol. That extra funding will also enable colleges to ensure that the additional technical and personal support needs of existing students with learning difficulties, who are currently enrolled on discrete programmes, are met.

Colleges have been utilising fully the allocations available to them through the fund. I am aware that, in the past, colleges have indicated that constraints meant that, on occasion, the level of support to individuals was restricted. The increase in funding for the additional support fund, which I announced in September, aims to ensure that the level of support provided reflects the level of support required. The impact on enrolments and the increases in the level of support, provided as a result of the increase in funding, will not be fully known until the end of the 2013-14 academic year.

Mrs D Kelly: I welcome the additional funding. Minister, will you tell me whether any account has been taken of the health trusts' proposals to reduce the level of day care facilities, which would have met the needs of young people with learning disabilities post-16?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her question, which touches on a very broad theme that cuts across a number of Departments. Frankly, we need to address that at an Executive-wide level. We want to avoid a situation where

we are simply moving issues from one Department to another. Rather, there has to be a partnership, with different Departments playing a role in the areas in which they specialise, because that is where they will be best placed to take issues forward.

Quite clearly, the further education system has a major role to play in helping people with learning difficulties post-19, and there is provision for that. We recently did an audit of that provision to see what gaps exist, with a view to trying to address them. The disability employment service, which my Department is responsible for, is also being reviewed at present to ensure that we are offering the best comprehensive suite of interventions to support people into employment and to sustain that.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety has a key role to play in providing day care facilities. I stress that further education is not always going to be a viable option for some individuals, so those day centres will play a vital role. At times, there will need to be a partnership approach, with the FE system reaching out to the day centres and trying to provide some type of intervention, training or education to young people. I stress that this has to be taken forward on a partnership basis. I certainly encourage the Health Department to make sure that it is investing appropriately in that provision.

Mr Campbell: The Minister mentioned an audit by the Department. Has that audit taken account of the numbers of people with learning difficulties in the catchment areas of each of the regional colleges and the numbers of people with learning difficulties already enrolled to see whether there is a differential and what the colleges can do to attract more people?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. In the broader context, we have seen a significant increase in the number of individuals with learning difficulties enrolling in the FE sector over the past decade. For example, in 2004-05, that amounted to 5% of total enrolments. More recently, it has amounted to 12% of overall enrolments. So, we are seeing a very clear direction of travel.

I am acutely aware that the transition from school at 18 or 19 is a very difficult and challenging process, particularly for the parents, because their children are often moving from a situation of relative certainty to a big unknown. I think that we need to do more to ensure that the existing audit of facilities matches the underlying data, where that exists, to meet the overall needs of the population as a whole. I think that Members can take some comfort from the fact that we have seen a significant increase in enrolments in the FE sector over the past decade, but there is obviously more to be done, and there are gaps in the system that still need to be addressed.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister would obviously agree that lack of access is one of the barriers to further education colleges for people with learning difficulties, given that many of the buildings are old and antiquated. In light of that, will he provide us with an update on the business case provided to his Department on the newbuild campus for South West College in Enniskillen?

Dr Farry: I have to say that that was a very creative way for the Member to move on to that point. Let me stress by way of introduction, to at least give some respect to the thrust of the initial question, that it is important that we

invest in modern buildings that are fully compliant with the needs of people who have disabilities. DisabledGo has done an audit of our facilities, and it is there to provide specific guidance to individuals on how they access buildings, and I have no doubt that that will be considered with any future investments in Enniskillen.

3.15 pm

I will get to the specifics of the Member's question. He will be aware that we have received a business case from South West College, and that is under consideration. We will not have a formal, definitive outcome from that business case until the issues of the transfer of land are resolved, and, at present, those are matters to be discussed between the Western Health and Social Care Trust and Fermanagh District Council. However, I want that to happen, and I very much look forward to progress in that regard. That is where that discussion lies, but, yes, we have received a business case from the college.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for his responses so far. The number of students registered blind or with a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses and deaf or with a serious hearing impairment have both decreased considerably since 2007-08. Will the Minister look at the introduction of support tailored specifically to those types of learning disability?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. I am aware of that context, and those stats have been commented upon by Members. It is probably more appropriate that we invest more generally in support funds that are available across the board and that the colleges have the flexibility to deploy. However, the categories that the Member mentions are within the subject matter for the additional support fund, and I have no doubts or concerns whatsoever that those funds will be deployed to support the individuals that the Member referenced.

North/South Cooperation

5. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline his priorities for greater North/South cooperation. (AQO 4929/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am committed to North/South cooperation on areas of mutual interest and of mutual benefit. Channels of communication are well established with the three Irish Government Departments with which my Department has the closest interfaces, which are the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. I and my officials regularly interact with Southern counterparts to share policy and good practice and to identify opportunities for collaboration in areas that include employment, training, further and higher education, employment relations, and accessing European funding.

The Employment Service has well-established links with the Department of Social Protection and shares policy and programme development on areas such as employer engagement and youth unemployment. For example, the Department of Social Protection is developing a contracted employment programme on a similar basis to our Steps 2 Success programme and is rolling out its Intreo service, which is a one-stop-shop approach similar to our jobs and benefits offices. The Department of Social Protection also works with us through the European Employment Services

Cross-border Partnership, which is supported by European Union funding.

My Department is also fully committed to cross-border research and development as reflected in particular by our successful delivery of the Strengthening the All-Island Research Base programme, which supported 12 major North/South R&D projects between 2008 and 2011, and also through our continuing key role in the highly prestigious US-Ireland R&D Partnership, which supports collaborative tri-national projects involving both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and the United States. Those projects are focused on a limited number of priority areas as agreed by all three Governments.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Will he provide us with an update on discussions that he has had with the Central Applications Office about the portability of A levels for entry into courses at Southern universities?

Dr Farry: I am very much aware of those issues, but the Member's colleague, the Minister of Education, is leading on those discussions. The difficulty that seems to exist is that the Central Applications Office is rather autonomous and separate from the Irish Government. The arguments have been won with Ruairi Quinn, the Southern Education Minister, and his colleagues, but it is a matter of getting the system itself to be more responsive. However, the representations continue from John O'Dowd, and I am more than happy to support him in that regard.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra chomh maith. What conversations has the Minister had, in particular, with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, on facilitating cross-border transportation to enable rural communities to access further education on both sides of the border?

Dr Farry: Formal discussions have not yet occurred, but we are looking very closely at student flows around the island of Ireland as a whole. Those links are significantly underdeveloped, particularly in relation to higher education. However, I caution the Member that the overall balance of the flows as they are — and small as they may well be at this stage — is very one-sided. They are largely of Southern students coming up to universities and the further education sector in Northern Ireland. I highlight, in particular, the situation that pertains in the north-west where, of the 4,000 or so students who come to further education in Northern Ireland, over 3,000 are in the Donegal to Derry/Strabane corridor. So there is a particular issue in terms of the spatial planning of the FE equivalent in the Republic of Ireland, particularly in the north-west, which is creating issues for us.

Mr Lyttle: What work is the Minister doing to expand the research cooperation that is happening on a North/South basis?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. One of the areas that is worth highlighting is what we are doing in relation to Horizon 2020. Between my Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), a number of Northern Ireland contact points have been appointed to focus on particular research areas. Those are based within local universities. The Department of Agriculture has also funded one in the College of

Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), and Invest Northern Ireland has also acted on small business relations.

This is a part of a concerted effort to seriously increase the drawdown that we have from Horizon 2020. As the Assembly appreciates, those are competitive European Union funds, and we have to compete with other bids to achieve this. The basis on which we compete successfully is through building relations between our institutions of higher education and their counterparts in other European countries. In particular, we have opportunities on the island of Ireland to significantly develop the level of cooperation that we have in high-quality international research.

I must also highlight what we are doing in the US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership. Dr Kerri-Ann Jones, who is the Assistant Secretary of State in the United States Department of State, is visiting Northern Ireland towards the end of next week. We will have discussions as to how we can take that forward to the next level.

Assured Skills

6. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the assured skills project. (AQO 4930/11-15)

Dr Farry: During the period 2007-2012, based on the number of projects won on a per capita basis, Northern Ireland has been the most successful region in the UK, after greater London, in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). That fact was evident at the recent investment conference in Belfast. Working with Invest Northern Ireland, the Assured Skills programme is designed to help attract new foreign direct investment companies to Northern Ireland by assuring them that the skills they need to be successful are available here.

Assured Skills support is also available to encourage existing companies that are considering expansion. The Assured Skills branch is currently engaging with nine foreign direct investment projects supporting the creation of over 2,000 jobs, with a total financial commitment of over £3 million from my Department.

Assured Skills also manages a number of capacity-building projects, which include sector-specific academies. This year's academy projects include: the Software Testers Academy, which is now in its third year; a new initiative with local information and communications technology employers around cloud technologies; and a company-specific project with Deloitte on its data analytical training academy. On completion, those academies will yield a return of 64 unemployed graduates gaining full-time employment. Once all employment targets are reached by the current FDI companies, the salaries alone will be worth an additional £46 million a year to the Northern Ireland economy.

I recently visited the United States, the purpose of which was twofold. First, I met existing clients to discuss their experience of Assured Skills and how we can improve the programme with a view to attracting more investors. Secondly, I met companies thinking of investing in Northern Ireland to explain the innovative support offerings available under Assured Skills. I am optimistic that, as a result of the visit, there will be Assured Skills projects in addition to those mentioned already.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. Will you tell the House what you think the future plans for Assured Skills are and how they contribute to the creation of employment here in Northern Ireland?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. It has become apparent over the past number of years that skills are increasingly the key basis on which we compete for inward investment. That was very evident at the recent investment conference and very much the message that I obtained on my recent visit to the United States. It is important that we continue to invest in the key drivers of skills, whether it is through the Assured Skills programme or the longer-term investment in our further education and higher education systems and through apprenticeships. I have no doubt that there will be many more projects under the Assured Skills umbrella over the coming years.

It is interesting to note that the Assured Skills programme is still technically a pilot. However, it has been extremely successful, so I am very optimistic that the programme will be mainstreamed in the next Programme for Government Budget period.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Will he indicate to the Assembly the type of support provided to small businesses and microbusinesses to improve the skills of their employees?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. I stress that we have a whole range of such programmes. We mentioned Bridge to Employment, which works particularly with the unemployed. The main service that we provide is the Skills Solutions Service, which is a one-stop shop to engage with businesses and discuss their particular training requirements. We can put in place bespoke programmes to address the very individual needs of companies. It is not a case of trying to shoehorn them into an existing programme; we can design something around their needs.

I also highlight that we offer management and leadership programmes at 100% cost, so they are, essentially, free to those who wish to avail themselves of them. That, again, is a very lucrative investment. It is of particular relevance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) looking to upscale. We know that good management and leadership are critical in that regard.

It is also worth stressing that, when we shortly announce the outcome of our review of apprenticeships, we will want small businesses in particular to take up those opportunities. It has been the case in Northern Ireland in the past, and it is also the experience internationally, that larger companies take on a disproportionate number of apprentices and that, sometimes, SMEs are somewhat risk-averse. We must have a conversation about how we can manage and overcome those perceptions — I stress the word “perceptions” — of risk.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for the detail that he provided in his answers. I am interested in finding out more about what help the Assured Skills programme has provided to existing businesses in Northern Ireland that are considering expansion. I understand that it is not just a tool for attracting foreign direct investment. I would be interested in finding out the proportion of FDI for local businesses.

Dr Farry: I can come back to the Member on what we can provide in the very specific split between existing companies and potential investors.

We are helping existing businesses through the academy model that we are taking forward. Sometimes, we have to make longer-term investments in our skills to ensure that we meet the longer-term needs of businesses. The academy model has proven to be a very flexible way of addressing particular skill requirements. It is based on taking good general graduates or others with a good level of education and, over a very short period of intense training, turning them into people capable of working in businesses. We have highlighted the software testers' academy and the cloud academy. Yesterday, we had the first graduation ceremony of the data analytics academy. I stress to Members that they will hear an awful lot about data analytics over the coming years. It is a huge growth area. We are positioning Northern Ireland to take advantage of the potential growth in that particular sector of the information and communication technology industry over the years to come.

3.30 pm

Employment: People with Disabilities

7. **Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any incentives his Department is offering to encourage employers to employ people with disabilities. (AQO 4931/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department offers a range of incentives, financial and otherwise, to encourage employers to employ people, including, of course, people with disabilities. All the Department's mainstream programmes and services, such as Steps to Work, are available to people with a disability. In addition, a number of specialist services and incentives exist for this client group. These include the Access to Work programme, which supports employers to purchase specialist equipment, adapt premises and meet the costs of support workers such as interpreters.

My Department also manages the Workable programme. This support includes free and ongoing disability awareness training for the employer and their staff, as well as long-term provision of a disability mentor or job coach.

The Department also administers the job introduction scheme, a no-obligation subsidised job trial, lasting up to 13 weeks. This enables the person with a disability and their potential employer to work together and decide whether there is an appropriate job match.

A new disability programme, Work Connect, was launched in September 2012. This programme offers intensive pre-employment support and in-work support to help the employee and their employer manage the early transition period and to agree longer-term disability support if necessary.

Finally, following the introduction of the youth employment scheme, a number of flexibilities have been introduced, specifically for young people with a disability. The employment subsidy element of the scheme was extended to all sectors for people with a disability, and the minimum 30-hour-a-week employment requirement has been relaxed for this client group.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his response. There is no doubt that the Minister's Department is leading the way in employing people with a disability. Can the Minister give us an indication of what percentage of staff in his Department have a disability?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. I am not in a position to give him those precise figures, but, as far as we are able to do it without breaching any data protection requirements that protect the personal data of individuals, we will endeavour to get in touch with him on that matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That concludes questions to the Minister for Employment and Learning. I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments while we make a change at the Table.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Assembly Business

Mr Campbell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I seek your guidance and help. During topical questions to the Minister of Education, there was a bit of an altercation between the Minister and me. During that altercation, the Minister indicated that I had made certain comments in the past that I had not made. I seek your guidance about how we can rectify that, because the former Member for West Belfast, when he left the Assembly, made similar comments, and it took me three years to rectify that. I seek your guidance about how we can ensure that there is equity and accuracy when Ministers are answering questions, even if it is to Members who are in a sedentary position.

Mr Speaker: I hear what the Member has been saying. This is always difficult to deal with. The Member now has it on the record, and that is important. Let me read Hansard and come back to the Member directly, or even to the House.

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly notes the ruling of the High Court on the decision to ban blood donations from gay men; further notes with concern that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's decision was found to be 'irrational', and to have been taken 'in breach of the Ministerial Code'; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to lift the ban and outline what steps he will take to build public confidence in relation to statutory equality duties.

Mr Beggs: I beg to move amendment No 1:

After second "ban" insert:

"from gay men who have been sexually inactive for more than 12 months"

I wish to indicate why the amendment is important. We want to ensure that we have a safe blood supply available to anyone who needs it, but, when you look carefully at the wording of the amendment, you see that it is not replicating the decision of the relevant English authority, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO).

In the motion, the availability of blood is opened up much wider than is agreed elsewhere, and that introduces additional risks. The purpose of my amendment is to reflect the decisions that were made by the independent committee that looks after the provision a safe blood supply to the United Kingdom and to reflect its wishes accurately about what should happen in Northern Ireland. It is important that we take scientific advice on such matters rather than an individual's point of view. I wish to go with that independent advice and with all the experts, scientists and related groups that have been involved.

In 2011, client groups — that is, those who regularly require blood transfusions — were involved, and it is important to reflect their wishes. The motion as it stands would remove all restrictions on homosexual men giving blood, but that is not approved elsewhere. What is approved is that those who have abstained from sexual activity for at least 12 months should be able to give blood if it is deemed safe to do so. I move the amendment for that reason.

It is important that we maintain public confidence in the safety of our blood supply. A range of factors restrict those who give blood, which involves short-term and longer-term issues. People on medication may be banned for a matter of days or weeks until, for example, an antibiotic course is completed and cleared from their body so that it is not transferred to someone who might require a blood transfusion. There are other practical issues, and there are bans related to travel. People travelling to the West Nile region in Africa can be exposed to the West Nile virus. There are also additional risks in parts of South America, and, for that reason, bans are imposed for a period of time. If someone travels to an area in which malaria is prevalent, there is a ban period to minimise any risk from exposure.

Other areas have lifetime bans. People who have been involved in prostitution or have ever injected drugs, even

bodybuilding drugs as opposed to heroin, which might be more atypical in people's minds, are banned. When one is exposed to such lifestyles, there are considerable additional risks, and science has deemed that there should be lifetime bans in such cases to protect the public.

Some areas require a shorter safety period to protect the public. As I see it, that list of areas has some common sense. The list includes people who have been, or who think that they may have been, sexually active in parts of the world, such as certain parts of Africa, in which HIV and AIDS are prevalent. If a partner has ever injected or been injected with drugs, there is a 12-month ban. There are additional risks if someone has a partner who has received money for drugs or sex. If you think that a partner has HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C, that is another issue from which real medical issues and risks would flow. For that reason, a 12-month ban is in place.

There have been developments in technology and testing, and it is deemed safe to use blood from a wide range of donors, provided appropriate periods are recognised. Science has determined that it is now safe to receive blood from gay men who have abstained from gay sex for 12 months or more. If that risk is deemed to be acceptable by scientists, along with the other risks that I listed, who are we to say no to that. A wide range of risks exists when blood is donated and received. However, there is also a big risk if there is a shortage of blood being donated and made available. I think that we have to go with the best science and information on this, rather than someone's individual viewpoint.

We have to reflect the fact that Northern Ireland cannot survive as a stand-alone unit for the provision of blood. There are so many blood types and many different blood products, which could cause difficulties and shortages, particularly if there was an emergency, as has happened from time to time, when blood supplies do have to be received in Northern Ireland from other parts of the United Kingdom.

As reflected in the court judgement, it has been deemed irrational to apply different standards to this part of the United Kingdom than those in other parts of the United Kingdom, particularly when we are willing to accept blood donated from other parts of the United Kingdom. As such, I ask Members to support my amendment to protect the public and sustain the public's confidence in the safety of our blood supply. I ask that we reflect on what has happened but, ultimately, respect the judgement of the independent Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs, which contains a wide range of scientific experts and has come to a scientific decision as to what is safe. I ask Members to support my amendment.

Mr Agnew: I beg to move amendment No 2:

At end insert:

"or resign if he feels unable to do so."

As MLAs, we have the privilege of being able to articulate our views to quite a wide audience. However, with that comes a responsibility to ensure that we are mindful of the impact that our words have on the wider community.

Those in the Government have an even greater responsibility to ensure that their actions are taken in such a way that serves the common good. There will

be occasions when that will require Ministers to put their personal views aside and act in accordance with the best evidence as to what is for the good of society. For example, the previous Environment Minister, on a number of occasions, stated that he did not agree with the proposed 11-council model in the reform of local government. However, as Minister, he acknowledged his responsibility as a member of the Executive, accepted the agreed way forward and progressed the reform of local government. I anticipate that his successor will do the same. That is responsible governance. That is mature governance. That is sound governance. However, that is not what we have seen from our current Health Minister.

Edwin Poots appears to have been on a personal crusade to do all that he can to prevent people who are homosexual being treated equally to those who are heterosexual, whether it be in marriage equality, those in civil partnerships adopting or gay men donating blood. To be fair, on equal marriage, he spoke as a Back Bencher and articulated his views from the point of view of a Minister who does not have responsibility in that area. He had a democratic right to do that and a right to dissent from those who campaign for equal marriage. However, his campaigns against gay men donating blood and against those in civil partnerships adopting have been done in his role as Minister. He must reflect on his equality responsibilities. I contend that his positions and actions to date have caused unacceptable harm.

3.45 pm

He causes harm to those children who seek adoptive parents. He does harm to those couples who wish to provide an adoptive, loving home to such children. Although I agree that no one has the right to adopt, we all have the right not to be discriminated against due to an irrational prejudice. I include myself in that as an unmarried man in a stable, long-term relationship. Should I and my partner seek to adopt, I would wish for us to be judged on whether we can provide a loving home and improve the outcomes for a child or young person, not to be discriminated against due to someone's values.

Harm is also caused in this instance by —

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: If I have time, I will come back to the Member.

Harm is also caused by the Minister's refusal to lift the permanent ban and, indeed to bring Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the UK on gay men donating blood. No statistically significant increase is achieved by allowing men who have not had sex with other men in the past year to give blood.

This is in the context of the Minister himself having warned that, at times, there is a risk of a shortage in the supply of blood. David Scofield QC stated in the High Court:

"Working that figure into the increased risk of one infected donation per billion, we estimate the Minister is concerned about an additional infected donation being made roughly every 50,000 years."

So, in taking his position, the Minister is causing risk. He is preventing a wider pool of blood donations when there is a risk to the health of those who need blood. I believe that that causes unacceptable harm.

The Minister's case becomes preposterous when we take into account Northern Ireland's position in the UK. There is no rational basis for a unilateral ban in Northern Ireland when we receive blood from the rest of GB. Indeed, Justice Treacy described the Minister's position as "irrational". The decision in the UK was taken based on the best and most sound scientific evidence available, and I contend that the Minister's decision has been based on neither evidence nor reason.

Further, we have to question the continued challenges that the Minister has engaged in to not just Justice Treacy's ruling but the Information Commissioner's ruling that the Minister should provide to the public the legal advice that he has received on this issue. When the Minister continually takes spurious legal cases — I will document some of them later — and continually loses them, we have to call into question the advice that he is getting. Is it a question of him receiving poor advice, or is it a question of him receiving advice from the Attorney General that he is not taking? I think that it is in the public interest to know that. The Information Commissioner has ruled that it is in the public interest for that information to be published. Yet again, the Minister and the Attorney General are challenging that decision. Again, I believe that that is unjustifiable.

I also have to call into question the Minister's understanding of the courts' positions. On 15 January, in response to a supplementary question on civil partners adopting, the Minister stated:

"we need to be very clear about this. When it comes to these issues, the House will make the laws, and the courts will interpret them; not the other way around." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 80, p216, col 1].

I think that that has been found to be a very naive and ignorant statement, given some of the recent court rulings. Although it is right that this legislature makes laws, we do so in the context of existing local, regional, national and European laws that have been shaped over generations through amendment and precedent in the courts. We must take that into consideration every time that we legislate in this House. We cannot simply ignore the positions of the courts. I, for one, am thankful that the authority of the court has been applied in the case of some of the Minister's decisions.

I would prefer to see the Minister spend less time and, indeed, less public money on spurious legal challenges and focus on his role as Health Minister in improving our health service.

I will list some of the expense from the public purse. Since the financial year beginning April 2011, the Minister's Department has spent £328,521 on legal costs. That is the most recent figure that I have received in response to questions for written answer. Of that, £40,000 was spent defending his position on unmarried couples and those in civil partnerships adopting; £29,990 was spent as a result of the Minister's non-appointment of a trade unionist to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council; and £37,112 was spent on defending his stance on gay men donating blood. That waste of public money is intolerable, and it is continuing. Those are my most recent figures, but I believe that the costs have since gone up.

I said that I would give way to Mr Givan if I got the chance, so I will quickly give way.

Mr Givan: I appreciate the Member giving way. He is usually generous in that regard.

He spoke about the Minister's personal values impinging on his ability to take decisions. I do not read anywhere in Justice Treacy's judgement that personal view was ever taken into account. Can he cite one example of where the Minister's personal views have impinged on his duties to carry out his job as Minister on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr Agnew: I asked the Minister on a number of occasions, in questions for oral and written answer, to provide evidence of his position that adoption by unmarried couples and civil partners would do harm to the children that they would adopt. That evidence was never provided, so I have concluded that his decision was irrational, as the courts concluded his decision on the gay blood ban was, and that his decisions are prejudiced, when you consider the scope of the Minister's decision across equality rights.

I ask the House to support the motion and my amendment, and I ask the Minister, if he cannot meet his equality duties, to resign.

Mr Dunne: It is imperative that public safety always be kept to the fore across the Department of Health, including in the realm of blood donation. The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service recognises that, and its website states that blood safety is crucial within its service. Its website also states:

"Quality is regarded as of paramount importance at the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service. This commitment is demonstrated by the development of a quality management system which will ensure the provision of safe, efficacious and timely blood products and services for both patients and donors."

Safety and quality are, quite rightly, at the top of the agenda for our blood transfusion service as well as for our Health Minister, Edwin Poots. It is quite right and proper that criteria be put in place to ensure adequate quality and a safe product. The Health Minister, quite rightly, puts public safety to the fore and takes all precautions to ensure that the highest quality of blood is available for those who require it.

Locally, donors are asked a series of questions, covering health, travel and lifestyle. That is all to ensure blood safety. The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service also states on its website:

"You should not donate if you have had a tattoo, ear or body piercing ... within the last 12 months."

That is an example of ensuring that quality standards are maintained. It is right and proper that the risk of contaminating blood be minimised and public confidence maximised. I was turned down some years ago from giving blood as I was deemed to have low blood pressure. I recognise that that was in the interest of blood safety and of my health and that of any potential receiver. It was not some form of discrimination.

The same legislation that applies across many developed countries, including the United States of America, Canada, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Norway and the Republic

of Ireland, is designed to ensure the highest possible standard of blood for those who need it.

The much publicised recent judicial decision states in paragraph 131 that blood donated from men who have been sexually active with other men increases the risk of acquiring blood-borne disease. We would fail our communities if we did not ensure that all possible risks were reduced.

We are fortunate in Northern Ireland that we have relatively high levels of blood donation and are almost self-sufficient. That is to be welcomed. It is important that the goodwill in our communities when it comes to giving blood is recognised and not lost in some of the hysteria in this debate.

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dunne: No, thank you.

We must continue to do all we can to improve the health service and maintain high levels of service and confidence for our public, whom we represent.

Mr McKinney: While many of the headlines around the debate are about equality, fundamentalist views and irrationality, it is our view that primarily this is an issue of medical safety and medical science. Many of us remember several horrific policy mistakes in the area of blood products, most notably in France — issues that go back some 30 years — and in the Republic of Ireland just 10 years ago. Those led to strict rules limiting who could donate blood. The premise was that what had happened before would not happen again; in other words, it would be "Safety first".

There are equality issues that arise in relation to the central safety issue, but "Safety first" means that the equality issues were and are secondary. It is clear that the whole world is divided on the issue. For example, there is no unequivocal international best practice. Many jurisdictions with excellent equality records maintain lifetime bans on blood products from those involved in MSM relations, and it is worth highlighting some of them. They include the USA, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and the Republic of Ireland. In all countries, there are many categories of people who may not or should not donate blood. In every case, we have to look at risk factors first and equality implications thereafter.

Giving blood is a good thing that should be encouraged, but it is not a human right. Given the known and proven risk factors, the needs of those who receive blood products must always take precedence over those of the donors. I encourage more people to consider giving blood, praise those who do so and praise the work of the Blood Transfusion Service. Our job, though, as legislators, is to find the best way forward for those in dire need of a low-risk blood supply. In dealing with real problems in real life, it is generally wise to avoid absolutist arguments about rights and wrongs and look to the greatest good. All the bands and categories of donor are designed to reduce risk at the start of the supply chain. That was the main option open to those who took the decisions in the wake of the blood supply controversies. Real life is seldom black and white, and certainties change, which is demonstrably true in the case of blood transfusion and donation. New science towards the end of the blood supply chain now

allows us to see risk reduced to minuscule levels, and that is the game-changer in this discussion. Scientific experts can now safely say that screening means that those minuscule levels can be reduced to as little as one case in 4.4 million getting through the screening process. That applies across the board here and in the other regions of the UK that have changed their determination on who can now donate.

It is important to put some context to the judge's description of the Minister's decision as irrational. That description referred only to the fact that there was an inherent contradiction in taking blood products from Britain, which includes blood from the MSM category, while rejecting that option here. It is, of course, irrational, but it is also a red herring. The irrational argument could easily be turned on its head if the source that allowed the MSM category blood was stopped. Such an action, while possible, would not be sensible and, against the backdrop of new higher screening levels, would itself be potentially irrational, though, as I said, for that different reason. So, we need harmony with the new English, Welsh and Scottish approach.

4.00 pm

It is not the only irrational aspect of the discussion. For those who are not allowed to donate blood, it would appear wholly irrational to deny someone who is in a long-term monogamous MSM relationship the option to give blood while allowing someone who is heterosexual and engaging in a range of sexual relationships to do so. I suggest that there would be a greater risk in the latter. That serves to underscore our central point: the focus of the debate should be on the new science. Embracing the new science removes the focus on all but the most high-risk categories. It means that the lifetime ban on donations from men in the MSM category is no longer an effective additional defence. While there may have been a bias on the part of the Minister, it is clear that the new science weakens that position considerably, and, while there may have been equality issues, it is the new science that changes and strengthens that dynamic. In light of that new science, it is the view of the SDLP that it is safe to lift the ban and, in doing so, to address the secondary equality implications. In our view, the Minister should do so. If he feels unable to do so, perhaps he should hand the decision to his permanent secretary.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr McKinney: If he further feels unable, then perhaps he should consider his position.

Ms Lo: The Alliance Party supports the main motion and both of the amendments. This is a serious debate and an opportunity for the Assembly to demonstrate that it is in line with public opinion on the issue. It also provides a challenge to the Minister to demonstrate that he accepts the judgement of the courts on the matter and is now willing to do his duty and to move to a situation on blood donations from men who have had sex with men that is in line with the rest of the UK.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Ms Lo: No, I am sorry.

Alliance believes that the current position of the Minister is irrational. It is irrational in the sense that it does not follow scientific evidence around what is safe and what

is unacceptably risky. In 2012, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs reviewed donor criteria and recommended that the lifetime ban on men who have sex with men was no longer required and that a 12-month deferral period was perfectly safe. That is now the position in the rest of the UK but, regrettably, not in Northern Ireland. As a consequence, there is a loss of dignity for some of our citizens who want to fulfil their civic duty through donating blood and are unreasonably prevented from doing so. There is also a cost to society in a diminished blood supply.

The blood donation ban is also irrational in the sense that men who have had sex with men but have had no subsequent activity for a full year can donate blood in other parts of the UK. Given that blood is regularly imported into Northern Ireland from other parts of the UK, local supplies collected under one set of protocols can be used alongside other supplies of blood that were collected on other terms. No doubt, the Minister will argue that this is now a matter for the UK Health Minister, Jeremy Hunt. That may be the case, but it is a cop-out from our Minister in that he retains the authority and capacity to bring the Northern Ireland situation into line with the rest of the UK. The Minister also has a challenge to prove that he operates and takes decisions on the basis of objectivity, particularly when it comes to the rights of members of the LGBT society and other social issues.

The judgement from the courts on blood donation comes in the wake of other judgements against the position of the Minister on the potential ability for same-sex couples and unmarried heterosexual couples to adopt and the requirement to produce revised guidelines on the termination of pregnancy. It remains to be seen what the Minister will do on the blood ban and on the matter of adoption. Already, the revised guidelines on abortion from the Department are unravelling. All of those are cited, as a pattern is emerging. While the Minister insists that he has not acted out of prejudice, the burden of proof very much lies with him to demonstrate that he is acting rationally and objectively.

We support the first amendment in that it clarifies that, for now, we are talking about a consistent regime across the UK. Ultimately, we should look to a situation where blood donation is regulated only on the basis of risk, independent of the sexual orientation and partners of donors. In other words, all other things being equal, there should be no difference in eligibility to donate between men who have sex with other men and men who have sex with women. To an extent, the second amendment is self-evident. It is not a direct call for the Minister to resign; rather, it is a recognition that it would not be sustainable for the Minister to remain in office if he or she is not prepared to act in accordance with the law. That is a core element of the ministerial code.

Ms Brown: As a member of the Health Committee, I rise to speak against the motion.

Yesterday, in the Chamber, we debated mental health. Whilst opinions on the way forward may have differed, there was consensus that mental health affects a huge number of our population. Sadly, the motion today is, perhaps, bringing us backwards in that it is opportunistic and has little to offer other than to score a political point or two. Were we to vote on every ministerial decision taken in this place on these grounds, there would be few Ministers left standing. It is worth noting that other parties here have

not shown the same willingness to resign their Ministers when courts found against them.

The nature of ministerial decisions is such that many go unnoticed and are routine, but some become controversial for one reason or another, and each Minister must defend his or her decisions. It is a Minister's right to make decisions and the Assembly's right to challenge and hold to account. I accept that. Such is the nature of government.

In respect of the subject matter of the motion, the Minister takes the view that he is acting on grounds of safety and not of prejudice or bias. I accept his good faith on that. Whatever the arguments or political spin by rivals, I believe that he is a Minister who has the interests of the people at heart and is quite capable of displaying compassion and integrity. His decisions may not please everyone, but that does not make them wrong.

I accept that others hold a different view on the rights of individuals to donate blood, whatever their orientation and background. I respect that. Perhaps, in time, the situation may change, but for now the Minister has chosen to move forward cautiously, and I really do not think that he can be criticised for that, particularly given the vast majority of countries that choose to keep a ban in place and show no signs of changing.

There will be many reasons why someone offering to give blood will have their blood refused. Such reasons include current health conditions and even simply what medications they are using at the time. We do not and should not talk about all those people being discriminated against or there being some issue of equality. It is good to take all precautions to ensure that our blood —

Mr Agnew: Will the Member give way?

Ms Brown: No, thank you.

It is good to take all precautions to ensure that our blood supply is and remains safe. Without wishing to sound disrespectful to those affected by it, the ban affects not just gay men but heterosexual women, those who have had sexual relationships in countries with high levels of HIV and those with hepatitis, amongst others. There are more pressing matters —

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Ms Brown: No, thank you.

There are more pressing matters in the provision of health-care to which we should devote our time and resources.

Blood donation is a wonderful gift to those who need it. I know that as a past recipient of donated blood, and I encourage all those who are able to donate to do so.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I support the motion. I apologise for missing the beginning of the debate, as I was in a meeting with the Social Development Minister.

The recommendation from the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs was accepted in 2011 in England, Scotland and Wales. The change of policy from a lifetime ban to a one-year deferral period for MSM came into effect there in November 2011, but the North did not follow suit. The Rainbow Project states that 424 people, fewer than half of them men, access HIV specialist care in the North. The figure in England is 1.23 people per 1,000;

in Scotland, it is 0.59 people per 1,000; and it is 0.4 per 1,000 in Wales. Taking those figures together, 1.12 people per 1,000 of the population in England, Scotland and Wales are in that category; in the North, it is 0.24 per 1,000.

The Minister stated that there were normally fewer than 1,000 units of imported blood per year. Justice Treacy, in his judgement, stated:

"Importing blood from other places which do accept MSM donors, even in limited quantities, leaves the door open for MSM blood to do just that. There is clearly a defect in reason here. If there is a genuine concern about the safety of MSM donated blood such that the blood stock must be protected absolutely from such blood then the security of that blood must actually be maintained absolutely. Applying a different standard to imported blood defeats the whole purpose of permanent deferral of MSM donors."

So there is irrationality in this. It is interesting to note that, in an e-mail dated 9 June 2011, a senior medical officer in the Department confirmed that the Blood Transfusion Service had no particular issues with the suggested changes to the lifetime ban.

The designation of MSM blood as high-risk has a disproportionate effect on gay men and is, therefore, indirectly discriminatory. The policy is also contrary to the EU principle of non-discrimination and to article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Minister says that the policy is not discriminatory on the basis of sexual orientation but makes provision for legitimate differences in treatment on the basis of behaviour. However, as blood is being brought in from elsewhere, that, surely, is irrational.

This is a controversial and cross-cutting issue. It takes in equality issues and deals with the implementation of an EU directive. The Minister should pay absolute attention to it. In my view, it appears that the Minister is practising a form of what might be described as "à la carte unionism", because the ban is not in place in Britain. His colleague Mr Givan, commenting recently on the National Crime Agency, stated that the North deserved equality with the rest of the UK. Obviously, that does not work in reverse. Mr Storey mentioned welfare reform during Question Time earlier. Constantly, we in the Committee for Social Development are advised by our colleagues from the DUP that parity is paramount, so I will conclude on that.

Mr D McIlveen: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. There are certain things in life that you feel that you will never live to see. I have to say that I have witnessed one today, in that we had a Sinn Féin Member vociferous in his desire to break parity on an all-island basis and have the powers taken over and devolved to the UK. That must be a first. I hope that it is a picture of things to come.

In all seriousness, we have to deal with some of the smokescreens thrown up in the debate. This is not an equality issue or one that focuses entirely on those who fall within the MSM category. It falls entirely on those who are involved in high-risk sexual activity. It does not pinpoint a particular group. A number of groups fall into the category that would be deemed high-risk. Therefore, trying to cover it up as an issue of equality really takes us down a road that, I believe, has no merit whatsoever.

Mr Agnew: Will the Member give way?

Mr D McIlveen: Not just at the moment. If I have time, I will let the Member for North Down in.

It is not a morality issue either. Trying to bring that smokescreen into the question is also erroneous.

This is an issue of public safety and of a flawed judgement. What astonishes me and what I find irrational in the debate is that every party in the House is not questioning that judgement. It very clearly states that, even though the Health Minister is part of the Executive in the Northern Ireland Assembly, he is unable to make this decision now without the consent of the Health Minister in Westminster. That is entirely anti-devolution. So what astonishes me today is that single party in the House is not questioning the judgement. Forget about its content: on the premise of pure legality, we should all be alarmed by this and call it seriously into question.

4.15 pm

Mr Givan: I thank the Member for giving way. He makes a valid point about the legality of all this. The motion calls on the Minister to act illegally by lifting the ban, which is a decision, as the Member has rightly indicated, that is now the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Health in England. Therefore, Members of the House are calling on this Minister to break the law.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Member for his intervention.

If the issue were medically straightforward, we would not be having this debate. The House must be fully aware that, to describe this country, as some have sought to do, as some sort of backwater because of the decision that has been taken is, quite frankly, shameful. In many countries, a ban has been retained or maintained either by state or federal Governments. The United States of America is a perfect example, and all but two of the European Union countries still have a ban. A ban is in place across Asia and throughout the Middle East. Legislators have been at one in raising their concerns about the issue. Why do they raise those concerns? If a person is in the MSM category, the blood that is donated carries a nine times higher-risk than that of heterosexual people. That is medical scientific fact.

The safety of the people we are elected to represent should be absolutely paramount in every decision that we take. As a House, we owe it to our constituents not to expose them to any proportion of risk, particularly in health-related matters. We should be committed to that without being swayed by prejudice or deflected by a media frenzy that, in certain cases, seeks to discredit those who have a genuine desire to safeguard their communities from adding unnecessary fears to an already anxious time for patients and families.

Mr Speaker: The Member has used up the added minute to his time.

Mr D McIlveen: The basis of the motion is fundamentally flawed, as are the amendments. I do not support them.

Mr Eastwood: Over the past number of weeks, a phrase has been used that needs to be put to one side: "gay blood". I am no doctor, but I am pretty sure that there is no category called "gay blood". *[Interruption.]* Well, it is a phrase that has been used in the media in the past number of weeks. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. We must not have debate across the Chamber.

Mr Eastwood: This debate, this issue and this failure by the Minister have added to a long list of things that say to the community and to people from an LGBT background that the Assembly is out of touch with you, has no empathy with you and has no real interest in your issues. That is a sad indictment of this place, whether the issue is equal marriage or the fact that, until very recently, gay couples would not have been allowed to adopt in this part of the world. How many children who are living in very difficult conditions would love to have been adopted by any couple who met all the rigorous tests of their suitability? Does anyone really think that those kids should have been left in homes or in care instead of being taken and adopted by loving parents, even if those parents are two men or two women? I do not understand the logic of that. It all feeds into the theme, not just from this Minister but from the House in a number of debates, that right-wing religious fervour takes precedence over the needs of our community. It strikes me that there is a crusade around some of this stuff.

It does not matter how promiscuous you are if you are a straight person. You can sleep with 100 people, and it will be all right for us to take your blood. However, if you are a gay person and have been in a loving relationship for 20 years with one partner, we do not want your blood. Never mind —

Mr Givan: Rubbish.

Mr Eastwood: It is not rubbish. I am sure that we have all posed for photographs when giving blood to try to encourage people to do the same. We know that if we are knocked down or are in a car accident and are very seriously injured, we will not particularly care whether the blood that saves our lives comes from a straight person who lives in Derry or a gay man who lives in Manchester, because it is possible that you will get that blood. It is not a good message for the Assembly to send out.

I think that today will see a bit of change, because I think that the motion will pass. That is a good thing. It is about time that this place started to send out the message to gay people and especially young gay people — there is a very high rate of suicide among young gay men in particular — that we care about them, they are part of our society, and we will not discriminate against them because of their sexuality.

My colleague Mr McKinney and other Members illustrated the issues of risk and science very well. The publication from the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs on the risk of HIV transmission shows that, with a lifetime exclusion, there is a risk of one infection in every 4.41 million donations, with a five-year time limit, there is a risk of one infection in every 4.39 million donations, and with a one-year time limit, there is a risk of one infection in every 4.38 million donations. Where is the significant risk difference between a one-year ban and a lifetime ban? There is virtually none. The screening has improved so much that the risk has been all but eliminated.

The ban is irrational. By the way, I did not need a judge to tell me that it is irrational. I have known for a long time that it is irrational, and the community knows that it is irrational. The point has been made, but what is also irrational is the fact that the DUP —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Eastwood: — is very prepared to break parity on this issue and issues like it but not on other matters.

Mr McCallister: Like other colleagues, I support the motion and will speak in favour of it. I also support the amendments. The Ulster Unionist Party's amendment rightly brings the issue into line with what is happening in the rest of the country.

I listened to various speeches. We need to condense the issue down into the simplest terms. What is the risk? Mr McKinney, Mr Eastwood, Mr Agnew and Mr Beggs all asked what this is about. Is it purely about safety, and, if it is, where do we get the evidence and advice from? We get it from a national body in England that advises, researches and looks at all the evidence not only from the UK but from around the world and makes an assessment. Government should follow that. Listening to some of the speeches from Members of the DUP, I think that the obvious conclusion to draw is that they think that the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government are putting people in Great Britain at risk. That is the logical outworking of their position.

Mr McIlveen said that the party's position was nothing to do with the DUP but was purely about protecting the citizens of Northern Ireland. It would be easier to believe that it was not a solid DUP position if it was not set against the backdrop of endless failures when it goes to court on adoption and a blood ban across the board. Who is the Minister getting his legal advice from? He really ought to think about changing them. He really ought to think about advising whoever he has on retainer to, perhaps, go off and deal with wills, conveyancing or something, because he is not getting good advice or he would not keep losing case after case after case. Effectively, the court is doing the job that the Minister should be doing in tackling some of the inequalities that he seems keen to preside over.

It is very funny that Lord Morrow added a contribution from a sedentary position. It is strange that, when it was against Minister Durkan and the Planning Bill, they were all for publishing legal advice and for adhering in strict compliance to the ministerial code. However, when it comes to Minister Poots, the ministerial code is just another piece of paper that nobody seems to have to worry too much about. It is just something more that Members from larger parties can ignore.

The Minister happily admits that he unwillingly, or unwittingly, which I think was the word he used, breached the ministerial code. However, the judge did not say that. The judge also said that the Minister's acceptance of blood from Great Britain was irrational. Like Mr Eastwood, I find that quite easy to believe. I would not have needed a judge to say that it was irrational, illogical, or whatever phrase you want to use. It just did not stack up when you looked at the evidence.

Look at the ban on adoption. We have delayed a Bill now for a number of years. How many children have we left literally rotting in our care system — in a failed care system — because we have not got on with speeding up an adoption process? How many? That is a blight on the Assembly and the Minister.

Ms Brown spoke about the debate yesterday and about the House coming together and speaking passionately

about mental health. Mr Eastwood touched on that. I agree wholeheartedly with this point: you cannot come to the House and speak about mental health and have other colleagues going out and talking about homosexuality being an abomination. You cannot do it, Mr Speaker. You cannot have that, and you cannot sit and talk and pretend that you care about suicide and self-harm and use language like that. We, as political leaders — all of us —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr McCallister: — have a responsibility to act and behave responsibly when dealing with the lives of each and every citizen out there. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Allister: This is a judgement that has drawn a lot of comment; some of it, I have to say, is quite ill-informed. It is a judgement at first instance. Maybe we will hear from the Minister whether the matter is going to rest there or whether it will be tested further, because it is but a first-instance decision and one that, I have to say, surprises me in its methodology of argument and in some of its conclusions.

It is a judgement that contains some key findings of a constitutional nature. One that I think is most troubling, in a devolutionary arrangement, is the finding that although it would not have been *Wednesbury* unreasonable for the Minister to find, as he did, that MSM donors are in the high risk — that is not unreasonable — it is unlawful for him to make the decision, under an EU competence, on a devolved matter. I must say that I struggle to follow the logic of the judge in that regard. There is quite an important constitutional issue that I feel should certainly be tested further as to whether Mr Justice Treacy is right in his finding about the EU competency point that flows from the directive. That is an important matter.

It is quite clear to me that the Minister was right to contest the case. He did not bring the case. Mr Agnew talked about wasting funds. The Minister did not bring the case. This case was brought as a challenge that the Minister quite properly defended. I suspect that it would have been a dereliction of his duty not to defend it, and he would be perfectly entitled to challenge it further. So, let us be quite clear about that.

4.30 pm

Let us also be clear that this judgement does not find that the Minister acted with *Wednesbury* unreasonableness in deciding that MSM donors are in the high-risk category. It found irrationality only because of the Minister's liberality in admitting GB blood. That is the sole basis on which there was any finding of irrationality. It did not find that it was discriminatory.

I wonder how many Members have read the judgement. If you read paragraph 141 of the judgement, you will discover that it states the finding that it is "unlikely" to be discriminatory if the decision had been rational on that one issue. It expressly makes no finding of bias, yet we have heard people talk today about all sorts of imaginations of right-wing religious views etc. There was no finding of bias. If there are extreme right-wing religious views on this, is that why half the countries in the modern world have the current ban that the Minister adheres to? Is that why most countries in the EU have the current high-risk ban? Are

they the product of right-wing religious extremism? I think not, and I think that those who seek to make such a point show the shallowness of their own argument.

Mr Givan: Does the Member agree with me that, for those who are making the argument that if individuals in the House happen to go to church, they are somehow not fit to be in politics, they reveal their prejudice against those of faith?

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added to his time.

Mr Allister: I think that it shows a sadly increasing incidence in our community of intolerance of those who dare to have any faith or religious belief. That is manifested, of course, by those who are very quick to canvass outside certain religious places of worship on a Sunday come election time. They are very quick to do that, but when it comes to one daring to have a religious view about anything, that is where discrimination has to kick in, and it kicks in very vigorously.

Mr Agnew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: If I have time, I will give way in a moment.

I come back to the point that I really struggle with: the judgement that it is not competent in a devolution scenario for a devolved Minister to set a higher standard for his part of the United Kingdom. If that power is devolved, why can he not do that? It is, as Mr McIlveen said, a contradiction of devolution in itself. That is the key issue that needs to be further tested constitutionally.

I will vote against the motion and the second amendment. I am not a political ally of the Minister, as some might have observed from time to time, but I think that he did right on this issue. He did right to defend this, and I think that he would do right to challenge it further.

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Is it not remarkable today that, when the public are talking about issues other than gay blood, such as the disappeared or a court case involving the cover-up of sex abuse involving the leader of the party that tabled the motion, we are discussing — what? — an issue about MSM blood, when we use 53,000 units of blood each year and when we have imported an average of 73 units over the past three years? Is this the big issue of today that the House should be talking about? I do not think so. Clearly, the party opposite, which is the party that brought this forward, is more interested in covering up for its paedophile-protecting president than in serving the needs of the community.

Ms Ruane: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: I would like the Minister to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* Order. I ask Members — *[Interruption.]* Order. I remind all Members, especially the Minister, to be careful of their language in the House. There is a standard of debate that everybody expects in the House, even from Ministers.

Mr Poots: I accept the Speaker's ruling. There is a standard in life that people expect, and when people are aware of paedophile activities taking place, they should report them.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Poots: The leader and president of Sinn Féin was aware of and believed it but did not report it. Therefore, do not come to me seeking withdrawals, because you will not get any withdrawals from me on that issue.

Over the past number of weeks, I have received personal abuse of the most vitriolic, vile and invective type. That has been aimed not just at me but at my family, including those who have never played any active part in politics, by so-called liberals. Those are the people who, on the other hand, say that I have some sort of prejudice or bias and do not look after equality or address discrimination. If I were to show or describe some of the abuse to Members, they would see that it is of the most appalling nature.

The motion before us today is about a ban on gay men giving blood. I have never introduced any such policy nor, indeed, has anybody previously. Therefore, the motion is wrong. The motion also asks me to act outside my legal competence, because, whether I like it or not, Justice Treacy's ruling has standing in law. Justice Treacy's ruling, for the Members who clearly do not understand it or have not read it, indicates that the person to make the decision is the English Minister, Jeremy Hunt, in the Department of Health. Clearly the motion has been drawn up by incompetents, because it is not politically competent. It is very interesting that Sinn Féin wants to take the decision on this out of Northern Ireland and send it back to England. That is an interesting case for a party that supports a united Ireland.

To deal with the issue, over the decade from 2000, there was a 300% rise in HIV in Northern Ireland. SaBTO identified in its report — for those who do not tend to read such things, it is on page 68 at appendix 5 — that, since 2008, undiagnosed HIV in the MSM community was 900% greater than it was in the heterosexual community. In paragraph 132 of the judge's ruling, he identifies that HIV prevalence in gay men ranges from 8.6% to 13.7%.

I accept that blood screening is good, but it is not good enough if I have a chesty cough or a sore throat, in which case, I cannot give blood. It also is not good enough if I have had hepatitis or jaundice in the past 12 months, or acupuncture or a tattoo in the previous four months, or if any member of my family has had CJD or received growth hormones, or if I have travelled abroad to certain countries in the previous six months. Indeed, if I had ever injected drugs, I could not give blood — ever. If I were a commercial sex worker, I could not give blood — ever — in spite of the fact that there is less incidence of HIV in that community than there is in the MSM community. If I had syphilis, I could not give blood — ever. People say, "Oh, screening is brilliant. That is where the science lies", but if it is purely down to screening, why do we have all those exclusions? Those same people say, "Just forget about the exclusions, and we will do it all by screening". That is the logic of the argument, and it is, I might say, an illogical argument.

The review group that advised SaBTO included representation from Stonewall, Gay Men Fighting AIDS, the National AIDS Trust and the Terrence Higgins Trust. Was there any prejudice or bias in that decision-making, given that four groups representing people from MSM communities were on the advisory group? Where were the representatives of the commercial sex worker

community, which has less incidence of HIV than the MSM community?

By the way, Spain and Italy are the only two countries in Europe where the lifetime ban has been lifted. Therefore, if I am the irrational, prejudiced and biased one, I am in the company of an awful lot of Ministers in very stable countries right across Europe, North America and most of the world. The UK is the first country in Europe to remove the lifetime ban for MSM, with the exception of Italy and Spain.

Our colleagues over here claim to desire a united Ireland, but I sometimes wonder. I wrote to the Minister for Health in the Republic of Ireland, and this is his Government's position:

"The Irish Blood Transfusion Service has a responsibility to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of safe blood to meet the needs of patients. In order to supply blood for transfusion all decisions on donation criteria are based on a review of the evidence bearing in mind the desire of individuals to donate, the safety of the recipient, and the tolerance of society in general of any transfusion related infection occurring. The exclusion of men who have/or had sex with other men from donation is based not only on risk factors for HIV but on other blood borne agents known to be associated with MSM".

They are not changing. For me, public safety will always supersede political correctness.

We almost get the impression that, if a judge says it, it must be right. It can never be wrong if a judge says it. Well, I am sorry, but that is not the view of our public prosecutor. Over the past year, our public prosecutor has referred no fewer than 14 cases back to the courts. Why? Because he thought that the judgements were wrong. In seven of those cases that have been heard, they decided that the previous judge was wrong. Members in this House say that we have to go with this judge because he has made the decision and he must be right. Well, judges are not always right. The conversation amongst lawyers is that the judgement itself is irrational. We use something like 53,000 units of blood in Northern Ireland and have maximised safety, and he recognises that. He suggests that, because we have been importing an average of 73 units of blood over the past three years, that would somehow make it so unsafe that it becomes irrational. I suspect that the decision itself is irrational.

Let us look at some other aspects of the decision. He has gone against the mode of devolution. He wants to put powers back in the hands of the national Government and, in this instance, the Department of Health in England. However, never mind this instance, given that it affects EU directives, I suspect that the Minister most affected by this judgement will be Mark H Durkan in the Department of the Environment because many of his decisions would have to be taken by the Environment Department and the Environment Minister in England. It is really good to see that the Members opposite are so keen to accept this judgement because it gets at this Minister that they cannot see the problems that it causes for them and their Ministers. It demonstrates their ineptitude in reading this, understanding it and making a rational argument. The judge indicated that I should have referred the matter to the Executive. Just a minute here. How can I refer the

matter to the Department of Health in England on one hand and to the Northern Ireland Executive on the other? Which is it? I suspect that the learned judge has got it wholly and completely wrong.

The question is this: will I appeal it? I am very reluctant to appeal it. Number one, it gives the larger parties in the Executive considerably more power. Number two, it refers a lot of governance back to the national Parliament and, as a unionist, should I be that concerned about that? Number three, do I believe that I would get fairness in the Court of Appeal or would there be a circling of the wagons? I am concerned that that may not be the case.

People have made suggestions about my own moral views and so forth, and, although there has been no bias found — because there is no bias to find — it is interesting to see that just last week in England Sir James Munby outlined that secularism rules in courts now and there is no place for religious beliefs. He had to be rebuked by the former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey who said that we are now living in:

"An age when all faiths are equal - except Christianity".

When I was at the Department of the Environment, I was asked a question by a BBC journalist as to whether I was fit to be a Minister and a Christian. What a shameful, despicable question, particularly when there are people in this Government who have engaged in terrorism and have been convicted of terrorist activities. It is all right for them to be in Government, but, if you embrace Christian values, you should not be there. That was the substance of the question.

4.45 pm

There is a continual battering of Christian principles, and I have to say this: shame on the courts, for going down the route of constantly attacking Christian principles, Christian ethics and Christian morals, on which this society was based and which have given us a very good foundation. It is a shame that George Carey had to respond in the way that he did to a judge in GB who made such a statement. It appears that our judges are rushing headlong in behind them.

Therefore, I am not sure that I would get a fair hearing. Mr Allister is quite right. I did not take any of these cases; they were all supported by legal aid, the Human Rights Commission and so forth. However what I have witnessed in the last number of judgements is a degree of judicial activism. For the unlearned amongst us, and there seems to be quite a few of them, that essentially means that judges are making laws as opposed to Parliament or, in this instance, the devolved Administration making them.

I do not believe that it was in the least appropriate, when the Assembly was conducting work on adoption legislation, for the courts to rule in advance of its completion. That should never have happened until after the Assembly had ruled on it. It should not have been reviewed, in that respect. And as to this issue of blood safety, I was well within my rights to ask why we should rush into this, if every other country in Europe except two, every country in North America and most of the western world maintains a lifetime ban? Why do we have four groups from the MSM lobby on the advisory group?

Remember this: someone told Margaret Thatcher at one stage that it was all right to allow bonemeal to be fed back to ruminant animals. The consequence of that was BSE, CJD, dead people and billions of pounds lost. If we have a system that works, has demonstrated safety and does not require huge amounts of blood to be imported, why should I take any element of risk?

A lot of Members have spoken. All of those who have spoken from the DUP have given blood. I would love to know whether those who have jumped up on the Benches opposite and have been exercised about the issue have given blood. When they came here, many years ago and long before I was Health Minister, only three of us turned up to give blood. I hear a lot of Assembly Members who are very exercised about this issue, but they do not appear to be sufficiently exercised to give blood themselves.

I want to do what is right, and I will do so. I will challenge the judiciary when I believe that it has got it wrong and, in this instance, it has very clearly got it wrong. Will it have the guts to admit it? I suspect not.

Mr Agnew: First, yes, I have given blood, Minister, and will do so again.

I must say at the outset that I regret and condemn any threat or intimidation that has been made to members of the Poots family in response to the Minister's views. I think that that is wholly unacceptable. As I mentioned earlier, his position has been articulated, and he has the right to dissent from views different to his.

On his point about whether this is an issue that we should bring to the House on this day, I have to say that the Minister may not consider equality to be a big issue worthy of the House, but the Green Party does. He might not consider the waste of public money to be a big enough issue for the House, but the Green Party does. He may not consider it to be important that we seek to uphold the judgements of the courts in the House, but the Green Party does. He might not consider it to be a big issue that Members of the House seek to ensure that government policy is based on the best available evidence about the common good for the public, but the Green Party thinks that that is an extremely important issue.

We have seen gut discrimination, particularly from the Minister's party. It was mentioned by Mr McCallister, I think, in relation to mental health. The discrimination that has been vocalised by members of the DUP is politics of the gut, and it is sheer gutter politics. It does only harm to our society.

Mr McKinney rightly said that this issue should be about safety first. The irrational decision of the Minister to have Northern Ireland out of step with the rest of the UK shows that it was not based on the best available evidence and that it was not about safety. The equality implications that Mr McKinney referred to were central to the Minister's position. It has been stated by those defending the Minister that the court has not found bias in the Minister's decision. However, time and again, he has failed to produce evidence to justify his decision. In the absence of evidence, what other explanation could there be?

I agree with Ms Lo: the burden of proof is on the Minister, because the public perception is very clearly that he has acted on his personal opinion rather than on the best available evidence or in the best interests of the health

and safety of the public. That public perception has been demonstrated by the 8,898 signatories to the petition online — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order, Members.

Mr Agnew: — that calls on the Health Minister to resign or be removed from office.

I come back to Mr Allister and Mr Givan's point about whether this is a persecution of religious belief. It is certainly not that, but I hope that it is not being suggested that, when a decision is taken on the basis of religious belief, the House should not challenge it, or that, somehow, challenging values is not appropriate in the House. It is the job of the Assembly to ensure that decisions are made on the basis of the common good and public interest. We must ensure that, whatever the motivation of a decision, we interrogate it and seek the best possible evidence.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Yes.

Mr Storey: If the Member is going to give us a lecture on what ought to be ethics, will he tell us what the basis of common good is? What would be the place where you would look for a definition of what is good and what is wrong if you do not have it on a faith basis?

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added to his time.

Mr Agnew: In this case, we look at the health and safety of the population. Indeed, the Minister — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Agnew: — has warned in the past that, at times, we risk facing insufficient supply of blood. Therefore, by restricting the numbers of those who can give blood, we do harm to the cause of increasing blood donation. We risk harming the health and safety of the public.

On behalf of the Green Party and the 8,898 members of the public who called on the Minister to resign, I ask that, if, and only if, his personal beliefs and values prevent him — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Agnew: — from acting in the best interests of the health and safety of the public, he step aside and resign as Minister.

Mr Copeland: Mr Speaker, I want to reiterate publicly the apology that I gave to you for my inability to be present during the greater part of this debate. At the outset, I should say that I am precluded from giving blood and have been for almost 35 years because of the virus that left me with my distinct limp. I remember that, when my wife was going through treatment for cancer and needed an operation, she required blood. My blood would have been suitable, but I could not give it, and I know what that felt like at that stage.

I welcome the opportunity to wind on the Ulster Unionist Party amendment, the point of which, as explained by Roy Beggs, was to add further factual clarity to the motion. Please let me say that donating blood should not be an issue on which the House divides. In fact, the act itself should be one that unites us. Unfortunately, as we have heard, many are unable to get away from the suspicion that the Minister's decision not to lift the total ban is based on ideology and prejudice rather than medical evidence.

That is for the Minister to answer. The most important question is whether the blood is safe. We have heard the statistics, and I do not dispute them. It would be foolish to do so, just as it would be foolish to justify the current ban by using them.

The Minister said something else, and I do disagree with it. First, let me say that I was concerned to hear that he, his family and others had been the recipients of abuse or anger directed at them. Although I may and frequently do disagree with the Minister, I have no doubt about his sincerity or faith when he makes such arguments. However, I feel that the remarks attributed to him on extending the ban to people who may have had sex with somebody in Africa are rather broader than one holding a ministerial position in our Executive should perhaps make.

Very few things in this world are totally free from risk, and donating blood is no different, regardless of the donor's sexual orientation. There are a number of restrictions on who can donate blood, as there should be. Those restricted include people with certain infectious diseases or people with a number of other general health issues, including me. However, a further swathe is banned simply for ticking a box on a form saying that they have been involved in a homosexual act. Given the risk that the Minister refers to, why does he have seemingly total confidence that such a form is accurately filled out? What is to stop a man involved in sexual activity a number of years ago failing to state that on the form and going on to donate blood? There is nothing to stop that, and his blood would be screened just like everyone else's. Admittedly, the risk is increased if men have been involved recently in sexual activity.

My party supports allowing only gay men who have been sexually inactive for 12 months or more to donate blood. That would put us in line with the rest of the UK and greatly reduce the risk, and yet it would still leave open the option of donating blood to many currently blocked from doing so. As I said, that policy has already been adopted in England, Scotland and Wales, where the popular medical opinion clearly tallies with the legal opinion here. The Minister did not mention — perhaps he will clarify this at some stage — any engagement with his English counterpart, whether by phone, letter or e-mail.

In conclusion, at a time when the demand for blood has rarely been higher, it is vital that we do not needlessly turn away potential donors. Blood is a gift. It should be cherished and not dragged down into futile political debate.

5.00 pm

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order, Members.

Ms Ruane: Cuirim fáilte roimh an díospóireacht seo. Ceapaim go bhfuil an combhionannas an-tábhachtach ar fad. I welcome the debate. I believe that equality for all of our citizens — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — is essential. Sinn Féin tabled the motion because the Minister has been running away from his responsibilities on this and, indeed, many issues affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) community. I welcome the constructive debate we have

had up to now right across the parties, apart from the party opposite, the DUP. I think that we have had a very reasoned, logical debate, and I think there is broad consensus right across the House that there should not be discrimination or prejudice against any community. I also believe that the vast majority of parties in the House understand the difference between the role of Minister, and a Minister using his or her political beliefs when they should be a Minister for all people.

Mr Storey: Has John O'Dowd resigned?

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: A member of the DUP — Mr Dunne, I believe — started talking about hysteria. The only hysterical reaction I have heard is from the DUP Members who spoke, particularly the Minister himself, in the way that he began the debate. He was the only Member of the House — this is particularly worrying, and he can check the Hansard report if he wants to — to use the offensive term “gay blood”. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: Nobody else did, apart from Colum Eastwood, who was explaining why it should not be used. It ill behoves the Minister to speak in such a way, and I have to say that it was very disappointing to hear that.

What we have seen is irrational decision-making. We have seen recklessness with public money. Other allies who have fought with the DUP and who sometimes jump in and out of supporting them do not seem to mind about public money being wasted on defending the indefensible, because that is what this is. This is not just about a ban on blood donations from gay men. This is about a pattern of discrimination and discriminatory actions. You can dress it up and you can dance around it, but, at the end of the day, it is discrimination against our LGBT communities. That is what it is, whether we are talking about equal marriage, the ban on blood donations, or adoption. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: Here we have a Minister, rolling his eyes and talking out of the side of his mouth. He had his chance to make his points. He did not make them particularly well. The least he and his party colleagues could do — *[Interruption.]* — I hear Mr Storey snapping from the background — is listen to the argument. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: Maybe they do not want to hear the arguments. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member is concluding on the motion and it is not in order for Members who have been absent during the debate to come into the Chamber and make a contribution from a sedentary position. It will not happen. The Member is winding. Allow the Member to finish her contribution.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Thank you, Mr Speaker. Today, we heard the Chair of the Health Committee, Maeva McLaughlin, state that the ban is contrary to the EU principle of non-discrimination and to article 21 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. We also heard that the Minister has refused to provide the legal advice. I will give the Floor to the Minister if he will

say yes or no. We are asking you. Parties in the House are asking you. Will you provide it?

Mr Poots: I thank the Member for giving me the Floor. I wonder how it is discrimination against the LGBT community when lesbians can give blood. The Member got that completely wrong.

Ms Ruane: You did not answer. I gave the Floor to the Minister —

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: We all note that he did not answer the question. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The convention is very clear. If Members give the Floor to another Member, they should not then interrupt. The Member may continue.

Ms Ruane: I note that the Minister did not answer my question. He has no answer. He has refused to provide the legal advice. He and his colleagues are ignoring scientific advice, citing blood safety as an excuse to justify a blanket ban.

Maeve and other Members, notably Fearghal McKinney, identified some of the key issues. What we absolutely need is blood that is safe. The role of the Department and the Blood Transfusion Service is to manage the safety of blood. However, you do not blanket discriminate against an entire section of the community in making sure that blood is safe. If you are the Health Minister, you certainly do not ignore scientific evidence, and you do not place your personal religious beliefs above being Minister and upholding the law for all.

The Minister tried to take us off — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — on a little distraction by pretending that there is discrimination against Christian beliefs. That is laughable. That is absolutely laughable. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: Every decision that he has made is based on his particular Christian belief. He should be the Minister for all people. He has a ministerial code and statutory equality duties, and he has failed in those. Sinn Féin is not in the business of calling randomly for resignation. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: We understand — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — the role of party leaders in nominating a Minister. A party leader — I note that his party leader is not here today — when nominating, needs to ensure that the person can do the job. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: That the person — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — can do the job in the interests of all — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — not based on personal religious belief. If Minister Poots feels that he cannot do the job, the sensible thing would be to go to his party leader and say,

“I have personal Christian beliefs that mean that I have to go against the law and my equality duties, and I really shouldn't be in this position”. If he does feel that, that would be the sensible thing to do. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: Let the party leader choose somebody who can carry out the role of Minister and fulfil his or her statutory duties.

Look how quickly parity went out the window. We had the nonsensical thing of saying, “Sinn Féin is an all-Ireland party, so why is it not sticking with the South in relation to blood?” Sinn Féin is very clear on that. If there is bad law somewhere, whether in the South or the North, we will not support it. The whole idea of a united Ireland is to bring about changes, North and South. *[Interruption.]* We will continue — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — to do that.

There is a pattern of discrimination by this Minister, whether on adoption rights, marriage equality or equality in blood donation. There is a very serious side to all this. One Member spoke about it — I think that it was Steven Agnew: it feeds homophobic behaviour. Yesterday, I had somebody in my office who had had 99 attacks on his and his partner's house. We have a Health Minister who is participating in defending the indefensible, and he is using public money to do so.

I welcome the fact that the Minister said that he is reluctant to appeal. Whatever his excuse is — we all know what his excuse is — I am glad that he is reluctant to appeal. I do not want my taxpayer's money used — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — to justify discrimination. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: I pay tax. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: The Minister tried to detract — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Let me say to Members on the right that, should they continue, I will name Members. I ask Members to behave in a professional manner.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle.

I am glad that he is reluctant to appeal it. He needs to get off the hook. He needs to accept the court's ruling. He should not detract from the debate. He asked whether people give blood: I give blood. He asked whether people had read the judgement: I read the judgement as, I have no doubt, did every person participating in the debate.

He really belittles himself. I also think that his comments in relation to the judgement and the judiciary were not well made — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — in his role as Minister. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: I ask that the Speaker examines those comments in relation to the judiciary.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time has almost gone. Order.

Ms Ruane: In the interests of equality — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — the right decisions need to be made. It is in the Minister's hands —

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member's time has gone.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Before we move to a vote, I ask you to rule on whether it is within the competence of the House to vote on the motion. According to Mr Justice Treacy, the motion invites and, indeed, instructs the Minister to take an unlawful act. In light of the ruling of Mr Justice Treacy, is it within the competence of the House to instruct the Minister to act unlawfully?

Mr Speaker: In taking Mr Allister's point of order, I say that the motion does not instruct the Minister; it asks the Minister. I can also assure the whole House that I have taken legal advice and other advice on the motion. *[Interruption.]* Order. The motion is competent.

Mr Poots: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker, I wish to indicate that our party will not participate in the vote because there is a very clear call on me to act outside the law. It is not wise for the Assembly nor any Member of the House to ask a Minister to act outside the law. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Before I put the question on amendment No 1, I advise Members that, if amendment No 1 is made, the question on amendment No 2 can still be put. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Question, That amendment No 1 be made, put and agreed to.

Question, That amendment No 2 be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the ruling of the High Court on the decision to ban blood donations from gay men; further notes with concern that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's decision was found to be 'irrational', and to have been taken 'in breach of the Ministerial Code'; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to lift the ban from gay men who have been sexually inactive for more than 12 months and outline what steps he will take to build public confidence in relation to statutory equality duties or resign if he feels unable to do so.

Exploris

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and published on the Marshalled List. The proposer of the amendment will have 10 minutes to propose and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr McCarthy: I beg to move

That this Assembly acknowledges the regional significance of Exploris — the Northern Ireland Aquarium in terms of tourism, culture, science, education and environmental protection; recognises its importance to the economy on the Ards peninsula and across Northern Ireland; calls upon Ards Borough Council, working with the local community and businesses, to formulate urgently a coherent plan for investment and financial support; calls upon the relevant Ministers to offer assistance in developing a plan; and further calls on the Executive to respond quickly and positively to such a proposal, with a view to ensuring that this facility has a sustainable basis.

5.15 pm

Thank you very much indeed, Mr Speaker. Following on from the petition to save Exploris that I presented to you this morning, Mr Speaker, I tabled this afternoon's motion to seek the support of all parties and Members to help to save Exploris in Portaferry from closure. To do that, I am asking our Executive and other Ministers to acknowledge Exploris as a Northern Ireland regional tourism, educational and environmental facility. As such, the various Departments should assist, not bail out, Ards Borough Council to provide funding for Exploris and help to retain, sustain and, hopefully, expand this excellent regional provision.

Exploris started in 1987 as the Northern Ireland Aquarium, situated on the edge of Strangford lough in Portaferry. It was the brainchild of Ards Borough Council, of which I was a member but no longer. The aquarium was designed to allow the public to see the unique and amazing diverse marine life that exists around this island, and particularly in Strangford lough and the Irish Sea.

Portaferry, at the tip of the Ards Peninsula, has been an ideal site, just a stone's throw from the lough itself and also —

Mr Newton: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCarthy: No. If I have time at the end, I will oblige. It is also adjacent to the Queen's University marine biology unit, which studies the entire environs of Strangford lough.

The aquarium is the place to go for hands-on experience of many varied and interesting aquatic species, so much so that the council invested in and extended the facility to include an education suite and exhibition hall. That was followed shortly afterwards by a purpose-built seal sanctuary. That continues to be a vital part of Exploris, in that a great many seals have been saved from certain death due entirely to the tender and loving care of the staff at Exploris, who nursed them back to health before returning them to the lough.

Exploris provides not only a wonderful display of marine life from the lough but includes public access to an area of parkland with a children's play area, a small putting green and a bowling green. All that makes for a fantastic day out for the family. It also provides a super location for local people and visitors to enjoy peace and tranquillity. I invite you all to make your way to Portaferry to experience that.

Unfortunately, like many other leisure and tourist facilities, despite the huge number of people passing through Exploris, with over 100,000 at its peak, the facility was costing the local council a significant amount of ratepayers' money. So, the council decided a few years ago to seek an outside partner or possibly someone to take over the whole Exploris site and manage it on behalf of the council.

It has to be said that because Exploris proved so popular across Northern Ireland and beyond, the powers that be here at Stormont over the years should have assisted Ards Borough Council with financial help in recognition of the regional importance of Exploris to Northern Ireland through the environment, education and tourism, as well as its contribution to the social fabric and local economy in the Ards Peninsula and further afield. It is reckoned that some 40 jobs depend on Exploris and are at stake.

We recognise the valued contribution from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and, when the seal sanctuary was being constructed, the sponsorship that was received from Northern Ireland Electricity, which helped to make the sanctuary a reality. Exploris has continued to provide an excellent product for many years but has, like so many other facilities, succumbed to the effects of the 2008 credit crunch. The result since then has been a loss of footfall at a time when costs were increasing.

In 2011, Ards Borough Council agreed to look at some market solutions as a potential way forward. In fact, there was interest shown from other aquarium groups. Livingstone Leisure showed an interest, and Ards Borough Council agreed to work with it to secure the future of Exploris in Portaferry. During the negotiations, there was unfortunately no marketing manager employed at Exploris, and it is believed that Ards Borough Council suffered a huge fall in visitor numbers and a fall in investment as a direct result.

Then, the announcement came from Livingstone Leisure that it could not meet the unique Northern Ireland legislative requirements for staff pensions, and its plans were shelved. Following that, a decision was taken on 18 September 2013 by Ards Borough Council to close and dispose of Exploris. That was on a majority vote of 11 for and seven against. The final decision was scheduled for 25 September.

However, there was a public outcry when the council made public its decision, and that continues to grow. Local people and others are furious. They see the closure of Exploris as a fatal blow to the efforts of small businesses operating throughout the Ards peninsula and across the lough to Strangford village, the Lecale hinterland and beyond.

After the closure proposal, support came from around the world. I have a recent publication, which states that the case of Exploris has gone global and that we have support for the retention of the facility from the USA, Israel, Peru, Australia and other parts of the world.

There was also a huge protest at Ards Borough Council's offices on 25 September. As a result, the council agreed to a two-month deferral. My colleague Councillor Alan McDowell proposed an amendment calling for a public consultation, an equality impact assessment and an economic study. However, that amendment was unsuccessful, and rather than lose a two-month reprieve, we supported the deferral as proposed.

The Save Exploris campaign was born with the help of marine experts, Exploris staff, unions, the general public and councillors. We must save Exploris: closure simply cannot be accepted, and it should not be an option. To achieve that, the Alliance Party supports regional funding from Stormont, coupled with a vision and a plan from Ards Borough Council to invest in, reorganise and promote Exploris towards a sustainable future.

As was mentioned earlier, the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of the Environment (DOE) must get together and provide combined assistance for Ards Borough Council to retain this regional asset for everyone in Northern Ireland and beyond. I urge officials from those Departments to respond positively to the chief executive of Ards Borough Council's request for a round-table discussion with the Friends of Exploris and our trade union colleagues to draw up a plan and a vision for a way forward as soon as possible.

We have in Strangford lough a wonderful and uniquely important area of biodiversity, flora and fauna that has been awarded various designations, including special area of conservation (SAC), area of special scientific interest (ASSI), area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) and marine nature reserve (MNR). Most recently, it was designated as the first marine conservation zone (MCZ) in Northern Ireland.

Exploris ranks as a top tourist attraction, as was acknowledged in a letter from the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to me. Therefore, it is vital that the Assembly support this fantastic facility, which is set within the most superb marine habitat, and help to safeguard it for future generations.

Educational visits to Exploris are an essential part of the learning process and should be partially funded by our Department of Education in return for educating our public about the truly unique natural resource of Strangford lough.

Very recently, the town of Portaferry and the Exploris centre were delighted to host a visit from members of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee. At that meeting, members of the Committee heard from representatives of Portaferry Regeneration Ltd, who described Exploris as a linchpin of the 'Destination Strangford Lough Tourism Management Plan 2013-2018'. Exploris, it said, is vital to the economy of the Ards peninsula because it brings around £3 million each year into the local business community.

The Committee also heard from representatives of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) and Save Exploris and from senior officials from Ards Borough Council, all of whom are pleading with the Assembly to accept its responsibility and support Exploris by acknowledging that central funding for this regional asset

is both merited and necessary to put it on a sound footing so that it will continue to serve everyone in Northern Ireland. I was delighted when, after the meeting, the Chair of the Committee, Patsy McGlone, said in public that it would be madness to close Exploris. So it would; I totally agree with what he said.

Dr Bob Brown, a renowned marine conservationist, has warned the Northern Ireland Government —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr McCarthy: — that is us — that this is a priceless asset. He advises government to act now across Departments, along with the council, to develop Exploris into a regional showcase.

Mr Nesbitt: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after the second "Northern Ireland;" and insert:

"and calls on the relevant Executive Departments to provide the regional funding, resource and support required by Ards Borough Council to maximise the benefit of Exploris to the economy of the Ards peninsula and to Northern Ireland."

I thank Mr McCarthy for bringing forward the motion. It is an important subject. I hope that we can debate it in better spirit and humour than we did the previous debate. That said, I rise to request support from the House for the amendment. In doing so, Mr Speaker, I ask the House to focus on the end. What is the outcome we are seeking in this debate and for the Exploris facility in Portaferry? We can anticipate only a limited number of outcomes: closure, clearly, is one; renewed opening, but a rebirth of some description, is another; and the third is maintaining the status quo, which some people, no doubt, support.

Let us look at the status quo. Is it right to support the status quo when Exploris is costing the ratepayers of Ards Borough Council a disputed sum of money, but a sum of money. Some say that it is £600,000 per annum; some say that it is half of that. I suspect that the true figure is somewhere in between at around about £450,000. Against that, people will say, "Yes, but that investment generates another pot of money. It generates income for the economy of the lower Ards". Again, it is a contested figure, but, as Mr McCarthy has pointed out, some say it could be as much as £3 million per annum. Can you argue that that is good and that the status quo is acceptable? Certainly, some politicians do that.

In the 'News Letter' on 26 September this year, Henry Reilly, a councillor from Kilkeel, said that he fondly remembers bringing his children across on the ferry to visit the aquarium when they were younger, and he pointed out that the attraction brings several millions of pounds into the area annually in indirect visitor spend. Critically, he also said:

"The argument being pushed that the aquarium is a loss making business is utter nonsense as councils have a statutory duty to promote tourism and provide such facilities. If councils are to adopt a policy of closing every loss making facility there will be no swimming pools, sports centres, community centres, playing fields or museums in Northern Ireland and we would quickly return to Victorian times when only the rich and very wealthy could enjoy such attractions."

I suspect other views are available from that political party.

Ards Borough Council clearly believes that it is no longer reasonable to continue to ask the ratepayers to subsidise what they believe is a regional facility. I believe that the subsidy works out at something in excess of £7.50 per visitor to the aquarium. Against that, Exploris has consistently achieved visitor numbers of around 90,000 per annum, but, of course, that could be improved. The council has spent in the region of £100,000 since 2007 in an attempt to sell the aquarium, but both deals have not been successful. Again, Mr McCarthy made mention of private sector interest.

During this process, Exploris has not had a marketing officer and could not benefit from what, I believe, is £375,000 in possible infrastructure grants, because of the short-term nature of the existence. So, it was not possible to reconfigure the physical layout of Exploris to attract people perhaps into areas where there could be a shop or a restaurant without them having to pay an entrance fee. Working with the local community, stakeholders and the great swell of public support, we could do a lot to transform the aquarium in the short term.

5.30 pm

Let us not be under any illusion: if the Assembly and Executive do not help to fund this as a regional asset, it will close in less than three weeks, because option 2 is closure. The House should not be in any doubt. It should remind itself that Ards Borough Council and all the parties on it voted for closure after a period of two months.

Mr Clarke: Really?

Mr Nesbitt: Yes, really; from your sedentary position — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Nesbitt: — really. Is that truly desirable? Does anybody really believe that to be the best way forward? I certainly do not. I believe that the council debates have had a positive effect in bringing a focus, not least in the House, to the issue of whether we want to see Exploris close or transform to the position where it is more viable. I will give way to Mr Weir.

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for giving way. On timescales, the document that the council provided to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment talks about a process starting in November. To quote Ards Borough Council, on which there are representatives of my party, Mr Nesbitt's and others:

"Due to the above, it is envisaged that any potential closure would not take effect until after March 2014".

So, we are not talking about closure immediately; you are talking about something that would not take effect for another four months, at the earliest.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Member for his intervention. I think that we are playing with semantics here. Clearly, you cannot close it, when you have seals — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Nesbitt: — there is obviously a process that has to be gone through. To use the maritime expression, I believe that that is a bit of a red herring, Mr Weir.

I do not favour closure —

Mr Weir: It is not closure.

Mr Speaker: Order

Mr Nesbitt: So, how do we take it forward? Well, after the vote at Ards Borough Council, I contacted the four relevant Ministers — Environment, Education, Culture and Enterprise — to invite them to come to a meeting in this Building on the Monday evening. If they could not come, and, of course, they are busy and dropping everything at two or three days' notice is not always possible, I invited them to send an official. If they all agreed, Friends of Exploris and others, including local elected representatives, would also be invited to the meeting, which was to be held in this Building to make it handy for everybody. No Minister was available, and only one Department said that it would be prepared to send an official. That makes me question the political will to save Exploris. Out of four Departments, not one Minister and only one official was prepared to say that they would come along and help.

The answer, I believe, is regional funding to allow Exploris to transform itself. To again use a maritime analogy, I think that it is a trident. I think that we look on the future of Exploris in a binary or a two-dimensional way when it should be three-dimensional. It is not just a question of whether it should be the public sector or the private sector or a combination of the two working together to help save Exploris; there is a third prong, and that is social enterprise. We need to look at the public sector, the private sector and the community, working as a social enterprise, working in combination as the way forward.

Again, there should be a trident of tourism, marine research — both of which currently happen at Exploris — along with what, to my mind, is the missing element of renewable energies. Everybody knows that since SeaGen went in, Strangford lough has become a global leader in experimentation and the development of renewable tidal energies. It seems to me that, for whatever reason, Exploris has not tied into that and exploited its potential as a way to move forward.

So, I believe that a lot can be done to reinvigorate and reconstitute Exploris in a way that will give it a viable future. Whatever Mr Weir says about it closing in a few weeks or a few months, it seems to me that it will close unless the Executive agree that it is a regional facility and, therefore, will need regional funding. Without that, the future is bleak to the point of total blackness. I ask the House to support in a clear way the idea that Exploris is a regional facility.

I direct the following remark at Mr Flanagan, who I heard suggest on BBC television that the decision to close was in some way sectarian.

I have worked with Portaferry Regeneration Limited on many occasions. I got Minister McCausland down. He was willing to help, but unfortunately the population size meant that it was outwith his brief. He directed me to the Agriculture and Rural Development Minister, Michelle O'Neill. I wrote to her and invited her to come down to Portaferry and meet the regeneration board. Do you know what? She said no. So I say to you, sir, that it is a regional facility, and if it were not —

Mr Flanagan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.
[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us have remarks through the Chair. Order.

Mr Nesbitt: He made a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Flanagan: The Speaker dealt with it.

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Nesbitt: OK. I will let my time go, Mr Speaker, by asking for support for the amendment. Let us make this a regional centre with some regional funding to kick it off to a better future.

Miss M McIlveen: At the outset, it would be appropriate to declare that I am a former member of Ards Borough Council and my brother is currently the mayor of the borough.

A great deal has been said about the decision to close Exploris since it was made by Ards Borough Council. While there has been a certain amount of constructive debate, sadly, as Mr Nesbitt has indicated, some quarters have sought to sectarianise the matter. That is entirely counterproductive and detracts from efforts to find a solution. As a ratepayer and former councillor, I appreciate how the council has sought to address the significant problems of running Exploris. However, Sinn Féin and the SDLP have been falling over themselves to play the sectarian card. They should be utterly ashamed of themselves.

Sinn Féin's Phil Flanagan told the BBC that there were:

"serious questions about whether there is a genuine commitment within the unionist councillors of Ards borough to maintain this important asset. Talking to local people, there certainly is a perception in the Portaferry area that the DUP-dominated council is attempting to close Exploris because of its location in a nationalist part of a unionist council area."

The council minutes of 25 September clearly shows that the council unanimously backed the proposal to close and dispose of the facility with a two-month stay of execution. I know that "unanimous" may sound a lot like "unionist" to a Fermanagh man, but, when the SDLP and the Alliance Party are also voting in favour of the proposal to close and dispose, it kind of undermines the sectarian argument.

Of course, the SDLP's councillor in Ards could not stop himself getting in on the act, claiming that the decision to close Exploris was:

"bordering on the verge of a political decision for a political reason".

He referred to Portaferry as the only nationalist majority area in the borough, despite voting in favour of the proposal himself. He went on to tell the 'Belfast Telegraph':

"They are seeking to deprive a certain community of what little they have."

Portaferry is by no means the Cinderella village in the borough. On spend a head, Portaferry residents received around £780 from Ards Borough Council in the past year. Compare that with Ballygowan residents, of whom I am one, who received around £8-84; Ballyhalbert residents, who received £39-62; and Carrowdore residents, who received £38-65. In fact, the closest were Cloughy

residents, who received £78-31 a head. The total spend in Portaferry by Ards Borough Council last year was £1,925,678. Newtownards, which has over 10 times the population of Portaferry, received £2,384,317.

I turn to the issue of Exploris. Ards Borough Council has, on two occasions, sought to transfer the running of the facility to the private sector. On each occasion that the council did that, it was a tacit recognition by councillors that they recognised that the running costs of Exploris had become so great that it was unreasonable for the council to run it. Sadly, on both occasions, those attempts failed. Each time, as it was tried and as Mr Nesbitt has pointed out, it resulted in considerable expenditure to the council to undergo the procurement process. Those are not decisions that are taken lightly. Each visitor to Exploris costs the council £7-58. Compare that with Comber leisure centre, where each user costs the council £1-80, Ards leisure centre, where each user costs £2-27, or Portaferry sports centre, where each user costs £6-63.

Since 1992, Exploris has represented a net cost to the council of £10,783,274. Last year, it attracted only 78,500 visitors, down from its peak in 1994-95 of 206,786 visitors. It has not had 100,000 visitors since 2009-2010. Even on the day when the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee met at the facility, it had only 28 visitors, and that was at the height of the publicity about the closure. It has been recognised by a number of interested parties that the running costs of Exploris cannot be left solely to Ards Borough Council. Friends of Exploris and NIPSA have stated that no council is set up to deal with a regional centre such as Exploris.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Miss M McIlveen: The facility needs investment in capital refurbishment and recurring running costs. One without the other would not be sufficient, and any offer would need to be substantial.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom labhairt i bhfabhar an rúin seo agus an leasaithe. I support the motion and the amendment.

The Environment Committee received a presentation from NIPSA and Friends of Exploris. My contribution will be about the question on the Floor, which is about Exploris itself. I listened to the previous contributor, who spent three minutes trying to introduce politics into the issue.

[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Boylan: There is no doubt that other Members will make political comments later on, and that is grand, but I am here — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Boylan: I am here to talk about how councils run facilities, because I have experience of that in Armagh City and District Council. We have a wonderful place called Navan fort. For years, I saw bad management practices and council practices and saw how one of our best facilities lacked marketing for tourism and the attitude and appetite to support it. It is recovering now.

The first question that I want to ask is this: is Exploris a feasible and viable project? I believe that it is. The story sold to me in the presentation that I heard was that it is a viable project. We need to take into consideration

its location, the number of jobs involved and the impact that it might have on that community. If people make the argument that it is not viable, let them make it, but I believe that it is a viable project.

If a facility has not had a marketing or development officer for many years, how do you market it? I thank the people who compiled the report on Exploris. The report states that NITB spent £1-8 million on Exploris over a 26-year period. In the grand scheme of things, that is nothing. I see also that, in a response to a question to the Finance Minister, it was stated that no one had come from Exploris to ask the Tourist Board for money. Surely there is a responsibility to promote the rest of the country, not just the Titanic Quarter and the Giant's Causeway. I am only listening to and going on what people have said, which is that Exploris is a good facility, so let us concentrate on that. That is what I want to concentrate on.

From reading some of this information, it seems to me that the council has tried its best with its input. However, down through the years, there seems to have been a lack of a proper business plan or a marketing strategy. If you accept the principle that Exploris is feasible and viable, that is what should have been put forward. It should have not been running for 25 years without that.

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for giving way. I concur with his remarks about having a need for a coherent plan, which is referred to in the motion. However, the amendment, because it removes about 60% of the motion, removes any reference to a coherent plan. He also mentioned Navan fort. I can understand support for Exploris, which is fair enough in relation to the motion, but, when the idea of regional government putting in the money to ensure that Exploris would continue was discussed in the Committee —

Mr Speaker: Can I ask the Member to conclude?

Mr Weir: — the Member said that that would set a dangerous precedent. In light of the fact that he said that it would set a dangerous precedent for regional government to pay for it, which is the tone of the amendment, why is he supporting the amendment, and what has changed between the Committee meeting and today?

5.45 pm

Mr Boylan: I thank the Member for his intervention. I was coming to that point. I believe that it is a —

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added to his time.

Mr Boylan: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I believe that it is a viable and feasible project, but I also recognise that it will need some support and funding, which will have to come from the Executive. I do not agree with it coming from the Executive without a proper, collective business plan that is brought forward through partnership, and I said that in Committee. Partnership is the way forward. Mr Weir is right, and he was sitting in Committee when I said that. I have not changed from that position. However, I believe that there needs to be investment up front and an element of support at this time. That is why I am supporting it this time.

I reiterate that the Assembly should not take the lead on the matter. A collective partnership should take the lead,

and we will support that. It will not be indefinite or an annual thing, and we need to look at that.

Mrs McKeivitt: It is my privilege to contribute to the debate, which I see as very worthwhile. When considering the contribution that the Exploris aquarium makes to our society in tourism, culture, learning and environmental protection, it is impossible to deem it as anything other than a true regional asset that deserves to be protected from closure.

It is estimated that Exploris attracts almost 100,000 visitors a year. Those numbers may seem small when compared with the 800,000 people who visited the Titanic building, but Portaferry is not Belfast and the contribution that those 100,000 visitors make to the economy of the Ards peninsula is vital. The business community is therefore understandably worried about the negative impact that the closure of Exploris could have on their businesses. On that note, I want to recognise the vast contribution of my party colleague, SDLP councillor and local businessman in Portaferry, Joe Boyle, who has strongly campaigned to keep Exploris open. I know that his efforts are greatly appreciated by the local community.

Departments have recognised the need to make improvements to the local area to improve tourism numbers. Improvements include an upgrade of the Strangford ferry and the resurfacing of roads in Portaferry, for which £271,000 is to be allocated by the Department for Regional Development. That is welcome, but it will fall to nothing if Exploris, a vital tourist facility, is shut down.

A key commitment in the Programme for Government is to increase visitor numbers to 4.2 million and tourist revenue to £676 million by December 2014. The Executive should note that any progress towards those targets could be undone by the closure of this tourism attraction. We should invest in assets such as Exploris that provide visitors with fun and educational aquamarine life experiences, while being a refuge and sanctuary for marine life, particularly seals.

The Save Exploris campaign has gained massive support since being launched by the Friends of Exploris Trust. Over the weekend, the 'Belfast Telegraph' reported on the global support behind the campaign, and I note that my colleague referred to that in his opening speech. Yesterday, I joined the 28,000 other people who have signed up to the dedicated "Save Exploris" Facebook campaign. Through these campaigns, the public have indicated their support for Exploris and their desire for the Assembly to intervene, prevent its closure and safeguard its future. We must take action. I support the motion and commend the Alliance Party Members for initiating the debate. Let us secure the future of Exploris.

Ms Brown: I am happy to support the motion.

Exploris, in its current state, is unsustainable. It requires significant capital investment and restructuring, which would be extremely difficult for a council to undertake. Many of the voices that we hear in opposition to the closure recognise and accept that Ards Borough Council cannot be expected to do this. A £600,000 annual deficit would be difficult for many councils to justify, particularly one the size of Ards. The unanimous decision by Ards Borough Council cannot have been an easy one; a decision that puts employees' livelihoods in jeopardy never is. It is a credit to the council that it stayed the execution of

its decision to allow some means of saving Exploris to be formulated.

I pay tribute to those who have campaigned and continue to campaign to save Exploris. Their hard work has not gone unnoticed. It has been disappointing that some individuals have sought to hijack their campaign and make political capital, but the vast majority involved have their community and the love of the facility at heart. That said, there are arguments for the retention of Exploris in some form. There are educational benefits for such an aquarium, with a significant proportion of the facility's visitors being schoolchildren. Furthermore, there is an environmental research aspect, particularly through the aquarium's link-up with Queen's University. If the Executive are unwilling to make Exploris a regional facility with regional funding — there have been no indications that such willingness exists — what are the options?

Mr Newton: I thank the Member for giving way. It is desirable across Northern Ireland that there are facilities for tourism, education and research and that there are attractions for visitors. Does the Member accept that the case being made for regional aid, if that is the case that is being put forward, could be made by Belfast City Council in support of Belfast Zoo, which is on a much larger scale, is a bigger attraction and is currently borne by the ratepayers of Belfast? That would allow the council to seek regional aid for that facility.

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added on to her time.

Ms Brown: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I definitely agree with the Member, who makes a very valid point about Belfast Zoo.

There is a possibility of subventions from relevant Departments to assist Ards Borough Council. However, given that there is a £600,000 annual black hole to fill as well as a serious need for capital investment in refurbishment and redesign, that will require a number of Departments to work together and to do so quickly. Overtures must be made to Ards Borough Council at the earliest opportunity if that is to be an option. If that option is to be pursued, it perhaps requires the promptest action. A number of Departments in the Executive could have an interest in Exploris, but, from the outside, it appears that each of them is waiting to see who blinks first. If the Ministers are sincere about helping, brinkmanship is not the way to do it.

Another option would be to look into a trust or a social enterprise. I know that Friends of Exploris has expressed an interest in that. Obviously, for such a project to be sustainable, it would require significant assistance, and the Executive could assist that in some way.

Another option is that the council proceeds to close and dispose of the facility, which may sound unpalatable to some. The prevailing view of the opposition to such a proposal is that Exploris would be gone. However, history has shown that there has been significant interest from the private sector in the aquarium. It does not stretch credibility that that interest still exists and that the facility could then fall into private hands. Portaferry could end up with a world-class facility, which Exploris, sadly, is not. If the council were to proceed with closure, I would like the Executive to seek to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to have another facility take its place, whether within the community or the private sector.

The relevant Departments should not sit back and simply watch what unfolds. They can be part of a newer, better, economically viable and much more attractive establishment at the heart of Portaferry. We must bear in mind that, even if the council follows through with its decision to close when the stay period expires, it will still take a number of months before the facility is completely shut down. As Deputy Chair of the Environment Committee, I recently enjoyed a visit to Exploris, and I am committed to ensuring that all options are explored to ensure its survival.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank my colleague for proposing the motion today. As my colleague from Armagh said, we are happy to support the motion and the amendment. I also record my thanks to the Save Exploris group. I do not think that anyone will be surprised at the passion and enthusiasm that they have shown not just for saving local jobs but for this tourist facility. I also thank my party's spokesperson in the area, Naomi Bailie, who has worked like a Trojan in lobbying us, and the party across the water in South Down too.

Opened in 1987 by Ards council to promote the diverse marine life along Ireland's shores, Exploris has long been a significant tourism and scientific centre of interest. There can be no doubt that Portaferry on the shores of Strangford lough, with its ready access to sea water expertise through the Queen's University marine biology centre, was and still is the ideal location for Exploris. Portaferry, with its proud and diverse maritime history and its beautiful natural and built heritage, represents huge untapped potential to be a leading maritime tourism and visitor attraction for any part of Ireland. For that scenario to be realised, it will take significant investment, prudent management and ambitious marketing: three strategically important ingredients that will be vital to ensure the long-term sustainability of Exploris.

There can be little doubt that the reason we are in this dire situation today is the complete and utter failure of Ards Borough Council and, indeed, the DUP as the dominant political party in Ards to support and invest in the long-term success of Exploris. For as long as the facility has been operational, the DUP and many unionist representatives have championed not the cause of Exploris but the need to relocate Exploris out of Portaferry and into another town such as Comber or Newtownards. One unionist representative who sits in the House described Exploris as a "plaything for anoraks" and said that it should be relocated to Comber because Portaferry was nothing more than a backwater. We are not playing politics with this: that was said. Given that insidious political context, it is little surprise that we find ourselves in this difficult situation.

Serious questions need to be put to Ards Borough Council and the DUP, as well as DUP Ministers such as the tourism Minister, Arlene Foster. I wrote to Mrs Foster previously on the need to support Exploris. You can imagine my surprise when she replied that, in the three decades since Exploris opened, the Tourist Board had provided a meagre £1.8 million in assistance. Bearing in mind Exploris's unique standing as the North's only aquarium, surely a facility with such strategic tourism value should be a higher priority. Mrs Foster went on to state that she recognised the importance of the aquarium as a major tourist attraction in the Strangford lough area — I repeat: a major tourist

attraction in the Strangford lough area — yet she will not consider providing financial assistance.

Mr Frew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: No, thanks.

In what other jurisdiction would a tourism Minister acknowledge the importance of a major tourist attraction but decline to provide assistance when such an attraction was in severe need of help? No doubt, if the aquarium were situated in the Titanic Quarter, the tourism Minister would be tripping over herself to get up the A4 to find the necessary funds. We need to seriously ask why Mrs Foster's Department, which has a statutory obligation under the Tourism Order 1992 to see that tourism is developed, has, up to now, made no advance to Ards council regarding the need for financial assistance. If Mrs Foster feels it appropriate that every other Executive Minister should provide funding for this valuable tourism product, the people of Portaferry and the staff of Exploris deserve an explanation of why she, as the tourism Minister, will not take the lead.

What we need to see now is very straightforward. First, Ards Borough Council and the ETI Minister need to sit down immediately and determine what assistance is available from her Department on an urgent and long-term basis. I also think that the Environment Minister should explore whether he can override the Ards council motion for closure following the lapse of the two-month period because it is not adequate for long-term and sustainable solutions to be arrived at and in the knowledge that no public consultation or EQIAs have taken place. Thirdly, the passion and enthusiasm of the Save Exploris group should be harnessed by a cross-departmental task force in order to plan for the future. Those are three simple steps that can be taken straight away, and they would be very productive in the long-term sustainability of Exploris.

Mr McNarry: None more than myself wishes to see the Exploris brand secure and not exploited.

6.00 pm

Over its lifetime, Exploris has invariably needed propping up, in excess of £10 million keeping it afloat. Annual losses amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds are sums that no borough can sustain or justify. Those are the hard facts, and they have taken us to the point of closure.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

I applaud the emotional effort that has been put in to save Exploris. Indeed, my party chairman is a keen cheerleader. I have read the intention to present a strategic case to the council at the end of November, but to insiders, the closure proposal is not really surprising, given that the decline in Exploris set in some years ago.

In the distant past, good initiatives have sought to promote Exploris. Northern Ireland Electricity made a one-off capital donation of £30,000 to the seal sanctuary. Thirteen years ago, I suggested to the council, of which I was a member, that it should look for £5 million for Exploris from the Government. Another initiative of mine was the Ards bus. That was an in-service Ulsterbus that was decked out in exclusive Exploris livery, at a cost of over £10,000, that would tour other constituencies. Then, there was the idea of joint ticketing for Exploris, the Saint Patrick's Trail

and Mount Stewart, but it got nowhere. In the courtyard development on site, the coffee shop ended up failing, and the country furniture venture pulled out. Close by was an excellent craft shop, but, sadly, it did not survive.

So, I look at the motion with withering contempt for the game of tricks that it invents. Typical Alliance Party: playing to the Gallery and dabbling in its usual baloney. Had the council a plan, it would have been out there not last week or last month but five years ago, when even Alliance could have admitted that the writing was on the wall. Kieran McCarthy MLA was, until recently, one of the longest-serving councillors. He is calling for business to step forward, but did the council that he sat on not agree to offload Exploris to businessmen, and was it not businesspeople who, in the end, turned down the deal?

What is implicit in the motion and the amendment is a kidology in bidding for a blank cheque without quantifying the sums of money that are involved. Have they told the Gallery that that is not how we do business in here? Is it not interesting that there is no mention by anyone of an approach to North Down council — the soon-to-be amalgamated partner and co-ratepayers in the area?

In this brutal world of taxpayers' public funding and commercial reality, the question is this: how can Exploris be preserved? Exploris is a moveable brand name asset, as is the expertise of its skilled staff, but, ultimately, all rests on a council decision that has yet to happen, which makes this debate somewhat premature. Until the council speaks, how can the Assembly take a view? When we do take a view, what power do we have over Ards council?

Look around. Where are the absent Ministers that the motion refers to? Where are the Ministers who are prepared to stand up tonight and say to the Assembly, "Without a plan, without a council verdict and without a notion of cost, my Department will take over responsibility for Exploris. Let us switch the cost from ratepayers to taxpayers". Let us hear about it. Where are they? Effectively, that is what needs to be said.

Otherwise, there is no message of a commitment to send to Ards council. We in the House should not be indulging in raising expectations in the false way that they have been raised today with this motion, which we cannot deliver on.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Weir: I can support the motion but not the amendment, and I will come to the reasons for that. A number of Members mentioned that they visited Exploris fairly recently. I did not have the opportunity to do so on that day but subsequently took the opportunity to visit it as a private citizen, if you like.

There is potential in Exploris and good facilities there. However, although some focus has been on the ongoing running costs, it is undoubtedly the case, certainly from my observations, that if the facility is to succeed, it will not only require ongoing subvention in annual costs but a very large capital sum. One of the problems is that we do not have a clue, as Mr McNarry said, what level of capital investment is required.

Mr McNarry is right to say that the status quo is not an acceptable option. My colleagues have mentioned the ongoing cost of £10 million over a period and, indeed, the cost of about £600,000, or perhaps a little less, a year. Indeed, there have been declining visitor numbers, and

I simply do not think that that is sustainable in the long run. The fact that the status quo is not sustainable was acknowledged unanimously by Ards Borough Council, and all the councillors from all parties therefore voted that it was not sustainable and voted for the closure. I notice the praise for the SDLP in Ards Borough Council for the hard work that it has done to keep it on, but the SDLP councillor voted for its closure. I am tempted to say this: with friends like that, who needs enemies?

If the current situation is not sustainable, what about the idea proposed in the amendment of the tab being picked up by relevant Departments? Because that is what the amendment says. I agree with Mr Nesbitt when he talks about the trident with three elements, yet the purpose of his amendment is to weaken the motion and take away those elements. References in the original motion to, for example, working with local businesses and the community are scrubbed out if we accept the amendment, but the reality is that working with local businesses and the community is the route that we have to go down.

However, what really takes the biscuit for me is the views of some of the Members opposite, who commit this Assembly to picking up the tab: support the amendment and put in the high levels of regional funding. Let me quote one person:

"let us be frank about this: we cannot have a situation in which people claim that a council-run facility that is currently under threat ... is regional, which, I am sure, it is, and expect the Executive to pick up the cost. ... We could end up with a queue, particularly in preparation for RPA, of other facilities that we will be expected to fund as well." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 88, p118, col 1].

Those are not my words but the words of the Culture Minister, Carál Ní Chuilín. For all the fine words from the party opposite, not only is there no commitment from DCAL for a penny to go into it, it has clearly refused to do so. Similarly, in the context of rural development, I understand that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development has also written to the Committee to indicate that she will not contribute a penny towards it. I agree for once with Carál Ní Chuilín that we cannot simply have a situation in which the Executive ride as the saviour to help save Exploris.

Mr McCarthy: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: It would set a very dangerous precedent, and that is why I prefer the motion as it stands. I will give way very briefly.

Mr McCarthy: I do not speak in defence of either Minister, but does the Member not agree that, in saying what they said, they gave a caveat that that was the position without further information? I am proposing in the motion that we can, with the help of the Save Exploris campaign outside, put something on the table to further that information, and perhaps we can get some funding.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Weir: With respect, even the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure referred to any help being a very "big if", as she put it. Again, I am quoting directly from Hansard. There has been no commitment whatsoever. Indeed, if anybody on the opposite side wants to give a commitment

on behalf of DCAL as to the amount of money that it is willing to put in, I am more than happy to listen and more than happy to give way.

The reality is that there is going to be a number of Ministers who are keen to commit that support —

Mr Flanagan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: I am sorry, my time is running out.

Mr Hazzard: You asked us for our opinion.

Mr Weir: Well, if the Member is willing to give me a commitment about the exact amount of money that DCAL is willing to commit to this —

Mr Flanagan: You would be quicker to give way.

Mr Weir: OK, I will give way.

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Member for giving way, but I really cannot understand why he thinks that DCAL should take the lead. Even though there are fish in the tanks, nobody is fishing for them.

Mr Weir: With respect, DCAL figures in the suggested amendment, so Members can make reference to it.

Yes, it is support right up until the point when it comes to giving any money or degree of financial support. The party opposite, in particular, is misleading people in Strangford. It is trying to exploit the situation on a sectarian basis to indicate that it is the champion of the people of Portaferry but, when it comes to any level of commitment, there is none from the party opposite.

Unfortunately, the amendment contradicts this, but what needs to happen is work between the council, the relevant Departments and the private sector to try to find a long-term solution. It is that work that is needed, not the giving of a blank cheque which, unfortunately, is what it effectively states in the amendment. From that point of view, the amendment would set, in the words of Mr Boylan, a very dangerous precedent.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Weir: I support the original motion, which I think is better. I oppose the amendment, which would take us into very dangerous territory.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important motion and the amendment. Before I get into the thrust of my speech, I pay tribute to the local community that is involved in this important campaign and the people involved in the Friends of Exploris group who have done a great job in highlighting their campaign and in bringing people to the knowledge that the place exists. One of the biggest problems is that people do not know that it exists, and you really have to wonder why, when it is such a good facility and 100,000 people visit it each year, people do not know that the place exists. That is a huge problem to start with. Local political representatives who are committed to retaining this centre, regardless of what party they are from, also need to be commended.

I was delighted to join my colleagues on the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee, and some from the Environment Committee, on a recent visit to the centre. We heard at first hand what a great centre it is and about the positive benefits that it brings to Portaferry and the wider

area. It is an excellent facility, but it has been neglected by Ards Borough Council for a long time. If you walk around the facility, you can see where investment is badly needed and where things have been taken out and have not been replaced. There is huge potential there. Given that it is one of the premier paid tourist attractions in the North, it would be a ridiculous decision if it was to close.

There has been little investment in improving the facility, keeping it up to standard and keeping it modern. Much more work could be done there that should have been done over the last decade or so, but that has not happened. The fact that the marketing team was removed years ago and has not been replaced highlights the problem that is going on there. If somebody thinks that you do not need a marketing team to promote a place, there is something seriously wrong somewhere.

The Committee recently visited Exploris, and I really enjoyed it. I thought it a great opportunity to get out and hear what is going on. It is quite a distance from where I live to Portaferry, there is no doubt about that, but I was glad to go. The marketing and promotion of Exploris has been an absolute failure. Ards Borough Council has completely failed to promote the centre, and I wonder why. The vast majority of the people I spoke with in Fermanagh and Tyrone before Exploris hit the headlines had never heard of the place. They never knew it existed. Schools did not know that it existed. It was never offered as a potential destination for school trips or for visitors. That really is part of the problem.

I support the retention of Exploris through a proper partnership between the Executive and Ards Borough Council, or between Ards Borough Council and North Down Borough Council. I should probably have put North Down Borough Council first; maybe other Members will not be too impressed that I did not.

It is a public facility, and anybody who tells me that it is a public facility and it is losing money does not understand how public services work. We do not run a business; we run public services that are not supposed to make a profit. That is what ratepayers and taxpayers' money is for: to subsidise things that do not work in the free market because they do not make money. I would have thought that the DUP would agree with that. No business is going to go into something that is not making money, and that is why government intervenes.

What is really striking for me is that, on the night of the council meeting, the unionist councillors proposed that they contact the Department of the Environment, which is run by an SDLP Minister, and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of Education, which both have Sinn Féin Ministers. However, not one person throughout the lengthy debate thought that maybe they should contact Arlene Foster, the Minister with responsibility for tourism and the economy. Given that it is a tourist facility that brings £3 million into the local economy every single year, I find that very strange. Nobody can tell me that that was not done for political opportunism. That is the only reason why that was done. It cannot have been that none of the political representatives in the council thought that they should contact the Tourist Board or DETI.

6.15 pm

Ards Borough Council has turned down grants to improve the facility. Why did that happen? Money was coming in to fix the place up, but Ards Borough Council turned it down. I cannot get my head round that. The place is bringing in £3 million, and the council is going to get money for nothing to do the place up, but it turns it down. That does not make sense. It tells us that it cannot afford to run the centre that brings in £3 million, but the same council can propose to spend £27 million on a new leisure centre in Newtownards. I am not that knowledgeable about the geography of that part of Ireland, but I know that Newtownards is not that far from Bangor and that there are world-class facilities in Bangor. There is questionable need in Newtownards for a new leisure centre in a council area that is going to merge with North Down Borough Council. Could some of that £27 million —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Flanagan: — not have been put into it?

We are also told that we cannot afford to put money into the Exploris centre. However, we could afford to put £18 million into the Titanic centre, not once but twice. The money was found for that twice.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. As I listened to the debate, I was reminded of the seanfhocal Gaeilge, an old Irish saying: agus téann an seanfhocal sin mar seo: "Ná lochtaigh gan leasú". In more contemporary days, as Tony O'Reilly would have put it, "Don't bring me problems; bring me solutions." I have heard very little of that this evening. I hope that we eventually get to that point.

I was in Exploris for the first time at the behest of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, which took the initiative, in response to a letter from Portaferry Regeneration, to go and find out about the place. I pay tribute to Portaferry Regeneration and Friends of Exploris for the work and effort that they and many people put in to present their case to the Committee on the day.

I welcome the motion and the opportunity to debate the future of the Exploris aquarium in Portaferry and any proposed plan for investment or financial support. I hope that we all agree on its significance and its potential impact on the local economy as a tourist attraction, the work done by the staff on marine conservation in the facilities to look after sick or abandoned seals from rescue to release, and its educational programmes and exhibitions. It was, therefore, a huge disappointment in the local community and wider afield to learn of Ards Borough Council's decision to consider closing the aquarium and placing the site on the market for sale after 25 years as one of the top 10 paying tourist attractions in the North, with around, depending on the year, 90,000 visitors per annum.

Having taken the decision to pursue a private sector takeover of Exploris in 2011, the late withdrawal of Ards Borough Council's chosen bidder is obviously a matter of regret. It represents a failure to successfully complete negotiations for that takeover, but the council had been aware for some time of the problems that that company had with the proposal. Those private sector difficulties centre on the desire for significant changes to staff terms and conditions of employment, including a

significant reduction in staff numbers and their contractual entitlements.

For the council to publicly threaten to close the facilities while campaigning for Executive involvement is playing politics with the livelihoods of the staff and the commitment that they have to the work that they are doing. All avenues should have been fully explored before the council even considered the nuclear option of moving towards the closure of Exploris.

My party colleague the Minister of the Environment has raised the issue of the future of Exploris at the Executive Committee for discussion. It seems clear that the Executive need to work collectively to address the threat to the future of Exploris, given that a number of cross-departmental interests are involved.

On 23 October — I have already referred to it — the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee went down. During deliberations the following day at the Committee, we agreed that the themes of Exploris cross many Departments: DETI on tourism and economic development; environmental concerns; educational concerns; and university concerns and issues. DCAL has already been referred to, and it concerns DFP and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

It is also clear that the responsibility for agreeing a coherent plan for the future of Exploris lies primarily with Ards Borough Council, at least until the new local government structures are up and running. Executive Ministers have a responsibility to assist in developing that plan and, where possible, to offer concrete proposals for investment and financial support to secure the future of Exploris. The public want political parties to take note of the economic circumstances and the benefit to the local economy, marine conservation, tourism and education of continued operation of that facility.

Ards Borough Council should lift the threat of closure immediately and enter into a constructive process, working with the local community and businesses and the Executive to develop a coherent plan to secure the future of Exploris and to develop that facility, because it is quite clear that some investment is required to bring us into a more contemporary age. It is seen, rightly, as a regional asset —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr McGlone: — that should be protected for current and future generations, so I end as I started: "Ná lochtaigh gan leasú." Let us hear the productive stuff.

Mr Rogers: Before I start, I welcome the people in the Public Gallery, who are so passionate about Exploris. I applaud their efforts. I must also applaud the efforts of my colleague Joe Boyle in his work to keep Exploris open. Despite what other people are saying, Joe does not vote to close it.

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important debate, which, quite rightly, marks the significance of Exploris. The aquarium makes an outstanding contribution to the tourist sector and is particularly important to the economy on the Ards peninsula and, indeed, across Northern Ireland. The Executive must adopt a collaborative approach to ensure that this vital facility can be sustained and remain open well into the future. This will require creative and joined-up thinking from Executive Ministers. We also need to ensure that there are ongoing

conversations with Ards Borough Council so that a coherent plan for investment and financial support can be put in place. Every effort must be made to avoid closure of one of our greatest tourist attractions.

Exploris is essential to the tourist development and investment opportunities in the Strangford and Lecale areas. Through the use of the Strangford ferry, many people visit the lough area. It is a major attraction and must remain open. In the most recent monitoring round, money was awarded to the Strangford ferry and to the improvement of the roads. Indeed, these improvement works will facilitate access to this tourist attraction. I agree with other Members in that I do not simply want Exploris kept open. Its whole potential must be developed, not only in marine tourism but in marine research, renewable energies and, indeed, maybe our aquaculture industry.

Exploris contributes directly to the tourism economy in south Down and complements the family-friendly cultural tourism on offer in the neighbouring St Patrick's country and Lecale. It is vital that Exploris, a highly respected and loved tourism attraction, is given every opportunity by Ards Borough Council to continue trading.

Exploris also tells the story of the diverse marine environment: the mammals, the fish, the flora and the fauna of Strangford lough. To close this facility would be detrimental to education provision, not only in the area but across Ireland, at a time when we are trying to promote science and see real-life science in schools.

I accept that there are challenges in terms of finding ways to meet the costs of the facility. We must do all that we can to save Exploris. Too many jobs are at stake, never mind the wider implications. If this facility were to close, it would affect everything right down to local shops. Investment opportunities and the wider economy in the surrounding area would be affected if it were shut. As other Members have said, it really is time for the Executive to work closely with Ards Borough Council and to put their heads together and work out a comprehensive and fully proofed plan to save Exploris.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The last Member to speak is Mr Fearghal McKinney. He will be restricted to four minutes.

Mr McKinney: I, too, had the good fortune to attend the recent ETI Committee meeting at Exploris in Portaferry just a few weeks ago and take the opportunity to welcome Exploris supporters to the Public Gallery.

I will just broaden the context. As I made my way from Newtownards to Exploris, the true beauty and majesty of the Ards peninsula was clear, bounded as it is on the inner shore by Strangford lough. Any tourist visiting the area knows that Exploris is a real window on that world. As we arrived in Portaferry, it was a different story, as it is clear that the town, as our Committee was to hear, scores highly in deprivation. It was not my first visit to Exploris. I have been there a number of times, so I know the educational, environmental, cultural, tourism, economic and jobs benefits of the facility. However, it has been clear to me and others — it was highlighted here — that there has been a deterioration in the facility in recent years and a drop in visitor numbers. I link the two deliberately. However, two million people like me have visited Exploris since it first opened as the Northern Ireland Aquarium. Although there has been a cost, there has also been a real

benefit to the community in the terms that I highlighted. More visitors would reduce the per-head cost.

Exploris began life as a regional asset funded by local government. As I said, it has attracted millions of visitors. Even up to recent years, it was attracting something like 100,000 visitors a year. It is important to say that it has grown from a simple tourist facility into something that is a major additional benefit.

One might think that a new devolved Government would have something formal to say about or would even consider its potential closure. You might think that the Department of Education would have something to say about a facility that has proven popular with many of our schools. You might think that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure would have some similar input. I know that the Minister of the Environment is an SDLP Minister, but you might think that the Department of the Environment would have something to say. You might even think that the Department of Finance, which, as we have just heard, has announced a major funding initiative for the Strangford ferry, would have given the matter some consideration, given that a considerable number of the 100,000 who visit Exploris come by — guess what — ferry. You might think that the Department of Enterprise, charged with encouraging tourists here, would have something to say about the closure of a facility that attracts about 100,000 people a year. In short, you might think that a regional Government with some joined-up thinking would have some reasonable input to the situation. You might think that, but no. It appears that, when it comes to an important regional facility such as Exploris, Ards Borough Council's bottom line has the final say. I just want to put it on record, because this is important to note, that significant opposition was voiced at the council debate. It has the final say to the extent that it does not even think that it is imperative to involve the Department responsible for tourism in its decision making. I hope that Ms Brown's —

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mr McKinney: Yes — sorry, I do not have time. The Deputy Speaker is saying that I am not getting an extra minute.

Mr Weir: You said yes, and the Deputy Speaker seems to be shaking his head.

Mr Deputy Speaker: By way of information, we are running out of time, and I restricted the Member's time to four minutes. There is not time.

Mr McKinney: I would like to say that I hope that it does not turn out that Exploris fails because of a stand-off at —

Mr Weir: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. My understanding from the previous ruling was that, once a Member had given way, he had given way, and, even if there were 30 seconds left, because the Member had agreed to give way, surely —

Mr Flanagan: He agreed but did not give way.

Mr Weir: He did, he said "Yes".

Mr Deputy Speaker: I have no idea whether the Member gave way or not. The important thing is that I have made a ruling, and I ask the Member to respect it.

Mr McKinney: The point that I am trying to make is that I hope that Exploris does not fail because of some stand-off at the Executive corral. Whatever about the present

circumstances attaching to Exploris, it is a facility that is much more than a simple aquarium.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

6.30 pm

Mrs Overend: I welcome to opportunity to wind on the Ulster Unionist amendment.

Many will be pleased that the Assembly is debating the issue, not least the people of Strangford, who are particularly concerned by the potential closure of the facility. We are all aware of the short reprieve that Exploris is currently operating under. My hope is that today's debate will contribute to a meaningful, long-term solution that will ensure the future of Exploris as a first-class aquarium.

I genuinely feel that there is potential for Exploris in Portaferry. It already attracts in the region of 100,000 people to the area each year, and they spend up to £3 million in the local economy. It employs 42 people, either directly or indirectly. It is situated in an area that is in the NISRA top 10 deprived wards. Given that the nearest tourist facility is Mount Stewart, it has increased importance to the Ards peninsula.

My children and I enjoyed a visit to Exploris, probably about eight years ago. My children have been there again with their grandparents, so Exploris is not just a one-off visit.

Mr Weir: Twice.

Mrs Overend: Well, they are not adults yet, Peter, so we might make it back again. Sorry, through the Deputy Speaker. *[Laughter.]* Of course, improvements are necessary if it is to be viable in the long term. Financially, we know that it will operate at a £450,000 loss following loans being paid off. That deficit needs to be dealt with. The council must play its part, particularly through the provision of a marketing officer, which we have heard mentioned on many occasions. I was disappointed to learn that one has not been in place since 2007. That needs to be rectified, especially if there is financial provision for the post. If Exploris is to be successful, it must be marketed properly and professionally. The facility needs to embrace new technology. The Giant's Causeway has shown that a tourist destination can maximise its potential in that way. During our recent visit to Exploris, the Committee Chair pointed out that Exploris does not even have Wi-Fi. Keeping up with current technology is the only way to appeal to young people. It also improves access for those with learning difficulties.

Much focus has been on who should be responsible for Exploris; in truth, responsibility should be cross-departmental. DETI is in charge of tourism, and DARD is in charge of rural tourism. The Department of the Environment has an interest in the seal sanctuary at the facility, and Queen's University is involved in marine biology research.

I now turn to what other MLAs said during the debate. In proposing the motion, Mr McCarthy covered all aspects of the debate to encourage Members to support Exploris. However, the Ulster Unionist amendment seeks to focus on the outcome. We urge Members to clearly support Exploris as a regional facility that should be funded accordingly.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Member for giving way. Does the Member accept that, at this late stage, the Executive

have clearly said that there will be no regional funding unless and until there is a plan and a vision provided by the council, which actually owns the facility? The sooner that is done, the sooner we can expect regional funding for the facility.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Overend: Thank you very much. I believe that it is the Executive Ministers' responsibility to look at what they can do for Exploris. They need to take responsibility for that and provide the funding, the knowledge, the vision and the ideas on how Exploris should go forward.

I thank Miss McIlveen for adding to the debate the issue of the costs to Ards Borough Council. It was interesting to hear the detail of that in comparison with other council provision. Without getting into the political spat between Sinn Féin and the DUP, I appreciate Sinn Féin Members' support for the amendment. Mrs McKeivitt mentioned that the business community is worried about the economic impact should Exploris close. She said that we should invest in places such as this. It is recreational and educational, as well as providing environmental research and protection.

Ms Brown referred to the desire to avoid brinkmanship. I agree with that. It is time for each and every Department to examine what it can do to provide support to Exploris. Mr Hazzard complained bitterly about the lack of funding from the Enterprise Minister, yet he agrees that all Departments should look at ways to provide financial support. That includes his own Sinn Féin Ministers, whom he failed to mention. I thank the Member for Strangford Mr McNarry for clarifying his support for Exploris. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Member will resume her seat. I am sorry to have to warn Members, particularly those who have just entered the Chamber, that they are not to shout from a sedentary position. Continue.

Mrs Overend: Thank you for the quietness. I will continue now.

Mr Weir said that the status quo was not sustainable. He felt that the amendment takes away from the motion. However, our aim is to add to the motion and focus on the responsibilities of the Assembly and what it can do for Exploris.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mrs Overend: I urge members to support the amendment. I appreciated the ETI Committee's visit to Exploris, which added very much to our knowledge.

Ms Lo: I thank all the Members who contributed to the debate on the motion to consider urgently a way forward for Exploris. I also take the opportunity to thank all those who made presentations to the ETI Committee and the Environment Committee at a special meeting in Exploris recently at which I was present. As many Members acknowledged, many of those people are in the Public Gallery.

I believe that there is support for Exploris in the House and among the many thousand members of the public who have signed petitions online and on paper. The question is this: how are we going to save Exploris? Many MLAs acknowledged the importance of Exploris to the local economy, tourism, culture, science, education, the SeaGen experiment and environmental protection. We

also recognise the potential negative impacts not only on Portaferry, which is already a deprived area, but across the Ards peninsula, should Exploris be forced to close. It is the only aquarium and seal sanctuary in Northern Ireland, and its closure will be a loss to all the people of Northern Ireland. In the debate, we also heard about the two failed attempts to privatise the facility since 2008. It appears that, because of the uncertain future of the facility, there has been a lack of investment in the marketing of Exploris over the years.

Our motion calls for a united effort from central government, the local authority, the local community and stakeholders to work together to formulate a coherent plan not only to rescue Exploris for the moment but to put it on a sustainable long-term footing. I am glad that many Members expressed the same view. As many of us said, we need a partnership, with Ards Borough Council taking the lead, assisted and supported by the relevant Departments. To do that, we also need to modernise and promote Exploris as a centre of excellence for tourist experience, educational enhancement, environmental protection and marine research and development.

I will make a number of brief points. I am disappointed that no Minister is present for the debate. I also note Mr Nesbitt's comment about the lack of departmental officials willing to turn up at a meeting that he called for. I am very disappointed at the tone of today's debate. Some Members, in particular Miss McIlveen, changed the focus of the debate from a genuine attempt to find a solution to save Exploris to one of party political and tribal bickering.

Mr Boylan believes that Exploris is a viable project and recognises that Executive support and partnership are needed to bring it forward. Mrs McKeivitt mentioned the contradiction of Roads Service investing in local roads and the ferry getting upgraded, yet we are looking at closure of the facility.

Ms Brown put forward a number of options and urged that all are looked at. That is sensible and in line with the motion. Mr Hazzard said that Portaferry was the ideal location for the aquarium but investment was needed to make it viable in the long term. He queried the ETI Minister's lack of interest in Exploris.

Mr McNarry introduced quite a bit of cynicism in questioning our sincerity in raising the issue in the House. He worried that we may raise expectations that we are not able to fulfil. I have known Mr McCarthy for a long time and know how passionate he is about his constituency and Exploris. It is important to recognise that.

Mr Weir said a lot, but his main point was that the Executive could not give a blank cheque to save Exploris. However, councils and everybody need to work together to find a solution.

Mr Flanagan said that Exploris was an excellent facility. He was there to witness it. He acknowledged the neglected state of the place but said that it had huge potential. He raised the important point that it is a public service and we need to subsidise it. Public services are not there to make profit, which is an important point that we need to remember.

Mr McGlone, Chair of the ETI Committee, took us all to Exploris, and I certainly enjoyed the trip. He said that his Minister, Mr Durkan, explored the issue with his Executive

colleagues, and I thank Mr Durkan too for taking a lead in this. However, Ards council needs to take the lead and work with the Executive. He thought that the council should lift the threat of immediate closure and that we should all work together with the local community, businesses and all the stakeholders.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Member for giving way. Just for information, it may be useful for Members to know that there is an Alliance motion on 20 November that, in view of all that has gone on, the council should rescind the decision taken earlier and allow further time to save Exploris.

6.45 pm

Ms Lo: Mr Rogers said that Exploris was a major tourist attraction with huge potential to thrive but we need a coherent plan. Mr McKinney listed the relevant Departments that should have responsibility for Exploris. He said that regional government should have joined-up thinking in producing a coherent plan. He hoped that the attraction would not fail because of a stand-off between Departments and between Ministers.

I think that those were all the contributions, and I thank everyone who spoke. I certainly think that we all need to work together. It is a wonderful place. I went there when it first opened. My children were very young and were really wowed by the large fishes in the tanks. I went again last week, and I am still very impressed by it. When you see the seals lying in their little cubicles or apartments — whatever they are called — they look so helpless. Surely we have to make every effort to make the place viable and keep it going.

We need to look at investment in the facility to bring it into the 21st century to make it a modern, attractive and must-visit venue. Let us all do it together. Let us grasp the opportunity to make Exploris an economic, educational and environmental hub and show the world what we can offer here in Northern Ireland.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 45; Noes 38.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Copeland, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hussey, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCreagh, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Milne, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ni Chullín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Mrs Overend, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Nesbitt and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Ms Lo,

Mr Lunn, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson and Mr G Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 52; Noes 31.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hussey, Mrs D Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKevitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Milne, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Mrs Overend, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Nesbitt and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Clarke and Mr G Robinson.

Main Question, as amended, accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly acknowledges the regional significance of Exploris — the Northern Ireland Aquarium in terms of tourism, culture, science, education and environmental protection; recognises its importance to the economy on the Ards peninsula and across Northern Ireland; and calls on the relevant Executive Departments to provide the regional funding, resource and support required by Ards Borough Council to maximise the benefit of Exploris to the economy of the Ards peninsula and to Northern Ireland.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes, and all other Members who wish to speak will have approximately seven minutes — *[Interruption.]* Silence when you are leaving the Chamber, please.

Mr Buchanan: I am glad to see some members of Derg Valley Victims Voice with us in the Public Gallery this evening. The material that I will use in the debate was mainly collated by members of the group, because I believe that it is important that the voice of the victims be heard in the Chamber this evening.

Derg Valley Victims Voice was formed in February this year to remember the innocent victims of IRA terrorism in Castlederg and district. It is an entirely voluntary campaigning organisation that seeks to ensure that the voices of victims' families are heard by the Government, their agencies and political representatives.

The members of Derg Valley Victims Voice believe that innocent victims of the Troubles in Castlederg district have been neglected and their interests forgotten in the ongoing political process that has concentrated on placating and appeasing unrepentant terrorism. That has been to the detriment of decent citizens who stood for law and order and happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time or were selected for assassination because of their religion or place of worship.

As well as the sense of exclusion from the political process, the members of the group are united by the continuing sense of injustice that they feel for their loved ones. A total of 29 people were murdered in Castlederg by IRA terrorism during the Troubles, but only two murder convictions have been made, and 93% of the cases remain unsolved. The few murderers convicted for their crime have long since been released from prison as a result of the Belfast Agreement. For the overwhelming majority of victims' families, there has been no closure. When we talk to them about the past, we are, in fact, discussing their present-day situation. When we listen to their stories, it is impossible not to be moved by the sense of loss, hurt, injustice and grief that they feel to this very day. Equally, one cannot fail to be impressed by their modesty and dignity. In Castlederg, the past has never been adequately addressed. Perhaps that, in part, explains the continuing division between the nationalist and unionist traditions in the town.

It is the contention of the victims' group that it is the Government's duty to take the lead in releasing the families of victims of terrorism from the shackles of the past. That can be achieved only through the delivery of justice — no matter how uncomfortable that process might be for the perpetrators, how difficult it might be for the political institutions in which they are embedded or, indeed, how difficult that might be for political representatives in the Chamber. Peace cannot be built on injustice and inequality.

Most of you know that Castlederg is one of the most westerly towns in the United Kingdom. The north, south and west of the town have a land boundary with the Irish Republic. Before the Troubles, Castlederg, like any other place in Northern Ireland, was a peaceful place to live, to rear a family and bring up your children. However, that tranquillity ended when, in August 1970, a bomb was left in Castlederg. A home-made device was placed at the local council offices in the middle of the night. Although no one was injured in the attack, the blast damaged the council buildings and 11 homes in the nearby park.

The IRA carried out a further 16 bomb attacks in the locality in the following two years. Such were the ferocity and intensity of the bombing campaign against the commercial centre of the town that, during the 1970s, the Belfast press described Castlederg as Ulster's most bombed small town. In all, the IRA carried out more than 70 bomb attacks in the area during the Troubles, mainly against Protestant-owned businesses, local government facilities, the local RUC station and the UDR camp at Rockwood.

Those attacks brought a constant feeling of fear and trepidation to the local community, and Castlederg quickly became a place where the presence of a stranger, an unfamiliar vehicle or an unusual package prompted suspicion that another terrorist attack was about to take place in the town.

7.15 pm

As well as a bombing campaign aimed at causing damage, disruption and death, the Provisional IRA conducted a sectarian assassination campaign against local members of the security forces and Protestant civilians. Twenty-one people were murdered by the IRA in Castlederg and the district, and a further eight men from the area were murdered by the Provos in other parts of Northern Ireland. Of the 29 Castlederg people who were victims of IRA violence, 28 were Protestants, nine were civilians, and 12 of 20 members of the security forces were off duty when they were murdered. Two of those who died were women, and just two murder charges have been brought in connection with this litany of sectarian killings. The first UDR soldier to be killed in Northern Ireland and the youngest police officer to be murdered during the Troubles were from Castlederg.

From August 1971 through to October 2001, the following 29 Castlederg people were murdered: 22-year-old Winston Donnell, single; 28-year-old Kenneth Smyth, married; 29-year-old Daniel McCormick, married; 34-year-old William Clark, married; 27-year-old William Bogle, married; 18-year-old William Brown, single; 37-year-old Jacob Rankin, married; 31-year-old Brian Russell, married; 59-year-old William Clarke, married; 39-year-old Lexie Cummings, single; 24-year-old Thomas Harron, married; 32-year-old Ronnie Finlay, married; 25-year-old Greg Elliott, single; 44-year-old Thomas Loughlin, married; 32-year-old Norman McKinley, single; 20-year-old Heather Kerrigan, single; 28-year-old Jackie Hamilton, married; 18-year-old Victor Foster, engaged to be married; 27-year-old William Pollock, married; 44-year-old Desmond Caldwell, married; 28-year-old Michael Darcy, single; 59-year-old William Monteith, married; 26-year-old Stephen Montgomery, married; 32-year-old Olven Kilpatrick, married; 43-year-old Andrew Bogle, married;

23-year-old Ian Sproule, single; 47-year-old Ronnie Finlay, married; 74-year-old Annie Bogle, widowed; and 30-year-old Charles Folliard, single.

Each murder not only ended the life of the victim but changed the lives of their families forever.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does he agree that, given the age profile of the people whose names he read out, it clearly demonstrates that the IRA was involved in a campaign of genocide against Protestants along the border?

Mr Buchanan: Absolutely. I think that the Member could not have put it in better words.

Children grew up without the love and guidance of their father; sons and daughters predeceased their parents; and brothers and sisters were left to mourn the death of their siblings. Their grief has been further compounded over the years by the continuing absence of justice for their loved ones.

The wider community in Castlederg also suffered as a result of the IRA terrorist campaign. In addition to the terrorist attacks that resulted in the loss of life, countless other failed bomb and gun attacks were carried out by the IRA against Protestant-owned businesses and the unionist people of the district. Members of the security forces and their families lived under constant threat of death, and many businessmen were intimidated, attacked or put out of business for trading with the security forces.

A number of families lost more than one member to the IRA. Of what was and remains a small community, most people would have known someone who was murdered by the IRA: a family member, a friend, a workmate, a neighbour, a school chum, or whatever. The impact of that on the Protestant/unionist community has never been properly assessed by the Government or statutory bodies, let alone addressed.

The IRA assassination campaign led to inter-communal strife between Roman Catholics and Protestants who had previously lived together in relative harmony. As the IRA campaign intensified, suspicions developed, alienation followed, and housing became segregated. During the 1970s, three new housing developments were built in Castlederg. The religious denomination of their tenants was mixed, but that had changed within a decade as Protestants, and particularly security force families, were intimidated out of those areas. Today, out of 228 homes on those three estates, only one is Protestant. That is the stark reality of what people had to live with in Castlederg.

The decision by Sinn Féin to relocate an annual commemorative event for IRA terrorists away from its usual venue in the republican area of Galbally to Castlederg on 11 August resulted once again in the town being thrust into the media spotlight to become the centre of the political arena. Victims' families were appalled and outraged at Sinn Féin's deliberate and provocative decision to commemorate terrorists killed by their own bomb as they transported it to Castlederg in August 1973. Sinn Féin showed absolutely no consideration for the hurt and trauma that the event brought to the victims' families.

The event itself saw republican bandsmen dressed in terrorist regalia walking the streets where IRA terrorists had brutally murdered and bombed with reckless disregard for human life. The parade passed the scene where two members of the security forces had been murdered. This

devastated the families of the victims of IRA terrorism. Community relations in Castlederg were propelled back in time by some 20 to 30 years as a result of the events of 11 August. Members now await the outcome of a police investigation into the multiple breaches of the Parades Commission determination, although more in hope than expectation, and hope that those who broke the law are made amenable for their actions.

Members of the Derg Valley Victims Voice advocate the need to develop and deliver a comprehensive strategy, underpinned by legislative change where necessary, that can deal fairly and thoroughly with the effects of Northern Ireland's past, present and future. The 1998 Belfast Agreement ushered in the prisoner release scheme, a controversial priority in the agreement, with arrangements for the early release of convicted criminals. When the early release scheme came into operation, terrorist prisoners who were responsible for some of the most heinous crimes walked free from prison straight back into the communities where they had caused those crimes and, in many cases, into the same towns or streets where their victims' families lived. Chance encounters with the murderers of loved ones on the streets became a frequent and distressing occurrence for victims' relatives. This was the beginning of a continuing sequence in which innocent victims were retraumatised as a direct outcome of the political process.

Releasing convicted terrorists early and the limiting of sentences for new convictions relating to qualifying pre-1998 terrorist offences also served to enable the cheerleaders of terrorism to claim that terrorist offences carried out prior to the Belfast Agreement were in some way justifiable while those of recent years are not. That argument is, of course, entirely flawed, because murder is murder irrespective of when it occurs, by whom or for what cause it is carried out. It is hypocritical, therefore, for senior republicans such as Martin McGuinness and Gerry Kelly to take every opportunity that they have to attempt to legitimise Provisional IRA terrorism, the murder and maiming of hundreds of innocent people, while condemning the latter-day standard-bearers of physical force Irish republicanism.

The range of agencies and mechanisms that emanated from the Belfast Agreement and that are in place to deal with the past are fragmented, under-resourced and based on bad legislation. Conversely, some agencies or inquiries have been hugely over-resourced and made available only to nationalists or in instances in which the state is alleged to have had a role in particular killings. This negligence of others and a means of recognising the enormous hurt these people continue to suffer —

There are a number of matters that the Derg Valley Victims Voice considers to be priorities in dealing with the past. The group feels that it is paramount to its members' needs to have each and every one of these priorities dealt with. There are seven priorities, and I want to leave them with the House tonight.

First, an appraisal and review of the definition of a victim should be conducted; secondly, that there is acceptance of responsibility by republicans for the consequences of the campaign they instigated under the cover of the objectives of the civil rights movement, and the issuing of an apology without reservation or qualification for their actions; thirdly, that there is an acknowledgement by the Irish Government —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Buchanan: — of the consequences of the support that they gave in relaunching the IRA and of the other actions and policies in respect of Northern Ireland that enabled terror; fourthly, that there is acknowledgement by Her Majesty's Government that they failed to provide a security policy —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Buchanan: — to meet the needs of the security situation in the west Tyrone borderlands; —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Buchanan: — fifthly, that there is the establishment of a mechanism that delivers justice for the victims created by the actions of the IRA and other terrorist organisations —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Sorry, I must ask the Member to resume his seat, please.

Mr Buchanan: — with the complicity or negligence of others, and a means of recognising the enormous hurt those people continue to suffer today.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Sorry, you must —

Mr Buchanan: Mr Deputy Speaker, if you will allow me, I have only more thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr Buchanan: Sixthly, that there is legislative change that prevents the glorification of terrorism anywhere in Northern Ireland, and, seventhly, that there is recognition of the restraint of many hundreds of members of the security forces who served with distinction in west Tyrone — a fact not given the recognition it deserves.

Only when these matters are dealt with thoroughly —

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am sorry —

Mr Buchanan: — will those who suffered and continue to suffer the most from Northern Ireland's troubled past be in a better position to move forward with the rest of their lives.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member —

Mr Buchanan: I commend this to the Office of the First Minister and the Justice Minister —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Sorry —

Mr Buchanan: — and trust that action will be taken —

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to please resume his seat.

Mr Buchanan: — to alleviate the continual suffering that the victims of Castlederg have suffered for over 30 years.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am sorry; I know that this is a very sensitive issue, and I have given the Member almost two minutes over his time. I am sure that I will be in trouble about that.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to speak to the House and to those in the Public Gallery today on what I and Sinn Féin regard as a very important part of our past and our future.

Peace and reconciliation have been the cornerstone of what republicans have been about in Ireland for decades. When our party leader, Gerry Adams, began discussions

with other political parties and interested people, Sinn Féin's aim was to end the conflict in Ireland through dialogue. We remain committed to that desire today, as much as we ever have been, and give a commitment that we will pursue all avenues through entirely democratic and peaceful means to ensure that all the people on this island can live together peacefully through an understanding of each other's cultures and beliefs and an understanding of the right to stand up to injustice in whatever shape or form it may take.

As an elected MLA for the Castlederg and Aghyaran areas, and from my time as a councillor in Strabane District Council, I have come to know many people in the Castlederg area through my constituency office, and they are very good people. They, like everyone else, want to move forward and do not want to keep looking over their shoulder at the past.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Ms Boyle: No.

However, I understand that the political conflict in Ireland and Britain caused terrible devastation and loss and that, as a result, there has been much hurt and pain, and the Castlederg area has seen many dark days.

I have listened with total sympathy to the Members opposite speak about the unimaginable loss suffered by the unionist community in Castlederg and about the hurt and pain inflicted on family members down through the years. As a republican, I cannot ignore that, nor can I fully understand the grief that a wife, husband, mother, father, son or daughter felt or continues to feel when a member of their family died as a result of the conflict.

Mr Buchanan: Will the Member give way?

Ms Boyle: No, I will not give way.

That is a challenge for us all. Just as republicans are willing to try to understand the unionist community's hurt and pain, so, too, must unionists understand that they and the British Government must recognise the hurt and pain they caused to the nationalist and republican people.

Unionism is not without blame. Unionism was part of the conflict in Ireland, just as it will be part of the solution to a new Ireland. Victims were created by all sides of the conflict: republicans, the British state, its forces, its agencies and unionists. Listening to the Members opposite —

7.30 pm

Mr Clarke: They did not wear balaclavas.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Member will resume her seat.

I appeal to all Members to show respect and dignity to the subject under discussion. Let us have no more shouting from a sedentary position. That is only showing disrespect —

Mr Clarke: They are glorifying terrorism.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, are you questioning the ruling of the Chair?

Mr Clarke: No.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I hope not. Continue.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Listening to the Members opposite, an independent observer would be forgiven for believing that it was only republicans who caused loss of life and suffering in the Castlederg and Aghyaran areas. That could not be further from the truth. Pre-1969, the nationalist/republican community, as in every part of the North, suffered discrimination and injustices at the hands of the one-party unionist state. Some would still prefer that to be the prevailing circumstance in Castlederg and other areas.

The RUC and the UDR — the local armed militia of the British Government — must also accept responsibility for their actions in the Castlederg and Aghyaran areas. Both those state forces caused terrible hurt and pain to the people whom I represent. Their campaigns of harassment, house raids, collusion and shoot to kill were totally justifiable in the eyes of some of the Members opposite. Republicans did not ask for the conflict in this part of Ireland. The unionist/loyalist death squads controlled by the British state were also active in the Castlederg and Aghyaran areas from the early 1970s. They planted a no-warning bomb in Killeter, killing one local woman, Kathleen Dolan, in 1977, and they shot dead a local man, Mick McHugh. In the 1980s, they were very active in planting numerous firebombs in local GAA halls and shops, and they killed a local bread man, Dermot Hackett, who was supposedly killed by loyalist Michael Stone. They also planted a booby trap bomb on a tractor, seriously injuring a 15-year-old boy, and they shot my party colleague Pádraig Shanaghan in 1991 after years of continued harassment by the RUC, the UDR and the British Army.

The moral compass on which the Members opposite base their condemnation of republicans does not take into account their support for the campaign of death and destruction carried out by Britain or her proxies against the nationalist and republican people of Castlederg and Aghyaran. Yes, we too have suffered; we all have. In recognising the pain that each side of the conflict has inflicted on each other, it must be fully recognised that there was a war, but we must not allow a hierarchy of victims that would discriminate against one community or the other. We are told by the unionist Members opposite that Tyrone republicans are insensitive to those who have suffered at the hands of republicans in the Castlederg area. However, in Castlederg, Sinn Féin, initially led by the late Sinn Féin councillor Charlie McHugh and Pat Doherty MP, has been involved in dialogue with the local loyal orders and other representatives from the unionist community for over five years. We have continually recognised the need for dialogue as a way forward. Can Mr Buchanan say the same? In recent times, Sinn Féin contacted the Derg Valley Victims Voice offering to meet it or offering assistance. We await a response. That offer still stands.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Ms Boyle: Without dialogue in the Derg or anywhere else in the North, we cannot progress. Unionist leaders need to show positive leadership.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Ms Boyle: The people of Castlederg and Aghyaran look to us, as local MLAs and community leaders, to provide leadership and a way forward. That is a challenge that we must face, and, as a republican from west Tyrone, I am

prepared to meet that challenge with the local MLAs: Mr Tom Buchanan, Joe Byrne and Mr Ross Hussey.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Ms Boyle: Will they agree, on leaving this debate, to meet me and other local politicians and community leaders to work through our past?

Mr Clarke: *[Interruption.]*

Ms Boyle: And that is the challenge.

Mr Clarke: — that your party was involved in.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I must warn the Member that he is in very serious breach of the normal conduct of Members in the Chamber, and it will be noted.

Mr Byrne: The Castlederg area has suffered a lot from the Troubles through bombings and the deaths of civilians and members of the security forces. It has had more bombings than any similar-sized town in Northern Ireland, as Mr Buchanan mentioned. Too many people have been killed needlessly in this part of Tyrone. Too much tragedy, pain and suffering has been endured by many victim families.

The recent republican commemoration in Castlederg was offensive and insensitive to the vast majority of victim families and, indeed, the local community. It has been interpreted and witnessed almost as a revisiting of the trauma on many local victims in the Castlederg area. No one wants republicans to be denied their desire to honour and commemorate their volunteers who have died, even those on active service, but they have to be sensitive to the trauma and the pain that has been endured by many of the unionist and Protestant victims in Castlederg.

The Derg valley victims' group has been vocal and organised since it was formed this year. It allows victim families to meet and make representations. They are mainly people associated with unionist-minded families and with security personnel who have suffered much in this part of Tyrone. They are entitled to be heard and acknowledged by the House and, indeed, the wider Northern Ireland community. Many other victims' families suffer in silence and isolation. The Eames/Bradley exercise afforded many silently suffering families the opportunity to come forward and tell their story of pain and suffering, and that was worthwhile. Indeed, many of the victim families of Castlederg appeared before the Eames/Bradley hearings.

I must put on record the names of some of the other victims in the Castlederg area: Kathleen Dolan of Killeter, who was posting her wedding invitation cards when she was killed; Dermot Hackett, a bread man from Omagh who lived in Castlederg and was killed; Patrick Shanaghan, a Rivers Agency worker; and Mick McHugh, a forestry worker. Others, too, were murdered or killed in that area. All those people were civilians who were going about their normal work.

All the victim families need the Haass process to deal with their pain and suffering through an outcome relating to dealing with the past. The reason why dealing with the past has to be dealt with sensitively and with understanding is so that a meaningful outcome and mechanism can be put in place to cope with the spectrum of needs of victims. A single-dimensional approach will not suffice. Not all victims want a legal or criminal justice approach. Some want, quite simply, the truth about why their family member was killed.

Some want some acknowledgement, while some want proper counselling and health-related support, among other outcomes. For some, a genuine apology would go a long way.

As a native of the Castlederg area, I am very aware of the pain and suffering associated with the Troubles in that part of Northern Ireland. I did not come lately to the issue of the area. We should not try to reopen old wounds or add to the suffering that all those victim families have had to suffer over many years.

I support Mr Buchanan for tabling the topic and helping to bring to the Assembly the issue on behalf of his victims and, indeed, all the victims of the Castlederg area. Castlederg suffered a relentless campaign of violence — bombings and killings. Community relations were set back very badly for many years. Thankfully, in recent times, a lot of work has been done to build better community relations, but what happened in August was a setback. It must not be a permanent setback. People, including republicans, have to learn that they have to be more sensitive and more tolerant. Equally, in Castlederg, the unionist-minded people have to realise that having so many band parades also causes some turmoil and discontent. The way forward is to have real dialogue, genuine apologies and a genuine sense of trying to deal with the past in a commonsense and sensible way. I hope that there will be better days ahead for Castlederg.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Ross Hussey, who is the only Member who has the permission of the Speaker to remain seated if he so wishes.

Mr Hussey: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Should I sit down, do not take offence.

I was listening to the radio this morning, and a priest in the Republic of Ireland said, "One day, you will stand before your maker and account for your actions". That was about the disappeared. This gives me an idea of the mindset of the IRA. The IRA was prepared to take somebody from their home, murder them, bury them and forget about them. One day, the people who did that will stand before their maker.

Much is often said by republicans about a conflict. There was no conflict in Ireland or Northern Ireland; we had a campaign of terrorism. A terrorist is described as a person who uses or favours violent and intimidating methods for coercing a government or community. That is what happened in Castlederg. It was terrorism, and it was conducted by terrorists. No sweet talking will change what those people are or were. They were not fighting for justice, and they were not freedom fighters: they were cowardly terrorists.

Here today we have victims from Castlederg. We have Gary Bogle. I am sure that Gary will not mind me pointing him out and talking about him. I heard that man talking about the death of his father when he was a very young boy. He and his two brothers were in the car. His father was in the car, and the mother had gone into Killeter post office. The father saw someone coming towards them. He realised what was happening and went in to his wife. He was shot in the back by a coward in front of his wife. Three young children were sitting in the car. What did that ever do to bring about a united Ireland? What did that ever do to make you a proud Irishman? What was the reason

for that? It was pure, blatant sectarianism. The man was murdered because he was a Protestant.

I hear other nonsense talked about collusion. Somebody colluded in the murder of Mr Bogle and several others in the Castlederg area. Somebody said to somebody else, "This person is working in Strabane today" or "This person is working in Castlederg today" or "This person lives in wherever, and they park their vehicle wherever". There is your collusion. That happened in Castlederg. Bombers were brought in from all over the place, and the heroes scuttled off back to their rathole. Castlederg was nearly bombed out of existence. How can you justify 70 bombs in a town the size of Castlederg? Apart from attempting to blow the town off the face of the earth, what were you going to achieve? Nothing. You were terrorising a community.

Gary Bogle also lost his grandmother. Why? Because the IRA decided to bomb a Chinese restaurant. A Chinese restaurant, for God's sake — what were they going to do? What did they ever do against the IRA and the people of Ireland? His grandmother took a fatal heart attack.

I have worked with the group from day one. I have met it on many occasions. One of the saddest occasions was when a man — I will just call him John — told us the story of his wife. She was eight months pregnant, and the brave heroes of the IRA blew up Sion Mills police station. She fell and, at eight months pregnant, lost her child. What good came of that murder? That child is not mentioned in the figures. In the Omagh bomb, 29 people and two unborn children were killed. Omagh is rightly in the news because, at one time, republican terrorists took out 29 people and two unborn children. Over a 20-year period, Castlederg suffered the deaths of 29 people and one unborn child.

7.45 pm

Not one sod of Ireland is worth the murder of anybody. I proudly wore the uniform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary for 25 years. I am big, and you could not miss me. When I served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, I wore a uniform, and I did the beat in Omagh and many other places. I was seen to be doing my job. What did these cowards do? They hid behind ditches. They sat in the Republic of Ireland, and they pushed a button. Heather Kerrigan died in the arms of her brother — bleeding on her brother — because some hero sitting in County Donegal pushed a button. I saw Mrs Kerrigan on 11 August, and what a sad sight that was: a mother grieving for her lost daughter and one of the nicest girls you could have ever met. What was she to the IRA other than a pawn?

You talk nonsense about peace and reconciliation. You talk about bringing an end to conflict in Ireland. You were responsible for the murder of most of the people who were killed during the Troubles, and you were also responsible for the deaths of most of the Roman Catholics who were killed during the Troubles. So, do not start this nonsense of trying to blame the RUC and the UDR for all our woes. The majority of deaths in Northern Ireland were at the hands of the IRA and the republicans. You have nothing to be proud of, and what you did in Castlederg was a shame. It brought shame on you. It brought shame on Ireland. We will not forget it. We cannot forget what was undertaken. All deaths by terrorists are wrong, but the murder campaign that was carried out in Castlederg was a disgrace. As the priest said, "One day you will stand before your maker and

account for your actions". I would hate to be in the position where I had to stand in front of my maker and say that I was responsible for the death of anyone. My sympathy is with the people of Castlederg.

Mr Ford: I congratulate Tom Buchanan on securing the debate. For the record, I should make it clear that I am speaking for my party and not in any sense as Minister. The issues that are the concern of Derg Valley Victims Voice are not those that affect the Department of Justice today. However, as one whose roots are in west Tyrone, even though I now represent South Antrim, I believe that it is important that I should be here to add my voice of sympathy to the comments that have already been made here.

It is absolutely clear that the sympathy of the House should go out unanimously to those represented by Derg Valley Victims Voice. There is no doubt that, as has been put forward by Tom Buchanan and Ross Hussey, there was a sectarian campaign waged in the Castlederg area not just against those who wore uniforms but against some civilians. There is no doubt that there was suffering on a scale that is almost unprecedented in any other part of Northern Ireland, perhaps because of the geography and perhaps for other reasons. In that context, we should recognise what Ross has drawn our attention to: the similarity between the number of people who died in one event in Omagh and the people who died over a period of years in and around the relatively small community of Castlederg.

I certainly welcome the comments that Michaela Boyle made about seeking to establish peace, but I think that she and her colleagues need to be an awful lot more sensitive to what has gone before than the latter part of her speech showed. It is fine to come out and make the speeches about seeking peace and seeking reconciliation and wishing to move forwards, but there is a need to acknowledge the part that your associates played in the Troubles and not merely point the finger across the Chamber, which, sadly, is what she did.

What we saw in Castlederg in August was a disgraceful attempt to coat-trail, to cause fear, to cause upset and to damage the community relations and whatever work was being done to move things forward there. I believe that families have a right to remember the dead of their own family and that people have a right to remember their friends, whatever the circumstances of their death. However, that right is not a right to coat-trail. It is not a right to cause offence. It is not a right to cause fear. It is not a right to raise further suspicions and further concerns. Sadly, that is what we saw from Sinn Féin when it staged that march in August.

I believe that there was a very real danger that we could have seen major trouble coming from that, had it not been for the very sensible behaviour of Derg Valley Victims Voice and the dignified way in which those who wished to protest against that activity protested by a religious service and behaved themselves in a way that ensured that others who might well have come from outside and caused problems did not get the opportunity to do so.

As far as I am concerned, commemorating and venerating dead terrorists is equally offensive whether they were active in the IRA or were those who are dealt with in a similar way and also commended by loyalists who commemorate the actions of people in the UVF and

the UDA. We need to get away from that. We need to recognise that what went on in the past is the past and should be put behind us. We need to see people moving forward, because there would have been serious damage in Castlederg if it had not been for the dignified way in which protesters responded. Even with that, as Tom Buchanan has said, there has been serious damage to community relations in and around the town.

In that sense, perhaps we can say that the victims represented by Derg Valley Victims Voice are in no different a position from those of many other victims who suffered because of the violence of terrorists, whatever cause those terrorists claimed, but they are here today as an illustration of where this society needs to move forward. It illustrates the need for those of us who are elected politicians in this place to fully engage with the talks process being led by Dr Richard Haass. It illustrates the need to look at what different ways we can move forward and actually achieve genuine reconciliation in the future, not a kind of half-hearted gesture politics of reconciliation.

I certainly regret that the report of the Consultative Group on the Past — the Eames/Bradley report — was rejected in its entirety because of one particular aspect relating to financial payments. I believe that we are going to have to go back and look to see how we allow victims to tell their story, how we allow people to recognise the suffering that went on and how we ensure that we can find a better way of commemoration that is not just a divisive commemoration.

There were positive ideas put forward by Eames/Bradley and by the Victims' Commission, and we need to look to those. What we do not need is to treat victims as merely a weapon to use in a continuing propaganda war, which is what seems to be coming in some places. I hope that we will see that positive step forward. I hope that we will see people seriously engaging and setting their minds to a different way of looking forward.

There is also no doubt that there are real issues about whether, through the services that are provided by the different agencies responsible both to us and to the Northern Ireland Office, victims are really seeing their needs met in terms of some of the practical issues, some of the issues around counselling and dealing with the effects of trauma, which is clearly continuing in some cases. There are massive questions as to the resources that we are collectively putting into that.

We need to ensure that we move away from the concept that any glorification of terror is acceptable, whatever cause those terrorists claimed. We need to move forward to genuine reconciliation and, most of all, to ensure that the needs of individual victims are met.

Mr Nesbitt: Will the Member give way?

Mr Ford: I think I had finished, but I will.

Mr Nesbitt: I appreciate the Member giving way. As he brings up Eames/Bradley, will he agree with me that, if we were looking at the four strands proposed in the Consultative Group on the Past's report, when it comes to the strand on thematic investigations, the one that should be begun first and foremost is a thematic investigation into what was clearly ethnic cleansing by the IRA of unionists and Protestants on the border?

Mr Ford: It is certainly a very serious issue that Mr Nesbitt raises. I think we need to be very careful in suggesting that only those Protestants who died at the hands of republican terrorists should be treated as the first priority. We have to recognise what also happened in a number of other areas where the victims were largely Catholics at the hands of unionist terrorists. What is clear in the debate today is that we need to recognise the suffering that was really inflicted on the people of Castlederg.

Mr Bell: I rise to bring the full support of the Democratic Unionist Party behind my colleague Tom Buchanan, who has so eloquently outlined the needs of the Derg valley victims and their plight, which they should never have had to suffer. It was unjustified and unjustifiable, and it always will be.

I had the privilege of working in Castlederg between 1992 and 1997, when I worked for the Western Health and Social Services Board, as it was then. Castlederg was a beautiful area. It was an outstanding town. It had a people who were, on many occasions — I worked right across the board — marked by their kindness, generosity and a wonderful country spirit that brought the very essence of humanity into life. Sadly, that town was to be targeted by the Provisional IRA and other terrorist organisations in a pre-planned, premeditated and systematic ethnic cleansing of the Protestant and unionist population.

I am conscious today that, of the 29 murders, 27 are unsolved. The Justice Minister said that it was not a matter for the Department of Justice. I am sure that he did not mean to put it that way. The 27 unsolved murders most definitely are a matter for the Department of Justice. Those who murdered them are criminals and need to be brought before the criminal courts and held accountable for their actions. Let me tell the House —

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Bell: I will give way on that point.

Mr Ford: Technically, those are clearly matters for the PSNI; they are not matters for the Department of Justice.

Mr Bell: The PSNI, the Public Prosecution Service and the Department of Justice via the courts are responsible for bringing the murderers of those 27 people before the courts to hold them accountable.

Let me be absolutely clear: the people who ordered the murders — I hope that Mr Adams is listening or will get a transcript — are as responsible as the people who pulled the trigger and planted the bomb, in exactly the same way as Gerry Adams is responsible for the murder of Jean McConville.

Mr Hussey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Bell: I will.

Mr Hussey: Do you also agree that those who colluded with the terrorists, who pointed out where the 29 people lived and where they parked their cars, are also guilty of murder and of that wonderful term "collusion"?

Mr Bell: They are, as the honourable Member put so well, guilty of collusion.

Slowly, we are starting to hear the voice of defenceless widows and the people who were hurt. We saw them last night on television. Their voices — the voices of people

who do not have guns or bombs and were not prepared to engage in murder — are being heard and are demolishing decades of deceit by the republican movement and other terrorist organisations. Why should I be surprised that they systematically murdered 29 people and psychologically injured many others through the terrorism that they engaged in? These were people who were prepared to murder within their community. They were prepared to kidnap, torture and murder a woman, knowing that she was a single mother of 10. After murdering that defenceless single mother of 10, they were prepared to put an IRA gun to the head of her 11-year-old child to try to cover up the evil murder that the IRA was responsible for.

At least, in the House, the IRA commander and deputy First Minister said that those actions were cruel and unjustified and were “of course” carried out by the IRA. Yet last night, on television, the president of Sinn Féin said that he did not know who was responsible. So the deputy First Minister knows that it was the IRA, but the president of Sinn Féin does not. Such hypocrisy and lies would sicken to the stomach any objective person.

The deputy First Minister said yesterday, when talking about the disappeared, that the murders were wrong. He said that the IRA was wrong to have committed them, that they were clearly the responsibility of the IRA and that they were cruel and unjustified. Let me tell the Sinn Féin representative who sought to rewrite history today that the 29 murders were equally wrong, equally cruel and equally unjustified. Those who have, to date, got away with the murder of 27 people, will not get away with that in the next world.

8.00 pm

One of the things that is most sickening is when people attempt to equate the 29 victims of terrorism and the people who terrorised them. That is an ‘Alice in Wonderland’, ‘Humpty Dumpty’ scenario in which people make words mean anything that they want them to mean. Let me be explicitly clear: the people who flew the planes into the Twin Towers and murdered all those people in the United States of America were not victims; they were terrorists. The people who killed those 29 people, planted 70 bombs and murdered the nine civilians were not victims; they were terrorists. The 29 people are the innocent victims. It is their voices that deserve to be heard, and heard to the fullest extent.

I salute my brother Hussey and others who served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary and other police services in County Tyrone, like my own grandfather. They held the line and delivered for us a British democracy in Northern Ireland, where terrorism has been defeated. We are witnessing people try to justify the wrongs of the past. Let me be very clear: it was wrong, and it always will be wrong. In conclusion, we hear a lot about Bloody Sunday.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Your time is almost up.

Mr Bell: We also need to hear about the IRA’s activities on bloody Monday, bloody Tuesday, bloody Wednesday, bloody Thursday, bloody Friday, bloody Saturday and bloody Sunday.

Mr Allister: Last night, through our television screens, we had the opportunity to glimpse something of the pain and horror that attended the entire episode of the disappeared. Tonight, this House focuses, quite properly, on the very

concentrated pain of the small town of Castlederg. It was visited, probably above all others, with the horrendous, vicious, vile, wicked, terrorism of the IRA, which was not some accidental fallout from some perception that someone somewhere was being discriminated against, but the calculated, deliberate and preconceived implementation of a terrorist campaign.

Ms Boyle comes to this House with not a word of regret and not a word of apology for the 29 murders, but with every attempt to justify, explain away and glorify even those who were the killers. They chose to be terrorists. No one made the killers of Castlederg be terrorists. They chose to be terrorists. Their victims did not choose to be victims. They were made victims by the IRA. This attempt to rewrite history and pretend that there is some great equivalence is adding great pain and hurt to the reality. The reality in Castlederg was ethnic cleansing. It was a vicious sectarian campaign against those of the Protestant faith and unionist persuasion. I think it was the Rev Neill who famously said at the funeral of one RUC officer that things are so bad in Castlederg that, when we come to pray, we have to have policemen at the door of our churches.

Some pretend that it was not sectarian genocide. That is exactly what it was. It is also quite appalling that victims who looked to those set up to help them, such as the Victims’ Commissioner, have to listen to a Victims’ Commissioner equivocate over whether those who made them victims were or were not terrorists, and who cannot bring herself to say, “Yes, of course they were terrorists”. It is such equivocation that adds greatly and immensely to that hurt, which was further added to, of course, by the obscenity of 11 August, when we had the coat-trailing glorification of two terrorists setting out of their own choice and volition to bring terror to Castlederg and who met their just desserts at their own hands.

Mr Kelly went to Castlederg to hail them as freedom fighters, those who gave their lives, he said, so that we could be free. They were on a murder mission to bring terror and mayhem to the town of Castlederg. As long as we have in the House and elsewhere those who are willing and eager to glorify such acts, there will be no reconciliation in the Province because reconciliation cannot be built on a falsehood. It is a damnable falsehood to suggest that there is equivalence between those who chose to be victim makers and those whom they made victims by their actions.

We should not be here to patronise victims. We should not be here to say that Eames/Bradley would have given you, and will yet give you, the opportunity to tell your story. Victims are not looking for storytelling. They are looking for justice, and justice means those who made them victims being faced with their deeds in the courts of this land. Storytelling is a patronising cop-out for facing up to the reality that what is required is justice for victims.

I salute the Derg Valley Victims Voice for its initiative, tenacity and persistent promotion of its cause. For those who are persuaded democrats in the House, I trust that it has been heard and that those who are here have not been insulted by the attempts of others to try to explain and justify the making of them as victims.

I commend Mr Buchanan for bringing the matter to the House. I agree with all the sentiments that he expressed. However, he started his speech by telling us that victims

were rightly discomforted and outraged by the appeasing of unrepentant terrorists. I have to say to Mr Buchanan and to Mr Bell that they should look at their own actions in putting unrepentant terrorists into the Government in the House to rule over us. You cannot have it both ways.

Adjourned at 8.08 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 11 November 2013

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Matters of the Day

Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer

Mr Speaker: Ross Hussey has been given leave to make a statement on the attempted bomb attack on a retired police officer, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. If other Members wish to be called, they should rise in their place continually. The key word is "continually". All Members who are called will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject matter. Members know by now that there will be no points of order or any other business discussed until this item of business is finished.

Mr Hussey: I, along with many Members, have just returned from a service of commemoration for those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their Queen and country. Today, 11 November, is Remembrance Day, and we remember all those who lost their life in service to the Crown. But for the vigilance of a former police officer, we could be remembering him here as well. A republican organisation deemed it appropriate to attempt to murder a former member of the police. Not only did it attempt to murder a former police officer, it also could have murdered his 12-year-old daughter. This was an act of cowardice. It was an act that everyone in this House should condemn unreservedly.

If we look at the history of the car bomb, and we look at the history of those who planted under-car booby traps, we can see a direct link to the Provisional IRA. In my opinion, those who planted this bomb have a direct link to that organisation. Someone once said, "They haven't gone away, you know." It is quite clear to all of us that they have not gone away, and they are still here. Having watched that former police officer go to and from his normal daily activities, they would have known that his 12-year-old daughter could have been in the car. What will her mental state be over the next few months as she thinks about what could have happened? What will her father's mental state be when he thinks that those people were prepared not only to murder him but to murder a 12-year-old child?

I have said before that not one sod of Ireland is worth the life of anybody. For somebody who was prepared to serve their country as a police officer and is now retired to be a target, what does that say about the peace process, and what does that say about republicans who engage in these activities? I condemn them unreservedly, and I ask that this House calls on anyone who has any information on those individuals to report it immediately to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

There is supposedly a code in the IRA whereby it keeps its secrets to itself, and it has done that very well since

1998, but it is about time that that code was broken, and it is about time that the people who are attempting to bring Northern Ireland to its knees and to kill innocent civilians and children should wise up and go away. If you have any information on them, I suggest that goes immediately to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. My sympathies are with that police officer and his family.

Mr Newton: I join with Mr Hussey in his condemnation of the attack on the police officer. Indeed, there is no sense in politicians from all sides in this Chamber condemning it; it is really the condemnation of wider society that is important. I believe that wider society in Northern Ireland has condemned these acts of terrorism and will continue to do so. It was not only an attack on that family. It was an attack on him because of how he has chosen to earn his living; he has chosen to serve society in a meaningful way and to play a very positive role in society. For that, he was singled out and identified in the minds of those who carry out such acts, as in the past, as some form of legitimate target.

Not only did they attack that man and his daughter, they attacked wider society. Society wants to move on, but those who skulk around in the darkness and those who have evil in their hearts want to drag us back to those days when it was common to turn on the news bulletin and listen to incidents about bullets and bombs and murder and mayhem. Well, society is not going back there, and it will not be led back by those who are prepared to carry out such cowardly and evil acts of violence. It is only thanks to Almighty God that that man's life was saved. His life and the life of his young daughter were saved by his vigilance.

The people of Northern Ireland want to move forward to build a successful economy and to build a standard and quality of life that all our citizens can enjoy. They want to do that by addressing the jobs issue to bring prosperity to Northern Ireland, tackling the health and education issues that are important to society and building a positive Northern Ireland that we can all be proud of. Indeed, the future of our children and older people — not bombs, bullets, murder and mayhem — has to be the priority.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I rise to speak, if we can, with a single voice coming out from the Assembly to condemn this attack on a retired police officer and his 12-year-old daughter. Anyone with information should bring it forward.

There is no rhyme, reason or logic that can stand over an attack on the PSNI. In this case, we have a man who has retired and who is trying to get on with his life. Perhaps people will still try to put out some sort of reason for this

attack. There is no reason. I agree with the Member who has just spoken. The whole of society wants to move on. This is trying to prevent the whole community from moving on and, indeed, trying to draw us back into a past from which we have moved on. I join with other Members in condemning this unreservedly.

Dr McDonnell: May I, on my behalf and on behalf of the SDLP, and I know that it is a sentiment shared by the whole House, send our sympathy, unconditional support and thoughts to this man and his family?

This attack has to be condemned outright, totally and absolutely. This type of vicious attack has no place in our society, going forward. In my opinion, from the little I know, this act of violence has little or nothing to do with any sort of meaningful politics or, dare I say, republicanism. It has got to do with an insanity that, somehow or other, killing a neighbour — a fellow countryman, a fellow human being — will benefit anyone. Violence, threats of violence, killing and threats of killing have no place in our society and will not be tolerated by any of us.

I am glad that we have a unanimous approach across the House this morning, and I thank the Member for bringing this forward and giving us all an opportunity to place on the record our absolute revulsion at this attack or, indeed, any other attack of this nature that might take place.

Mrs Cochrane: On behalf of the Alliance Party, I join others who have spoken to condemn the attempted murder of the former police officer and his family. My best wishes are with the family at this time. Yesterday, my colleague Naomi Long MP called with the family to pass on our thoughts. Understandably, they are distressed.

This attack was a couple of streets away from my home, and the device was discovered prior to the gentleman taking his daughter to school. Indeed, I came across the incident having done the school run. To target someone in that way, in a built-up area, with no consideration for who else could have been injured, or worse, is beyond contempt. Those who planted the device are utterly reckless and have absolutely nothing to offer Northern Ireland. It was an attack not only on the former policeman, but on the whole community. Every right-thinking person will condemn it.

We need to work together to build a peaceful future where we will no longer see this type of attack. I encourage everyone in the community to work alongside the police in order to bring those people to justice.

Mr McCallister: Like everyone else in the House who has spoken, I rise to condemn this awful, awful attack and incident, which could have caused absolute carnage in a family. The fear that that instils in the community and in serving and former police officers is appalling.

The message coming from the Assembly is loud and clear: they have nothing to offer; there is no future for these people; nobody wants them or their cowardly acts. Mrs Cochrane made the point. This is a situation that many of us face with young families and children. We can all envisage the absolute horror of what this poor family faces. Our thoughts, sympathies and prayerful support are with the family. It will be important that they know that the House is fully behind them and supporting them with whatever help we can be. Anyone with information should, and must, contact the police immediately and give that information.

I thank Mr Hussey for tabling the matter of the day, because I think that it is important that that message goes from this place very loudly and strongly.

12.15 pm

Mr Allister: I join in unreservedly condemning this further terrorist attack in our midst and the attempt to bring murder to the very heart of a family. I condemn it from the context, personally, of having condemned all terrorism: it was never justified and is still not justified. I hear Mr Kelly today condemning it, yet unable and unwilling to condemn like incidents from the past when perpetrated by the IRA. Rather, he was in the business of justifying those.

This incident brings home to us a timely reminder of the sheer heartless approach of terrorists. They care nothing about what might happen to even a 12-year-old girl. Of course, that same mindset caused the IRA to think nothing of the well-being of the 10 young children of Jean McConville. The same mindset, same approach and same type of godfathers direct these incidents. I trust that the family in this situation will find some comfort after the ordeal that they have been through and that, as a community, we may finally put to rest the circumstances in which such incidents can even be planned, never mind perpetrated. We are glad that it came to nought on this occasion. How different it could have been.

With the indulgence of the House, I also mention that, yesterday, in Ballymena in my constituency, we had an apparent terrorist incident, when a car was left in the Parkmore/Cullybackey Road area, and it seems that a gun has been recovered. Great inconvenience was caused to families there, and I commend the community spirit that enabled people to cope and get through that. However, the terrorists care nothing about that. Indeed, the more terror and mayhem they create, the happier they will be. If, eventually, someone is made amenable for this offence, I trust that nobody in the House will campaign for their release, escorting them on parole should that arise and showing the hypocrisy that too often goes with the words that flow from certain people's lips.

Mr Spratt: As a retired police officer with 30 years' service, I utterly condemn the incident a few days ago, in which a retired officer and his young daughter almost lost their lives. It brings us back to families and the concern that it causes retired officers' families that these sorts of incidents still happen. I remember having to check cars daily, families having to check cars and grown-up children having to check cars. The thought that we could move back to those days is horrendous. I think that all in the House have condemned and should condemn what happened.

I urge anyone with any information, no matter how small or insignificant they think it is, to report it to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Let us face it, this is not the first incident to have happened in that immediate area over the past two or three years. I also urge all former members to be vigilant in the days ahead. Once again, they need to check vehicles.

In the past, causing horrendous and sometimes fatal incidents did not work, and it will not work now. I urge everyone to support their neighbours. If people see anything suspicious, first, tell the families and, secondly, tell the Police Service. The incident should be, and is being, condemned today, and I welcome that.

Tony McCoy

Mr Speaker: Mr Danny Kinahan has been given leave to make a statement on the accomplishments of Mr Tony McCoy that fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. Once again, Members who wish to be called should continue to rise in their places. All Members will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject matter. Once again, no points of order or other issues will be raised until this business is dealt with.

Mr Kinahan: I have enormous pleasure in speaking of the phenomenon of Tony — Anthony Peter — McCoy. I am really pleased to see a County Antrim man — a south Antrim man — from Moneyglass do so well in the racing world. In 2005, Antrim Borough Council gave him the freedom of the borough for 2,000 victories. He has been at the top for 20 years and champion jockey for 18 consecutive years. He has won the Grand National; the Gold Cup; the Champion Chase; the Scottish Grand National; the Irish Grand National; the Welsh Grand National; and the Galway Plate. I could go on. He really is a phenomenon.

When I was much younger and lighter, I spent five months trying to be a jockey while I was a student. The 4.00 am early morning starts did not sit well with being a student, but that is what Tony McCoy has been doing for 20 years: early starts, keeping fit and dieting to keep his weight down. He is a tall man. He is an iron man. He is determined. When we see or hear of him, we should all think of him as a great race winner. He has won 4,000 races, and Richard Dunwoody has won only 1,699. Tony McCoy is miles ahead of everyone else.

He is also a kind, quiet person. I do not know how many of you saw, years ago, Red Rum being brought into a BBC studio and Tommy Stack speaking to him from another place. Red Rum's ears lifted. That is the sort of relationship that someone such as Tony McCoy has with every single one of his horses.

He does have a downside: he is an Arsenal supporter. We will forgive him that. *[Laughter.]* We think of Redgrave, Ainslie, Wiggins and even Ferguson. In 2010, Tony McCoy was also sports personality of the year. He is a fantastic ambassador for this country. Roll on 5,000 wins.

Mr Clarke: It pleases me to join with Danny Kinahan in my remarks about A P McCoy. I had the privilege of being present when A P McCoy received the freedom of the borough from Antrim Borough Council. For those who do not know, Moneyglass is a fairly small settlement outside Toomebridge, and he has brought great honour to the area. On certain days and occasions in the House, other sportspeople have been honoured. A P McCoy is a fairly modest, quiet and unassuming gentleman, and, that day, he came and received his award in a very quiet manner. The recognition that he has brought stands well for the Toomebridge and greater south Antrim area.

When I was a child, the television was always on in our house. You would have seen various jockeys on television. However, none has done what A P McCoy did last week in achieving 4,000 race wins. I wish him all the best in his future and what he continues to do. He has not forgotten where he came from. Having met him in 2005, I can say that he has never forgotten his roots in south Antrim. I wish him the best for the future.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I join with my colleagues from the South Antrim constituency to congratulate Tony McCoy. Very often in the Assembly, we are preoccupied with issues on which we disagree. I think that the discussions on the despicable circumstances of the abortive car-bomb attack and Tony McCoy's achievement show all that is positive and solid about our people.

Across the piece, Tony McCoy represents how people can overcome adversity and succeed. It requires hard work, diligence and an iron will, and he represents all that.

In all the references to Tony McCoy since he achieved that landmark victory to reach an unbeatable total of 4,000 wins, people could see that the reason for such a phenomenal achievement was the fact that he had total focus and dedication. He also had the support of his family, and it would not have been possible to put all that effort, suffering and sacrifice into those achievements unless he had had their full support. I have had the privilege of meeting Tony McCoy's family on a number of occasions. You can see the characteristics of a family that is united and, naturally, intensely proud of Tony's achievements.

If the Assembly were to reflect the joint pride that we all have and its positivity, we could set it against the voices in our community that look for the glass-half-empty option and who, with their negative contributions, drag us back and invoke a spirit of despair. Tony McCoy's life and achievements are the antithesis of that. He proves what can be achieved with commitment and determination. For that reason, I thank Danny for raising the issue, and the entire House will take pleasure and pride in Tony McCoy's achievements. Finally, I reiterate that the Assembly will have the opportunity to honour Tony McCoy because the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure has stated her intention to invite him here, welcome him and publicly acknowledge his contribution.

Mrs McKevitt: I am delighted to be associated with the congratulations to Tony McCoy on his amazing career to date, with the record number of 4,000 wins achieved last Thursday. With that milestone, Tony's achievements stand as legendary in the history of horse racing in Ireland and internationally. He has been champion jockey in each of the past 18 years. To reach the pinnacle of any sport is commendable, but to stay there for almost two decades is remarkable.

Tony's career, as has been mentioned, has included wins in the biggest races in the National Hunt calendar such as the Gold Cup and the Champion Hurdle at Cheltenham and the Grand National. In a sport in which falls are inevitable and injuries are common, Tony has had his fair share. What has endeared Tony to his fans here and across the world is that he has accepted triumph and disappointment with modesty, humility and good grace. Now, he is judged by the standards that he sets for himself, but his place in Irish and international sporting history was assured long ago, and his achievements continue to be an inspiration to us all.

The SDLP is backing the call by its own Councillor Thomas Burns for a statue of Tony McCoy to be erected at Down Royal that would stand proudly, reflecting the horse-racing history that this local hero has made. I offer our congratulations to Tony and his family.

Mr McCarthy: Like other Members, I wish to congratulate A P McCoy on his achievements, particularly on his fantastic horse-racing record. He has been a tremendous sportsman and ambassador for Northern Ireland. He joins the host of sporting icons that have come from here. I had the pleasure of meeting Tony and his family at Stormont not so long ago. They were truly a very humble and decent family from Moneyglass.

As has been mentioned, Tony McCoy has already received the freedom of the borough from Antrim Borough Council. I believe that Tony has a great future ahead of him. On behalf of the Alliance Party, I congratulate him and say "Well done. Continue to enjoy your chosen sport and pick up more prizes and trophies as you jump and race along. Continue to be a sporting hero for Northern Ireland".

My Assembly colleague and the Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry, asked me to refer to J P McManus, who is the owner of the horse that provided the 4,000th winner last week. It is appropriate to acknowledge the support that J P has given over many years through the provision of scholarships to many local students from low-income households. That has enabled those who may not have attended higher education to go to university and become further assets to our economy. We say a sincere thanks not only to A P and J P but to everyone for their support and wish everyone well for the future.

12.30 pm

Executive Committee Business

Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension to Northern Ireland of the provisions of the Care Bill, as introduced in the House of Commons on 30 October 2013, contained in clauses 49 to 53 dealing with cross-border provider failure.

During the previous debate on the Care Bill, which took place on 24 June 2013, I advised Members that the main purpose of the Bill was to modernise care and support law and to consolidate a number of existing pieces of legislation into a single, clear statute. During the debate, I also advised Members that discussions were ongoing between the four UK Administrations that would seek to introduce a clause at the amendment stage of the Care Bill to provide for temporary local support in a situation in which clients are receiving a care package in a UK country other than the one that is funding their care and the care provider's business subsequently fails.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

In a Northern Ireland context, the amendment will introduce a duty on health and social care trusts to step in and temporarily meet the needs of clients placed in Northern Ireland by local authorities in England, Scotland or Wales, where the provider of that service user's care package fails. In a circumstance in which a trust steps in and meets the needs of a client, any costs incurred in the course of fulfilling that duty can subsequently be recovered from the relevant local authority in England, Scotland or Wales. That will, of course, be a reciprocal arrangement. This means that people from Northern Ireland who are placed by health and social care trusts in England, Scotland or Wales and whose care provider fails will benefit from a speedy intervention to secure their care package from the local authority in the area in which they live.

It is my view that the proposed amendment to the Care Bill requiring the consent of the Assembly will ensure continuity of care for clients for whom we arrange care outside of Northern Ireland. It will also ensure that there will be no periods of unmet need due to the business failure of a provider. I believe that the provision will allow a reasonable and fair process to be followed on the regrettable occasions when a provider's business fails.

I consider this to be a positive measure that seeks to protect our most vulnerable client groups against any service provision problems arising from the failure of providers. It also gives additional protection to those placed across the UK. On that basis, I ask the Assembly to support the motion.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his statement. On behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I support the motion. The Committee took evidence on the Bill from departmental

officials on 18 September and agreed at its meeting on 9 October that it was content with the motion.

As the Minister said, the legislative consent motion is required to provide a legal basis for local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland and our health and social care trusts to meet an individual's care needs and maintain continuity of care for patients placed in care when a care provider fails. The Committee welcomes this move, which will provide security of care for some of our most vulnerable older people. The Committee supports the legislative consent motion.

Mr Wells: As the Chair has said, the Health Committee has scrutinised the legislation. We have asked a few questions about it but are generally content with the issue. We have had prior warning about what can go wrong, as one of the leading providers of social care recently got into financial difficulties. Indeed, it is active throughout the United Kingdom. So, it is important to guard the rights of the most vulnerable in our community, who are often very elderly people in care who would, of course, like the reassurance that, if something goes wrong, there is legislative support for them. On that basis and to ensure equality right across the United Kingdom, I have no problem whatsoever supporting this.

Mr Beggs: I too lodge my support for the motion. It seems a simple and logical way to improve the lot of the citizens to whom it applies. Someone may have an elderly relative living in England, and, at some point, it may be better that they return home where they may have more friends and family available to support them. Through this enabling legislative consent motion, regulations will be produced that will ensure that costs that may be incurred in one location in the United Kingdom will transfer to another. There will also be a mutual benefit to patients, and we will improve the lot of those who might need a care package. I understand that this has applied to a relatively small number of people to date and that around 24 people have transferred from Northern Ireland to England. It is much better that we regularise the situation rather than have a bureaucratic system that could take longer than it should. Clear guidance should be available, and mutual, reciprocal arrangements should be in place that will be applicable for the benefit of our citizens.

I understand that, on top of that, the Health Research Authority will be abolished as an independent body and will be established as a non-departmental public body. Again, it has been said that that is being done to enable the body to take on other responsibilities. I understand that its funding presently comes from Westminster. That is the direction of travel that it is taking. It would be illogical for us to have separate legislation to allow that to happen, especially as the funding is at Westminster in any case. So, we ought to support the motion for a number of reasons.

Mr McCarthy: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I, too, support the LCM.

Adult social care is a huge issue for all societies, including our own. It is about how we ensure that the best care can be given to fully support our citizens and how we resource an efficient and effective system.

In this modern world, people have been much more mobile in their life. For instance, they may have had to move away from their traditional home and locality for work etc. In

addition, families can now spread out across jurisdictions, so we will have situations where adults are receiving or should be receiving care in a different jurisdiction from that in which they previously resided. For example, they may wish to be closer to family members. We can consider a host of such scenarios, and, therefore, it is right that, across the UK, the different jurisdictions should seek to regularise how all this will be regulated and resourced.

It might be useful if the Minister could clarify how this will work, especially if the regions of the UK adopt different approaches to the resourcing of adult social care, and how any tensions that result would be managed. We also know how important health-related research is both to improving and saving lives and for our economy. My party and I are happy to support placing health research on a stronger footing, and we support the legislative consent motion.

Mr Poots: I thank a number of parties, and I thank the Business Committee for agreeing to revise the original motion. It is important to identify precisely the provisions of the Bill that the Assembly is being asked to endorse for extension to Northern Ireland. I therefore wrote to the Speaker to ask him to accept the revised wording in place of the original motion. I also copied my letter to the Chair of the Health Committee to alert her to the proposed change to the motion, which is essentially about a technical change to keep pace with amendments in Westminster. I stress that the purpose of the motion is not in any way changed by the new wording. I think —

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Poots: Yes, certainly.

Mr Allister: I am obliged.

Not being a member of the Health Committee, I do not have the in-depth knowledge of others who have participated in the debate, but I notice that the focus of the debate is very much on the cross-border case. Would clause 48, which seems to require provision by a local authority where a private provider fails, irrespective of whether it is cross-border, apply were a private provider in Northern Ireland to fail? Is there an obligation under clause 48, and will clause 48, in fact, apply to Northern Ireland?

Mr Poots: The health and social care trusts do not have the legal power to place clients in the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, there are not similar protections in place in the Republic of Ireland. The Bill has emanated from Westminster, and, as a consequence, the redress within it is Westminster-based and UK-based. This is mainly for people who are originally from Northern Ireland and happen to be in England whose provider fails to provide that service any further because they go out of business. In Northern Ireland, we are able to address that issue, and we would be able to step in quickly were a provider to fail, as has been the case. We should not think that that could not happen again, because it may well do so. In fact, it is quite likely to happen at some time in the future, given the nature of the business and the difficulties that people can find themselves in. I trust that that gives the Member some reassurance.

I thank the members who contributed to the debate and the Health Committee for taking the time to examine the amendment and for its positive engagement with my officials. As I stated, the introduction of this amendment

to the Care Bill is a positive measure that will ensure the continuity of a care package when a provider fails.

I will just deal with Mr McCarthy's question. The Department of Health has announced intended funding reforms. People moving from one area to another will be charged in line with the policy of the area from which they have moved. I trust that that assists Mr McCarthy.

Without further ado, I urge the Assembly to support this, as I consider it to be a positive measure that seeks to protect our most vulnerable client groups against any service provision problems arising from the failure of a provider and gives that additional protection to those who are placed across the UK. On that basis, I ask the Assembly to support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension to Northern Ireland of the provisions of the Care Bill, as introduced in the House of Commons on 30 October 2013, contained in clauses 49 to 53 dealing with cross-border provider failure.

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for this debate. The proposer will have 15 minutes in which to propose the motion and 15 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Miss M McIlveen (The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit [NIA 140/11-15]; and calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

As Chairperson, I am pleased to move the motion on the Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) Committee's investigation into gaps in child protection and safeguarding across the CAL remit. I thank the other members of the Committee and the Committee staff for the considerable work that they have put into this important investigation report. I also thank all the individuals and groups who contributed to the investigation either by providing written submissions or giving evidence before the Committee.

I am sure that all Members here this afternoon will agree that the protection and safeguarding of children and other vulnerable groups is a cross-cutting issue that should be a priority for all Departments and Ministers, and Members will be aware of my personal interest in and commitment to the matter. I welcome the fact that the Culture, Arts and Leisure Minister is here today to respond to the motion, and I am aware that she and her officials have followed the evidence phase of the investigation closely and have contributed to it. It is also gratifying for the Committee that the Minister's officials have already undertaken actions in response to the Committee's work.

12.45 pm

The Committee's objective in undertaking the investigation was:

"To seek gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure remit, to identify examples of best practice in this area and, by comparing these, make recommendations to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure with respect to highlighting any gaps and suggesting how they might be mitigated."

In meeting that objective, the Committee sought to identify the excellent work being done across the CAL remit with respect to the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups. Members then considered how that best practice might be developed into standardised formats, processes and procedures.

The Committee received a briefing on the work of the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) in November 2012, and that became the locus for the investigation that the Committee started earlier this year. Throughout the evidence-gathering process, the Committee heard

individuals and organisations acknowledge the excellent work undertaken by the CPSU and the standards and best practice that have been established in sport as a result. Members saw how the CPSU encouraged sporting organisations to apply six key principles for best practice in the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups: recruitment good practice; effective management of volunteers and staff; reporting; codes of behaviour; sharing information; and general safety and management.

The protection and safeguarding standards that the CPSU has helped to establish in sport have taken considerable effort to achieve. However, Members realised early on in the investigation that those standards represent best practice that can be used to identify gaps and remedy those in other sectors. During the investigation, the Committee was also conscious of the individuals and groups that operate privately and outside the system, particularly self-employed persons. They are not part of the regulation process, and the Committee believes that efforts must be made to reach out to them. We were also mindful of the policies, networks and frameworks for the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups that exist outside the CAL remit and believe that the recommendations coming from the report must acknowledge them.

In undertaking the investigation, the Committee sought examples of best practice to share across the CAL family and to support the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in developing a more joined-up approach to the issues. During the investigation, the Committee widened its consideration to include all vulnerable groups, not solely children. The Committee agreed to proceed with an investigation rather than a full inquiry so that the evidence-gathering process could be undertaken over a more condensed period and be specifically focused.

During the evidence-gathering process, the Committee received written submissions and heard oral evidence from a wide variety of organisations, groups and bodies, including the Department, its arm's-length bodies, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), the CPSU, Volunteer Now, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) and a range of stakeholder groups from across the remit. At the outset of the Committee's investigation, the Department indicated that it would be a willing partner in the process and would give detailed consideration to the Committee's findings. The Committee looks forward to hearing from the Minister about how her officials will proceed.

As I have said, there are many private tutors and small groups operating across the CAL remit that are unregulated and unaffiliated. Those individuals and groups are often unsure about protection and safeguarding issues, and the Committee wants to reach out to them. Additionally, many organisations that are part of the system and have policies and procedures are still unsure how they should be implemented or applied or would benefit from advice or guidance tailored to their sector. Again, the Committee wants to find ways to reach out to them. Members are also concerned about the challenges presented to vulnerable groups, parents and teachers by the internet and social media and want to identify ways in which those challenges can be mitigated.

The Committee has heard a great deal, through this investigation, about the challenges and benefits presented by the internet and social media. Members are very keen that collective action is taken by the Executive in a number of areas with reference to that, particularly in light of the tragic results of abuse and cyberbullying. The Committee has recommended a number of measures to be taken forward in the CAL remit, but most notably adoption of a Charter Mark standard. Members believe that this standard has the potential to be rolled out across other sectors following a successful CAL sector pilot. There are already examples of this sort of Charter Mark, such as the IFA's Clubmark Northern Ireland.

Such a Charter Mark would provide a brand for protection and safeguarding that could be awarded to organisations that meet recognised standards and best practice. It could act as a seal of approval, allowing parents and volunteers to know that an organisation has considered these issues and is managing them to a specific standard. Members have further recommended various forms of awareness-raising around protection and safeguarding to publicise the sources of information and help available.

As I have already indicated, there is a role for the Executive to play in combating issues around the internet and social media. However, there is also a significant role for educating parents, carers, teachers, at-risk groups and young people in the safe use of the internet and social media.

Another key issue that the Committee has considered during the investigation, and which has been emphasised by a number of contributors, is that of protecting the volunteers and others who undertake work with children and other vulnerable adults. Members believe that it is extremely important to ensure that those people understand how to protect themselves so that organisations that work with vulnerable groups can still attract staff and volunteers.

I return to the excellent work of the CPSU. The Committee has recommended that the Department examines the idea of developing similar units in the arts and culture sectors. It is important that a successful model like the CPSU is replicated as part of the process of creating standardised protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups.

Although the Committee made specific reference to children and young people in the objective and terms of reference for the investigation, members are clear that this issue extends to a much wider group of people. The Committee believes that protection and safeguarding policies and procedures should be cognisant of, and specifically clarify, the range of groups to which protection and safeguarding should apply.

"Vulnerable groups" is a phrase that the Committee heard a number of times during evidence sessions, and members believe it is important that safeguarding policies and procedures ensure that there is clarity that this generic phrase includes all children and young people, adults with disabilities, special needs or other vulnerabilities, and those with greater exposure to risk of harm.

Paul Stephenson of the CPSU highlighted to the Committee during the investigation:

"There is a need to motivate organisations that want to do things, teach people, give them skills, and so on."

They need to up their game ... It is about professional support mechanisms whereby they can download forms, information and guidance and access training that is specific to their sector. It is about supporting the voluntary sector. It is not about saying, 'You have to go and do this, but we do not have any answers for you.'"

Paul is absolutely right. We must provide people with the right tools to ensure that they undertake protection and safeguarding properly. The best way to close gaps in the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups is to work together as a network, with clear structures for information sharing. Members are keen that that networking should also involve the Churches and faith groups, and local government.

A significant element in closing gaps in the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups is awareness. As well as the Committee's recommendation of a CAL Charter Mark standard pilot, there must be a wider awareness-raising campaign. Other Ministers might be able to help the Minister inform such a campaign. The Charter Mark campaign should also act to highlight protection and safeguarding requirements to self-employed persons and unregulated groups. A significant aid to better understanding and practical use of policies and procedures for the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups is that they are standardised. Local government could and should play a key role in that.

In recognition of the electronic world in which we all live, the Committee has recommended that the Department plays a full part in the Executive's development of an e-strategy and should consider one of its own for the CAL family. The Committee also believes that there is a need for a safeguarding portal, a link leading from websites where one might go to seek information on protection and safeguarding to a website giving the most up-to-date policy and procedural information. The Committee believes that the development by the IFA of a smartphone application that does something similar to the portal should be assessed and considered for a wider roll-out. Similarly, the Committee sees a need for the Department to develop an acceptable users' policy and a code of conduct for communication with young people through any form of social media, with guidelines on when and how young people should be communicated with. That would give those working with children and young people a more tangible basis on which to conduct relationships.

As a model of best practice, the Committee has recommended that safeguarding and the protection of vulnerable groups be a permanent agenda item for the Department's accountability meetings with its arm's-length bodies (ALBs). The Department must also hold records of any concerns about protection and safeguarding that have been raised with the ALBs and any subsequent action taken. Additionally, the Committee has recommended that the Department and relevant ALBs develop a model for an audit of organisations in the arts and culture sectors. That would examine the policies and procedures that bodies in the sectors have in place to protect and safeguard vulnerable groups. The audits should be taken forward as soon as is practical.

The establishment of a young person reference group would give young people a voice in key policies and strategies, including the development of policies and

procedures for protection and safeguarding. The Committee suggests that the group might work effectively on a virtual basis and could, again, be part of a Charter Mark standard pilot in the CAL sector. It is important that the group takes cognisance of existing frameworks for advice and cooperation and avoids the duplication of work. The Committee has recommended that the Department take that forward. Liaison with the Commissioner for Children and Young People should ensure that the group does not duplicate the work of other bodies and that it is plugged into appropriate networks.

The Committee gave a great deal of consideration to the position of volunteers during the investigation. Members believe that people can be put off volunteering to work with vulnerable groups by protection and safeguarding policies and procedures that can be off-putting and intimidating. To offset that, the Committee has recommended that the Department engage with relevant networks and stakeholders and with existing frameworks to promote and disseminate specific guidance for volunteers working with vulnerable groups, thus allowing them to be sufficiently knowledgeable and secure to undertake volunteering and providing an environment of information that will encourage new volunteers.

The Committee is acutely aware that issues around the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups are very fluid and constantly changing, particularly in the areas of the internet and social media. That is why members have recommended that training and retraining for those working with vulnerable groups in the CAL remit be set within specific time frames, probably every two years, to ensure their relevance.

To underpin much of what the Committee has recommended following its investigation, members also recommend that the Department establish a memorandum of understanding with the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) or, if more appropriate, seek membership of one or more of the SBNI's committees.

The Committee believes that the investigation has been extremely worthwhile and that members' recommendations will help to close some of the gaps in the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups that it helped to identify.

I look forward to an interesting and useful debate. I commend the Committee's investigation report to the House.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom tacaíocht a thabhairt don rún seo inniu. I speak in support of the motion. Mar atá ráite cheana féin, the CAL Committee's investigation into gaps in child protection and safeguarding across its remit arose from a briefing from the NSPCC a year ago on the work of its child protection support unit (CPSU). The CPSU has a record of excellent work in that area. The six best practice standards that have been established in sport are an example of that. The Committee decided that it was appropriate to undertake an investigation across the remit of Culture, Arts and Leisure to seek out any existing gaps, given the wide range of bodies, organisations, small groups and private agencies that operate in the field of children and vulnerable people.

Although the large agencies and arm's-length bodies are well established in their policy development and adoption

of appropriate processes and procedures, many smaller groups and private individuals operate in an unregulated way. Cé go bhfuil cúraimí acu chomh maith, ag cinntiú go bhfuil siad ag feidhmiú i ndóigheanna a thugann cosaint do pháistí agus daoine i mbaol, níl sé i gcónaí soiléir cad é mar atá sin déanta acu. Although they also have responsibilities to ensure that they operate in ways that safeguard children and vulnerable people, it is not always clear how they do this. In recognition of that, the Committee sought to reach out to such groups to offer advice and guidance focused on that sector.

1.00 pm

The investigative work that was undertaken by the Committee involved taking evidence from a range of groups over a period of months. This has been a valuable exercise, and the Committee was impressed by the work that many organisations have been involved in to ensure that they are fulfilling their responsibilities. A notable aspect of the process has been an evolving backdrop to that work, which continued to inform the Committee on the importance of developing policy in this area. It also illustrated the serious and complex nature of safeguarding children and vulnerable people. That backdrop has been the revelations of instances of abuse by celebrities that was visited on young, vulnerable people over many decades, the most notable of which was the Savile case. Such examples had the effect of clarifying and emphasising the absolute requirement for establishing best practice in all cases in which people are involved in work or leisure that brings them into contact with children or any vulnerable person.

A specific area of concern was the evolving world of social media and internet sites. The undeniable benefits of the internet were acknowledged and accepted, alongside a need for proper safeguards and protections to ensure that the young and vulnerable are not harmed, manipulated or compromised. On that issue, the Committee took evidence from Wayne Denner, who delivers workshops on cyberbullying and appropriate online behaviour. Wayne talks about the impact of cyberbullying and has become a key adviser on awareness and strategies for prevention aimed at educators, parents and community organisations that work with young people. His contribution to this ongoing and ever-changing issue is extremely important.

The Committee believes that the best way to close gaps in the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups is for key stakeholders to work together with clear structures for information sharing. It is also vital that the training, advice, policies and procedures are standardised. Tá sé riachtanach chomh maith go bhdfuail traenáil, comhairle, polasaithe agus nósanna imeachta curtha ar bhonn chaighdeánaithe. Specifically, there is a need for a clear brand — a Charter Mark standard — to identify best practice, which organisations and bodies should aim towards. People working at an individual level need protection and guidance and should be identified using an awareness campaign. A website link, similar to that used by CEOP, should direct individuals or groups to the most relevant up-to-date advice and information. A safeguarding smartphone app, such as that brought forward by the IFA, should also be developed. As was stated, the role of educating children and young people, teachers and parents in the positive use of the internet and social media

is vital. These actions could all be piloted under the CAL remit, with a clear focus on the Charter Mark standard.

On a final note, it is also vital to emphasise the need for continuous staff training across all organisations and agencies in safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable people. In undertaking this investigation, I believe that the Committee has shown leadership and responsibility. Agus an coiste i mbun an taidhde seo, creidim gur léirigh sé go raibh sé i ndáiríre ó thaobh ceannaireachta agus freagrachtaí de.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Ms McCorley: Molaim an rún seo.

Mrs McKevitt: I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the Committee motion. The safeguarding and protection of children, young adults and vulnerable people is paramount. Children and young people have the right to be safe and the right to be protected, and we as public representatives are duty-bound to ensure that these rights are extended to every single child, young adult and vulnerable person. As was mentioned, the NSPCC briefed the Committee in November 2012 on the excellent work of its child protection in sport unit. I thank the NSPCC for meeting the Committee on this occasion as the briefing highlighted the need for an investigation into the gaps that might exist regarding child protection in the CAL remit.

The investigation identified that some arm's-length bodies and funded groups do have child protection policies and procedures. Others have policies in place, but there is uncertainty about how they would be implemented. Many groups and private tutors do not have policies in place. It has also been identified that many groups and private tutors have received no advice or guidance on how to deal with child protection effectively. The differences in approaches to child protection are concerning and must be rectified.

After careful consideration of evidence submitted by relevant bodies, the Committee agreed that a standardised system of best practice should be implemented across the CAL remit, including private groups and tutors. The recommendation for a Charter Mark standard for the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups should be given full consideration by the Department. For the Charter Mark standard to be successful, it would have to be implemented widely across the CAL family. An effective awareness campaign should be launched, and information on best practice standards must be readily available.

I hope that the Department will consider implementing the Charter Mark standard as a pilot that can then be rolled out throughout various other Departments. I recognise the Department's support for the investigation to date, and I am pleased to hear that it prompted the Department to reinstate its own child protection working group.

I urge the Department to give due consideration to the NSPCC recommendation that a body such as its child protection in sport unit should be developed for the arts. Over the past number of years, we have seen an increase in the information of arts and culture groups. I ask the Department to support the creation of such a body in order to sufficiently protect all children and vulnerable people as well as tutors, mentors and, of course, our volunteers.

Living in the digital era, the Committee recognised that child protection online is very difficult to monitor. The recommendation for an e-strategy carries merit, and I

further propose that training sessions be offered to groups and tutors in public buildings such as libraries. Wayne Denner, a digital expert from my constituency, previously visited the Committee to speak about online safety. Specialists such as Wayne should roll out training on how to keep children, young adults and the vulnerable safe when online.

I will finish by commending the Committee Clerk, Peter Hall, and the whole Committee support team for all their work throughout the investigation. We are very grateful to you.

Ms Lo: On behalf of the Alliance Party, I want to make a few comments on this comprehensive report and commend the CAL Committee for conducting this very worthy investigation.

Following the disclosure of sexual abuses perpetrated by Savile and other celebrities, with many reports not being examined properly by the authorities, we must learn the lesson of listening to what children and young people tell us and take actions to investigate allegations of abuse, regardless of the alleged perpetrator.

I totally endorse the Committee's view that the best way to close gaps in the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups is for all statutory and voluntary agencies, including church organisations, to work together as a network with clear structures for information sharing. The creation of the Safeguarding Board NI last year provides that type of coordinating platform where different agencies can work in a more coherent manner.

I support the Committee's innovative recommendation for the development of a Charter Mark standard to be piloted initially in the CAL sector. We have universal benchmarks, such as Investors in People, so why not have a recognised brand for best practice in child protection? I am sure that the sector will welcome such an initiative, particularly as the report indicates that it may be beneficial to the self-employed individuals who tutor music or coach sports in a private capacity, outside of any regulated structure.

I agree with the report that the sports sector has established good systems in the protection of vulnerable groups over the years, and it is important that such good practice is extended to the arts and culture sector. I therefore welcome the Committee's recommendation that the Department works with the Arts Council and other culture bodies to establish a model for an audit of organisations, looking into the policies and procedures put in place within the sector.

I support the recommendation that the Department and all its relevant arm's-length bodies seek to establish an equivalent of the child protection in sport unit for the arts and culture sector. The Committee recommends that the Department engage with relevant networks to promote and disseminate specific guidance for volunteers working with vulnerable groups. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the thousands of volunteers in our communities helping in sports and arts activities. Without them, many clubs and organisations simply could not function.

At this point, I want to raise a concern from a constituent of mine who is a volunteer with a sports club. Although he fully acknowledges the importance of knowledge for volunteers — he has completed all the necessary training courses — he is concerned that some organisations, including some sports governing bodies, are refusing

to recognise the generic Keeping Children Safe course, provided by YouthNet and others, as being the adequate requirement for volunteers. He is unhappy that volunteers are being charged to obtain the necessary certificate and are therefore out of pocket. He believes that that should not be the case. According to my constituent, what seems to have happened is that a cottage industry, as he calls it, in training volunteers has developed, with a lack of central regulation. I understand that he made enquiries to the Safeguarding Board but was told that the board is powerless to oblige organisations not to charge for training. Perhaps the Minister can shed some light on that issue later in the debate. I support the motion.

Mr Humphrey: As colleagues have said, in December 2012, the CAL Committee agreed to conduct an investigation into the gaps in child protection and safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure remit in Northern Ireland. From January until May this year, written submissions and oral evidence were received from a range of organisations in, as the Chair said, the DCAL family, but also from organisations such as Volunteer Now, the Northern Ireland Association of Social Workers (NIASW), the NSPCC, Churches and faith-based organisations, and community organisations such as the Ulster-Scots Community Network, Foras na Gaeilge, Swim Ireland, the GAA, the Irish Football Association (IFA) and the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU). Therefore, a huge wealth of information, comprehensively given, is now available to the Committee.

That piece of work followed the Committee's briefing from the NSPCC in November 2012. I have to say, as someone involved in youth work, that I think that this work is invaluable for government and for the people of Northern Ireland involved in youth work and youth provision.

At this point, I declare an interest as a member of the Scout Association and president of the West Belfast District Scout Council. I pay tribute to the people who are working across our community in organisations such as the Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Scouting, Guiding, youth clubs, sports clubs and Church organisations. We hear politicians on the mainland talk about the Big Society. Those people are involved in delivering the Big Society, many of them at their own cost and to their detriment. As someone involved in a youth organisation, I am concerned that we are putting people off becoming volunteers and getting actively involved. It is vital therefore that we protect those people who want to become practitioners on a voluntary basis but also protect young people from allegations and abuse, whether that abuse and those allegations involve state institutions, youth organisations, Churches, care homes, sports and youth clubs or, indeed, the home.

1.15 pm

I served on the OFMDFM Committee for a time, and I met people who were involved in institutional abuse cases. I spoke to Margaret McGuckian, who leads an organisation of victims, and I spoke to some of her colleagues. Some of the stories that they told me in my office of young people being subjected to such evil were absolutely harrowing and terrifying. There were stories of cruelty that were just beyond belief. Therefore, we must do all that we can to prevent such evil in future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I also serve on the Justice Committee. You will be aware that the Human Trafficking Bill is coming forward. Again, we need to ensure that Lord Morrow's Bill, which that Committee is scrutinising, is there to protect young people and the vulnerable in Northern Ireland and across the European Union. I have to say that I am concerned that, despite that Bill and other protections, young people and the vulnerable in Northern Ireland will not perhaps be as protected as those in the rest of the United Kingdom because of the failure to extend and fully deploy the National Crime Agency here. In my party's view, Sinn Féin's refusal to fully support the NCA and the SDLP's objections on the grounds of accountability will leave young people in Northern Ireland more exposed and vulnerable than their counterparts in the rest of the United Kingdom. I urge those two parties to reconsider their position.

Mr Peter Davies of CEOP spoke to the CAL Committee in March. Mr Davies advised the Committee that he leads for the Association of Chief Police Officers on child protection and investigations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In his evidence, he advised that it was increasingly difficult to distinguish between online and offline threats. He also outlined his belief that child exploitation:

"is about vulnerability meeting power — vulnerability on the part of victims and power on the part of offenders".

The CEOP strategy talks about being able to "prevent, protect and pursue" for the future.

Resources are key in combating abuses. It is vital that, to protect children and vulnerable people, organisations that are tackling these issues come together, pool resources, share information and expertise and set aside political ideologies.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Humphrey: The NCA needs to be extended to Northern Ireland for the maximum protection of our young people, who are the most vulnerable people in our society.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat a LeasCheann Comhairle, agus tá mé iontach bródúil agus sásta a bheith ag labhairt ar an ábhar iontach tábhachtach seo inniu. B'fhéidir go mbeidh sé ar an ábhar is tábhachtaí a bheidh an coiste seo a phlé.

I am pleased and happy to speak on this matter here today. It is probably the most important subject to come before the Committee to date.

The motion is on foot of the investigation on gaps in child protection and safeguarding across the CAL remit, but it has been stretched in part to represent those covered by the generic phrase "vulnerable groups". In December 2012, the Committee agreed to investigate the gaps that exist. The investigation was later widened, which is to be welcomed. During the investigation, the Committee received representations from our arm's-length bodies and many other organisations and individuals in the sector.

A major concern on which there has been limited discussion is the relatively new medium of the internet and social media. It presents particular identification procedures and mitigating measures. It also challenges all who deal with children and the vulnerable to be aware of an ever-moving target. OFMDFM is engaged across the

Executive to look at particular aspects that are pertinent to carers, teachers, parents and at-risk groups. That work must be supported by better evidence and information. The excellent child protection standards that exist in Club Maith for the GAA and Clubmark in rugby and soccer must be replicated across the board, avoiding duplication. We encourage the Minister to instigate that.

Protection must also be given to those who give freely, willingly and voluntarily of their time and expertise for the benefit of wider society. Encouragement of organisations in this field is also a necessary requirement, given the number of high-profile TV and celebrity cases of child abuse to date and their effect on the whole of society.

The Committee recommends the installation of a charter mark that could be rolled out across all sectors, including local government and the community and voluntary sectors. A complementary awareness campaign should also be instigated. These safeguards will hopefully be followed through on up until and post RPA and be established in any future local authority governance.

The investigation has been central to the development of an overall e-strategy that should ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups and parents are addressed. The Committee encourages the Minister to engage with the Irish Football Association, whose safeguarding smartphone app is lauded as a pioneering development worldwide.

The education sector also has its role to play. There is also a role for the Arts Council and cultural bodies in drawing up an audit of organisations in the arts and culture sector, carrying out periodic reviews and conducting two-yearly strategic audits to keep all participating organisations up to date with best practice. A biennial conference should also be organised to focus minds and exchange information, probably in sync with any review.

As I said at the outset, this is a major piece of work that is long overdue and welcome. I hope the House can unite in support of the investigation. Tá súil agam go bhfuil muid ábalta teacht le chéile i bhfabhar an fhiosraithe agus an moladh seo.

Mr Beggs: I welcome the report by the CAL Committee. I was surprised by its topic, because I was not aware that the investigation was going on. It is clear from the recommendations that there was a need for it, and the Committee has identified gaps in current provision. I commend the Committee for doing that.

It is important that every Department and every organisation recognises its responsibility in the protection of children and young people and, indeed, vulnerable adults. I therefore welcome some of the recommendations. For example, the proposal for an awareness campaign, particularly for those working in the arts sector, must be welcomed to ensure that people are fully aware of their responsibilities.

There is also a recommendation regarding those who are self-employed in that area. Again, sometimes small groups can forget that responsibility falls to them, and, when someone who is self-employed comes in, it is important that they are adequately trained and regulated. Sometimes, that aspect can be overlooked, so it is right that it is highlighted.

I ask the Minister to investigate how those who may work with multiple groups can be facilitated in a more efficient

manner, because there are some practical difficulties. I declare an interest as a Boys' Brigade officer and a member of the Carrickfergus Community Drug and Alcohol Advisory Group. I had to go through two sets of child protection assessments, just as many others in the community have had to. It seems bureaucratic that, having been cleared, you may have to submit a fresh application perhaps within weeks when the same criteria are assessed and an assessment of someone's suitability is determined. We need to move towards a degree of individual assessment that could be a passport, provided that it is checked in a reasonably short period. Self-employed persons who work in the arts sector may have to go through clearance with each group that they work with unless the group is facilitated by someone who has been cleared and agrees to supervise them whilst they work. That is a barrier, and there is a positive suggestion for improving the facilities.

I am pleased that the Committee has carried out the investigation and highlighted some of the difficulties in the area. Hopefully, improvement will occur as a result.

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I commend the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure for undertaking the investigation and producing the report that we have in front of us. I also place on record the appreciation of many in the House for the work that has been undertaken by the Chair of the Committee, not only in that role but for championing a serious issue that she has very passionately raised over a long time. Most of the recommendations appear to fall within the remit of DCAL, the Health Department or OFMDFM. That said, elements of the report were of considerable interest to the Education Committee and the Education Department. In its deliberations, the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure has highlighted how a significant proportion of pastoral care issues dealt with by teachers appear to relate to social media problems, including bullying and inappropriate sexual content and contact. That is a worrying if, sadly, unsurprising finding of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee's investigation.

I note that the C2k providers monitor access to the internet by schools and that that is subject to a detailed filtering policy that categorises websites into groups that are allowed or not allowed. That filtering process is updated several times daily as a result of requests from schools or as new sites appear on the internet. I wonder if, in the winding-up speech to the debate this afternoon, the Deputy Chair of the Committee might confirm that the cyberbullying issues covered in the report are not linked to school-based internet access. I anticipate but would value confirmation that those issues are linked to mobile phone or home-based access. In respect of an overarching strategy for child protection online, we can all agree with the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee that there is a key role for the Executive to play. That said, there is also a significant task for Departments, including the Department of Education, to undertake in order to educate parents, teachers, at-risk groups and pupils in the safe use of the internet and social media.

As we are aware, the Education Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and will, I am sure, note with interest the reference to the ETI's monitoring of child protection and awareness of schools' ICT policy, for example the pre-inspection

of parental questionnaires which are carried out. This is another very useful factual insight provided by this report that will inform the Education Committee's future considerations of these matters, and I intend to have the matter raised for consideration at the Committee this week.

In conclusion, as a Member of the House and the DUP's education spokesperson, I will say that, reading this report, I am disappointed that it seems that there are those in the House who are prepared to allow their political prejudices to mask or cover an evil in our society rather than exposing and going after those who sexually exploit our children. I refer to the inevitable consequence of the establishment of the National Crime Agency, which was referred to by my colleague Mr Humphrey. CEOP will be transferred into that organisation, and, given the key role that it plays in regard to keeping our children, young people and vulnerable groups safe, the parties opposite who have played politics with the issue need to look at their conscience today and ask where they are going with the matter. If they are really interested in protecting children, they should step up to the plate, not only by words and platitudes but by actions. They should show the House and families that they support what is contained in this report.

I will also say that I am somewhat disappointed that it seems as though the Ulster Unionists have come to this ill-informed. I wonder what its Members were doing on the Committee —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Storey: — when they could not inform the rest of the party of the importance of the issue. Therefore, I commend the Committee for what it has done —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Storey: — and I look forward to action from Members opposite rather than just words.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. At its meeting of 13 December 2012, the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure decided to conduct an investigation into gaps in child protection and safeguarding across the DCAL remit. During the investigation, the Committee decided to widen it to include all vulnerable groups. That includes adults and children. The Committee decided on an investigation rather than a full inquiry so that the evidence could be gathered over a more specific time frame and would be specifically focused.

Oral and written evidence was presented to the Committee. Oral evidence came from a wide range of groups, including DCAL's arm's-length bodies, such as Sport NI and the Arts Council, as well as groups such as the NSPCC and the GAA, and Ulster-Scots, rugby and football organisations. As the evidence was being gathered and presented to the Committee, it became clear that the written and oral evidence was of a very good standard, but, at the same time, it was clear that not everybody was working with the same policies and standards. The Committee agreed that that presented a major problem.

1.30 pm

Another vital part of the investigation centred on vulnerable groups. That section dealt with children and adults who have a disability or special needs. It was clear from the presentation that the majority of those groups

had accepted the title “vulnerable groups” within their own policies but, in reality, when questioned at the Committee, could tell very little about the complex needs, complex situations and the vulnerability of the children and adults in vulnerable groups. That is a major gap, because there is no sense in accepting one title within the whole evidence gathering if we do not know exactly what we are talking about.

Councils play a major part in communities, especially in rural areas and in the protection of vulnerable groups. Their premises, more than anybody’s, are used by thousands of vulnerable children, adults and groups who take part in council-organised events. Councils also lease their premises to groups and individuals that run activities for vulnerable and able-bodied adults and children. Therefore it is vital that the councils’ representative body, NILGA, makes sure that all councils can implement the same good protection and safeguarding policies not only for themselves but for those who rent or lease council properties to run events that include the disabled.

The Committee recognised that the Department has no remit with local government but sees RPA as a golden chance to have that imbalance changed. There is no better time to do that than now. I spent 23 or 24 years in local government, and, in reality, I never saw the policies changing.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr McMullan: No, I am nearly finished. Staff and management in those premises also need to be brought into line. It is known that around 80% of council staff have contact with the public. Once staff are vetted and cleared to work, it is unfortunate that there is little or no formal ongoing training to allow them to recognise and deal with vulnerable groups or individuals and their complex needs or behaviour problems. In the past, we have had cases where children with behavioural problems have actually been asked to leave premises because they are being disruptive. That is because those dealing with them did not know the complexity of that child or individual. When a group books a facility in a building, how many times has management asked for the complexity of the needs of the children or adults who are coming in? Again, I see that as a gap.

It was after listening to the evidence that the Committee recommended that there should be one policy or Charter Mark for everyone. That should be introduced across the Department by the Minister and, when successful, should be implemented through other Departments and their arm’s-length bodies, including councils.

I was disappointed to hear today that the word “politics” was mentioned. It was indicated that we were playing politics with this. That is sad, because politics did not raise its head once in the inquiry through the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will draw his remarks to a close, please.

Mr McMullan: That was a very cheap shot at those who are vulnerable. We should do all that we can to help them.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member’s time is up.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Agus éirímhse ar an ócáid seo le tacaíocht a thabhairt don rún. Fáiltím roimh an Aire anseo inniu

agus tá mé cinnte go mbeidh muid ábalta dul chun cinn tábhachtach a dhéanamh ar an cheist áirithe seo. Fáiltím fosta roimh fhoilsiú na tuairisce seo ar na bearnaí atá ann i gcosaint leanaí, daoine goilliúnacha agus daoine óga na heagraíochtaí atá faoi chúram na Roinne Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta. I support the motion and welcome the publication of the Committee’s report on the gaps in child protection and safeguarding. I thank the Committee staff for all their work in compiling the report, which is based on evidence given to the Committee over the past year or so from a wide variety of organisations. I thank the Chair of the Committee for the interest that she has taken in the subject and for the comprehensive account of the report that she gave at the beginning of the debate. I may not have the time to go into matters in that amount of detail, but I can say that the Committee, the Department and the Assembly take child protection and safeguarding very seriously, which is only right.

It is useful to highlight, as the Committee has done in its report, the organisations across society that follow and in some cases exceed best practice. In the same vein, we need to examine where there are shortcomings and gaps. We must ensure that such gaps are filled and that we do the best that we can to protect and safeguard young people and vulnerable adults. The report highlights the gaps and, in response, makes useful and significant recommendations that the Committee wishes the Department to implement.

Any community organisation, sporting body or other organisation that works with children and vulnerable adults is aware of the stringent requirements placed on them to ensure that child protection and safeguarding are of the highest standard, and that is only right. The report sets out a process by which we can ensure that those standards are not only met but benchmarked across all sporting and cultural organisations that come under the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. The report suggests that this can be done best through the use of a Charter Mark system.

The report highlights the good work of the GAA in Ulster through the Club Maith programme and the IFA through its Club Excellence Mark Northern Ireland programme. Those organisations have set the bar high and set a standard for others to follow. We must commend them for their work and recognise their standards. However, we cannot become complacent. The range of areas of work set out in the report for those in the non-sporting field who are funded by and work to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Department is also important. Whether they are small groups, organisations as big as the GAA and IFA or, indeed, self-employed individuals who do not fall directly under the regulations, it is important that we expect the highest standards from everyone.

I hope that the Department will lead the way. We need to offer help, support and guidance to ensure that we reach the highest standards, and we must professionalise the way that we approach the protection of children. The Chair quoted Paul Stephenson of the CPSU. I will not reiterate that here —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will bring his remarks to a close.

Mr D Bradley: — but, in the end, I join all others in the House and welcome today’s report. Might I just say that I regret that —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Sorry, the Member's time is up.

Mr D Bradley: — Mr Storey and others chose to —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Sorry, the Member's time is up.

Mr D Bradley: — politicise the debate. The SDLP will work to achieve the type of —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Sorry, I must repeat: the Member's time is up.

Mr D Bradley: — accountability that we need to get a National Crime Agency —

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Michael McGimpsey.

Mr D Bradley: — that suits us and is accountable..

Mr McGimpsey: As a member of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, I support the motion. I begin by saying, of course, that Mr Storey's remarks were well off the mark. My party well understands the importance of child protection.

When I was the Minister of Health, I was also responsible for social services. I became very familiar with the difficulties, problems and issues that it was necessary to deal with to protect children. Every year, there were around 20,000 child protection referrals, and about 2,000 children were on the child protection register at any one time. We dealt with that on an ongoing basis to provide support to families and children.

The sexual exploitation of children, which is the subject of the debate, is, however, a different matter. Children's protection normally focuses on issues that are described as the "holy trinity" by social workers: domestic violence; drugs and alcohol misuse; and the mental ill health of parents or carers, which results in the neglect of children. Neglect is the primary issue in that area. Sexual exploitation of children is, of course, entirely different. It is a criminal issue, and I believe that it is a matter, first and foremost, for the police and criminal justice system. It is a matter of apprehending people, taking them to court and, as necessary, putting them behind bars and on the sex offender register.

The steps that we have taken in our Committee investigation add to that. Without going into all the points that have been made by the Committee, which have been made ably by the Chair and others, there are a number of issues on which all Departments have a role to play to provide protection and to ensure that areas within their remits are fit for purpose for the protection of children.

When I became Minister of Health, one big issue that faced the Department, as colleagues are aware, was suicide, particularly among young people. A key way in which to deal with that was to tackle suicide chat rooms, which were proliferating on the internet and through what was then called "new media". I had meetings with internet providers in London, and, at that time, their attitude was that they simply provided the mechanism. They said that they were deliverers and were not responsible for the content on their systems. I found their approach disappointing and negative.

The way in which we dealt with that, on a UK-wide basis, was through Downing Street, Gordon Brown and Professor Byron, who published a report and came forward with recommendations. The Prime Minister became involved, and he had the power and authority to progress the issue

with the big internet providers, most of whom were based outside the UK in the US. Progress was made on suicide chat rooms, and there is a lesson there to be learned. It is the way in which the UK is going, and it is a UK-wide issue. Any measures that are put in place have to be in partnership not only with other Governments in the UK but with the Dublin Government in particular on all the issues around the sexual exploitation of children. Those who abuse children do not respect borders and are liable to skip from one jurisdiction to another.

The lesson always was that there should be a partnership approach in the Executive. On this issue, the lead has to be taken by the Department of Justice because it is, first and foremost, a criminal issue. It is a matter for the police and the courts. It is also a matter of all other Departments working together to ensure that we proof, as far as possible, the environment for children.

It is a heinous situation and crime. As we saw recently —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr McGimpsey: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. We were looking at care homes. Of course, children in care homes are a small part of an issue in wider society.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McGimpsey: Partnership is key.

1.45 pm

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ar dtús, gabhaim buíochas libh agus ba mhaith liom tacaíocht a thabhairt don rún agus don tuairisc ón choiste.

I thank you all for your contributions to the debate thus far. From the outset, I want to say that I fully support and welcome the report and its recommendations, and I support the motion.

I thank the Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure and the members of the Committee. I also want to thank the Committee and research staff for the huge effort and time that they put into making the report one of the most significant to come through the Assembly in this mandate. I will explain why.

There is yet another aspect to this report. I have literally just received it and, as all will appreciate, it will take some time to disseminate. I believe that it is obvious that the views of not just the Chairperson, the Committee members and the staff, but those of the witnesses, comprising groups, individuals and organisations who came in person to submit evidence of their views on the issue, have been prevalent throughout the debate. Because of that, it is incumbent on me and the Department to take the report, look at it properly and make sure that it is given due time and consideration. I am also grateful to the Committee for allowing departmental officials to make a presentation on the subject. I welcome the debate and the contributions from most of the Members who spoke purely on the Committee's report.

Let me also say that I have always welcomed the Committee's decision to undertake an investigation into the gaps in child protection and safeguarding. That is the

business of us all, regardless of the Departments for which we have responsibility.

Many thousands of children and young people and, indeed, vulnerable adults across the board enjoy taking part in culture, arts and leisure activities every day and every week. As a parent and a grandparent, I know that parents appreciate how important participation in sport is for a child's health and personal development. Those positive effects can take place only if the activities are in the right hands and in the right circumstances, with those who have placed the welfare of all our children first and foremost, and if we adopt practices to support, protect and empower them. That is why it is important that all those activities take place in an environment where our children and young people and adults are safe from the possibility of any form of ill-treatment or abuse.

DCAL is committed to developing and implementing policies and procedures that ensure that everyone knows and accepts their responsibilities in relation to their duty of care. I am committed to ensuring that there are correct and comprehensive reporting procedures that promote good practice and that there are sound recruitment measures for all individuals who work or volunteer in the sector.

That is one of the reasons why, last year, I asked officials to undertake a review of the Department's safeguarding policies, culminating in the publication of revised departmental safeguarding guidance in July 2013. It should also be noted that although DCAL rarely provides direct services to children, some of the functions, and those of many of our partner bodies involved in contact with children and young people, have been raised throughout, particularly in reference to the arm's-length bodies (ALBs).

Mr Humphrey: I appreciate the Minister giving way. Does she agree that the key thing in this issue is the balance between the protections for children, young people and the vulnerable in society, whom we are talking about today, and the practical solution that needs to be found to ensure that we manage to recruit volunteers to keep those organisations going? If we cannot recruit volunteers, whether they are coaches or volunteers in youth organisations, those organisations will collapse.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I totally agree with the Member and I will touch on that later. Anna Lo raised that point. For the record, I thank the 11 Members who spoke in the debate, particularly those who are not members of the Committee. The point that Anna raised is really important. It is not exclusively about sporting groups; there are arts and cultural groups, many of which provide activities through their voluntary contributions. We rely heavily on those groups and we need to give them better support in order to meet what are essential criteria. I am not suggesting for a moment that the Member is suggesting that the balance would be that we would compromise. I accept that fully. We need to make volunteering easier, and we need to make sure that people accept the essential criteria in providing those activities and that they are supported in doing so. If Anna, in particular, has any details that she would like to share with my officials, my door is open at any time.

It is important that we look at the safeguarding guidance — I think that that is what the Member was getting at — that has been compiled to support our partner organisations. It seeks to establish best practice in the area of

safeguarding, not only within our ALBs but extending our influence across the wider culture, arts and leisure sectors. One way in which we can extend that influence is through the distribution of public funding or the commissioning of services for children and young people. That guidance requires organisations seeking such support to have robust and effective policies and procedures in place that safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults. I understand the point that Members made about the self-employed or private practices, and we need to come back to that in more detail, because we have to make sure that there are no gaps that people can use to inflict harm or abuse on children, young people or vulnerable adults.

DCAL will monitor the safeguarding arrangements through regular governance and accountability meetings with our ALBs, and we give a commitment to do that on a regular basis. Safeguarding forms part of the Department's risk-management processes, providing assurances that there are satisfactory safeguarding measures in place across all our ALBs. In addition to those governance measures, DCAL previously commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate to undertake a review and follow-up inspections of the child protection arrangements in the sample of our ALBs. The inspectorate's report found the quality of safeguarding arrangements in all the sponsored bodies inspected to be satisfactory. Therefore, it is our aim to make sure that that is much more improved.

However, what about the individuals, as I mentioned earlier, working or volunteering in the sectors that fall outside our influence? Members should be conscious of the fact that we need to be mindful of the extent of DCAL's remit. Nevertheless, I accept the point that Members make about looking at where gaps may prevail. I welcome the fact that the Committee, in its report, appear to have considered and recognised that as an issue. I also see that there are recommendations aimed at other Departments and local government. As Members are aware, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has strategic overall responsibility for children and young people in the North, while the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is the lead Department for vulnerable adults. However, it is everyone's business.

Michael McGimpsey said that he believes that the Department of Justice should lead on this. I understand the Member's concern to make sure that there is a standardised approach taken. I give a commitment that I will meet my Executive colleagues and talk to them about the report and its subsequent recommendations to ensure that we can do all that we can on good practice, even going back to the previous mandate. The example that was given around suicide prevention is excellent. We need to do all that we can to make sure that the vulnerability of children and young people is decreased and that we provide the best possible protection for all. That collaborative approach is essential.

A key recommendation in the report refers to the Charter Mark. I understand that it is not a new concept, given that the Department of Health looked at the protection of children and vulnerable adults accreditation scheme, and there are also schemes in other reports as examples. However, I believe that we need to work towards a Charter Mark or a recognition that the best possible standards of child protection have been undertaken by groups. That is

the least that parents, guardians, and grandparents can expect when they trust their children's safety to others.

It is a complex issue, and, for me, it demonstrates the need for a collaborative approach. I also see from the report's recommendations that my Department and others have already made progress on the opportunity to work with our ALBs and partners to enhance current arrangements, and I welcome that.

This is one of the most significant reports to come through, and I believe that we cannot do enough to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults. Rather than just use words, I am really excited about the potential that we have collectively across the Executive to close gaps and to implement the Committee's report where possible and perhaps even to strengthen some of the other recommendations. However, I will certainly bring back a detailed response in early January.

I am delighted that most Members recognised the importance of the debate and the report. It was a pity that at least two Members, one of whom is a Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee member, chose to make party political remarks. Given the importance of the commitment that I am placing in this report and debate, I believe that that was totally crass. I think that the Chair of the Education Committee's remarks were regrettable and very disappointing. I am glad that the DUP's class clown has left the Chamber. I believe that it was totally unbecoming of this debate, and I really cannot understand how you —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the Minister and all Members to be very careful in how they describe other Members.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I appreciate that. I withdraw my "class clown" remark. However, I would like to say that I cannot, for the life of me, understand the Chair of the Committee, with the commitment that she has given over previous years to safeguarding children's issues, allowing that to sully the debate. I believe that it was an inexcusable move that she made. Given the nature and severity of this Committee report and given the importance of the debate, I think that it was totally disappointing.

Having said that, I support the motion and the recommendations in the Committee report. I welcome Members' contributions and believe that most, if not all, made them for the right reasons. I look forward to rolling the process out in the future. I hope that we can use this report to work with other Executive colleagues to strengthen what I believe is one of the most important issues and challenges that we face, that is: the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. As Question Time begins at 2.00 pm, I suggest that the House takes its ease until then. This debate will continue after Question Time, when the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee, Mr William Irwin, will conclude and make a winding-up speech on the motion.

The debate stood suspended.

2.00 pm

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Oral Answers to Questions

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Speaker: We will start with 15 minutes of topical questions to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Tourism: Successes

1. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the wonderful and successful Our Time Our Place and the enormously successful Titanic Belfast, UK City of Culture and many, many other things, including the great work of Howard Hastings, what is the next step, what is the next plan? (AQT 321/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): I thank the Member for his question. He is right to mention the success of Our Time Our Place, which, of course, was just for 2012. The idea behind that was to give us a platform, and it was a game-changer for the tourism industry. We have continued that this year with the World Police and Fire Games, the UK City of Culture and, of course, the G8, which came to us off the back of the Prime Minister's decision to hold that event in County Fermanagh. Next year, the Giro d'Italia is coming here. We are looking at how events can really make a change to the tourism product here, as well as, of course, investing in our infrastructure. So, it is about investing in the infrastructure and bringing events to Northern Ireland, and we are continuing to work on that strategy.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for her answer. I wonder whether we can look in future at having an "Our Time Our Place Our People" hall of fame. We can all list many people: Tony McCoy, whom we spoke of already today; Mary Peters; the Northern Ireland football team under Billy Bingham; and Joey Dunlop. We could go on. Can we look at having an Olympic-style museum or a hall of fame that shows the very best of everything in Northern Ireland? Can we put funds towards that and make it one of our top priorities in the future?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for that comment. Of course, that has been raised with me on a number of occasions by, most notably, Dame Mary Peters, who is a great supporter of the idea, and, indeed, Ronnie Spence, the outgoing chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund. I am certainly supportive of the idea. I suppose that the critical issue is not just setting it up but making it sustainable into the future. Therefore, as the Member will understand, it is a matter not just for me but for a number of Departments right across government. If the Member wishes to come to speak to me about that, I am quite happy for him to do so. As I say, it is good to celebrate our people here in Northern Ireland, because that inspires young people from a different generation, and that is what we are all about.

Flag-related Protests

2. **Mr Maskey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she is aware of the proposed

flag-related protests in Belfast city centre in the run up to Christmas and, if so, for her assessment of such protests on the city centre economy. (AQT 322/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for his question. There have been a number of reports recently on the protests' impact on the city centre in particular. I received one recently, and I am still assessing that. I have to say that just 30 firms in Belfast were interviewed, so we have to look at the underlying statistical robustness of the figures that come to us. Notwithstanding that, we have to recognise that protests of any nature in the city centre will have an impact on trade, particularly if they take place in and around the peak shopping times. Therefore, I will renew my call, which I made, I think, the last time that I was on my feet in the House during Question Time, for dialogue between those planning any protest and the people who are most directly affected, that is the traders.

Mr Maskey: I thank the Minister for her reply. I am well aware of and appreciate her previous comments. In light of that, has the Minister managed to have any contact with any of the protest organisers and, more particularly, the retailers themselves to discuss the matter?

Mrs Foster: I, of course, spoke to the retailers right throughout the original protest time. Indeed, the Member will recognise that it was my Department, along with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), that took the lead in the Backin' Belfast campaign, which was, I have to say, hugely successful and very much appreciated not only by the traders but by the restaurant owners and bar owners in Belfast.

My door is open. I would very much like to be of assistance and, if I can, to facilitate discussion around anything that is planned for the winter months. We want to see Belfast reach its potential over the winter months, and if there is anything that I can do to assist that, I will, of course, make myself available.

Utility Regulator

3. **Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what her Department is doing to make the Utility Regulator more effective in protecting the interests of electricity consumers. (AQT 323/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As you know, there has been a change of Utility Regulator. Indeed, we wish the outgoing Utility Regulator well and welcome the new Utility Regulator, Mrs Jenny Pyper, to her position. I look forward to having an engagement with Mrs Pyper in the very near future about her role and how she sees it moving forward. As the Member will know, the Utility Regulator has an independent role. I may express opinions, but it is up to the Utility Regulator whether she takes them into account.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she agree, however, that there is a gross imbalance when somebody is looking for a new supply of electricity? I know someone who has built a new house and has been quoted £16,500 for a connection charge even though they live within 90 metres of an adjacent house. What can be done through the House to make sure that that abuse of power is not manifested in future?

Mrs Foster: The initial findings — they are initial findings — came out on Friday in respect of the RP5 price determination, when the regulator gave a determination

that was not accepted by NIE and it went to the Competition Commission. The Competition Commission has made important rulings not only on how NIE deals with its price controls but on how it invests in its infrastructure. I have often said to the House that, when you look at limiting the price of energy, there is a consequence in and around the commerciality of NIE and how it will work in the future. I recognise what the Member is talking about, because, being an MLA from the west of the country, I, too, have had constituents tell me that they are being asked for hundreds of thousands of pounds to connect to the grid. However, it is all connected to how much money NIE can invest in the grid and how it is allowed to do that. It is regulated by the Utility Regulator, and, if the Member wants me to mention it to the regulator, I certainly will do so when I get the opportunity to meet her.

Springfield Road/Woodvale Regeneration

4. **Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on Invest Northern Ireland's plans for the regeneration of the Springfield Road/Woodvale area of Belfast. (AQT 324/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As far as I understand, the negotiations about that site are ongoing. I understand that the city council has an interest in that site as well and was looking at different plans for that area. It is still in talks about the best way to develop that site.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for that. Could you provide any details of how Invest Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council and Belfast Metropolitan College plan to cooperate in the development of the innovation incubation unit in that area?

Mrs Foster: Belfast Metropolitan College is doing some excellent work in west Belfast, and, indeed, I had the chance to visit and see its work in and around renewable energy and the way in which it hopes to retrain people, perhaps from the construction industry, who are finding it difficult to find work, in the renewable energy sector. I do not have in front of me the details of how those three organisations work together, but I will be happy to provide the Member with written information and place a copy in the Library.

Economic Growth

5. **Mr Brady** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her reaction to the reports published by the Ulster Bank and InterTradeIreland, indicating further positive news in the economy. (AQT 325/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I very much welcome both those reports today. It again shows that we are stabilising the economy here and moving into growth mode. It is particularly encouraging that growth was seen not just in specific sectors but right across all the sectors, including retail, services, construction and manufacturing. It is also pleasing to note that employment has expanded strongly as well and, indeed, is at its fastest rate for six years according to the Ulster Bank's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) survey. That is to be welcomed, and we look forward to seeing continued growth in the right direction.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for her answer. Does she accept that the so-called green shoots of recovery are not

evident in every sector or location across the North? How does she plan to address that? Go raibh maith agat.

Mrs Foster: As I said in answer to the first question, the PMI report actually says, for the first time, that it sees growth across all the main sectors. I very much welcome that, because, until now, we have been talking about growth, for example, in the agrifood sector, which has always been a very strong sector for us in Northern Ireland, but, in construction and retail, we have seen huge difficulties. I am not suggesting that we are back to where we were pre-2008; I do not suggest that at all. However, we are seeing a stabilisation in relation to some of those sectors. In other words, I think that they have bottomed out, and, because of that, I think that we are seeing growth in those sectors for the very first time.

Business Start-ups

6. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what financial or other support arrangements are in place for start-up businesses? (AQT 326/11-15)

I thank the Minister for her active interest in the Omagh Enterprise Company, recently and generally.

Mrs Foster: Of course, there is the Start a Business advice and assistance that people gain from Invest Northern Ireland. Members will remember that the regional development programme was in some difficulty last year; I am pleased to say that that has now rolled out very effectively across Northern Ireland. The Member's constituency is one of the stronger constituencies in start-up businesses.

As well as that, I am pleased to see that start-up loans are now being made available. They were being made available in England and Wales; now they are available here as well. I very much welcome that. That was a part of the economic pact, and it was something that we discussed with the Business Secretary when he came to Northern Ireland about a month ago. I am pleased to see that that is now in place.

It is about having companies like Omagh Enterprise to really engender an ecosystem for new companies so that they can approach people like Nick O'Sheil for assistance, and he can then signpost them to the appropriate place. I am a big supporter of Omagh Enterprise. They are doing a tremendous job with the facilities that they have, and I will always be pleased to visit.

Mr McElduff: The Minister knows that Omagh enterprise centre has recently developed a further 31 units. How might her Department work with the business community in Omagh to help fill those units and further develop entrepreneurship?

Mrs Foster: One of the exciting things about Omagh enterprise centre is that it has direct access to Project Kelvin. That is a tremendously strong selling point, and it is one of the reasons why Omagh Enterprise, through Nick O'Sheil, is working with Fermanagh, in the person of Martin Maguire, to develop the "smart region" philosophy. We hope to appoint a data analyst to cover the south-west region in the near future. That will inform companies that seek to set up of the needs of that area. It is an innovative way to look at start-up companies and inward investment. I know that the political parties have been briefed recently

on that, and I hope that everybody in the region gets behind that idea, because it is a new way of looking at investment for the south-west region.

Narrow Water Bridge

7. **Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the tourism potential of the Narrow Water bridge project. (AQT 327/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Narrow Water bridge project has always been, first of all, a bridge to connect people, as opposed to a tourism bridge. Tourism was always secondary. We wait to hear whether the bridge project will proceed. That is a matter for colleagues in the Executive, in DRD and in DFP.

Mr Lunn: I query the Minister's assessment that it is not a tourism project. I think it largely is. Does she agree with me that, given the number of people who visit Cooley and Carlingford, the relatively small proportion of the cost that will fall to the Northern Ireland Executive and the amount of money that her Department has put into the Mournes area in the last few years, it is a very worthwhile project and should be encouraged from a tourism potential point of view?

Mrs Foster: The Member can take whatever view he wants of the bridge project. I rely on the guidance of my officials on the financial implications and the implications from a tourist perspective. I have to take those on board, as does the Finance Minister when he looks at the financial implications. We await hearing from the Finance Minister and, most importantly, the Regional Development Minister on those issues.

2.15 pm

Mr Speaker: That concludes topical questions. We now move to questions for oral answer. Question 8 has been withdrawn.

Insolvency

1. **Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many businesses have become insolvent in the past 12 months. (AQO 4940/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The total number of businesses that became insolvent in the past 12 months — 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013 — is 866. That includes bankrupt businesses and companies.

Mr Gardiner: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she confirm that, despite company insolvencies being down on a year ago, personal bankruptcies are up by 12% and would be worse without debt relief orders? How serious is the personal debt problem, and what more can the Minister do to help?

Mrs Foster: I do not have the personal debt figures in front of me, but I can tell the Member that, for companies, there have been 417 — actually, I do have the figures: 586 bankruptcies, which is down from 790 last year. The issue with insolvency, bankruptcy, compulsorily going into administration and so on is that there is always a lag in the figures. Indeed, it was the same at the start of the recession. The figures for 2008-09 were not particularly poor, but, once we get into 2011-12, we see the impact of the recession really beginning to take hold. As the economy stabilises, the figures will continue to go in the

right direction. The six-monthly trend for insolvencies shows a decrease of approximately 10% on the same period last year. Again, however, there is a lag, so it will take a little while for all that to work through the system.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle, agus mo bhuíochas leis an Aire fosta. I thank the Minister for her response. In light of the difficulties being faced in the local economy, will the Minister advise us whether the much-promised peace dividend from the British Government is now completely off the table?

Mrs Foster: No. The Member is aware of the economic pact being developed. Just last week, I jointly hosted a seminar in Lancaster House in London with the Secretary of State. At that event, we hosted 16 regions and countries from around the world in which we have seen opportunities. I do not accept that the much-vaunted, to use his words, "peace dividend" has gone. Our national Government are very much alongside us in trying to sell Northern Ireland as a good place to do business. The Prime Minister, at the investment conference in October, said that Northern Ireland was a spectacular place to do business. Those were very strong words, and, of course, we will continue to build on that investment conference.

It was very heartening, when the First Minister and deputy First Minister were out in the States a short time ago, to hear another 100 jobs announced for FG Wilson/Caterpillar. We were pleased that those jobs were allotted to Northern Ireland after the investment conference. The significant element of that is that we are now getting jobs in a new area of Caterpillar. The same thing has been carried out through many firms and sectors: we get a particular sector, and we then look to see whether there is any other sector in the business in which we can help the company to do business better. That is what we are doing in Northern Ireland. Things are very positive at present, and we will continue to push Northern Ireland as a region in which to do business.

Mr Frew: The Minister mentioned jobs. Will she comment further on jobs created over the past 12 months?

Mrs Foster: We are very pleased and encouraged that our job market has shown signs of improvement, with more than 5,000 jobs added to the local economy over the year to June 2013. The services sector is a particularly strong sector for us. It has been a key contributor to job growth, with 6,500 more jobs over the year to June 2013. As Members will know, we have always put a strong emphasis on job creation, whether that is from foreign direct investment or through the jobs fund, which continues to be a good success for the Executive and for Northern Ireland. We have gone past the targets on the numbers of jobs promoted under the jobs fund, and we are very close to the target on jobs created under the jobs fund. As you know, in foreign direct investment, we do not have a target in the Programme for Government for jobs created. We have a target only for jobs promoted, but, in the jobs fund, we have targets for jobs promoted and jobs created, so I am pleased that it looks very likely that we will hit both targets in the near future.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. What support or assistance will be available or can be provided by your Department for viable firms that are experiencing a temporary cash flow problem to prevent them from going out of business?

Mrs Foster: Unfortunately, it has been a particular problem for many companies across Northern Ireland that their bank is calling in debts or reducing their overdraft facilities and they find themselves in difficulty because they have a viable business but cannot find the working capital to keep going for the time needed to get back into the black. There is a programme called Buying Time assistance, whereby Invest NI comes into a firm and tries to deal with it, if it finds that there is a viable business that needs a specific space of time. It can come in and make that intervention. Of course, we need the banks to work with us and to listen to Invest NI. It is interesting that, in Scotland, the approach is that the Government's regional development agency goes into a bank with a company and says, "We believe in this company, and we want you to work with it". It has said that that can be controversial at times, because you are picking companies and sectors to support. It feels strongly enough about it to go into the banks and sell the proposition to them. Invest NI can put programmes in place, but I am sure that colleagues will also support companies as they go into banks to try to renegotiate deals. That is the most effective thing that we can do as MLAs.

Banking Task Force

2. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the joint ministerial task force on banking and access to finance. (AQO 4941/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The joint ministerial task force on banking and access to finance in Northern Ireland met officially for the first time on 8 October 2013 and was chaired by the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP. The task force is a forum for addressing the challenges faced by Northern Ireland businesses in accessing vital finance. I attended the meeting alongside the Secretary of State, Business Minister Matt Hancock MP, HM Treasury's director of financial services and, of course, the Northern Ireland Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton. Good progress was made at the meeting, with the terms of reference for the task force being agreed and priorities for early engagement discussed.

Mrs Dobson: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will the Minister outline the discussions that she has had with the Finance Minister to get specific lending data published for Northern Ireland, particularly following the availability of GB information from the British Bankers' Association?

Mrs Foster: This is primarily an issue for DFP, but I am very aware of it, having sat in a number of meetings with the previous Finance Minister and with the current Finance Minister. They never fail to talk about the fact that they have difficulty sourcing regional data. Indeed, the Minister of Finance and Personnel is still concerned about the lack of detailed regional data. He met Anthony Browne, the chief executive of the British Bankers' Association, on 11 September to discuss how the quarterly SME bank lending data that it provides to DFP could be improved. It has given an undertaking that it will work with the banks to develop this data set, but, frankly, this has been going on for far too long. If we are to make any assessment of the banking system in Northern Ireland and how it lends to different sectors, we need the data. Of course, we do not have any direct control over the banks in Northern Ireland, which is why I welcome the ministerial task force. We hope that we

can put some pressure on the banks to give us the data, and I know that the Finance Minister is keen on that issue.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answers. How does she view the announcement made last week that the Royal Bank of Scotland is to carry out a review of the Ulster Bank?

Mrs Foster: First of all, I welcome the fact that the Ulster Bank will remain a core part of the Royal Bank of Scotland. Both the Finance Minister and I have been pressing the issue very strongly with the Westminster Government, and we are pleased that they have recognised that it is a big issue for Northern Ireland.

There are aspects of the announcement, particularly those with possible implications for jobs and the local property market, on which we need clarification and certainty. The Finance Minister is certainly pushing for that certainty and clarification.

We will continue to engage with the Ulster Bank here and, of course, with the Government on all these matters as the review of the Ulster Bank is undertaken. It will provide us with an important opportunity to help shape the Ulster Bank. If it had been taken out of the RBS, we would not have had that opportunity. Most importantly, we need to advocate for the 30% of people in Northern Ireland who rely on the Ulster Bank for their finances. It is a very big player. It is the biggest player in Northern Ireland and, therefore, is a strategically important part of growing the Northern Ireland economy, so we will continue to engage, particularly with the Finance Minister, on those issues.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for her answers. Will she indicate what feedback she has received from the business community with regard to the funding schemes introduced by the Executive?

Mrs Foster: The funding schemes introduced by the Executive, particularly the growth loan fund, have been very warmly welcomed by the business sector. I do not have the up-to-date figures regarding take-up in front of me, but they have been very strong. I am also pleased to say that the small loan fund that we launched has been taken up across Northern Ireland. It is the one to which you can apply for anything from £1,000 to £50,000. It is working well also.

We brought the funds into being because the national schemes did not seem to be gaining traction in Northern Ireland and we felt that we had to intervene with very specific schemes. It is also the reason why we introduced the agrifood loan scheme, which, the Member will know, we hope will have a very positive impact on the poultry sector in its first phase, because we want to see the poultry sector growing very strongly. We believe that there is a market opportunity there, and I hope that many producers will be able to access finance with the help and assistance we have given from government.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh mile maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a cuid freagraí ansin. I thank the Minister for her answers. Has she had any assurances from the Ulster Bank that it will continue to afford facilities to SMEs? Those facilities have sadly been cut on many occasions during the past year, causing great pain and consternation to smaller businesses.

Mrs Foster: This goes back to my response to Ms McLaughlin. As MLAs, we need to be vigilant and raise issues with the banks when our constituents feel that they have been treated unfairly. That is one of the reasons why we appointed the independent panel following a recommendation from the economic advisory group. The Member may be aware that the Finance Minister and I have appointed that panel to look at how the financial system works in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to access to finance for small and medium-sized companies. The panel comprises Professor Russel Griggs, Ann McGregor and John Trethowan. Two of those people are from outside Northern Ireland but have particular expertise in the banking sector, and, of course, Ann McGregor brings the Northern Ireland perspective to the panel. I hope that it will take evidence, and, indeed, if MLAs feel that there is a need to bring evidence to it, I encourage them to do so, to see how the banking system is changing and if indeed it has changed since the height of the recession. We need to see our banks being flexible and working with the business community, particularly the small business community.

2.30 pm

Energy: Security of Supply

3. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the discussions she has had with her counterparts in the Republic of Ireland and Westminster in relation to the security of energy supply. (AQO 4942/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department continues to have regular formal meetings on security of energy supply with the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in London, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in Dublin and the energy industry, through the UK/Ireland gas and emergency planning group. Additionally, the all-island gas and electricity planning group meets regularly to review resilience planning across the island and reports to the All-island Energy Market Joint Steering Group. Work is ongoing between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland on mutual fuel resilience. My Department is represented on a number of DECC-led groups currently reviewing UK oil and fuel planning policy and emergency arrangements.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for her answer. What more can be done? What alternative provision of energy supply could be explored to promote more secure and affordable energy for businesses and households in Northern Ireland?

Mrs Foster: The Member has, perhaps unwittingly, put his finger on two of the most contradictory elements of this: security and affordability. Sometimes, the two do not always match up. On the mainland at present, a real debate is going on concerning green energy taxes. The Prime Minister is looking at that, and I will, of course, watch very closely to see what impact, if any, it has on Northern Ireland. If we were to see any cut in current levels of support and incentives for renewable energy — we have talked a lot in the House about the need to have a mix of energy resources, and, as you know, we have a stringent renewable energy target — that would have an impact in Northern Ireland.

Of course, one of the most critical pieces of infrastructure — the North/South interconnector — is also very important for security of supply. It was a matter that I discussed with

Minister Rabbitte on Friday on the fringes of the North/South Ministerial Council meeting. He tells me that the current estimate for the constraint on the system on the island is £30 million a year. Therefore, that is a critical piece of infrastructure that we need to see progressing. He tells me that the Republic of Ireland hopes to go back to an Bord Pleanála in the near future about its part of the interconnector. I think that strategic environmental assessments are going on for the piece in Northern Ireland. As I said, it is a critical piece of infrastructure. I recognise the sensitivities, obviously, from a local point of view, but, if we do not have the North/South interconnector, we are threatening our security of supply in a real and tangible way.

Mr Campbell: Further to that point, will the Minister outline the possible consequences or implications should the very substantial midlands wind farm project in the Irish Republic prove to be successful in generating significant energy?

Mrs Foster: The midlands wind farm project is a Republic of Ireland onshore wind facility that connects to Great Britain through the east-west interconnector, which is now in place. When I was at the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) conference recently, I heard that it was very proud of the fact that it had delivered the east-west interconnector. From a security of supply point of view, it has been very important. The Westminster Energy Bill provides for non-UK renewable generation to receive support through a UK feed-in tariff, which means that consumers in the UK actually pay for non-UK renewable energy. Therefore, excess wind energy from the Republic of Ireland may in the future be traded with Great Britain and contribute to the UK target for renewable energy. It is a cheaper option than developing indigenous renewable sources. I think that that is a very strong statement to make, if I may say so. Great Britain is actually bringing in renewable energy from the Republic of Ireland. We are represented on the renewable trading steering group, and that is important, because what I do not want to see happen is it having an impact on our renewables incentives. The costs will be socialised across the United Kingdom, and our consumers will have to contribute. People may say, "What has this got to do with Northern Ireland?", but it will have an impact in Northern Ireland, because the costs are socialised across the United Kingdom. It is obviously something that we are keeping an eye on.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Will the Minister tell us what efforts are being made to better inform the demand side of the management of electricity and to encourage consumers to use electricity at times of lower demand?

Mrs Foster: That is a very important point, because, of course, we want to increase energy efficiency right across Northern Ireland. Last year, we undertook a campaign across all different sorts of media to try to encourage people to switch off appliances and to use them at appropriate times when demand is perhaps not as high. We will continue with that campaign, which was carried out through the interdepartmental working group that I chair. Energy efficiency is a critical part of our energy policy, and we will want to ensure that that stays at the forefront of everyone's minds in any discussion about energy policy.

Mr Allister: With Ballylumford B required to cease production in 2015 and Kilroot required to reduce production by 50% the next year, it is quite clear that we

face a significant generating deficit in Northern Ireland. In those circumstances, why is there no urgency and no focus on a new generating plant in Northern Ireland and, indeed, on stabilising and increasing the Scottish interconnector? Is the impression that the Department is quite disconnected and complacent about these matters unfair?

Mrs Foster: I know that the Member cannot help but make a snide comment. However, Northern Ireland will still have a 200 megawatt generation-capacity surplus after the decommissioning of the 510 megawatt of capacity at Ballylumford after 2015 and after further restrictions at Kilroot's generating units from the industrial emissions directive.

However, there is increased risk to Northern Ireland of a capacity deficit after 2021. By 2021 the Moyle interconnector will be fully operational and the new North/South interconnector should be commissioned. So, we are working with Mutual Energy to make sure that we have a short- to medium-term look at what is happening with the east-west connector. We are also pushing ahead with NIE on the North/South interconnector.

The regulator continues to work with SONI to establish the necessary security of supply margins from January 2016. That will inform the necessity and options for the provision of additional generation capacity at the least possible cost. That is the important point: least possible cost. Cost is an important element to this. If the Member thinks that I should just start up a new generating plant now, does he not think that that will have some cost implications for Northern Ireland and its consumers? That is always at the forefront of my mind. If I have to instruct for new generation capacity, I will do so, but we are not there yet. We are very much keeping a watching brief on this matter. One is certainly not complacent.

Exploris

4. **Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on her Department's role in providing financial assistance to Exploris aquarium, following her recent meeting with representatives of the Save Exploris group. (AQO 4943/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I had a very good meeting with Jim Shannon MP and representatives of the Friends of Exploris group on 21 October at which I confirmed that, since 1991, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has provided over £1.8 million of financial support to Exploris for capital, marketing and other schemes.

In considering the future of Exploris, there is a need to improve the commerciality of the project for it to succeed in the long term, either in public or private ownership. Although there is currently no financial support available from the NITB to help Exploris, both the Tourist Board and Invest Northern Ireland are available to work with Ards Borough Council on marketing activity and business planning to increase the project's commerciality.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her answer. Does she agree with me that any loss of Exploris would represent a severe blow to not just the local tourism economy but the local economy as a whole in County Down and further afield? With that in

mind, is she committed to doing all that she can to ensure Exploris's future?

Mrs Foster: I can say to the Member that the meeting with the members from Friends of Exploris was a very good one in so far as we were very frank with each other about what needs to happen to make Exploris a commercial entity and to take it forward into the future. It will look at different models and has different plans. I gave Friends of Exploris a commitment, which I stand by, that, when those plans come to us, I will look at them in as positive a way as I possibly can. So, we look forward to engaging with Friends of Exploris and, indeed, with other Executive colleagues on this issue.

Mr Nesbitt: What instructions has the Minister given her officials on the foot of last week's Assembly debate, which overwhelmingly endorsed the idea of Exploris as a regional facility that requires Executive support?

Mrs Foster: As I indicated in my previous answer, I await any proposals on that issue. I particularly await them to see their commerciality and their sustainability for the future. All of us want to make sure that Exploris gets the stay of execution lifted, but we want to see it lifted and not come back another day. We want to make sure that any saving of Exploris will make sure that it lasts into the future. Therefore, there is a need for it to be commercial and for the status quo not to be maintained.

Mr Anderson: The Minister will be aware that our councils financially support many tourist attractions throughout Northern Ireland. If the Minister was to give financial assistance to the likes of Exploris, would she also consider funding other tourist and leisure attractions throughout Northern Ireland?

Mrs Foster: The Member has put his finger on the issue very well. I will not name him, but one of the Belfast MLAs, of which there are many, so I am not pointing one of them out, said to me, "If Exploris gets funding, does that mean that Belfast Zoo can come and look for additional funding, because it is supported by Belfast City Council?" The important thing is that, if we are able to help and assist Exploris, we will do so in a way that will make it commercially viable and sustainable into the future so that it does not have to keep relying on public funds in the longer term.

Mr McCarthy: Will the Minister give the House an assurance that, if Friends of Exploris and Ards Borough Council come up with a commercially viable proposition for Exploris, her Department will not be slow or behind the door in supporting it with some financial regional support?

Mrs Foster: I said to the members of Friends of Exploris directly that I will be as positive as I can be when they bring forward any proposal, and I hope that they are able to bring that proposal forward in the very near future.

Sporting Events

5. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the efforts her Department is currently making to secure major sporting events. (AQO 4944/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department, through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, has undertaken significant work to secure major global events in Northern Ireland, including major sporting events. Indeed, the success of the Irish Open

in 2012 and winning the Giro d'Italia for 2014 are two examples that highlight the success to date.

The overall aim of the events function is to support the promotion of major events in Northern Ireland that have the potential to impact positively on the image of Northern Ireland, including world-class international events that generate significant economic benefits by attracting tourists and international press coverage.

I recently approved NITB's new tourism events strategy 2020, which has a key focus on the bidding for and securing of major global sporting and cultural events to Northern Ireland. NITB will be working with other key stakeholders, in particular the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Sport NI, and I encourage those organisations to play their role in that regard.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Minister for her answer and congratulate her on how she is securing major sporting events and promoting Northern Ireland. Further to that, what assistance is she giving to the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) to support its bid to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for those comments. I can confirm to her that the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and I had a very positive meeting with officials from Ulster Rugby and the IRFU. That took place within, I think, the past six weeks. We are very supportive of bringing that event to the island of Ireland, but we want to make sure that those of us who are Ulster Rugby fans see a tangible benefit for the people of Northern Ireland from bringing it to the island of Ireland. Making sure that we have some of the major matches in Northern Ireland is one of the key elements to ensuring that we can all enjoy the spectacle, and it would be a spectacle, of the Rugby World Cup.

Environment

Mr Speaker: We will start with topical questions.

Anaerobic Digester: Ballymena

1. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any concerns about the number of anaerobic digester applications — in particular, the anaerobic digester in the Ballymena area that will be fed entirely by chicken litter, which is the first of its kind — and to state how he can justify the current neighbour notification system, which has caused a lot of concern and suspicion among the local community about what could be safe and progressive technology. (AQT 331/11-15)

2.45 pm

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I thank Mr Frew for his question. There are quite a number of applications in the system for anaerobic digesters. However, I am not familiar with the specific application to which the Member refers.

On the issue around neighbour notification, I believe that we, as a Department, need to look at how that is done to reduce and remove any room for suspicion or paranoia among local communities about not just applications for anaerobic digesters but any applications at all. On the whole, anaerobic digesters are something that we should

be supportive of; however, not in any place and not at any price.

Mr Frew: Is the Minister concerned by the lack of knowledge in the planning department on this type of anaerobic digestion? Is he minded to treat this type of application like wind farms, whereby he will bring it into the centre of the planning department?

Mr Durkan: Each application has to be treated and judged on its own merits. The applications for wind farms, to which he refers as being brought into the centre, are generally article 31 applications, and they are viewed as having massive regional significance. Should an application for an anaerobic digester be deemed to be of that scale and of that significance, it will be.

As regards a perceived lack of knowledge in the Department on how to process those applications, that is something that I will look at. It is imperative that our planning officers are fully upskilled and fully aware of every type of application that comes before them. I am confident that we have a very skilled workforce. However, technology changes and application changes, and it is vital, and I am determined, that the Planning Service changes to keep abreast of those developments.

Taxis: Single-tier Licensing System

2. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he fears that a single-tier licensing system would make the taxi industry less accountable, given that all taxis would be available to be hailed. (AQT 332/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat fá choinne na ceiste sin. Thank you for that question, Mr McMullan. The move towards single-tier taxi legislation was due to be complete by September 2013. However, with the agreement of the Environment Committee, my predecessor decided to postpone the implementation until September 2014 in order to give the industry and those within it time to prepare for the implementation so that its impact will be less onerous on operators and drivers, and it will be more affordable for them.

As regards the implications of the move towards a single-tier system on competition, I have met several dozen taxi drivers and representatives of taxi drivers and companies and heard many concerns and views. It is complicated legislation, and it is important legislation, which will improve standards in the industry and improve accessibility, particularly for those with a disability. I am determined that we use the year that we have bought through postponing the implementation of the legislation to ensure that we get it right. I am happy to work with those representatives of the taxi industry and with Committee members to make sure that we make it as effective as possible.

Mr McMullan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Has advice been sought from any other jurisdiction that has implemented a single-tier taxi system to establish whether it has been successful?

Mr Durkan: As I said, the legislation is complicated. I believe that it was the first legislation passed in this House, and the fact that we are here, five years after its passage, and it still has not moved anywhere, is an indication of just how complex it is and how important it is that we get it right.

There have been studies done of the taxi industry elsewhere. Every country and, indeed, most cities have their own particular taxi needs and issues. The case in point is Belfast, which we see as the place in the North that would be most severely impacted on by the introduction of the single-tier system. I suppose that Belfast public hire taxis fear what the impact might be on them. As I said, it is very important that we work together. I will also be working with my colleague the Minister for Regional Development on issues around ranks and bus lanes and how they can best be facilitated.

Mr Speaker: Question 8 has been withdrawn.

Climate Change

3. **Mr Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce the daft and economy-destroying idea of his predecessor: a climate change Bill for Northern Ireland. (AQT 333/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Thank you, Mr Wilson. I am not sure that my predecessor had any daft ideas. He did have many daft ideas — [Laughter.] — but maybe not as many as some of my other predecessors. [Laughter.] However, climate change is a massive issue that we face. Regardless of differences of opinion about its cause, I think that all of us can now at least accept that it exists, and that the need to do something about it exists as well. The introduction of a climate change Bill might be one way to address it, but, at this time, I am not 100% convinced that it would be the best way to address it. We need buy-in from all Departments, Members and sectors of the community, particularly the business community. At this time, I am more minded to favour a climate change strategy, where we get people on board, including those who might have reservations about a Bill, and make sure that we get them working towards reducing greenhouse gas and carbon emissions and making Northern Ireland a better place with regard to its environment and its level in European and world terms.

Mr Wilson: I am not too sure whether the Minister is accepting that it was a daft idea and if he is now trying to row back from it. I welcome his caution, at least. Does he accept that given the fact that there has been no global warming for the past 15 years, even though CO2 emissions have been rising, and that the Bill would affect farmers, businesses, jobseekers and the economy in Northern Ireland, it would be much better to move away from regulation and additional costs on businesses through trying to introduce such legislation at a time when, already, we are struggling for competitiveness in Northern Ireland?

Mr Durkan: Thank you for that supplementary question, Mr Wilson. I do not accept that regulation is necessarily bad for business. It is possible to create and strive for a better environment and a stronger economy. That is why it is so important that I, and we as an Assembly, work with those interests that Mr Wilson mentioned — those in agriculture, industry and the agrifood industry, in particular, which is so important to our local economy — in order to address their fears and their concerns. I do not particularly think that the logic that Mr Wilson is espousing is particularly helpful, nor do I accept that there has been no increase in global warming over the past 15 years.

Waste Management

4. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of the Environment, given that the Northern Ireland landfill allowance scheme (NILAS) targets are fast approaching, whether he believes that the North West Region Waste Management Group application, which is the only application at the moment, is capable of being the only solution in Northern Ireland. (AQT 334/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Clarke for that question. The issue of waste, how we deal with it and the infrastructure that we have — or, to date, have not — got in place to deal with it is very important. It is a burning issue in some constituencies, one could say, myself included. I have met the North West Region Waste Management Group, as I have others, individually and collectively. It is important that they work together, that the Department works with them and that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and local councils work with them to make sure that whatever solution to our undeniable waste problem we come up with is one that works.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for his response. I note that he has met the North West Waste Management Group. However, the Arc21 group for the east of the Province is to consider an application for the Mallusk area. I know that my colleague is particularly interested in the ozone layer; but would a location in the Mallusk area not be more viable than transporting the goods from the Belfast area to the north-west?

Mr Durkan: As and when any waste management group submits to the Department a viable appointment business case, the Department will consider any case for funding on the basis of its assessment of the project's contribution to Northern Ireland's compliance with European landfill diversion targets. The Arc21 project comprises a combination of mechanical biological treatment and energy from waste through incineration. The remaining bidder for waste procurement recently announced its plans for the new facility in Mallusk, to which Mr Clarke referred, and it has been engaged in pre-application discussions with the Planning Service.

Sellafield

5. **Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of the recent damning report on Sellafield from the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee and the dangers to people and the environment here in the North of Ireland. (AQT 335/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat. Mo bhuíochas an cheist suimiúil sin. Thank you for that interesting question. I must plead ignorance on that. I am unaware of the report, but I will make it my business to read it and study its findings. I am fully aware of Sellafield and of the public concern about the dangers that it poses to them. I am fully determined to do anything within my remit as Minister of the Environment to mitigate such damage.

Ms Ruane: Bhuel, go raibh maith agat faoin fhreagra sin. Thank you for the response. I am a bit concerned that your Department did not make you aware of the report, and I welcome the fact that you will study it. I also ask you to make representation to the relevant authorities, because the report is damning and Sellafield is 10 years behind in terms of safety and waste.

Mr Durkan: I undertake to make the relevant representation. My party colleague the MP for South Down has been vociferous in her concerns and those of her constituents about Sellafield, so I give you my guarantee that I will look at it.

Mr Speaker: Jonathan Craig is not in his place for question 6.

Councils: Community Planning

7. **Mr Mitchel McLaughlin** asked the Minister of the Environment how he intends to ensure strong and accountable community planning as part of the transfer of powers to the newly configured local councils. (AQT 337/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat fá choinne na ceiste sin agus déanfaidh mé mo dhícheall freagra a chur air. I thank the Member for his question, and I will do my best to answer it.

The transfer of powers to local councils is vitally important. A couple of weeks ago, we voted here to pass the Local Government Bill to Committee Stage, where it now sits. In fact, an extension to Committee Stage has been granted so that the Committee — I am sure that Mr Boylan is looking forward to it — can spend more time properly scrutinising it and making sure that it is fit for purpose. Community planning is a massive issue in that. It is a massive opportunity to empower local communities and local individuals to play an active role in shaping their own towns, cities and regions.

Through my predecessor, the Department acquired additional funding from the Executive to provide training and capacity building, not only for local councillors but, importantly, for local community groups and others interested in and vital to the community planning process.

Mr Speaker: Members, that concludes topical questions. We now move to questions for oral answer. Questions 1, 9 and 14 have been withdrawn.

3.00 pm

Anaerobic Digester: Sion Mills

2. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the proposed location for the anaerobic digester in Sion Mills, beside an internationally renowned stretch of the River Mourne. (AQO 4956/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Jurisdiction on that proposal has passed to the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) by way of a non-determination appeal. As part of the appeal process, the commission asked the Department to provide it with either draft reasons for refusal or draft conditions. The Department assessed the proposal based on the evidence that was available to it and has presented nine reasons for refusal to the commission. The commission has now asked all parties to submit statements of case by 17 December 2013. The Department is preparing a statement in support of the draft reasons for refusal. The planning appeal is to be dealt with by an informal hearing, which is to take place on 22 January 2014. By that stage, the Department will have received the statements of case from the appellant and interested third parties. The Department will consider the content of all those submissions, which may have an impact on the Department's assessment to date.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his response. Does he believe that the volume and nature of traffic that would be required to service the proposed anaerobic digester would be conducive to the residential composition of the village of Sion Mills?

Mr Durkan: Ná habair é. I made a visit to the proposed site and have seen at first hand the road infrastructure in and around the site, and I met a dozen or so objectors. In total, 337 objections have been received about the proposal. As far as I am aware, many, if not all, of them referred to the traffic impact, should the proposal go ahead. Roads Service is a statutory consultee, and it will respond and submit its statement to the PAC. It will have seen the objections from residents and will carry out its own traffic impact assessment.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Does he agree that Sion Mills is a good example of an industrial heritage village and that the tourism potential of an industrial heritage project could be jeopardised if an anaerobic digester were to be sited in the village?

Mr Durkan: Thank you, Mr Byrne, for that supplementary question. That issue was raised by community representatives when I visited Sion Mills on 21 or 22 August 2013. I am aware of the history and heritage in the Sion Mills vicinity. I am also aware of the determination of a group in that community to maximise the benefit of that built heritage to Sion Mills as a tourist destination. Therefore, I take on board the Member's concerns and those of the community. However, it will be up to the PAC to assess those concerns.

Lord Morrow: Before I ask my question, I declare that I am a member of the Sion Mills Angling Club, which fishes the River Mourne. I want to put that interest on record right away.

I listened carefully to the Minister's responses. Does he not feel that a river of the standing and calibre of the River Mourne deserves special protection and that that type of river, which is so important for the migration of salmon, should be protected from such a development? Will he carefully consider giving rivers of that nature special protection?

Mr Durkan: I thank Lord Morrow for his question. On the day that I visited Sion Mills, a member of the angling club was there and expressed some of those concerns. The area is, indeed, sensitive with regard to conservation not only for angling but potentially for wildlife. However, on initial assessment, the Department deemed that an environmental impact assessment would not be required. Objectors have raised that case and made submissions to the PAC.

As regards the future of the river, we will see how that runs. I will certainly take Mr Morrow's concerns on board. I will look at what is in those rivers and at how they can be best protected.

NIEA: Consultation Responses

3. **Mr Wilson** asked the Minister of the Environment what is the length of time for the longest outstanding final consultation response by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to a planning application (AQO 4957/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The longest outstanding planning consultation response with the NIEA is for application S/2007/1372/O, which is for a mixed use development in Lisburn. This consultation was issued to the NIEA on 21 January 2009 following an initial consultation with Public Health.

Mr Wilson: I suspect that there are many other examples of three or four years' delay for the NIEA to respond to consultations. This is gumming up the planning system. Does the Minister believe that not just the NIEA but Roads Service and other consultees should be required to respond within a specified period otherwise it should be assumed that they have no comment to make, rather than holding up vital developments across Northern Ireland?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Wilson. As a previous Minister of the Environment, he is only too aware of how this works and how, in sadly too many cases, it does not work properly and fast enough. I am looking seriously at a new duty for statutory consultees to respond to consultations within a prescribed time frame as we move planning powers towards councils. That is something that I aim to pursue.

Mr Gardiner: Will the Minister explain whether any particular types of planning application are prone to longer delay, and can he give reasons for that?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Gardiner. Some applications are more complicated than others, and there are various reasons why some consultations take longer than others, such as previous land use. In the example I cited, which is the longest running case, the site had been used previously as an animal feed mill. Thus, the ground conditions on the site must be subject to detailed investigation to establish its suitability for the proposed end use, which included residential use.

There are a number of reasons why NIEA responses can be delayed. Officers dealing with complex cases need time to prepare appropriate and considered assessments of environmental factors. They may have to undertake necessary investigations, studies and/or evidence gathering before an assessment can be made and a consultation response prepared. This can lead to a delay in responding to planning, which may and does have a knock-on effect on the processing of applications by the Planning Service. However, although there are many reasons, there should be no excuses. There are certainly no excuses for a response to take as long as the case in question has done. I was shocked to see it, and I have instructed officials to make sure that the response is issued by the end of this week.

Ms Lo: The only independent member on the board of the NIEA finishes his term at the end of this year, and I understand that he is not being replaced. How does the Minister intend to keep that independent view in the NIEA from next year?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Chair of the Committee for her question. I had a conversation with the outgoing independent NIEA board member a few weeks ago. He also raised those concerns, which were justifiable and understandable. It is important that there is more objectivity and a degree of independence in any board, and the NIEA is no exception. I will look at this as we move forward. The decision was made, but it can be looked at again and can be remade.

Exploris

4. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the discussions he has had with Ards Borough Council in relation to supporting the Exploris aquarium. (AQO 4958/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Following the announcement by Ards Borough Council of its intention to close Exploris, I met the Member and a delegation from Friends of Exploris to listen to their concerns. At the meeting, I gave an undertaking to raise the matter with my ministerial colleagues and to task my officials to meet the council to learn more about the details of the proposed closure.

The meeting between officials and the chief executive of the council took place on 2 October, and further information was provided on the background to the decision, including previous private sector interest, costs and staffing implications. Information was also provided on the process and timescale for closing Exploris when the two-month stay of execution lapses on 25 November. On my direction, officials have since written to the council setting out a proposal for providing assistance to Exploris. The essence of the proposal is that one-off grant support may be available to help upgrade the facilities to attract more visitors and income, thus reducing the subsidy provided by the council. However, the proposal is dependent on three factors: first, that the council is open to the proposal in principle and is prepared to commit to Exploris in the long term; secondly, that the council prepares a business case justifying the public expenditure involved; and, thirdly, that ministerial colleagues are prepared to assist in the provision of a one-off capital grant, provided that they are satisfied with the business case made. My Department could not do this alone. The proposal will be placed before the council's development committee on 20 November, and any recommendation from that committee will be considered by the council at its meeting a week later.

Alongside that, Friends of Exploris has commissioned BDO consultants to develop a business case for saving the centre that they intend to present to the council in advance of that meeting. That is a positive development, and I have asked my officials —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Mr Durkan: — to join any discussions arranged to progress the business case.

Mr McCarthy: Mr Speaker, I am prepared to listen to the Minister all afternoon if he comes up with a positive response.

Mr Speaker: That is not possible.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his reply and for his efforts at the Executive table to move this important problem forward.

Mr Speaker: I encourage the Member to come to his question.

Mr McCarthy: Following the cross-party support for Exploris that was given in the Chamber last week, has the Minister had receipt of any plans or vision for a sustainable future as yet for this priceless asset? Will his Department —

Mr Speaker: I must now encourage the Member to finish.

Mr McCarthy: Will his Department assist with regional funding to see Exploris enjoy a sustainable future?

Mr Speaker: The Member should take his seat.

Mr McCarthy: Mr Speaker, I am under enormous pressure to get the answer from this gentleman. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Speaker: Allow the Minister to answer.

Mr Durkan: Thank you, Mr McCarthy. Following the announcement by Ards Borough Council of its intention to close Exploris, I raised the matter with ministerial colleagues at the Executive Committee. As we are still in discussions, I am not able to say much more at this point. However, we still await a full and thorough business case from Friends of Exploris and the council on how we can save this much-needed and much-loved facility. In the absence of that business case, I cannot give my Department's potential commitment to future regional funding. However, business case aside, I can state categorically that I would be committed to and favourable to allocating money to the seal sanctuary element of Exploris, which performs a vital role. It is the only place in the North of Ireland that does such a thing; the nearest other one is in Cork. The value of a seal sanctuary was mentioned in the press again today. Regardless of how the business case looks, my Department will fund a seal sanctuary, whether that be in Exploris or elsewhere.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Has the Minister allocated any funding for the business case? Is he aware of any discussions with any other partners on the project, such as Friends of Exploris?

3.15 pm

Mr Durkan: I have not personally had those discussions. However, one of my officials has had many such discussions and continues to have them with both the council and Friends of Exploris. Where resources are concerned, that is what I have given. I have directed my officer there, and he is working closely and well with both the council and Friends of Exploris.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Minister for his answers. I am particularly taken by the fact that he suggests that his Department might be keen to support the seal sanctuary aspect. Could various Departments pick up on specific elements of Exploris' work? For example, could the Department of Enterprise support tourism, or could DCAL look at expanding cultural areas? Is that the way to provide regional support from the Executive for Exploris?

Mr Durkan: That would and will be dependent on the business case. What we as an Executive cannot do is pour good money after bad into a black hole. There is a cross-cutting element to this facility. It obviously has an educational value, it has a tourism value, and, through the work that it does with Queen's University, it has a role in further and higher education. However, in the absence of that business case or until we see a business case, the Executive are unable to commit to that sort of funding. My seal sanctuary pledge, if you like, is aside from that.

Partnership Panel

5. **Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of the Environment what role a local government association will have within any future partnership panel. (AQO 4959/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It will be a matter for the 11 newly formed councils, following their establishment in May 2014, to agree the role of a local government association on a future partnership panel. In the meantime, I have asked my officials to examine the partnership council in Wales, on which the Northern Ireland proposals are modelled, to ensure that the Department is fully briefed on how the Welsh council operates and functions.

In moving forward, it is my intention to engage with relevant bodies, including the political reference group, before I present fully worked-up proposals to the Executive for agreement on a future partnership panel. I will also put a position paper on the partnership panel's role to the regional transition committee meeting on 27 November, so that there is an informed discussion with the chairs of the transition committees, who will be responsible for briefing the new, incoming councils.

The Local Government Bill, which was introduced in the Assembly on 23 September 2013 and is currently at Committee Stage, provides for the establishment of the partnership panel in Northern Ireland. Clause 106 requires the Department to establish the panel, whose members, to be appointed by the Department, are to comprise Northern Ireland Ministers and members of district councils. Before appointing council members, the Department will be required to consult appropriate bodies that are representative of local government. The panel's functions will be to advise the Northern Ireland Ministers on matters affecting their functions; make representations on matters affecting or of concern to those involved in local government in Northern Ireland; and give advice to those involved in local government in Northern Ireland.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I thank that Minister for his answer. Does the Minister agree that there are benefits to be had from the collective, corporate view that comes from local government as a sector?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat. I am aware of the value of having a representative body. Indeed, I told them that at the weekend, so I will not tell you any differently. I think that the panel itself will have a very important role. It is therefore vital that we ensure that composition is just right. It will provide a forum for discussion at a political level of strategic matters of mutual interest and concern to central and local government. District councils and their representative body have, on a number of occasions, raised concerns about the lack of consultation on important policy issues, especially those that directly affect them. The panel will not only address that issue but will support the delivery of the Executive's vision for a new citizen-focused local government, particularly in the context of driving new initiatives, such as community planning.

National Park: Causeway Coast

6. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on a national park in the Causeway Coast and glens. (AQO 4960/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am fully aware of national parks and the benefits that they can undoubtedly bring to areas, as they have done in GB and on this island. National park status is a globally recognised brand and, as a result, is a key draw in attracting tourists and ultimately boosting the local economy. Furthermore, national parks have a role in protecting and enhancing natural heritage. However, I am also aware of the opposition to national parks here in Northern Ireland and the concerns of landowners over what designation might mean for them. Given the level of that opposition, I do not believe that now is the correct time to proceed with national parks. I believe that some of the benefits associated with national parks can be derived from enhanced collaboration and partnership working on the ground between stakeholders, including, importantly, landowners and others who have expressed reservations about national parks. That stance applies to the Causeway Coast and glens and to other areas.

Mr McMullan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he now boldly go where the previous Minister failed to go — a public meeting — and explain the rationale for what he has told us here today in that now is not the time to proceed with the national park? Will he also now consider withdrawing the proposal completely, as was done for the Mourne's?

Mr Durkan: I am certainly happy to attend such a meeting. I have received an invitation from Moyle District Council to attend a meeting on that very issue, but, to date, I have been unable to schedule it. My predecessor also attended public meetings, though not every public meeting. I am happy to attend such a meeting and to explain my rationale to members of the Member's community and those from elsewhere.

Mr Speaker: I call Mervyn Storey.

Mr Storey: I trust that the Speaker has not forgotten my name so quickly.

Will the Minister take it from me, as someone who represents the area, that there is total and widespread opposition to the creation of a national park? Does he accept that it is unnecessary, expensive and dictatorial, as one individual has described it? Will his Department now work with the farming community in north Antrim in a way that is beneficial to the environment rather than proceed with what is proposed, which would clearly be to their detriment?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Storey for his supplementary question. In my opinion, the reason why opposition to national parks has been so strong and so vociferous is largely a fear of the unknown. My Department and I will happily engage with the farming community to which Mr Storey refers, but it is important that we do so on the basis of building partnership working on the ground not just with the farming community but with those who support national parks and recognise the value that they can bring to an area. It is important that that partnership approach is taken. Maybe, just maybe, people's opposition might reduce some time in the future. That is why I am not scrapping the national parks Bill, but I am shelving it.

Mr Kinahan: The Minister answered much of what I wanted to ask. Can we rely on him not to give up on the north coast and to find a good way forward that suits the environment, farmers, businesses and everyone else?

Mr Durkan: Absolutely. I remain convinced of the benefits of national parks; that has not changed. However, I have to recognise the depth of opposition to national parks and the difficulty of taking things further in the face of that opposition. This is not something that we can impose in any area; it has to grow from the ground in any area.

Recycling: Targets

7. **Mr Newton** asked the Minister of the Environment whether recycling targets for local councils are being met. (AQO 4961/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are currently no recycling targets set at local council level. The recycling targets associated with the European Union's waste framework directive are set at member state level. The waste framework directive requires that 50% of waste from households is recycled by 2020. Provisional data for Northern Ireland relating to the waste framework directive target, submitted as part of the UK rate, shows a recycling rate for waste from households of 41.6% for 2012. My Department also published a consultation paper in May 2013 seeking views on policy options for a recycling Bill that would contain powers to introduce a statutory recycling target for a local authority collecting municipal waste. The proposal is to set a 60% target for the recycling of all local authority-collected municipal waste by 2020. My officials are currently analysing the responses to the consultation, and I will consider that analysis before making any decisions on the preferred policy options.

Mr Newton: I thank the Minister for his reply. What specific measures will he take to ensure that the new 11-council model will indeed meet the targets that he has just described?

Mr Durkan: Thank you again, Mr Newton. It is important that I, as Minister, and we all, as Members, espouse the value of recycling and the importance of doing so. I have just published the new waste management strategy, 'Delivering Resource Efficiency', which seeks to change the focus of waste management from resource management to resource efficiency. That really means using our resources in the most effective way to minimise their impact on the environment and recognising the real value of our resources. In terms of increasing the rates of recycling across the council, my Department's Rethink Waste programme has, over the past few years, given out millions and millions of pounds in funding, and, where that investment has been made, we have seen improvement in the recycling rate. I want to do a closer analysis of that to see where we have the biggest return for that investment through success in boosting recycling rates.

Mr Dallat: Does the Minister agree that some of the best examples of reducing and recycling have come from our schools? Is it his intention to give that sector of our community greater encouragement, because is it not young people who understand these things and then implement them in their adult life?

Mr Durkan: I was going to recycle my answer to the previous question, but I will not. Education is an extremely important tool in reducing waste and promoting recycling and in doing all such things to protect our environment and our planet. That is why I have put quite an emphasis on Eco-Schools since taking up post. I examined our list of Eco-Schools and saw where we were not doing

well. I wrote, personally, to each of the schools that had not signed up, and, as a result, we have had a massive increase in uptake of maybe nearly 100 schools in the past month — so much so that my constituency went from being the worst represented in Eco-Schools up to fifth place.

Mr Speaker: That concludes questions to the Minister of the Environment. Before we finish Question Time, I want to say that there are still some Members who, over a number of weeks, have not been in their place for Question Time and have not come to the House or even to my office to apologise. I expect Members who, for whatever reason, are not in their place during Question Time to at least give the House a reason or come to my office and give a reason. I often say to Members of the whole House that I am happy to listen to confessions here or in my office on all these issues.

3.30 pm

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit [NIA 140/11-15]; and calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Mr Irwin (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure): I support this important motion.

I would like to start by thanking Members for their contributions to the debate, and I join the Committee Chair in thanking the Minister for responding. As has been said by so many Members today, this is an extremely important issue, and it cuts across all Departments. I echo the Chair's thanks to the members of the Committee, the Committee staff and all the individuals and groups who contributed to the investigation, either with written submissions or by giving evidence before the Committee.

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair)

It is clear that the Committee's investigation report has proved to be a very valuable piece of work. I know that the Committee will work hard with the Minister to ensure that its recommendations are implemented. As has been said by many here today, the Committee's main purpose in undertaking the investigation was to look for gaps in child protection and safeguarding in the Culture, Arts and Leisure remit and then to seek out examples of best practice in the area. By putting those together, the Committee has developed a number of recommendations by which it hopes to close the gaps.

Throughout the evidence-gathering process, the Committee heard a good deal from individuals and organisations about the excellent work that is undertaken regarding protection and safeguarding across the CAL remit. Many here today have highlighted the great work done by the CPSU, and I also offer my congratulations to Paul Stephenson for the difference he has made in sport.

The Committee Chair referred earlier to private tutors and small groups operating across the CAL remit who are unregulated and unaffiliated. Those individuals and groups were very much in the Committee's mind when it decided to undertake the investigation. They are often unsure about protection and safeguarding issues, and the Committee believes that many of its recommendations will help them, particularly the Charter Mark standard. As the Chairperson has indicated, it will provide a beacon for protection and highlight recognised standards and best practice. It is to be hoped that this seal of approval will become something that the unregulated individuals and groups will feel that they need to be part of, as parents will ask them whether they belong to it. The Committee

wants it to become a "must have" for anyone working with vulnerable groups.

At this point, I want to expand on what "vulnerable groups" actually means. It is a phrase that the Committee heard a number of times during the evidence sessions, and members engaged in a great deal of discussion about who exactly falls into that category. The Committee sees vulnerable groups as being inclusive of all children and young people; adults with disabilities, special needs or other vulnerabilities; and those with greater exposure to risk of harm. So often, when talking about protection and safeguarding, we forget adult groups. However, I am sure that all Members are aware of the media headlines around the abuse of adults in cared-for situations. In many ways, they are just as vulnerable as children and young people and, in some cases, more so.

One of the best ways that we can get the protection and safeguarding message across to those who need to hear it is through education and awareness campaigns. The Committee has made recommendations that will address that. In addition to the Charter Mark standard pilot, there will be an awareness-raising campaign. It is to be hoped that those will prove to be a useful way of reaching out to the self-employed persons and unregulated groups who work with vulnerable people. I stress that the Committee does not want to demonise the unregulated individuals and groups who work with the vulnerable. Members realise that, in the vast majority of cases, they simply want to do the best they can. The Committee's recommendations are designed to help them do that.

During the evidence-gathering process, the Committee reached out to local government. The Committee has made it a practice to engage with local government as a key partner of the Assembly. Members understand that councils have considerable involvement in the activities undertaken with vulnerable groups and therefore councils have a vital role in helping to protect and safeguard them. The Committee believes that local government must be a partner in the process of standardising our approach to protecting and safeguarding vulnerable groups.

I am no expert on the internet or social media, nor do I have special expertise in the use of high-tech devices. However, I acknowledge, as did many Members during the debate, the huge role that they play in our daily lives. Through my constituency work, I have heard the worries of parents and teachers about the problems that the internet and social media can cause. Do not get me wrong, they can provide lots of benefits, but there are many dangers. In recognition of those dangers, the Committee has recommended that the Department play a full part in the Executive's development of an e-strategy and consider developing one of its own for the CAL family. The Committee Chair highlighted the need for a safeguarding portal. As she said, this would be a link from websites that people might use to get information about protection and safeguarding issues to up-to-date policy and procedural information.

In making its recommendations, the Committee was very aware that young people need to have a say in protection and safeguarding. The inclusion of their voice will promote greater relevance. Therefore, the Committee has recommended the establishment of a young person reference group. It would give young people a voice in key policies and strategies, including the development of

policies and procedures for protection and safeguarding. Such a group might even be able to work on a virtual basis, as the Chair suggested. That would allow a considerable membership and reflect the way in which young people like to work. As the Chair said, a young person reference group could also be part of a Charter Mark standard pilot in the CAL sector.

The Committee is very much aware that it did not undertake the investigation in a vacuum. Members are all clear that a great deal of work is undertaken in other Departments and many organisations on the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups. Therefore, as the Chair said, the young person reference group should work with the existing frameworks for advice and cooperation to avoid duplication. It is to be hoped that the Committee's recommendation that the Department liaise with the Commissioner for Children and Young People on the establishment of the reference group will mean that it does not duplicate the work of other bodies and that it is able to work closely in the networks.

As the Chair said and many Members repeated, we must not forget about the amazing work done by volunteers. We must also ensure that volunteers do not find that protection and safeguarding policies put them off the great work that they do. The tremendous volunteering during the recent World Police and Fire Games provided a wonderful example of how vital those people are to many activities. Much of what enriches the lives of vulnerable groups would not be possible without the help of volunteers. We must ensure that they are protected, too. We must ensure that volunteers are always kept in the loop and receive the best and most up-to-date training and retraining that we can provide. Knowing the correct policies and procedures and having a clear idea of where they can go for information and help will allow them to feel more secure as they undertake their important work.

We live in an ever-changing world. Technology is constantly moving on, and ideas about protection and safeguarding are, too. That is particularly true of the internet and social media. It is difficult to keep up with the latest trends in gadgets and popular social media sites. Parents, teachers and carers often feel confused about how best to protect those whom they look after from the negative aspects of the internet and social media. The availability of information and regular training is the best way to ensure that we do not fall far behind our young people.

The quality of the debate today reflects just how important the Committee's investigation has been. However, it is just the beginning. These issues do not stand still. The Committee looks forward to working with the Minister and her Department to ensure that the vulnerable in our communities get the best protection that we can give them.

Members made a number of very useful comments during the debate. I have divided them into broad themes: Charter Mark standard coordination and standardisation, internet and social media, and impacts on volunteers. Many of the contributors agreed that the development of a Charter Mark standard for protection and safeguarding was an excellent idea that deserved further consideration by the Minister. It could be developed in such a way that it is transferable to sectors beyond culture, arts and leisure.

Anna Lo described the Charter Mark as an innovative idea. The Minister considers that it would be a best practice

standard that organisations aim for. Members were very supportive of the Committee's recommendation for an awareness-raising campaign to accompany a Charter Mark pilot. They also voiced support for the Committee's recommendations around a website link to inform on protection and safeguarding and a smartphone application that would offer the same access to information.

Members recognised the need for and benefits of a standardisation of policies and procedures and a coherent approach to the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable groups. Mr Ó hOisín commented on the support for the Committee's recommendation for a CAL conference every two years to discuss issues of protection and safeguarding. A conference such as that will allow the exchange of best practice and experience and promote standardisation across policies, procedures and training. Some Members also referred to the benefits of taking a cross-departmental approach to protection and safeguarding that could also include local government.

A number of members referred to the dangers presented by the internet and social media. At this point, I will respond to Mr Storey's query about whether the cyberbullying issues that are referred to in the report are linked to school-based internet access. The information in the Committee's report is based on the use of internet and social media on personal devices, but the Committee cannot state definitively that inappropriate activity does not happen using school-based equipment. That issue may require further investigation by others.

Members supported the development of an e-strategy by the Executive. Almost all contributors paid tribute to the excellent work of volunteers across all sectors. The Committee heard of examples whereby volunteers worked at their own expense to ensure that they were properly trained. Members expressed concern that this should be the case. It is possible that this kind of expense might deter volunteers, and Members highlighted this as an issue that needs to be resolved.

The Committee welcomes the Minister's clear support for the report and its recommendations. Indeed, she described the report as one of the most significant to have come before the Assembly in this mandate. The Committee also welcomes the Minister's commitment to talk to her Executive colleagues about how the recommendations can be taken forward. She highlighted the potential for the Committee's suggested Charter Mark to become a best practice standard. The Minister highlighted the re-establishment of her Department's safeguarding working group. The Committee is pleased that the Minister and her officials have already begun work to support the Committee's recommendations.

Once again, I thank the Minister and all Members who contributed to the debate. I support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit [NIA 140/11-15]; and calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Private Members' Business

Insulation: Housing Executive Properties

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes in which to propose the amendment and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Easton: I beg to move

That this Assembly calls on the Minister for Social Development to initiate a review of the range of insulation materials used in Housing Executive homes, to assess the heat retention properties of the materials used and to maximise the cost effectiveness of insulating the homes.

We intend to accept the amendment. I brought the motion to the House after becoming aware through research carried out by the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) and the National Insulation Association (NIA) on around 20 Housing Executive properties in my constituency of North Down. This took place in the Bloomfield estate, the Kilcooley estate and Jubilee on insulation on current and former Housing Executive homes.

Through the research, it was discovered that every single property had serious flaws with their cavity wall insulation. The report on those 20 properties found a lack of proper cavity wall insulation in every case and a lack of proper loft insulation in some. I saw this at first hand by looking through a borescope, which is a camera that looks into cavity walls. I was able to see huge gaps in cavity wall insulation that had not been installed properly. In some cases, the loft insulation left a lot to be desired by not having the proper recommended depth of 300 mm, although I accept that the Housing Executive has a scheme in place to rectify that particular problem.

3.45 pm

The result of that poor workmanship has contributed to large patches of damp occurring in many of those dwellings, with one family having to paint a bedroom once a month on average because it looked so bad, with black patches of damp on the walls. It was also affecting the health of their son, who suffers from asthma. I believe that this is only the tip of the iceberg in our Housing Executive stock, and I am sure that many Members will have examples to share from their own constituencies. It is leading to major repair problems for the Housing Executive and increased cost to residents who have to heat their homes, which are unable to retain their heat, plunging many into fuel poverty.

Northern Ireland's residents pay significantly more for their energy than the rest of the UK. Fuel poverty in Northern Ireland, at 42% in 2011, is well above the UK average of 19%. Although this is partly due to the greater reliance on home heating oil, there is no doubt that the number of properties with no cavity wall insulation or underperforming cavity wall insulation is a contributing factor. Proper insulation is vital, not just to combat fuel

poverty but to help people's health during cold winters. At the root of many winter deaths are cold, badly insulated homes. With rising fuel prices, more and more older people cannot afford to heat their homes adequately. Warm, well-insulated homes would enable older people to stay healthier during the winter.

Some winters are worse than others. Progress is being made on death rates, which have fallen since the 1950s, largely due to warmer homes. However, with tens of thousands of excess winter deaths still recorded across the UK since then and many older people still having to live in cold homes, much more needs to be done.

Several studies across the UK have shown that excess winter deaths are linked to cold homes. Excess winter death rates are highest among those living in the coldest homes. For many older people, the problem is that they simply cannot afford to heat their homes properly, increasing their risk of serious illness or death. Over half a million older households in the UK are in properties that are hard to heat because of, for example, non-cavity walls or no access to mains gas. Improving the thermal efficiency of a dwelling can result in a large and sustained reduction in household energy costs.

The link between poor performance of insulated cavity wall dwellings and cold homes is quite clear. There is also a strong connection between cold homes and fuel poverty. It stands to reason, then, that the performance of cavity wall insulation in domestic housing plays a vital role in the determination of the full poverty calculations.

The report from SERC and the National Insulation Association on my constituency demonstrates that there is a fundamental problem with the quality and performance of some cavity wall insulation in some Housing Executive properties in Northern Ireland, and will highlight not only an industry solution to the problem but a number of other benefits, economic, social and environmental. Those benefits include boosting economic activity and tax revenues; creating jobs in the hard-hit construction sector; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; providing consumers with savings in their energy bills; tackling fuel poverty; and creating healthier and warmer living environments.

The worry of the increasing cost of keeping homes warm, or the thought for many of spending another winter in a house with damp, mould, condensation and the associated health risks, should be a thing of the past. A substantial programme of upgrading existing cavity wall insulation in Northern Ireland should be treated as a priority, part of infrastructure and capital strategy, consolidated in its funding and coordinated in its delivery. I believe that a review by the Housing Executive will make a strong case for investment in insulation to substantially increase the energy efficiency of our existing housing stock, which is often overlooked as a vital part of the economic infrastructure.

Using cavity wall insulation, where suitable, to reduce energy costs must always be the first port of call. It is unquestionably the most cost-effective treatment and energy reduction measure in any property. Investing in cavity wall insulation in Northern Ireland in fuel-poor households will have a similar or more positive macroeconomic impact than the equivalent stimulus package, either through increases in government current spending or government capital spending. If householders

have to spend less on energy, then they are able to spend more on other products and services.

The result of the research by SERC and the NIA in my constituency, and any potential review by the Housing Executive, will point to a win-win scenario for Northern Ireland.

Any cavity wall insulation upgrade programme would have other advantages. It is shovel-ready and fast to mobilise and would stimulate economic activity and employment in all areas of Northern Ireland. It would reduce expenditure on treating cold-related illnesses, such as respiratory and coronary diseases. There is an opportunity for Northern Ireland to lead the way on such a programme of cavity wall insulation upgrade, which has not been attempted on such a scale anywhere else in the world. At a higher level, there are benefits to society via health, job creation and the economy, whereby spending less on energy means that the public can spend more on other goods and services. That is one message, but it will of course need the cooperation of several Departments. We need joined-up thinking. A public health message linking cold, damp homes to respiratory problems could be pushed by the family GP. A prescription for insulation is a simple message to understand.

As for the social benefits of energy efficiency programmes to help alleviate fuel poverty, we should look at the conclusions of Dr Brenda Boardman of the Environmental Change Institute (ECI) at the University of Oxford. She said:

"this is a fantastic job creation scheme'. It is a great way to ... revitalise the whole economy, because when you do work on a building virtually none of the money is exported. You are not importing loft insulation or anything, it's all here, and at least half of the funding is labour costs and that's taking people off benefits, it's providing some income tax for government"

That would require the right political framing, since most people have yet to realise how satisfying it can be to live in an energy-efficient house. Dr Boardman sees that as a contribution to future generations. She continued:

"The Victorians built us sewers and underground tube lines. Our ancestors have given us wonderful legacies with their transformations of infrastructure. What infrastructure should we be changing? The housing stock, the building fabric, to ensure that it is fit for another century would be a good choice ... up to two-thirds of the benefits from energy efficiency improvements are non-energy related: they are benefits to health and the calibre of the housing stock."

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has existing relationships with contractors and surveyors, and it could begin work, if it chose to, with its stock of 90,000 homes, giving a boost to any potential scheme at its early stages. The Northern Ireland Executive's constrained Budget would not allow them to finance the scheme alone. For that reason, we should look at international examples of state-led initiatives to leverage private capital into such projects. Once again, we do not propose establishing any new agencies or complex systems of bank finance. Proposals have been made that would allow the Housing Executive to borrow through a bond insurance, similar to that undertaken by municipal and local councils in many other countries.

The impact on employment in Northern Ireland would be significant. It is estimated that every £10 million invested would create up to 330 jobs in Northern Ireland. Of course, any potential scheme could not, by any stretch of the imagination, eliminate unemployment, but it could provide employment for people in their local area once trained in the skills of cavity wall insulation. The proposal seeks to demonstrate that, even with severely constrained budgets, there are still options open to boost investment and growth in our economy. A real recovery will require more imagination and bold policymaking. This proposal seeks to begin that debate.

What better time to reduce fuel poverty? What better time to make our Housing Executive stock more energy-efficient? What better time to reduce the repair budget of the Housing Executive? What better time to reduce fuel bills for the most vulnerable in our society? What better time to make our population's health better and save lives? If you believe as I do, we must show leadership and grasp this opportunity with both hands by asking for a review. Deliver for our people. Support the motion.

Mr Agnew: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after the second "used" and insert:

"and to ensure that they are environmentally sustainable and provide value for money over their lifespan."

This is possibly the fourth debate that I have taken part in that focuses to a large degree on fuel poverty. Energy efficiency in our housing is absolutely key to tackling fuel poverty, as well as, as was mentioned by the Member who spoke previously, reducing the release of CO₂ emissions. Indeed, there is potential for job creation through public investment in that area.

Energy efficiency is the best way in which to tackle fuel poverty. At the minute, as Members will know, the UK parties are crawling over one another to see who can promise the lowest energy prices. I think that we should be very sceptical about those promises. The fact is that oil and gas prices will continue to rise, regardless of government interventions. In fact, although not powerless, the Government can have little impact on energy prices. However, they can invest in energy efficiency. So, I think that we have to accept that cheap energy is not an option, but reducing our reliance on energy through energy efficiency is an option in which the Government, whether at UK level or locally through the Executive, can play a large part.

I argue that Northern Ireland's housing stock is in a particularly bad state. Northern Ireland has more excess winter deaths per head of population than Finland. Bearing in mind that Finland can see winter temperatures between anywhere as low as -25°C and -50°C, it seems very strange that we suffer greater health problems due to cold weather than people in Finland, where the sea literally freezes over during some winters. Santa's home in Lapland could be warmer than our constituents' homes in Limavady or wherever. It is something that we have to take seriously and tackle.

The proposer of the motion referred to fuel poverty levels. Whether it is 44%, or whatever the exact figure is, we know that our fuel poverty levels are much too high to be considered acceptable. Again, as the Member who spoke

previously said, housing is a key part of our infrastructure. However, I do not think that it is given the same attention as other areas of our infrastructure. I argue that our housing infrastructure is in a much poorer state than many of our roads, yet we pay so much attention to and invest so much in roads and see them as a key part of public investment, but I do not think that we have the same focus on our housing infrastructure.

With all due respect to schemes such as the warm homes scheme and the Northern Ireland sustainable energy programme (NISEP) grants, they are a piecemeal approach to tackling what is a structural and strategic issue that needs to be dealt with.

We need to ensure that building regulations ensure that we no longer build substandard, poorly insulated homes. I think that we have further work to do on that. Technologies and processes are improving all the time, and we need to make sure that our building regulations keep up with those and ensure that we are not, on the one hand —

Mr F McCann: I thank the Member for giving way. You mentioned house-building standards. However, is it not the case that we recently lowered house-building standards and that that is storing up trouble for the future? This debate relates only to the Housing Executive, but the whole issue is much wider than just Housing Executive houses.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Member for his intervention. I absolutely agree. The debate concerns the Department for Social Development (DSD) for public housing and the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) for private building. We need to ensure higher standards through legislation and put in a statutory regulation to make sure that we do not allow unregulated building or low regulations on the one hand, with, on the other, the public purse later having to fund retrofitting to make up for poor building quality.

At any time, only 1% of our housing stock will be new homes. The motion focuses on existing Housing Executive homes, which I think require particular attention. I thank the proposer for tabling the motion. The survey of Housing Executive homes took place in our constituency, and it found the problems that he outlined. That has caused great concern among those communities, and I continue to be engaged with the matter.

The reason that I proposed the amendment — I thank the proposer of the motion for his support — is that I want to make sure that the review is as broad as it can and should be. When we look at the cost-effectiveness, as outlined in the motion, I want to make sure that we are not just talking about the upfront price of the materials and that we take into account the longer-term costs. So, when we look at insulation, we must recognise that the cost is not just the price of the materials and the installation, we also have to consider the beginning-of-life and end-of-life costs of energy use. There is not much point in trumpeting the improvements in energy efficiency of a particular type of insulation if it is very energy intensive in its production or disposal. So, we need to take those things into account, but I am clear that any insulation will save energy over its lifetime. We need to ensure that we maximise those savings.

4.00 pm

The impacts of materials used and how they affect a homeowner's health should be taken into consideration.

Again, we are promoting the health benefits of a better insulated, warmer and less leaky home, but we need to ensure that we are not putting hazardous materials into people's homes that may affect breathing ailments, such as asthma. Professor Tom Woolley, an architect who specialises in sustainable building, says:

"We rely far too much on glues, sealants, membranes and so on which are synthetic, toxic, pollute the environment and often make disassembly very difficult."

It is the toxicity in particular that concerns me. In this review, we must look at the impacts that the insulation materials have.

Equally, with longer-term costs, we are putting in materials that, as Professor Woolley points out, are difficult to disassemble, cannot be recycled and could be sent to landfill. While it may not be the Minister's Department that pays landfill costs upfront, through council rates or taxes, those will be costs to the public purse in general, so we must take into account the lifecycle costs.

There is a vast array of insulating materials, whether they be petrochemical based, based on recycled materials or natural products. New products are being developed all the time, and the review must look at those different products because, while most loft insulation installers use fibreglass, it is by no means the only option.

Through public procurement, perhaps we could look at different materials that may be better for environmental sustainability and lifecycle costs. Perhaps then we can drive innovation in that field and improve the options for homeowners who wish to fit insulation other than the fibreglass product. That could be a benefit.

The more you learn about insulation, the more complex it becomes. Any review needs to be carried out by somebody with the necessary expertise. As I said, the review should look at lifecycle costs of materials as well as taking a holistic look at environmental impacts.

I support the motion, because the particular issue with insulation in Housing Executive homes is an important one to bring forward, but it needs to be part of a wider strategic look at our housing stock.

I cannot finish my speech without mentioning my regret that the green new deal programme was not funded or implemented to look at this issue across our housing infrastructure.

I support the motion and thank the Member who proposed it for bringing it to the House.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I support the motion and the amendment, which has been accepted by the DUP. I thank the Members who tabled the motion, because it is very timely as we move into another winter in which many people are facing major difficulties from a lack of insulation in housing.

All of us have visited people who suffer the serious problem of a lack of insulation in their home. I understand that you can expect that in houses pre-1919 or pre-1945 or 1946 or even from the 1960s, but I believe that it is intolerable that people in homes built more recently face the same problems as those in older dwellings. Although the thrust of today's debate is focused on Housing Executive properties — I agree that there are problems in

those properties — they are not exclusive in facing those problems, and failure to find a strategy that deals with all housing, including housing association homes and homes that are privately owned, is storing up major problems for the future.

In the past, I have spoken to the Minister regarding certain areas where houses have been built in the past 10 years. People bought those houses in the anticipation that they were their dream home for their future and the future of their children only to find out that the level of insulation in their home has made their life a nightmare. The developer has gone into receivership and left the residents, who live on the outskirts of west Belfast, dealing with serious problems. I understand that the Minister has met the Mount Eagles ratepayers' group, which is lobbying to get help, as its members have had to endure atrocious conditions because of the poor insulation in their homes. I believe that that situation is replicated across the North in many housing developments where residents have been left with no financial ability to rectify the problems.

I understand the difficulties with Housing Executive properties, but let us not forget the thousands of people who live in their own home and cannot afford to rectify the problems created by developers. We need to look at how those people are helped and to look at legal redress in respect of those who sold the houses, those who inspected the houses and cleared them as being OK and those who installed the insulation in the first place. I have spoken to a company that has inspected houses in Mount Eagles, and it has said that they are among the worst that it has seen. It went on to say that houses close by, belonging to housing associations, have serious problems with the level of insulation. Although those are relatively new houses in the Lagmore area, there are serious grounds for concern. The problem is not confined to Housing Executive properties. Over the years, I have seen serious problems caused by poorly insulated housing, and, when residents complained, they were blamed for not keeping their windows open.

I recently visited homes that are just 20 years old and have serious problems with poor ventilation, which has led to fungi growing. The walls are black with dampness. Those conditions must be having an effect on those living in the houses. I have got into arguments with housing officials about the difference between condensation and dampness. To be honest, to a tenant it makes little difference; their house is cold and wet. All they know is that their children are coming down with illnesses because of those problems, and to be told to open your windows and it will be all right does not convince a person if it is raining or -15°C.

I recently visited a house in my constituency where the woman of the house had been complaining about dampness in her home. It was a relatively new house, and she was complaining about problems in the living room, kitchen and upstairs bedroom where her young daughter slept. Many of the walls were black with damp, and there was some growth on the walls. She was constantly informed that she needed to keep a constant flow of fresh air through her house. The room that had the biggest problem was the child's room. On the wall was an extractor fan that was supposed to deal with air flow. When the family checked behind it, on the bedroom wall, there were six small holes, which went nowhere.

Across all our constituencies, similar problems exist. I have no doubt that it is worse in rural constituencies where much poorer housing conditions exist. While I support the efforts of Members to deal with problems in Housing Executive stock, the problem is much wider than that. Any review or strategy developed needs to be widened to deal with all housing. We need to protect vulnerable tenants, no matter what housing sector they live in.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr F McCann: That includes the private rented sector, which escapes the scrutiny of many of these reviews. It is unregulated and in receipt of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money. I support the motion as amended.

Mrs D Kelly: I welcome the Minister's attendance at the debate, and I hope that he will be able to address a number of the issues raised by Members across the Chamber. I do not believe that there is much that any of us are in disagreement on in relation to either the motion or the amendment. It is something of a no-brainer to link poor insulation and poor heating with poor health outcomes. Some Members have made important contributions recognising the potential not only for health improvements but for job creation and reducing the carbon footprint.

I lend my voice to that of Mr McCann in using the Mount Eagles residents' plight as an illustration of houses that were built as recently as the past three to 10 years. I know that there has been correspondence with the Minister from the residents' association in relation to their particular difficulties. I appreciate that some of the remedies are within the gift of his colleague the Minister of Finance, who has responsibility for building control. There appears to be a strong argument for the improvement of building control regulations, particularly the inspection regime in and around the types of materials and levels of insulation used.

It is my understanding that in Mount Eagles, where 25 bags of insulation ought to have been used, only seven were found to have been used. The Minister will know that that scheme has been closely examined and investigated by scientists from Queen's University and the University of Ulster. So, as Mr McCann pointed out, it is not the case that it is only houses that are quite old and from early in the previous century that are proving to be difficult and in which heating is a drain on a family's finances; it includes some that were built as recently as three to 10 years ago. The Minister may well be aware that, under NHBC, insurance in relation to insulation covers only an 18-month period. That is something that may well be looked at in any review.

In relation to tackling fuel poverty in its broadest and widest sense, there needs to be a much more holistic examination. It is not enough to insulate and then to look at a boiler scrappage scheme. If we are going to do a house, we should try to do it in a holistic way so that when you leave each home, you leave it in the most energy-efficient circumstance that is available to that tenant. Therefore, Minister, if you are of a mind to look at reviewing the insulation, I ask that you do so not just in terms of warm homes or cavity wall insulation but look at —

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: I will.

Mr F McCann: Steven made a point, although he went round the world and ended up in Santa's grotto to make it.

He said that there was good practice elsewhere, and if we tapped into that good practice a lot of the problems would be resolved.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs D Kelly: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. Mr McCann is right. I believe that there are different regulations in England pertaining to the type of insulation materials and the inspection regime, which, I am sure, could be easily amended and introduced here.

As the Minister well knows, there are people who bought their house at the height of the market in good faith and are left with a home that is damaged because of condensation, damp and spores, particularly in the Mount Eagles project. They have been abused badly by the system and the failures within it. I do not know whether there is anything the Minister can do in speaking to his colleague the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, who is responsible for insolvency cases; I do not know whether there is any way in which residents can seek redress. I appreciate that it is probably at the back of a very long queue in terms of bankruptcy proceedings, but it may be something that the Minister could raise with his colleagues.

There is little to be added to this argument. As I said at the outset, it is something of a no-brainer with regard to trying to improve the welfare of our people and in job creation. I am keen to hear if the Minister will take forward such a review and what the parameters of that review and any other projects or pilot schemes that his Department is currently undertaking would be.

4.15 pm

Mr Kinahan: I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion and am happy to support it and the amendment. Like many others who have spoken, I have seen many of the problems of condensation and damp in houses. I praise my local Housing Executive for its excellent work, although it is sad that we have to put it under pressure at times. That is normally due to lack of resources.

The energy efficiency of a building and the efficiency of its heating source are often the difference between a household being in fuel poverty and not. As energy prices rise, improving energy efficiency is one of the few alternatives that can be used to offset a hike in fuel bills. Of course, there is also a significant health benefit from keeping a home warm. It is also worth highlighting, however, that, although the 2004 fuel poverty strategy included a target of eradicating fuel poverty, regrettably, the 2011 strategy did not.

Regrettably, the energy efficiency of many homes across Northern Ireland remains outdated, and, disappointingly, the problem is often much worse in the social rented sector than in the private and owner-occupied sector. There has been good progress with Housing Executive stock over recent years, but there is still much work to do. We know that double glazing has a huge impact on the efficiency of properties, so it was disappointing that it was mired in controversy earlier this year. We feel that the Minister's intervention caused the significant delay that we all saw threaten the livelihood of many installation firms across the Province. I ask him today whether he has achieved the scale of saving that he initially perceived.

Of course, as we have heard, there are ways to make a house more efficient other than changing the windows and, in many cases, the whole surrounds. The boiler replacement scheme has strong support from my party, particularly following the revision of its eligibility criteria, which opened it up to more working households. Although it happened a couple of years too late, in my opinion, it was better late than never. The Minister should also consider rectifying the problems that single-skin walls or "no-fines houses" present, and I am aware that he has already asked the Housing Executive to develop a programme in that regard. However, in the strongest terms possible, I urge the Minister to ensure that he handles that issue thoughtfully and openly. Will the Minister, therefore, tell us today whether he believes that he, his party or any of its elected representatives, including councillors, have had or could have any conflict of interest in the provision or advocacy of provision of insulation to external walls? The current Minister for Social Development has allowed himself to be surrounded by a cloud of suspicion, so I encourage him to tread carefully on the matter.

The warm homes scheme is the other issue that I will focus my remarks on. Although not applicable to social housing, it is the Department's primary policy for improving the efficiency of privately rented and owner-occupied low-income households. The annual target to install improvements in 9,000 properties has been met consistently for the past number of years. However, I suggest that the Minister, rather than resting easy in the knowledge that targets are being met, review the scheme to see whether there is a case for new ambitious targets or for even more fundamental reform.

My party has called for significant reform in the past. In 2011, we launched a policy document that called on the Department for Social Development to consider the Kirklees model as a potential way forward for the insulation of properties, social and private. In Kirklees, the warm zone scheme that ran between 2007 and 2010 was one of the biggest ever home energy improvement programmes in the UK. An often repeated fact is that, in the time that it took Kirklees to help over 50,000 households, the warm homes scheme in Northern Ireland helped fewer than 30,000 households for three times the budget. Therefore, Minister, while acknowledging the success of our scheme, I encourage you to consider what the benefits of reforming it would be.

I support the motion, and I support the amendment, although we must always be careful to ensure that we balance finding the environmentally sustainable way forward and the cost of giving people warm homes.

Mr Dickson: I thank Mr Easton and his colleagues for tabling the motion.

Insulation remains an extremely important issue given that, since 2009, the average price of home heating oil has increased by 62%. Gas bills in the greater Belfast area alone are up by 38%. We have the largest proportion of households using oil in western Europe, with some of the highest levels of fuel poverty.

A specific issue has been raised about problems with wall insulation, particularly condensation and damp. Reference was made to a number of housing areas where those problems are prevalent. In Northern Ireland, we are in a difficult position because most homes are exposed to high

levels of wind-driven rain, and most, if not all, forms of wall insulation seem to cause some risk of damp. As was noted — indeed, it received a great deal of publicity recently — insulation work in several housing areas was not completed properly and/or piles of damp insulation fibre were being found at the bottom of cavity walls. One would expect that insulation that was installed as far back as the 1980s or 1990s would start to deteriorate, but, when a home is 10 years old or less, serious questions arise about the material and the job that has been done. Perhaps the Minister could clarify whether there is any evidence that the insulation material itself is substandard or that the companies made false or misleading claims about the standard or effectiveness of materials in order to gain housing contracts. Are we simply looking at cases of bad workmanship? Have the homes been properly rendered? Has the insulation been installed at all? It is alarming to note stories of work not having been completed despite having been signed off as completed. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive needs to do an urgent audit of all properties in order to know for sure whether jobs that are registered as done have actually been done. What is the current check rate for that? There is also a role for building control staff. Building control fees are paid, but are inspections done, and are they thorough enough? There should be 100% checks to ensure that public money is spent on work that is actually completed and completed to a high standard.

The retrofitting of existing housing stock can improve energy efficiency and create and sustain jobs in the construction sector. A lot could be achieved with a coordinated and ambitious approach that effectively implements a range of energy-efficient measures. Cavity wall insulation is only one of those measures. It has been demonstrated, for example, that loft insulation can provide substantially more or better insulation than even that of cavity walls. As of 2012, the Minister confirmed that 60,000 Housing Executive stock needed to have their loft insulation brought up to a 150 millimetre standard, a standard that, I understand, has correctly been increased in size since then. Nearly 15,000 houses are waiting for double glazing. It is clear that we have a long way to go before we see all housing stock meeting appropriate energy efficiency targets.

Should alarm bells also be ringing in the private sector and among both ex-Housing Executive stock owners and anyone who has had cavity wall insulation fitted? Is this yet another scandal waiting to happen?

Alliance will support the motion today, but we would also welcome further clarity about how sustainability factors into the proposer's views of cost-effectiveness. We support Mr Agnew's amendment, which makes it clear that sustainability and value for money must run hand in hand. So, too, must the truth. We need to know what work was done and what was not done.

Mr Campbell: Like everyone else, I support the motion as amended.

Fuel poverty has dogged society in recent days, principally for the reason that was probably outlined best by the Member for North Down, which is increasing fuel prices. Recently at Westminster, at Prime Minister's Questions and throughout the nation, the issue of how best to manage the cost during a cold winter, particularly for

homeowners and even more so for the elderly, has been the major issue.

It is true to say that, for example, the Scandinavian countries — Mr Agnew mentioned Finland — have exceptionally expensive but excellent high-quality insulation, whether it is triple-glazed windows or really high-specification cavity wall and roof space insulation, which means that the basic main heat source is minuscule. The quality of the insulation is so high that only a very small amount of heat is required to heat the home. The problem, of course, is that the provision of that exceptionally high-quality insulation and all those extra measures is extraordinarily expensive. Nonetheless, it works, and if it works we should endeavour, so far as we can, to replicate that type of scheme. Other Members have mentioned the warm homes scheme. I have been a strong supporter of that scheme and, so far as it has gone, it has been very effective. However, we need to get more resources to make it more effective.

I take issue with the Member for North Down. I am not targeting him; it is just that he said a few things that I oppose. He offered some mild criticism of the NISEP scheme, which is due to end at the end of November. Again, it is an excellent scheme because anyone over 70 years of age on an income of less than £576 a week — how many senior citizens do we know who earn more than that? — can get free loft insulation up to 300 mm, free cavity wall insulation, a free hot water tank jacket and free low-energy lightbulbs.

Mr Agnew: Will the Member give way?

Mr Campbell: If he is going to recommend that everyone should take it up I will definitely give way.

Mr Agnew: Absolutely. I have promoted the warm homes scheme and the NISEP scheme to my constituents, and I agree that they are of value. My point was more about the efficiency of having the NISEP scheme, the warm homes scheme, the boiler replacement scheme and the double-glazing scheme. We need a more coherent, strategic approach to housing infrastructure and energy efficiency.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Campbell: Thank you for that. You should listen to these words, because you probably will not hear them very often: I agree with the Member for North Down. *[Laughter.]* We will have to get those words recorded for ever and a day. I agree with him if he is talking about a coordinated approach.

This is an exceptionally important issue. Over the next four or five months, we will all come across dozens, if not scores, of elderly people in our constituencies who will be faced with the conundrum that we all know is just a cliché but has a high resonance: heat or eat? It is a very real problem that will be faced particularly by elderly people. I commend the Minister for the steps he has taken in recent years. Whatever difficulties there are in front of him, I am sure that he will grapple with them and overcome them. However, we have to try to get the resources that are necessary to put in place very significant insulation in the homes of vulnerable people in communities across Northern Ireland. I strongly support the motion, and I hope that it will get the unanimous endorsement of the Assembly

so that we can see a much better future, particularly for those vulnerable elderly people.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I support the motion and the amendment. Most things have been said at this stage in the debate but I have some points to make.

It has been only about four years since the Saville report told us that we had among the best social housing in Europe. Of course, the retention of that standard, and particularly the decent homes standard, was predicated on the provision of adequate maintenance. Unfortunately, that has not been happening in many areas. There are huge gaps in provision, which Mr Easton mentioned. Obviously, if you do not have proper insulation, you will have a lack of heat retention.

4.30 pm

We have increasing fuel poverty. The warm homes scheme and the boiler replacement scheme have been mentioned, and they are effective. However, they could be more effective, and they need to be targeted at the people who are most deserving of them. Some 70% of social housing here has oil-fired central heating. Therefore, if those homes are not insulated properly, the cost can be prohibitive. Over 2,000 older people in the North have died of cold-related illnesses from 2003 until now. There is continuing dampness, which causes health problems. In the past, I have had arguments with the Housing Executive, because, if you had Niagara Falls in your living room, it would still tell you that it was condensation and do very little to alleviate the problem. Older houses in rural areas are more difficult to insulate. Some do not have cavity walls, so it becomes increasingly difficult to deal with the problem.

Some very interesting information has come from the Mount Eagles Ratepayers Association. It says that a report was presented to Minister McCausland in which academics from the University of Ulster at Jordanstown (UUJ) confirmed that, after retrofitting of cavity wall insulation — extraction of insulation and then refilling — in two properties, there was a 30% improvement in heat and comfort levels. Homeowners also reported that the mould had not returned and that their homes were significantly warmer and retained the heat for a much longer time. At present, there is no energy efficiency scheme available to remedy defective cavity wall insulation. Rightly, therefore, the academics are saying that an innovative solution is available whereby the old defective insulation is removed by vacuum and refilled using the latest grey bead cavity wall insulation. That may be something for the Minister to consider. Benefit cuts will mean that the most vulnerable will find it increasingly difficult to heat their home. Therefore, proper insulation is more important.

Mr Campbell mentioned the free services available. However, I make the point that, no matter how well insulated your house is and no matter how well it works, if you cannot afford to put fuel into your tank, the only thing that the insulation will do is retain the cold. That is an important point worth making. If the personal independence payment replaces the disability living allowance and up to 20% of disabled people lose their disability living allowance, more and more vulnerable people will suffer.

In my constituency a few years ago, there was a pilot scheme to introduce and build passive housing. That would have meant that houses were built with the whole insulation agenda properly in mind. Unfortunately, the Housing Executive ran out of money at the time, so the scheme did not progress.

Mr Campbell also mentioned Scandinavia. I talked to people who were involved in the warm homes scheme and went to Scandinavia to see passive housing. When it was -25° outside, the houses were so well built that the minimum of heating was needed. Obviously, there is a bigger outlay involved, but it is worth it in the long run. If the money is put into that and proper cognisance is given to what might happen if those houses were built, we would not have the same problems. Nevertheless, we have to bear it in mind that, although there have been some increases in the use of insulation, people in social housing still have health problems and problems with heating. They are still suffering from fuel poverty. You cannot divorce fuel poverty from poverty. Again, I reiterate: benefits cuts can only increase poverty and fuel poverty.

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):

First, I want to thank all the Members who contributed to the debate. If my response fails to address any specific points, I will, of course, write to them separately.

I welcome the opportunity to respond to the motion. At the outset, Members will be aware that one of the commitments in the Programme for Government is to improve the thermal efficiency of Housing Executive stock and to ensure full double glazing in properties. I intend to see that commitment achieved by 2015.

By way of background, I thought that it might be useful to reflect on the history of the Housing Executive's stock. At its inception in 1972, the Housing Executive inherited a large stock of existing properties from the then local councils and the Housing Trust. Those dwellings included properties that were built of solid wall, aluminium panels, concrete orlits and cavity wall construction.

During the next 24 years until 1996, the Housing Executive continued to increase its housing stock by constructing newbuild housing of varying construction types. In the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the construction industry began to acknowledge the benefits of good insulation in homes for reducing heat loss. Therefore, in the early 1980s, the Housing Executive introduced cavity wall and roof space insulation into its standard specification for all newbuild housing. However, the requirement for cavity wall insulation was not made compulsory in building regulations for newbuilds until the early 1990s, which is approximately 10 years after the Housing Executive introduced it as standard.

Turning to the theme of the motion, I will cover some recent developments regarding the insulation of its properties that the Housing Executive has been involved in. For example, the Housing Executive recently provided external wall insulation to three rural cottages outside Coleraine. That cost just under £13,000 a unit and included 200 millimeters of external insulation, new doors, windows, rainwater goods and fascias, and warm-deck roofs to two of the properties with a side extension. It is now monitoring the dwellings' performance over the coming winter season.

Following on from that pilot scheme, the Housing Executive is currently at the start of a larger and more

detailed analysis of its no-fines concrete properties. It was approached by the Building Research Establishment (BRE), which is facilitating the latest round of the Technology Strategy Board research and development funding titled 'Scaling up retrofit of the nation's homes' to ascertain the Housing Executive's willingness to participate as a partner. It considers that the Housing Executive's mix of stock and technical challenges, such as lower densities, the gas/oil network, fuel costs etc would give the proposal a unique selling proposition.

BRE is keen to have a project in Northern Ireland focusing on no-fines, solid-wall homes, as there are some 5,600 in Northern Ireland and a total of 300,000 such homes across the United Kingdom. That has generated more impetus due to the ongoing government debate in Northern Ireland. The Technology Strategy Board is to invest £4.5 million to stimulate significant cuts in carbon dioxide emissions from existing homes. Its aim is to allow consortia to radically improve its retrofit products to bring about greater take-up in the market.

The primary objectives of the project are to achieve a 60% reduction in monitored annual energy costs in heating and electricity; the usage of a package of measures with a total average payback period of five years; and on-site delivery that is 25% quicker, with an improvement in both quality and health and safety performance. A consortium has been formed to establish the best solution to improving the Housing Executive's no-fines concrete stock of some 5,000 dwellings through the use of external insulation to improve the dwellings' thermal efficiency.

The issue relating to no-fines stock seized my attention when I first became aware of it. I asked the Housing Executive earlier this year to urgently develop such a programme for all houses of that particular construction, prioritising those properties that are most in need. The project, which is due to start in a matter of a week or so, will look at providing external insulation to seven no-fines properties in Antrim. The outcome will be to provide a new policy for energy-improvement measures for this type of construction. It is hoped that that solution can be rolled out across the United Kingdom, where there are over 300,000 such properties.

The project, called S-IMPLER, has four aims: increasing occupant understanding of retrofit health and financial benefits; reducing solid wall housing retrofit costs; developing building information modelling; and generating monitoring data on actual building performance.

The solutions to be considered will be coordinated by the Housing Executive's in-house no-fines working group.

I also propose to visit some homes in Germany next month to see at first hand how the successes achieved there in tackling such issues might be used here in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive has advised me that a retrofit scheme in Loanda Crescent, Newry, is at the planning stage. That will evaluate other means of retrofitting different environmental standards and contribute to the overall no-fines strategy.

Regarding cavity wall insulation, a recent report from the University of Ulster, Jordanstown, that was commissioned by a commercial entity, which, I might add, has a commercial interest in the manufacture and supply of blown beads, suggested that there may be a problem

in some dwellings where mineral wool or fibre-based insulation was installed. The report suggested that, where blown fibre has been provided, the fibre settles in the cavity owing to insufficient insulation being installed at the right pressure, that is, not to British Board of Agrément (BBA) standards. The university report dealt only with fibre-based insulation and resulted from desktop research and an examination of one property. It recommended further extensive studies on the issue, which I think were necessary.

The South Eastern Regional College undertook that further work, based on the report, and inspected 100 properties, including owner-occupied, Housing Association and Housing Executive stock, with the same result. The report noted that the problems are historical, dating back to insulation schemes of the 1980s and 1990s, and can be attributed to factors such as inadequate insulation being pumped into the cavity; insulation being pumped at an inadequate pressure; poor workmanship and supervision; and inspection methods in the 1980s and 1990s not being as advanced as today.

The Housing Executive therefore decided to commission its own research into the area to undertake a minimum of 300 technical surveys of its dwellings. Those surveys, which are being carried out by the South Eastern Regional College, because it won the tender, should determine whether the cavities have blown fibre, loose bead, bonded bead, insulation board or other, and identify the current condition of the insulation. The surveys began in October 2013 and will complete in March 2014. Until they are complete, the Housing Executive has no way of knowing whether there is a wider problem with cavity insulation and, if that is the case, the extent of it. The Housing Executive will obviously carry out an evaluation of the results to determine whether there is substandard insulation in its properties and will develop whatever action plan is indicated with new strategies and policies.

It should also be noted that this is not an issue that is unique to Housing Executive stock or, indeed, to Northern Ireland. Failure of insulation types, if confirmed, would affect all housing tenures and apply throughout the UK.

At the same time, some properties in north Down have been included in an external cyclical maintenance scheme and will have their cavity insulation checked. The consultant has been briefed, and insulation survey results are anticipated in mid-December.

As we take this matter forward, which I decided to make a priority some time ago, it is important, as I am sure Members will agree, that any progress that is made or any actions or initiatives that are taken are evidence-based and that it is imperative, therefore, that we carry out the sort of research that I indicated is being carried out. It would be possible to move forward on the basis of anecdotes, stories that we have heard or individual experiences that we have had, but it is important that we get some good, solid information to provide a basis for moving forward.

To summarise, with the ever-increasing cost of fuel in Northern Ireland, I am absolutely committed to doing all that I possibly can to ensure that social houses are insulated to a high standard to significantly improve thermal comfort for tenants and their families and to help to address fuel poverty.

There have been considerable improvements over recent years. Just last week, I visited some new homes that are just being completed in the Village area of south Belfast. We spoke to the residents already living in those homes to get their account of the difference that the energy efficiency measures have made. It was a bitterly cold day when we were there, and when I came in out of the cold, I was certainly impressed to feel the warmth in those homes. I have also taken the opportunity to see some retrofit schemes across in GB, and the impact of those on the energy efficiency of homes was truly remarkable. The anecdotal evidence from the tenants, over a period of a few months, was that the installation had caused no real disruption to them at all and that the difference to the energy efficiency of the home was remarkable.

4.45 pm

I want to pick up on a few points that Members raised. In spite of all that I have outlined, Dolores Kelly spoke about some dissatisfaction with the progress that has been made. We have boiler replacement, the warm homes scheme, double glazing, retrofitting and the area-based approach, and a number of those initiatives only started in recent years. If there is dissatisfaction with what I am doing, I am sure that she is equally dissatisfied with the work that was done in previous years or, in some cases, had not been done by my predecessors.

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Minister give way?

Mr McCausland: I have to decline that approach because I want to make a number of points.

Danny Kinahan spoke about delay in the installation of double glazing. That was due to the fact that one company took out an injunction against the way that the Housing Executive was dealing with the matter. That has now been resolved. We are now back on track, and we will be able to meet our target of having all Housing Executive properties double-glazed by 2015. He asked whether there were savings to be made because of changes in the way that the windows are installed. Yes, there are bound to be savings because you avoid the problem of having to pay redecoration grants, except in a limited number of cases, because of the way that the windows are installed, which is exactly the same manner in which the windows would be installed in my home or the home of any other person around this Chamber.

There was a certain amount of begrudgery in his contribution, and, in some cases, I think that he was speaking in code, because I was not clear what he was talking about. He referred to the Kirklees model. I am sure that the Member will be pleased to hear this, because it is obviously news to him: we are taking forward an area-based approach in partnership with local councils and spearheaded by the excellent research and work that we commissioned with the Housing Executive from Professor Christine Liddell of the University of Ulster. That is about the evidence-based approach that we need to have moving forward. The area-based approach is one of our more innovative approaches and one that will certainly pay off in the longer term.

Stewart Dickson asked whether we can check any evidence that insulation material is substandard and that installers did not do a proper job. The Housing Executive carries out substantial checks on work that is undertaken.

It is perhaps not as complete as I would like, but maintenance officers have been retrained, and inspections are now much more comprehensive than they might have been previously. The Member will welcome that.

Dolores Kelly made a point about the Mount Eagles residents and the problem with inappropriate and ineffective installation. I will certainly ensure, moving forward, that any review will look at all elements of insulation, including standards of materials used. We want to deal with the issue as comprehensively and effectively as possible, and the sort of initiatives that we have been bringing forward — boiler replacement, warm homes, the area-based approach through Professor Liddell, the double-glazing, the retrofitting — all show that we are taking a holistic approach to the issue of energy efficiency.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Could the Minister please bring his remarks to a close.

Mr McCausland: We want to see good practice, and the progress that we have made is extremely encouraging and appreciated by the people who are the beneficiaries.

Mr Agnew: I welcome the debate and, indeed, the consensus across the Chamber in support of the motion and the amendment. I have to say that I welcome the Minister's closing comments: his commitment to the evidence-based approach, the area-based approach and the work with Professor Liddell. The Kirklees model is certainly something that my party is proud of. We had a strong presence on the council that implemented that scheme. It is a model of good practice that we can look to and try to emulate. It was ultimately the basis of the green new deal proposals, which, unfortunately, were rejected. However, from a lot of what the Minister says, it sounds as though his Department might be taking forward some of that work under a different name. I am not wedded to the name; I am very conscious that, in Northern Ireland, anything with "green" in the title — including the name of my own party — can sometimes prove divisive.

However, I recommend to the Minister approaches other than those which his Department is taking. For example, today I met up with a cooperative called Futureproof NI, which I advised to contact his Department. The cooperative presented to me a proposed pilot retrofit in Moyle which, it believes, could be funded for around £250,000 a year. Those approaches can and should be looked at and, where local people and companies have the initiative to take forward some of that work, we should, if their business case stacks up, support them how we can.

I made reference before — and I will try not to go around the world again, Mr McCann — to Finland. Finland and Scandinavia in general have been mentioned by a number of Members. Again, it comes back to the evidence base. They have 100% cavity wall insulation, 100% loft insulation, 100% floor insulation and 100% double glazing. The evidence is there that winter-related deaths are lower, per head of population, than in Northern Ireland despite much colder temperatures. There is absolutely no doubt that better, more energy-efficient housing leads to better outcomes for those who live in it.

In the discussion across the Chamber between me and Mr Campbell the Member for East Londonderry, by a strange act of goodwill, he agreed with me. It is not actually his first time, though he said that it may be the only time that it has happened here. I believe that he did it once on 'The

Stephen Nolan Show' as well. So embarrassed is he that he has left the Chamber.

However, we do have various schemes: the boiler replacement schemes, the double-glazing scheme, the warm homes scheme and the NISEP. We should look at ways in which we can bring together that funding into a pool, and look at deep retrofitting on an area-based approach, because double-glazed windows in a house that does not have cavity wall insulation will in themselves be ineffective; and boiler replacement in a home that does not have other insulation will be ineffective. It is only when you bring those measures together that you get genuine energy efficiency and the true benefits to the homeowner.

We must go further than simply the Housing Executive stock and, as others mentioned, the social rented sector, and, indeed, privately owned homes. We have to treat this as part of our public infrastructure and look to get to the level where Finland is, where we have 100% of the aforementioned insulation and energy efficiency measures in place across our housing stock, because we all move houses and, ultimately, we are all the responsibility of this Government. Fuel poverty, at 44%, goes beyond the social housing sector or just the lowest paid. It runs throughout our society, into all income brackets and housing tenures, and it has to be an issue that we tackle.

Ms P Bradley: As we approach winter, our thoughts turn to heating our homes and the cost that we will incur in that. We already know that those on low and fixed incomes are often hit proportionately harder by the onset of cold weather than the rest of society. I congratulate the Department on the work that it has already done to try to address fuel poverty in line with the Programme for Government.

As well as addressing the financial side, it is imperative that we ensure that when people heat their homes, they get the full benefit from the heat, and, in turn, the most heat for the least amount of money. People on low incomes are more likely to be on the higher tariffs of pay-as-you-go meters. Those are, rightly, designed to prevent them from amassing large bills, but they are not always the most economic way to heat a home. Therefore, it is imperative that the heat that they pay for stays in their home and does not filter out through uninsulated walls or lofts. As my colleague Mr Easton highlighted, it is a worrying fact that people aged 75 and over are most likely not to have full cavity wall insulation and most likely to have zero insulation. Those living in low-income households, in which every penny is likely to count, are also at higher risk of having no wall insulation.

I am pleased to note the research that shows that it is not all doom and gloom. The Department has made improvements to loft insulation and double glazing in Northern Ireland Housing Executive homes, which is no doubt helping those on low incomes. We must strive to further that good work and ensure that the materials used are of a good standard and fit for purpose. Studies have indicated that insulation is beneficial but that efficiency is not the only factor. The materials used have to be of the best quality and affordable: loft insulation, for example, must be of a certain thickness. The Department also has a duty to the public to ensure that such materials are value for money and, where possible, environmentally sustainable. That is a big ask, but I am confident that the Minister can lead his Department in delivering it.

I now turn my attention briefly to what other Members had to say. Mr Alex Easton, in proposing the motion, said, quite rightly, that insulation was only the tip of the iceberg. I want to put on record my thanks to Alex, who brought the issue to my attention some time ago. I had always known about the poor quality of insulation in homes in Northern Ireland because of the number of people calling to my office and because of my home as well, but Alex brought me some really hard evidence showing that it is a massive problem for all sectors in Northern Ireland. Alex also highlighted the link between cold homes and the lack of insulation. He said that it was clear that that was why our homes were so cold. He stated that investing in cavity wall insulation would have a massive impact on people's lives, socially and economically. What better time to reduce fuel poverty by showing leadership and supporting the motion and amendment?

Mr Agnew, in moving his amendment, spoke of the increasing cost of energy. He said that there are more winter deaths in Northern Ireland than in Finland, even though the temperature there is much lower. He also stated that housing infrastructure is in a much worse state than our roads and yet we spend more on roads than on housing. He said that the materials used should complement the owner's health to ensure that there are no adverse effects for people with respiratory disease. I agree. Also important to me is biodiversity. He spoke well about that and said that biodiversity should be considered in products for the future.

Mr McCann spoke in support of the motion and highlighted the fact that we should also look at other sectors, including housing associations. He said that we should not forget the thousands of homes purchased by developers. That gives serious grounds for concern. I agree with Mr McCann that it is not solely the tenant's fault. I, like him, have been to homes where I have been told that it is the tenant's fault because they have not opened their windows. I have seen children's bedrooms, living rooms and other rooms covered in spores of mould. It is not always the tenant's fault, and it should not be laid at their feet.

Mrs Kelly is absolutely right that this is, as she put it, a "no-brainer". She, like Mr McCann, brought to our attention the Mount Eagles issue and said that it needed to be given serious attention. She also made the very good point that energy efficiency should be holistic. There is no point in doing one thing and not another; it must be all-encompassing.

Mr Kinahan praised his local housing association for its work. He highlighted the fact that many homes remain in fuel poverty. He strongly supported the boiler replacement scheme, and I agree with him. If only that had come in some time ago, we would be in a better place now. He also highlighted the fact that we have to find a balance between environmental issues and value for money, and I think that everyone is agreed on that.

5.00 pm

Mr Stewart Dickson questioned why housing that is just 10 years old should have such poor cavity wall insulation, and he called into question the workmanship and inspections on those properties. He is absolutely right. He also said that we still have a long way to go on the issue.

Mr Campbell said that fuel poverty has come to the fore because of the increase in fuel prices. He said that

we should possibly endeavour to replicate successful schemes in other countries. He brought up the issue of NISEP and its value, and then he and Mr Agnew had a little debate between themselves. We could feel the warmth and the love in the Chamber, which was very welcome. I am glad that Mr Agnew mentioned that he had agreed with you one other time in the past, so that is good. There has been agreement twice, so we have made lots of progress there. He also commended the Minister on the steps that he has taken over the years but said that we will need to go further to support vulnerable people in our community.

Mr Brady talked about the success of the warm homes scheme and the boiler replacement scheme. He said that more needs to be done and that we cannot leave it at that. He talked about the difficulties with older houses in rural areas. He made the important point that it does not matter how well insulated your home is if you do not have the money to put oil in the tank. If that is the case, what good is it to you? He also said that you cannot divorce poverty from fuel poverty, which is extremely true.

I also thank the Minister. He gave examples of recent developments from his Department. I believe that he is committed to doing everything that he can to ensure that all social homes are insulated to the very highest standard.

In a modern Northern Ireland, we have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our society do not have to make the stark choice between food and heat. Food is as important to maintaining body temperature as heat is. By helping to combat fuel poverty, we will have an impact on services such as the health service as people, hopefully, will be less at risk from illness caused by poor diet or the cold. This is a classic example of how spending in one Department can cut costs in another, and I am delighted and glad that the Minister has shown leadership in ensuring that his Department is doing everything possible to ensure that it is helping the most vulnerable people in our society. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, as the largest provider of social housing, should also be leading the way in such matters by ensuring that houses are heated well and that the housing stock will last longer. That is a win-win situation for all involved.

Question, That the amendment be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly calls on the Minister for Social Development to initiate a review of the range of insulation materials used in Housing Executive homes, to assess the heat retention properties of the materials used and to ensure that they are environmentally sustainable and provide value for money over their lifespan.

Adjourned at 5.03 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 12 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Eddie McGrady

Mr Speaker: It is my sad duty to inform the Assembly of the death of Mr Eddie McGrady, a former Member here for South Down. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my personal condolences to his family circle and to all his party colleagues on their sad loss. I came to know Eddie McGrady extremely well; he and I served on the first Policing Board. He was one of life's true gentlemen, and politics in Northern Ireland will be much sadder with the loss of Eddie McGrady.

Mr Rogers: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your kind words. Unfortunately, the party leader and deputy leader cannot be here this morning. Like all members of the SDLP, I was saddened to hear of Eddie's passing last night. He was a giant among giants in politics and a man who was totally dedicated to peace and the creation of a lasting prosperity for all our people.

He was born and bred in Downpatrick. He sat on Downpatrick Urban Council in the 1960s and 1970s and then moved on to Down District Council, where he sat until 1989. In 1970, he was a founding member of the SDLP, later serving as its first chairman. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, he won a Westminster seat in 1987, when he defeated Ulster Unionist Enoch Powell.

His passing is a loss not only to his friends, family and the SDLP but to all the people of this land. We have lost a great democrat, a true visionary and a patriot. His huge contribution to politics in the North led not only to the shaping of our history but to the foundations of our future.

Over his years in public life, Eddie provided invaluable assistance, representation and genuine advice to thousands of constituents, irrespective of their political opinion or religious background. South Down and the whole of the North remain indebted to Eddie and what he did for the peace process. He was a man of highest integrity, considerable courage and a deep faith. He brought sharp political insight to everyone he dealt with, whether that was dealing one-to-one with local councillors or with the complexities of an emerging new police force.

His words, delivered by our party leader, Alasdair McDonnell, at the weekend, ring true to the man he was. He said:

"Don't mourn for me ... Just get out there and finish the job."

My thoughts and prayers are with his children, Paula, Jerome and Conaill, as well as the wider family circle, his sister, Marie, and brother, Malachy, and of course his deep friend and political colleague Margaret Ritchie.

When I spoke to Eddie last Wednesday night, I said a prayer with him, because I knew that it would not be long. He will be deeply missed as a close friend and colleague. He has left a lot for Margaret, Karen and me to do to try to fill his shoes in South Down. May he rest in peace.

Mr Wells: I concur with everything that Mr Rogers has said.

I first met Eddie McGrady 31 years ago at a meeting of tenants in Saul Street in Downpatrick. I have worked alongside and with him ever since. He was a gentleman and gentle by nature. What impressed me about Eddie McGrady was that he was scrupulously fair in his representation of all the people of South Down. He was held in the highest respect. Be it in unionist areas, nationalist areas or areas with ethnic minorities, Eddie McGrady was the man people knew they could turn to if they had an issue at Westminster. From Cranfield to Crossgar, from Kilkeel to Kilcoo, everyone had the highest respect for Eddie McGrady.

I happened to be chairing a meeting in Downe Hospital on what turned out to be his last day as the Member of Parliament for South Down. I saw him coming into the back of the meeting and I realised that Parliament would be prorogued in a few hours' time and that this was Eddie's last meeting. I called him up to the front to say a few last words, and there was hardly a dry eye in the house. Eddie clearly was going to miss representing the people of South Down. Indeed, even when he stood down as MP, he would ring me and ask whether he could attend site meetings that I was organising. I understand that that was quite a regular occurrence, such was his dedication.

He will sadly be missed by all. He was a political giant and I find it a privilege to have known him for so long.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle agus tá muid ag smaoinéamh ar chlann Eddie McGrady ag an am brónach seo. We are thinking of Eddie McGrady's family at this very, very sad time.

He provided 23 years of service to the people of South Down. Obviously, Eddie and I had different views on many things. We shared views on many other things. What I can say is that I always found him to be a very courteous and fair colleague and enjoyed working with him on a range of issues. I met him fairly recently at the opening of a school and we had a bit of craic together. I know that he will be missed by his colleagues in the SDLP. He will be missed

by other colleagues and by all of us in the House. I pay tribute to the service that he provided to the people of South Down over the past two and a half decades.

Mr Nesbitt: I heard of the passing of Mr McGrady while I was in my office at tea time yesterday. When I was leaving the building, I bumped into a senior member of the SDLP who was keen to inform me that Mr McGrady had passed away; he was unaware that I knew. The look on their face and their tone of voice left me in no doubt that this was a matter of huge sadness for the family that is the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

We all agree that, by character, Eddie McGrady was a gentleman. By political conviction, he was a colossus in promoting the aspiration of a united Ireland, but doing so at a time when he, Seamus Mallon and John Hume in particular stood resolute in saying that that aspiration was sullied by violence and those who tried to promote the cause through the use of the bomb and the bullet.

On his political skills, what more need we say than that he unseated Enoch Powell? Enoch Powell. It took more than one go, but he did it. What a testament to the skills of Eddie McGrady as a politician.

As a journalist, I always enjoyed interviewing Eddie McGrady. I will not give too much away, but there was a time during the negotiations that led to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement when Ulster Television ran a sweepstake on when an announcement would be made. Eddie came to our interview point, and I asked him whether he would like to join the sweepstake. He did and he won. Either he had inside knowledge or some influence over what was going on in those talks.

I am sorry that my colleague Danny Kennedy MLA is not here to pay tribute. However, when we heard the news last night, he was very keen to join me in issuing a statement that expressed the sadness of the Ulster Unionist Party.

Finally, Eddie McGrady gave 50 years — 50 years — of his life to public service. What a fantastic testament to Eddie McGrady. The Ulster Unionists pass on our sympathy to his family and to the SDLP.

Mr Ford: I also want to add a few words of sympathy. Mr Speaker, you started by describing Eddie McGrady as a "gentleman", and I think that every Member who has spoken has used that term of him. Undoubtedly, he was a gentleman. He was man of firm principle. If you met him and talked with him, you could not doubt that he was a nationalist by conviction, yet he was also absolutely determined to ensure that devolution worked in this place and to play his part in ending the violence of the early days of his political career by ensuring that we could move forward constructively and progressively together.

Sean Rogers and, indeed, Jim Wells spoke about South Down from their different perspectives. I cannot do that. However, the fact that Eddie was able to achieve the vote that he did with the background that he had in a constituency such as South Down showed that he could attract votes from a diverse range of people. He was able to do that because of the concern that he had for his constituents and the work that he did for each and every one of them.

I will remember him personally from the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement and from those happy days of the first Assembly when things did not run as

smoothly as under your jurisdiction, Mr Speaker. The deals that were done in the corridor behind the Speaker's Chair generally involved Jim Wilson from the Ulster Unionist Party and Eddie, and sometimes I got in if our votes were needed. Those deals were a tribute to the man. You knew that he was a gentleman and that if a deal were reached, it would be stuck to. He was a man of his word in everything that he did, and, in that respect, we have lost a great presence in the Chamber as well as elsewhere. On behalf of the Alliance Party, I extend our sympathy to his children, his family circle and, in this place, his colleagues in the SDLP.

Mr McCallister: I join colleagues in paying tribute to Eddie McGrady. I first met Eddie when I was a farmer who needed help with a grant application about 20 years ago. Needless to say, Eddie sorted it out very satisfactorily indeed, and I am grateful to him. I got to know him significantly better when I was elected to the House in 2007 and he was still the Member of Parliament for South Down.

No doubt his colleagues in the SDLP will know what a true gentleman Eddie McGrady was, and others have spoken about that. The way in which he represented all the people in South Down was reflected in the enormity of his vote. No doubt the standing of the SDLP in South Down was helped enormously by Eddie and his tireless work for the people in the constituency. His nature was such that so many felt easy in his company and felt him easy to approach to get help with constituency matters and, certainly, easy to support at the ballot box.

He put in, as Mr Nesbitt said, 50 years of service. That is half a century of service. To someone as young as me, that seems like an awfully long time. When you think of how he served in the 60s and 70s on an urban council, then on Down District Council and as a Minister in a power-sharing Executive, you can see that that is tremendous. He did that almost 40 years ago. He also served for 23 years as the Member of Parliament for South Down. That is a huge service to South Down and to Northern Ireland, and it is only fitting that we respect that this morning.

10.45 am

On behalf of NI21 and my party colleague, Basil McCrea, I express our sympathies with the family, the family circle and his party colleagues in the SDLP. I spoke to his dear friend, now our Member of Parliament, Margaret Ritchie, this morning to pass on my thoughts and sympathies. Margaret Ritchie will certainly miss Eddie, as they had a deep friendship for many, many years. We think about Margaret, the family circle and all his colleagues in the SDLP. He was a towering figure in our political life in South Down and across Northern Ireland, and we will miss him very much.

Mr Allister: I join in expressing condolences to the McGrady family on the loss of Eddie McGrady and to the SDLP on the loss of someone who was so pivotal for so many years in the structures and successes of that party.

My path and that of Eddie McGrady crossed most when I was a Member of the European Parliament. A number of times, we had occasion to discuss fishing issues in particular, because, as Member for South Down, Mr McGrady obviously had an abiding interest in the fishing industry. It was an industry seldom without difficulties to

be resolved. I must say that, in all my dealings with him, I found him to be how others have described him today, namely the perfect gentleman. He was always most courteous in his dealings with others, evinced a very deep-seated interest in the needs of his constituents and left undone nothing in that regard that needed to be done.

Although our politics were distinctly different, I found it gratifying to have a good working relationship with Eddie McGrady, as the MP for South Down, particularly on those fishing issues. I left that experience with an enhanced opinion of Eddie McGrady the man. I can well appreciate the loss that will be experienced by those who knew him best. I join very much in adding my sympathy on his passing.

Matter of the Day

Devastation in the Philippines

Mr Speaker: Cathal Ó hOisín has been given leave to make a statement on the devastation in the Philippines that fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. If other Members wish to be called, they should continually rise in their place. All Members who speak will have up to three minutes. Members know that no points of order or other issues will be discussed before we conclude this piece of business.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat a Cheann Comhairle, agus gabhaim buíochas leat as an tseans a bheith ag plé leis an ábhar tábhachtach seo. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for accepting this Matter of the Day.

I do not think that anybody could fail to have been affected by the television pictures that have been coming through from the Philippines during the current disaster. The situation is ongoing and threatens to get worse over the next number of days and weeks. When it comes to some of these national disasters, the unfortunate thing is the roll-out in which the rescue services and aid can reach the affected areas. We have seen that during hurricane Katrina, the south-east Asian tsunami and, a couple of years ago, during the Haiti earthquake. That is a challenge that faces us all, and that challenge will face us now in the Philippines.

Irish people have a very close association with the Philippines. Many of those involved in our care homes and our hospitals are from there. They are hard-working and diligent people. Indeed, our system depends very much on their contribution. They work hard here to send money home and to keep their families there, and I think that we have a natural affiliation with the people in the Philippines.

I will go back to my issue about aid. I believe that it is incumbent on places such as the Assembly, our councils and elsewhere to put together some type of prime funding that might be able to be accessed more quickly and immediately in the case of natural disasters. We also have the expertise of rescue teams in this part of the world, and we should examine how we pull people together to exercise that when these things happen.

I will put it into context. In one city that is smaller than Belfast, current estimates reckon that there are 10,000 people dead. It is incumbent on us to look at how best we can assist those people and the wider public to assist in the Philippines. I know that a number of motions will come in front of councils this evening, and I hope that they will go through. I also hope that they will receive support from this House.

Mr Poots: I had the opportunity yesterday of visiting people in the Ulster Hospital who are over here from the Philippines and talking to them about the devastation that has taken place in their country. Some of them have had homes affected, and staff in the health service have lost loved ones. It is very important that we support the people from the Philippines at this time. We have found that they have been of huge support to us. Our nursing officers travelled to the Philippines in and around 2000 because there was a shortage of nurses at that point. Those people have admirably filled the gap over the years, and many of them have chosen to stay in Northern Ireland because of the welcome that they found. It is important that we

provide them with the care, support and duty of care that the service has to its staff. That will happen through giving appropriate time off, counselling support and other support that can be given. I know that the staff will also rally round their colleagues, whom they greatly appreciate. The Filipino people have a very caring attitude; it is incumbent on us to demonstrate the caring attitude towards them that they have demonstrated towards our people, whom they have supported in the health service.

Mr A Maginness: I am grateful to Cathal Ó hOisín for raising the issue. The Filipino community has contributed much to us. Its care and its sensitivity, particularly to those who are ill or aged and infirm, has become legendary in our community. There are many Filipino people living in the constituency of North Belfast. I have engaged with them on many occasions and have always found them to be a friendly, hard-working and long-suffering people, because this natural calamity is not new to the Philippines. They suffer most dreadful climatic changes and, as a result, similar disasters have occurred in the past, but this one is particularly difficult. Some 10,000 people have lost their life. In Ireland, in the North of Ireland, we should respond generously to any appeal that will be made by the Filipino community here, whether it be for money, materials or some other sort of support, we should give it because they have served us, and we, in their distress, should serve them.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Member for bringing the matter to the House. As in any political institution on planet Earth, this is a moment to break from the daily focus on our own issues and to put them into the perspective of what has happened in the Philippines, which is on a scale even greater than the Christmas tsunami of a few years ago. The scale of the death and destruction, particularly the number of young people who have lost their life, is absolutely horrific.

It is the way of Northern Ireland that we are connected. Philippine nationals work here in Northern Ireland, and there will, undoubtedly, be Northern Irish people working in the Philippines. I know that there is a tendency — it is not the greatest tendency of human nature — to sometimes put a value on life depending on how far it is from where we are and to believe that lives and their value lessen the further away the incident is from our focus of attention. However, this is a moment, I suggest, to focus on our common humanity and a time to rally round, because the survivors have certainly survived the incident, but now they face an equally fatal threat of disease, not least because of the shortage of clean drinking water and other issues. This is a moment for all of us, in common humanity, to do what we can for the survivors.

Mr Lyttle: I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on the issue. It puts the challenges that we face in the House into stark perspective. We have heard that typhoon Yolanda has claimed 10,000 lives and displaced some 600,000 people. It is my understanding that the UN has launched an appeal. The UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs has said that people in the Philippines are absolutely desperate and there is no food or water in many areas. As an MLA for the constituency of East Belfast, I know that there are many people from a Filipino background working in our emergency services and serving our community. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those people today.

It is my understanding that the UK Disasters Emergency Committee, bringing a number of charities together, will launch an appeal on television this evening. People can donate via dec.org.uk or by texting "DONATE" to 70000. I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister has announced an increase in aid to the area. I join Members in extending the support of the Alliance Party.

Mr McCallister: When you hear the numbers and try to get some sense of the scale of the tragedy and disaster, you know that the impact that it will have on the country is overwhelming. I have already been in contact with constituents of mine who have family who are affected. They are struggling to get in contact and to know what they can do from here and whether their loved ones are even safe. That is a very difficult situation for any family to be in. As colleagues have said, that is a very difficult situation to face.

I am encouraged that our national Government are at least responding and that the Disasters Emergency Committee has set up a fund, because people can do something practical by giving and helping to support that. A mammoth effort is required, not just regionally, nationally and on a European level but throughout the world, to help out the people who are so badly affected in the Philippines. I am pleased that here we are all keen and willing to support that and to play whatever small part we can in that, Mr Speaker.

11.00 am

Ministerial Statement

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary

Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): Go raibh maith agat, Mr Speaker. In compliance with section 52C(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, we wish to make the following statement on the seventeenth meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in plenary format, which was held in Armagh on Friday 8 November 2013. The Executive Ministers who attended the meeting have agreed that we can make this report on their behalf.

Our delegation was led by the First Minister, Peter Robinson MLA, and me. In addition, the following Executive Ministers were in attendance: Minister Durkan, Minister Farry, Minister Foster, Minister Hamilton, Minister Kennedy, Minister McCausland, Minister Ní Chuilín, Minister O'Dowd, Minister O'Neill, and junior Minister McCann. The Irish Government delegation was led by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, and the following Irish Government Ministers also attended: Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, Minister Noonan, Minister Quinn, Minister Howlin, Minister Bruton, Minister Deenihan, Minister Rabbitte, Minister Coveney, Minister Fitzgerald, Minister Varadkar and Minister of State O'Dowd.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Our meeting in Armagh was very positive and constructive, and it provided a valuable opportunity for us to focus on some of the key challenges that we face. Last week's meeting came a few short weeks after the very successful investment conference in Belfast and the Global Irish Economic Forum. The Council recognised the value of both events, and I have no doubt that they will provide an important platform on which to build economic growth and prosperity.

Obviously, because of the challenging times that we live in, much of the focus of the plenary was on our shared economic challenges. In a broad-ranging discussion, the Council welcomed the fact that some signs of recovery had been apparent over the last number of months. The Council was advised that the Irish Government is on track to exit the EU/International Monetary Fund bailout by the end of the year. The various actions being undertaken by each Administration to help support the economic recovery were explored, and the importance of attracting foreign direct investment and ensuring adequate access to credit within the banking sector in each jurisdiction was recognised.

Both Administrations recognise the value of international trade and have a series of trade visits planned to attract additional investment. The Council also recognised the role that cross-border trade can have in helping local companies grow their markets. InterTradelreland's recent report highlights the fact that, for many companies wishing to export goods, experience in cross-border trade is a valuable stepping stone and can be a significant influence on the development of additional export markets.

In recent weeks, there has been much discussion about the role of banks. The Council welcomed the role of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) in making

lending available to develop assets across the island. Ministers were advised that disposal of assets from NAMA would be handled sensitively, with a view to supporting the economic recovery in both jurisdictions.

Tourism has an important role in growing our economy. At the meeting, the contribution of the tourism industry was recognised. In particular, Ministers acknowledged the success of initiatives such as "The Gathering" and the City of Culture celebrations which have been taking place in my home city over the last year. We must build on those successes, and Ministers looked forward to the hosting, next year, of the Giro d'Italia, which will have a cross-border element, as cyclists travel from Armagh to Dublin. The race provides a real opportunity to work together to maximise tourism benefit.

Growing our economy is an important priority, but it is also important that all levels of society benefit from that. In this context, the progress made to date under the Building a Prosperous and United Community economic package was discussed, and Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the package.

As we move forward, we must continue to support and build our communities. Of relevance to this important work was a conference exploring the role of sport in reconciliation, which some Ministers attended in Armagh last Friday before the meeting. At the plenary, Ministers endorsed the collaboration between sporting organisations across the island to tackle racism, sectarianism and division.

We also took the opportunity to discuss the importance of European funding to both jurisdictions, and current collaboration to draw down such funding was welcomed. Further possibilities for collaboration to draw down funding that are mutually beneficial continue to be explored.

The future Peace IV and INTERREG V funding programmes were discussed. Proposals for the structure of the programmes are being developed, and both Administrations look forward to reviewing these.

Ministers remain supportive of the concept of the Narrow Water bridge and have asked for urgent analysis of the issues involved. They remain conscious that the priority is not to lose the EU funding involved.

Youth unemployment continues to be of concern to both Administrations. Following our discussion at the last NSMC plenary meeting in Dublin, we received a further update on that important topic. The Council was briefed on the levels of youth unemployment in both jurisdictions, discussed the European Union's youth guarantee and agreed that, where possible, both jurisdictions should collaborate to tackle the issue. The Council also welcomed the ongoing collaboration between the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Social Protection to tackle youth unemployment. The NSMC will receive a further update on the issue at a future meeting.

The North/South Ministerial Council joint secretaries provided us with a comprehensive report on the work that has been ongoing in the Council since the previous plenary meeting in July. Ministers welcomed the following key developments. The business planning process for the establishment of a new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin Area Hospital is progressing on time, with construction due to commence in spring 2014 and completion scheduled for summer 2016. Progress continues to be made on

the agreed work programme on child protection. The programme, which was agreed in July 2012, promotes shared learning, contributes further to improving practice in specific areas of safeguarding and child protection and focuses on five work streams.

There is continued progress on the common agriculture policy following the political agreement reached between the European Council and the European Parliament on the Multiannual Financial Framework and between the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament on CAP reform. There is successful high-level engagement between officials in the two Education Departments. Progress will be reported to a future NSMC meeting on agreed cooperation in the educational underperformance and good school leadership work streams.

The terms of reference for an all-island research study into the airborne pollution from residential smoky coal combustion has been approved. Both jurisdictions continue to share knowledge and experience in the delivery of road safety strategies and measures to further reduce road casualties.

In December 2013, InterTradelreland will launch a free, multiplatform app for Horizon 2020. The app provides a centralised online portal of key information and allows users to communicate with one other instantly, as well as facilitating partner searching and promoting opportunities to get involved in existing project consortiums.

Development on post-2013 territorial cooperation EU programmes is progressing. It is intended that operational programmes for Peace and INTERREG will be presented to the Executive, the Irish Government and the Scottish Government — for INTERREG V only — during 2013, with formal submission to the European Commission following the agreement of the relevant Governments.

A major new campaign that focuses on childhood obesity was launched by Safefood in October 2013. The campaign focuses on helping parents to tackle the everyday habits associated with excess weight in childhood and maintaining awareness of the health challenges posed by excess weight.

The Loughs Agency partnered Tate Britain to supply oysters harvested in Lough Foyle at the Turner Prize events in Derry, including the event launch, which over 1,000 guests attended.

Foras na Gaeilge is proceeding with implementation of the new core funding arrangements with effect from 1 July 2014, in line with the NSMC decision on 10 July 2013. The two agencies of the language body continue to collaborate on governance and promotional issues and the delivery of a joint programme of activities to mark the 400th anniversary of plantation charters.

The new chief executive of Waterways Ireland, Ms Dawn Livingstone, took up her position on 29 July 2013. Development work on the Ulster Canal is progressing incrementally. All planning approvals have now been obtained from Cavan County Council, Clones Town Council, Fermanagh District Council and the Planning Service. The interagency group is exploring funding options.

The final aspect of the joint secretaries' report was the progress on the improved tourist visitor numbers to date in 2013 and the launch of the £15.7 million Tourism Ireland autumn promotional campaign in September 2013. The

September–December period traditionally yields as much as 30% of overseas tourism business.

Ministers also acknowledged the ongoing work on the reform of the North/South bodies' pension scheme.

On the St Andrews Agreement review, the Council agreed, following discussion, that Ministers would consider their priorities in their respective sectoral areas. The outcome of this exercise will be considered at a future NSMC institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review.

We had a useful discussion on the north-west gateway initiative, which is being reviewed. Ministers look forward to receiving a report on the outcome of the ongoing stakeholder consultation exercise at a future NSMC institutional meeting.

Ministers agreed to review the North/South consultative forum at a future NSMC plenary meeting.

Finally, the Council approved a schedule of NSMC meetings that were proposed by the joint secretariat, including an NSMC plenary meeting in June 2014.

Mr Nesbitt (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

I thank the deputy First Minister for his statement. My question relates to youth employment. The deputy First Minister is probably aware that the World Health Organization recently said that the issue of people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is a time bomb waiting to explode. I ask the deputy First Minister to put himself in the shoes of someone who is not in education, employment or training. What comfort would he take from the words of his statement and from the fact that:

“Youth unemployment continues to be of concern”?

He said that, following a discussion at the last meeting, there was another discussion about the issue and that this time they discussed the European Union's youth guarantee and agreed that it was a good thing that they should work on if at all possible. If you were a 17-year-old not in education, employment or training, what comfort would you take from those words?

Mr M McGuinness: Obviously, we are all very conscious here of the unacceptable rates of youth unemployment. This is sadly a feature of life, particularly during what has been a world economic crisis, throughout western Europe over the past number of years. The youth unemployment rates in places such as Greece, Portugal and Spain are through the roof. That said, the unacceptable rates that we have to deal with here have to be tackled. Work is ongoing on our Together: Building a United Community project, and officials are engaged in its design and the need to ensure that it is implemented at the beginning of next year. That will bear down on the NEETs challenges that we face.

In the European context, the current Peace III and INTERREG IVa programmes do not have specific priorities that focus on youth unemployment. The focus and priorities of future EU programmes will be developed, based on the identified needs of the eligible areas. No decisions on the content of a future Peace IV programme, for example, have been taken. However, actions to address training, education and employment will be priority considerations. The development of Peace IV followed an initial public consultation in autumn 2012, the results of which suggest that the new programme should have

a particular focus on young people and on providing assistance, youth activities and education for economically excluded young people.

The economic pact provides for an additional £50 million to Peace IV, which is linked, as I said, to an Executive commitment to seek to use it in support of the united youth programme in our Together: Building a United Community project.

11.15 am

Mr Moutray: I thank the deputy First Minister for his statement. With regard to the Narrow Water bridge project, can he confirm that the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) will be in a position to reallocate funding to other projects so that they can progress at this time?

Mr M McGuinness: Obviously, that was discussed during the event in Armagh. In the communiqué that followed the meeting, North/South Ministerial Council Ministers clearly expressed their ongoing support for the project. I remain fully supportive of the Narrow Water bridge project. I met the chambers of commerce in the area before the tender costs were announced, and they have briefed me on the very positive business and economic potential for the area if the bridge is built.

The SEUPB, the local councils and the Departments of Finance, North and South, should, I think, put together a proposal on the project for consideration by the Executive and the Government in Dublin, including all the available business cases and economic appraisals. I shall be meeting the local chambers of commerce and councils over the next week to get an update on the current situation from their point of view.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat agus go raibh maith agat don LeasChéad-Aire as an ráiteas sin. I welcome the statement from the deputy First Minister. Does he agree that the Narrow Water bridge project is a very good project for everyone in the Louth/Down area, that the chambers of commerce are representing every single community — Kilkeel, Warrenpoint and Rostrevor — and that the project went through a very rigorous process in relation to the SEUPB and came out at the top of the competitive process?

Mr M McGuinness: As I said, during the discussion that we had on Friday in Armagh, the communiqué made it absolutely clear that Ministers, North and South, are very supportive of the project. Obviously, it has had problems during the past number of months, but, of course, we all have to be problem solvers. Given that we are, in principle, very much in favour of the project, the effort now over the next short while, in conjunction with the SEUPB and all the stakeholders who have a very keen interest in what is a very important project for the area, is to focus attention on how to bring it to fruition.

Mr Attwood: I want to ask the deputy First Minister about the St Andrews review. Are you not concerned that, six or seven years after the review was first commissioned, it has yet to conclude? Are you not concerned that when a commitment was entered into at the last NSMC that a report would be brought forward to this NSMC that that did not happen? Are you not also concerned —

Mr Deputy Speaker: I think that the Member has asked two questions so far.

Mr Attwood: — that what we are now seeing is what the First Minister —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Mr Attwood: — has declared to be his view of North/South, reducing it to a letter, a phone call or a meeting?

Mr M McGuinness: We are very pleased to note that the part of the review relating to the recommendations specific to the North/South bodies is now effectively complete, subject to any further discussion at NSMC sectoral meetings.

The respective Finance Departments have concluded that the provision of Enterprise-scale shared services within the bodies is not feasible due to a lack of scale. However, they have recommended that the bodies should continue to share knowledge and expertise where it is beneficial to do so.

Work by the Finance Departments on the review of the financial memoranda is at an advanced stage. It is the aim of the Finance Departments to have the review completed by March 2014. With regard to terms of reference two and three, following discussions, the Council agreed that Ministers should consider their priorities in their respective sectoral areas. The outcome of that exercise will be considered at a future NSMC institutional meeting as part of the ongoing review.

At the meeting on Friday, a very clear signal was sent by both sides to the discussions that Ministers and Departments should accelerate and increase the level of contact between the Departments. That is something that everybody has signed up for, and I expect that there will be an acceleration and increased engagement between Departments to see what more can be done. Obviously, as the Member well knows, taking forward those matters has to be subject to agreement by all sides.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the deputy First Minister for his statement. He might be aware that a wide range of victims and survivors of loyalist, republican and state violence in Northern Ireland gathered in the Assembly yesterday to state clearly their view that they have been failed by this Executive in their calls for truth and accountability. Did the deputy First Minister and the First Minister take the opportunity to discuss how the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government could work together to deliver a comprehensive, victim-centred process on dealing with the past, and if so, what specific ideas were considered?

Mr M McGuinness: As the Member has heard me and others say ad nauseam over the past 15 years, one of the greatest flaws in the peace process has been the approach to the past, of which there are many narratives. There is a huge responsibility on all of us to deal with that. That is why we agreed, and I am very pleased that the Member's party was part of that agreement, to ask a highly esteemed diplomat from the United States, Richard Haass, to chair multiparty talks. He, supported by Meghan O'Sullivan, has been involved in a wide-ranging engagement, and he has been talking not just to the parties but to the Irish and British Governments. We are all aware that the United States Government, through Vice-President Joe Biden, to whom the First Minister and I spoke in the aftermath of the appointment of Richard Haass, are taking a very keen interest in this work. I have to hope, along with all others in the process, that we will see a resolution to the issues of flags and parades

and that a way forward will be found on how we support victims.

Yes, I think that all of us need to hold our hands up. This has been a signal failure over the past 15 years. However, I hope that it is a failure that can be corrected over the next months, particularly if we can find a way forward before Christmas, in conjunction with the other challenges that Richard Haass faces. We have a duty and a responsibility to find that way forward. It will be very difficult, because there are different analyses and narratives about the past.

Mr Spratt: I note from the statement that there were discussions on European funding and collaboration between both jurisdictions. Can the deputy First Minister tell us whether the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) funding was raised when discussing transport issues? What is the possibility of substantial amounts of money being made available through that funding?

Mr M McGuinness: Those are part of ongoing discussions that officials are involved in. Of course, transport was a subject for discussion during the NSMC meeting. We are consistently looking for opportunities to draw down extra funding from Europe, and the targets that we set to increase funding by 20% are well on their way to being reached, specifically on how we can utilise whatever other opportunities are presented on the issue of transport and ensuring an easier way for transport to move around. Those discussions are continuing.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhúochas leis an LeasChéad-Aire as a ráiteas agus as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. Can the Minister give us an update on the review of the St Andrews Agreement?

Mr M McGuinness: In answer to the question raised by Alex Attwood, I made it absolutely clear that it is still a work in progress. I understand that some people might not be satisfied with the answer that has been presented, but, as always, Members will appreciate and understand that taking these matters forward is a matter for all-round agreement. We are consistently working to see the situation progressed. I think that the commitment that was made during the meeting to increase contact, Department by Department, and to liberate Departments to do more was a very progressive development. It was quite interesting that, during the press conference in the aftermath of the NSMC plenary meeting, the Taoiseach declared that, from his perspective, it was the best North/South Ministerial Council meeting that he had attended.

Mr G Robinson: What comparisons have been made between the output of the Northern Ireland economy and that of the Republic of Ireland economy?

Mr M McGuinness: During the meeting, we obviously had the opportunity to talk about the challenges that both of us face. Some of those challenges are different. The Government in the South have been dealing with specific economic challenges over the past while, but they indicated at the meeting that they hope to see an improvement. Similarly, in the past number of days, those who analyse the situation here have provided further positive reports of an upturn in our fortunes. I am always very reluctant to talk about green shoots; people who have done that before did so to their cost. However, I think that there is some sense that things are beginning to be on the up. Even our reports over the past eight months

on the reduction in the number of people who are on the unemployment register indicate that we are continuing to go in a positive direction. Alongside that, we obviously need to support our local entrepreneurs, who have been stalwarts over a very difficult period for our economy in recent times.

One area where there appears to be commonality is that, in the past short while, the Irish Government have been able to record important increases in foreign direct investment into the South. That actually corresponds with some very positive job announcements here in the North as well. Of course, the economic investment conference that the First Minister and I attended, and which the Prime Minister came to, was the best of the three such economic investment conferences that we have attended. So, there is considerable hope for the economy and considerable hope that foreign direct investment will continue to increase, North and South, which is good for all of us.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, agus gabhaim buíochas leis an LeasChéad-Aire as an ráiteas sin agus na freagraí go dtí an póinte seo.

Will the deputy First Minister provide a further update on the north-west gateway initiative and, indeed, the City of Culture in Derry?

Mr M McGuinness: Obviously, everybody is aware that the City of Culture year has been a huge success. We had a discussion on the north-west gateway initiative. At the meeting, we noted that the consultation with stakeholders on the north-west gateway initiative has been proceeding, and we look forward to receipt of a report on the findings of that consultation at the next NSMC institutional meeting.

Where moving forward with investment in the north-west is concerned, over the past number of years, there has been major investment in the region, and more is planned. The investment shows that we are committed to the north-west gateway initiatives. Key examples include the Peace Bridge, which has made an enormous difference to the city of Derry; the regeneration of Ebrington and Fort George, which are very powerful and positive developments; hosting the City of Culture celebrations; Project Kelvin; and the multimillion pound project to build the radiotherapy centre at Altnagelvin. We also discussed some of the major activities that are taking place in the north-west.

We are now in the last quarter of the City of Culture year, with major community events well under way. As a city with significant deprivation, Derry is harnessing the opportunity of much-needed investment to build on its strengths. What are those strengths? They are local people, music, heritage and digital technology, which all showcase the city to an international audience.

We are committed to ensuring that community-based activities are central, not just in 2013 but as part of a long-term legacy from the City of Culture. Although the following projects receive less national and international coverage, the Music Promise, Portrait of a City and local community cultural strategies are focused on delivering skills and opportunities. DCAL officials are engaged with Derry City Council and partners in the city to develop legacy plans that will help to achieve agreed targets up to 2020 and beyond. We do not view 2013 as a one-off but as the start of a long-term upward trend for the city, and it is vital that we ensure there is that momentum.

11.30 am

Mr Byrne: I thank the deputy First Minister for his report. In relation to promoting cross-border trade by InterTradeIreland, was the thorny issue of Strathroy Dairy's difficulties in marketing its milk products in the Republic addressed by our Minister, and does the deputy First Minister agree that the issue needs to be resolved to make sure that we promote more cross-border trade in general?

Mr M McGuinness: We certainly had a discussion on the National Dairy Council (NDC) campaign at the meeting, and the Irish Government listened very carefully to what we had to say. We expressed our concerns that the National Dairy Council campaign is an abuse of country of origin labelling. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment raised that issue with the Irish Competition Authority and with Irish Government counterparts, and she has also brought the campaign to the attention of the European Commission. We are also concerned that the NDC campaign contravenes the principles of the single market. It discriminates against consumers who are being denied the additional choice and benefits of market dynamics that come from the North and that would be provided by the North. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has received feedback from our dairy processing industry about the adverse impact that the NDC campaign is having on local businesses, and we are aware that the Dairy Council is threatening to take action in the European courts to stop the NDC campaign. It was discussed, and we are very concerned.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for his statement. Ensuring adequate access to finance was discussed at the meeting. How is the deputy First Minister making progress on that issue in Northern Ireland?

Mr M McGuinness: Access to finance is obviously of huge importance, and the whole issue of the responsibility of the banks to support businesses is an ongoing feature of our discussions, North and South. We all face similar problems, and both jurisdictions highlighted the availability of credit as important to support economic recovery. The banks' position is that demand for credit is low and that this is the main reason why lending is following. The data support that but only to a degree. However, they must be tested on that, and the Finance Minister's message to the business community is that anyone putting off applying for credit should step forward and, if they get turned down, should appeal. We also have no doubt that the costs and conditions attached to credit are contributory factors, and banks need to treat businesses reasonably. We strongly believe that it is acting as a constraint to our economic recovery, and it really is a matter that has to be addressed.

There will be a number of key actions this autumn to tackle issues relating to banks, and the economic pact's joint ministerial task force will hopefully give some focus to that work. Good progress was made at its first meeting. The Finance Minister has also recently met the Secretary of State, the British Bankers' Association and the Irish Finance Minister to discuss those issues. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Minister of Finance and Personnel have established an access-to-finance implementation panel on banking to work with us, the banks and the business bodies to progress the issues associated with access to finance that we have identified. That panel will bring independent eyes to what we think is important work. We will continue to press the banks.

Mr McCallister: Paragraph 14 of the deputy First Minister's statement mentions the progress to date on 'Building a Prosperous and United Community'. Could he detail what he feels that progress is?

Mr M McGuinness: The Member will be aware that we outlined for public consumption the very extensive projects that are included in the Together: Building a United Community strategy. We recognise that there is a wide range of issues to be dealt with in supporting the community and breaking down barriers. Obviously, the recent news about a new barrier going up in east Belfast is not good news, particularly in the context of our stated aim of bringing down the walls in Belfast over the next 10 years. However, I think that that is still an achievable, viable goal. As I mentioned in a previous answer, the challenges involved in finding employment for something like 10,000 young people is also hugely significant and important work. The whole issue of shared education is also important. We have seen that take a significant step forward, with the project in Lisanelly now beginning to take shape. Six schools in the Omagh area have now signed up to the whole concept of a shared education campus. I know that the Education Minister has big plans for other areas and that other areas are now focused on the prospect that they can avail themselves of support. There is also support for local communities with regard to urban centres.

A wide range of issues are outlined in the document, and I have no doubt whatsoever that the economic pact that we made with David Cameron, in conjunction with our Together: Building a United Community strategy, will have a dramatic effect as it rolls out. At the moment, it is all in its infancy. For many, it is still in the design stage. However, it is on course to make a real impact within the community.

Mr Anderson: I thank the deputy First Minister for his statement. I note that reference is made to the North/South Consultative Forum. In light of there being no Civic Forum in Northern Ireland, and no prospect of such a forum meeting, does the deputy First Minister accept that there is no prospect of the creation of a North/South Consultative Forum?

Mr M McGuinness: Every Member will be aware that the only way that we can progress these issues is by taking a united and agreed approach to them. There is no point in my airing the differing views that there are about this. Some people consider that, although the Civic Forum first happened in the early days of this Assembly, life has changed considerably since then, particularly with the influx of all sorts of other people who have come to our shores to seek a new life for themselves. We have a large representation of ethnic communities in the North. Many Members of the House are supportive of a Civic Forum and many are not. The North/South Consultative Forum is obviously affected by that. Until such times as we can get agreement, we are going to have to continue to make the case for it in the hope that, at some stage in the future, people will agree that it is a sensible way forward.

Mr Rogers: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answers so far. In this statement, there is a strong emphasis on economic recovery. Obviously, the Narrow Water Bridge project is something that will unlock the tourist potential and, indeed, the economic recovery of the south Down area. In answer to a question yesterday on the Narrow Water Bridge project, Mrs Foster said that the

issues lay with the Department for Regional Development (DRD) and the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). Considering that the Regional Development and Finance Ministers were at the Council meeting, is there any need for further analysis of issues? Do we not need to get to a commitment of funds to the Narrow Water Bridge project?

Mr M McGuinness: The Member knows that there was a very strong commitment from our Administration. There was also a strong commitment from Dublin. What created the difficulties were circumstances totally and absolutely outside our control. That has left us in a new situation, where proper protocols have to be applied. The important thing is that there is still a commitment to the project. The challenge is to see whether we can, in spite of the difficulties that we have faced over the course of the past number of months due to circumstances outside our control, see the project come to fruition. All the Ministers are very supportive of it, but we have to abide by the rules and regulations. We also have the SEUPB, councils on both sides of the border and the Irish Government involved with us. I hope that, in the course of the next while, a real effort will be made to analyse what happened and how that can be fixed.

Mr Dallat: I thank the deputy First Minister for his statement. I note that we have been harvesting oysters in Lough Foyle on a cross-border basis. I wonder whether anyone noticed that the Lough Foyle ferry service has disappeared after carrying up to two million passengers. Surely there must be food for thought somewhere that that ferry service in the north-west is as vital as the one in Strangford? Will the deputy First Minister cancel the notion that we are in a North Korea/South Korea situation?

Mr M McGuinness: Whenever circumstances, which are normally financial, impinge on important services for local communities, that can be a huge disappointment for people in County Donegal and County Derry. The challenge, as always, is to continually look at what more can be done. There are obviously important restrictions on how projects like that can be supported, through financial input and commitments. That said, if a service is being provided that enhances the tourist potential in the area, there is a challenge for Dublin and for us to look at whether the service can be restored. There have been other discussions, particularly in the past, around the connection between north Antrim and Scotland. I had high hopes that, when we had discussions on that in the past, we would have a necklace of support, from the likes of Scotland through to north Antrim, County Derry and on through to County Donegal. The problems are mainly financial. I think that we can explore whether more can be done to restore the service. I say that without having had any discussions with any of the Ministers who might be directly involved, but I undertake to do that.

Mr Allister: Since the plenary meeting in July, we have had the First Minister's wise and joyous U-turn on the Maze project, which has led to the halting of the peace and reconciliation centre. Was that discussed at the plenary session, or is that such a non-issue that it did not merit being discussed?

Mr M McGuinness: The peace-building and conflict resolution centre is a matter for the Executive and the Assembly. It is not a subject for discussion at the NSMC. It is more a matter between us and Europe.

Executive Committee Business

UK Intellectual Property Bill: Legislative Consent Motion

Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I beg to move

That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension of the Freedom of Information provisions in the UK Intellectual Property Bill on the protection of pre-publication research to Northern Ireland.

The Intellectual Property Bill was introduced to the House of Lords on 9 May 2013. It contains a freedom of information provision in Part 3 that requires a legislative consent motion if it is to extend to Northern Ireland.

11.45 am

The new provision emerged from the post-legislative scrutiny of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 that was carried out by Westminster's Justice Select Committee in 2012. This article protects research information held by public authorities that are subject to the Act, but, other than in Scotland, there is no dedicated exemption for information created during a programme of research. The Bill introduces a new exemption into the Freedom of Information Act to protect continuing programmes of research intended for future publication by public authorities. This will achieve parity with Scotland. The new exemption was recommended by the Westminster Justice Committee following representations made to it by the higher education sector. The coalition Government, in their response, accepted the need for a dedicated research exemption to ensure that public research bodies, including universities and colleges, would be able to protect their research findings prior to publication.

As well as providing public sector researchers with additional reassurance that their sensitive research information would not be exposed to premature release, the new exemption provides them with the opportunity to validate and analyse their research results before putting them into the public domain or before any related patent application has been filed. Indeed, the Intellectual Property Bill was chosen as the legislative vehicle for the new exemption because it relates closely to intellectual property, especially in its protection.

In detail, clause 20 of the Bill inserts a new exemption into the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for continuing programmes of research intended for future publication. The Freedom of Information Act section 22(a) exemption that will be created is a prejudice-based exemption, which means that there must be a likelihood that disclosure of information would cause prejudice to research interests. If harm or prejudice can be established, the exemption is engaged. Prejudice-based exemptions are also qualified exemptions, which means that a public interest test must be carried out. Therefore, although the aim of the provision is to protect research at a key stage, openness and transparency are safeguarded by the requirement to conduct prejudice and public interest tests. These tests will ensure that research bodies have a sound and rational case for withholding information.

Clause 20 has an almost identically corresponding section in the Scottish Act, with two minor differences. The

Freedom of Information Act section 22(a) exemption will require the exemption to be engaged if the information will or is likely to cause prejudice, rather than “substantial prejudice”, as in the Scottish Act. Section 22(a) will allow public authorities, under certain circumstances, neither to confirm nor deny that they hold the requested information, unlike the Scottish Act. These differences will ensure that section 22(a) is in keeping with the wording of our Freedom of Information Act while providing parity with the Scottish Act in the protection of pre-publication research.

Coalition Ministers fully consulted the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the proposed amendment to the Freedom of Information Act. As the provisions are of particular interest to the Department for Employment and Learning, the parent Department for the higher education sector, OFMDFM officials consulted colleagues in that Department. No issues were raised. Furthermore, the Assembly’s Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister was briefed on the new exemption, and its support was obtained.

I hope that I have sufficiently outlined the nature and scope of the provisions requiring the consent of the Assembly, and I commend the motion to the House.

Mr Nesbitt (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, at its meeting on 9 October 2013, was briefed by departmental officials on the freedom of information provisions contained in the UK Intellectual Property Bill. Officials advised members that clause 20 of the Bill created a pre-publication exemption that will bring the Freedom of Information Act 2000 into line with the equivalent Scottish legislation. The exemption will provide assurance to the higher education sector that sensitive research information will not be subject to early release. During the briefing, the Committee sought clarification that further education colleges would also be covered by the exemption. The Committee also requested examples of when the exemption could be used.

On Thursday 10 October, the Department responded to advise that further education colleges would be covered by the exemption. The Department also provided the Committee with further information on examples of when the exemption had been used in Scotland. However, the Department had to highlight that the exemption had not yet been tested in Scotland with the Scottish Information Commissioner and, therefore, it was not possible to be categorical as to whether the exemption was applied correctly or would have been upheld. That said, the Committee was content with the responses from the Department and went on, at its meeting on 16 October 2013, to agree that it was content to support the legislative consent motion.

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I appreciate the cooperation of Executive Ministers and the OFMDFM Committee’s prompt consideration of the issue. I would also like to thank the Member for his contribution. The freedom of information provisions in the Intellectual Property Bill seek to provide the higher education sector with additional reassurance that its sensitive research information will not be exposed to premature release. With your support, a consistent approach to the use of

the exemption is achievable. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension of the Freedom of Information provisions in the UK Intellectual Property Bill on the protection of pre-publication research to Northern Ireland.

Committee Business

Standing Order 20A(1)

Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures): I beg to move

In Standing Order 20A(1) leave out "first" and insert "last".

Go raibh maith agat a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee on Procedures, I am pleased to bring the motion to the House today. It proposes a single change to Standing Order 20A(1) relating to topical questions.

On 1 July, the Assembly agreed that a facility for asking topical questions of Ministers be introduced, and amendments to Standing Orders were approved. One recommendation included in the Committee's report on the subject was that a review of the process should be carried out no later than six months after its introduction. The Committee has therefore kept a watching brief on the new process since its introduction in September this year. After two full rounds of questions to Ministers, there is now sufficient data collected to allow the Committee to take an informed interim review and address any urgent issues that have been highlighted.

A number of comments, together with feedback and suggestions on how the topical questions process could be improved, have been received by the Committee. However, although those will be fed into the wider Committee review, one issue seems to have been raised consistently and to be of more immediate concern, and that is the purpose of today's motion. Comments suggest that a general concern had arisen that topical questions preceding oral questions leads to a risk of Members pre-empting or duplicating an upcoming oral question, which I am sure the Deputy Speaker has witnessed.

Having considered comments and the data available, the Committee on Procedures is of the view that many of the concerns can be addressed by altering the order in which questions are put to each Minister. The motion before the House reflects that view and proposes a simple change to Standing Orders so that topical questions are taken by the Minister during the last 15 minutes of the time allocated for questions for oral answer.

One issue with the motion is that amendments to Standing Orders usually take immediate effect. However, as Question Time has already been scheduled for later today, it may be more practical for any agreed change to be implemented only from 18 November, which is next week.

In conclusion, I remind Members that the proposed change brought to the House in no way affects the wider review that the Committee on Procedures will conduct of the topical questions process, which will, it is hoped, help ensure that topical questions become an even more effective way to challenge and scrutinise Ministers. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr McCarthy: I am happy to row in behind the Chair of the Committee. I support the proposals on the table.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Trevor Clarke to conclude and make a winding-up speech on the motion.

Mr Clarke: I do not think that there is any need to make a winding-up speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, given that only one other Member spoke. However, like others, I know that

the issue was brought before the House and that Members were made aware of the process. Members were quick to criticise how that process was rolled out, but they had the opportunity to comment at the outset. The Committee has listened to the concerns raised, and I am sure that we all recognise the problems with having topical questions before Question Time as opposed to after. I commend the amendment to Standing Orders to rectify that wrong.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

In Standing Order 20A(1) leave out "first" and insert "last".

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 15 minutes in which to propose and 15 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members called to speak will have seven minutes.

Ms Boyle (The Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee): I beg to move

That this Assembly takes note of the following Public Accounts Committee reports:

Committee Reports

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report (NIA 43/11-15)

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners (NIA 45/11-15)

Report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute (NIA 48/11-15)

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11 (NIA 58/11-15)

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings (NIA 64/11-15)

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009-10 and 2010-11 (NIA 88/11-15)

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts (NIA 99/11-15)

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts (NIA 102/11-15)

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools (NIA 116/11-15)

Report on Invest NI: A Performance Review (NIA 109/11-15) and the following Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda of Reply:

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners

Report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009-10 and 2010-11

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools

Report on Invest NI: A Performance Review.

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. It gives me great satisfaction to move the motion today and to take the opportunity to share with you and the House the work of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). I must recognise the independence and evidence-based work of the Audit Office in giving the Committee a strong base from which to take a bird's-eye view of government.

I have been Committee Chairperson for over a year and a half now. In that time, I have heard the Committee described in many ways as I underwent initiation in the lore of the Public Accounts Committee: it is the watchdog; it is the Rottweiler; it is the guardian of the public purse; it is a paper tiger. I do not know why it is seen as such an animal. It is a media glare and a beacon into dark corners. In ways, it is all those things. The Committee is at its best in a system such as ours, with an independent Audit Office and high standards of stewardship of public money. However, we cannot be complacent. Public financial government is at its most effective when all the participants are thinking, eager and striving for excellence: the auditors, the Committee members, the secretariat, the accounting officers, the civil servants. We can really make a difference if our recommendations are well measured and are implemented properly and promptly. We can really make a difference if public money is spent as carefully and thoughtfully as private money is. We can really make a difference out there if it is all weighed up against waste and lost opportunities.

Although the Committee was very displeased with four memorandums of reply (MORs) some time ago, the standard of response and the level of acceptance of recommendations has been very encouraging over the past year. We will continue to monitor that as measure of the system's effectiveness.

12.00 noon

My experience in a rural constituency makes me even more aware of certain realities in the limits of public funding. I live in a valley of winding roads and small settlements, where everyone helps one another, where the unemployment and suicide rates are rising and where local services to support mental health and community resilience are threatened and depleted. In my experience, public money often touches lives by being lacking. So, when I read of fraud —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. There appears to be a mobile phone in the Chamber. Will Members check that their mobile devices are turned off? I invite the Chairperson to continue.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. When I read of lofty projections and unrealistic business cases of maladministered reform projects and an over-reliance on consultants by public bodies whose culture resists transparency and good governance, I wish desperately for some learning to take place. I cannot help thinking of the benefit that my constituents could get from that public money.

I want to shine a light into the dark corners to reveal what went wrong and what must be learned. I want public services, which touch so many people, to demonstrate care as well as efficiency, and I want Departments to learn. For that reason, I have chosen to speak about patient safety and progress on reducing the Government's reliance on consultants

I wish to refer, first, to the Committee's follow-up report on the use of external consultants, which was completed in June 2012. The report looked into the use of external consultants in the Civil Service here and at the Department of Finance and Personnel's (DFP) good practice guidance. The Committee was pleased to find that, in contrast to a previous investigation on the use of external consultants in 2008, there had been a significant reduction in expenditure in this area, from £42 million in 2006-07 to £14 million in 2012, and that the level of compliance with DFP guidelines had improved. However, over a six-year period from 2005-06 to 2010-11, Departments, including agencies, non-departmental public bodies and health trusts, spent more than £150 million on external consultancy. It was also found that there are still many examples of poor practice across the public sector when it comes to recruiting external consultants.

One example was the Account NI consultancy project. That was a reform initiative in the NICS that was devised to introduce a centralised accounts system. The original contract value was £970,000. The final total was £9.6million and, further, it was delivered four years late. That money was spent on external consultancy recruitment. It was clearly a project that had begun to spiral out of control and, in effect, it presented an open chequebook to the external consultants to ensure that the project was completed. That was clearly a financial overrun that was not helped by a distinct lack of competition in the recruitment processes of the consultants. DFP, however, did not accept that it was an overrun. Rather, a representative from that Department said:

"it was an elephant rather than a horse."

This is just one example that shows failings in the Department to implement good practice and to follow appropriate procedures to ensure that value for money was achieved. The Committee found that 40% of contracts ended up costing more than was initially stated. Further contracts were found to have been extended, sometimes repeatedly, which caused great concern to the Committee.

The preparation of robust business cases by Departments is vital when considering contracts to ensure that maximum value can be achieved from the money that is spent. It was shown that DFP has improved in that regard. However, that element was missing from a number of projects, and the poor quality of those that were produced was concerning to the Committee. That was a vital oversight when it came to the recruitment of external consultants and was a key factor in explaining why there was no justification for the way those consultants were recruited. It is of intrinsic importance therefore that DFP and other Departments work on improving that.

Value for money can also be measured through post-project evaluations. The Committee found that there is room for improving the way in which those evaluations operate to enhance the quality of their work and make them more useful to Departments. DFP has been encouraged by virtue of its position to exert its influence on that matter.

The Committee also stressed the fact that single-tender actions should be the exception and not the rule at all times. That should have been the case when it came to external consultant recruitment. The C&AG's report found that one in five of the contracts it looked at was awarded through a single tender. That should not have happened.

The Department failed to ensure that all the necessary steps were taken to ensure that maximum value for money was achieved, and the result was a cost of millions to the public purse.

The Committee recognises that, on some occasions, it is necessary to bring in expertise from outside. The intention of that is not only to bring in specialist skills to assist with projects but to have a transfer of skills from those experts to the permanent staff, which in turn should further reduce the necessity for such vast numbers of external consultants being called upon in future. Projects that require external consultants should be designed to facilitate that. It was found that two thirds of contracts were let without any documented evidence on whether opportunities for skills transfers existed or could be put in place.

The Committee noted that, since the previous hearing on this matter in 2008, there has been a marked improvement in the way that the Department operates when it comes to recruiting external consultants. However, any improvements, while welcome, must be made in the Department to ensure that the greatest value for money is achieved.

The PAC conducted an inquiry into the safety of services provided by our health and social care trusts. That is a very important and emotive topic, as we all expect and deserve health and social care services to be delivered safely. That, however, cannot be guaranteed by the health and social care sector. Indeed, each year, the health and social care trusts report around 83,000 adverse incidents. Those are incidents that could or do result in the harm or even the death of a patient or client. However, that is not the complete story. The Department informed the Committee that under-reporting of incidents continues to be widespread, particularly in the acute sector.

Each year, around 250 adverse incidents are classified as "serious". In almost eight years, up to March 2012, there were 2,084 serious adverse incidents, including 813 deaths in circumstances relating to those incidents. While the deaths may not necessarily be a reflection of issues with the care delivered — for instance, 488 of the fatalities reported related to suicide — the Committee considers that the numbers of deaths suggests that the standard of care being provided still requires continued close scrutiny.

The Committee was disappointed by the Department's continued reluctance to undertake research to estimate the potential level of harm caused to patients and clients. Without robust estimates of the extent of harm, we cannot say that we have safer care than we did 10 years ago or that we have a sound basis for setting priorities for harm reduction efforts going forward.

In the Committee's view, there are some health and social care systems and practices at odds with the open, fair and learning culture to which the Department aspires. We were shocked to discover that nurses or any medical staff would have reservations about raising concerns about safety. The Department and trusts must do more to embed a widespread culture of safety in which honest reporting is encouraged and genuine learning can take place.

In respect of patients and clients, the Committee was disappointed to learn that, in less serious cases of adverse incidents, the individual will not always be well informed. We felt strongly that the sector needs to be more proactive in obtaining feedback from patients and clients to identify

areas for potential improvement or to highlight good practice, and the current reporting of adverse incidents needs to be enhanced and made publicly available to enable the public to assess the relative quality across the service providers.

The Committee considers that achieving substantial improvements in patient safety will also require a management information system that captures data on all adverse incidents and near misses and uses that information to design care delivery systems. While the Committee noted the Department's plans to introduce a new regional adverse incident learning management information system, with a pilot scheduled for 2014, we are concerned that, prior to its full introduction, comprehensive information on adverse incidents will continue to be unavailable. Furthermore, the Committee remains unconvinced of the need to develop a stand-alone, specific management information system when a national reporting and learning system has been operating across the NHS in England and Wales since 2003.

A small number of those who are dissatisfied with the treatment or care that they received from the sector will take legal action to obtain an explanation of, or an apology for, their experience or seek financial compensation for an injury suffered as a result of their experience. The latter can have significant financial implications. In five years up to March 2012, it has cost the Department £116 million. The Committee considers that further action is required to speed up the claims handling process and that serious consideration is given to the feasibility of developing formal dispute resolution procedures as an alternative to litigation.

In conclusion, while it is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of harm to Health and Social Care patients and clients, the challenge for the sector is to ensure that its patient safety systems minimise the risk of harm and to take steps to maximise the competence, knowledge and skills of health and social care professionals.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw her remarks to a close, please?

Ms Boyle: I must recognise the independent, evidence-based work of the Audit Office in giving the Committee a strong base from which to take its view across government. The Committee has 11 members; it is not just me. We are working well together, and we are all keen to do the best that we can.

Mr Easton: I rise to speak on the PAC's report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's management of response maintenance contracts. The report raises very serious concerns about the capability and competence of management in the Housing Executive over a number of years, particularly at a senior level. It also highlights significant and serious breakdowns in corporate governance and accountability in one of Northern Ireland's major non-departmental bodies.

The Public Accounts Committee met on 12 September 2012 to consider the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's management of response maintenance contracts. The witnesses were: Mr Will Haire, permanent secretary of the Department for Social Development (DSD); Dr John McPeake, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE); Mr Jim Wilkinson,

director of the housing division in the Department for Social Development; Mr Gerry Flynn, director in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Mr Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General; and Ms Fiona Hamill, Treasury Officer of Accounts in the Department of Finance and Personnel.

In taking evidence, the Committee focused on three main areas: management of response maintenance contracts; whistle-blowing, investigations of breaches of discipline and reported suspected fraud; and corporate governance and accountability.

12.15 pm

The Committee found that, during the report, there had been serious weaknesses in contract management in the Housing Executive over many years and this had been clear to senior management. However, the management regime failed to take the necessary and timely action required. For example, contracts were inappropriate, out of date and not fit for purpose; recommendations from the Comptroller and Auditor General aimed at addressing shortcomings in contract performance were totally ignored; management placed too much emphasis on a partnership approach and not enough on scrutinising the work done by the contractors; and senior management failed to equip staff with the skills to manage response maintenance contracts. As a result, many district maintenance teams were not delivering the required standard of service and were failing to challenge the poor performance of contractors. There were serious flaws in how jobs were selected for inspection, how inspections were carried out, the timeliness of the inspections and how the results were recorded and reported. There were also widespread and systemic weaknesses in the setting and using of key performance indicators. It is very likely that performance data was being manipulated and that reports were actively withheld from the board or audit committee or not fully responded to.

Despite a clear warning from the PSNI in 2006 about the inadequacies and weaknesses of its systems, the Housing Executive did nothing. That undermined its ability to effectively manage its contracts and guard against and tackle fraud. There is a real concern that the weaknesses and failings identified in response maintenance are systematic and extend into other areas of the Housing Executive, such as planned maintenance, kitchen replacement, heating schemes and land deals.

The Committee made the following recommendations:

"In the Committee's opinion it is vitally important that both the Department and Housing Executive use the bedding-in period for these new contracts to critically evaluate how they are working in practice. The Committee recommends that emerging lessons are shared with the Housing Executive's Board and the wider public sector through the Central Procurement Directorate within the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Northern Ireland Procurement Board.

The Committee recommends that detailed information on the results and timeliness of inspections is reported to the Housing Executive Board and Audit Committee who must also assure themselves that payments are being made promptly to all contractors.

This is not a recommendation that the Committee should have to make. However, given what has taken place the Committee is compelled to recommend that senior management within the Housing Executive, together with the Board, recognises and upholds the Corporate Assurance Unit's independence from the operational divisions, and ensures that it continues to be protected and that its work is not undermined.

In light of what has transpired within the Housing Executive, the Committee recommends that the Central Procurement Directorate's review of the accreditation process for Centres of Procurement Expertise should also address the need to improve the level of contract management skills within the public sector in Northern Ireland.

The Committee recommends that the Housing Executive and the Department undertake the necessary investigations across the Housing Executive's business areas to establish the full extent of the contract management problems and the potential exposure in financial terms; and ensure that weaknesses are identified and eradicated."

The Committee also recommended:

"that senior management in the Housing Executive must send out a clear message to staff that the organisation is not a cold place for whistleblowers".

It also recommended:

"that the Housing Executive should be alert to former employees taking up employment with a firm or contractor providing services to the Housing Executive, and should ensure that there are no conflicts of interest or inappropriate working relationships involving former employees and current Housing Executive employees.

The Committee reiterates that it is the responsibility of a sponsor department to regularly review its processes for gaining assurance on sponsored bodies' management of risks to ensure that effective controls are in place. The Committee recommends that departmental Governance Statements provide confirmation that this has been done."

The Committee also recommended:

"that the Department publicly reports on the outcome of its review of the progress being made to implement the recommendations from its governance review as soon as it is completed. The Committee also expects the Department to continue to monitor progress and report annually on this."

The Committee welcomes the Department and the Housing Executive's commitment to introduce the substantial changes needed to improve governance, accountability, contract management and value for money. However, the Committee considers that the Housing Executive has nothing to be complacent about. Action is required to tackle the systematic weakness in governance and contract management that has been exposed.

Although proposals to restructure the Housing Executive have been announced, that should not be seen as an opportunity to slow down or suspend the essential

programme of change that is under way. The Committee expects the necessary changes to be implemented quickly.

The Committee also looks to the Department of Finance and Personnel to ensure that the lessons from the report, alongside those identified by the Comptroller and Auditor General and through the DSD reviews, are promulgated to and acted on by boards, audit committees and senior management across the public sector.

Finally, I pay my sincerest tribute to the Public Accounts Committee Clerk and staff for their guidance and organisational skills, which have led to such an effective report.

Mr Rogers: I welcome to the Public Gallery ladies from Ballymartin and the group of schoolchildren, who will be particularly interested in this one.

I wish to speak about the inquiry into improving literacy and numeracy achievement in schools. I declare my interest in education, first and foremost as a parent but also as a teacher, a former school principal and as a member of the Education Committee. The report is extremely important for two reasons: education forms the foundations on which we build a strong and vibrant economy, and numeracy and literacy are the cement that make those foundations strong. The Public Accounts Committee is about accountability, value for money and ensuring the very best in service delivery. I will put that in an educational context: a good school is child-centred, has high-quality teaching and learning practices, has effective leadership and is an integral part of the community. However, this will happen only where there is efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources. Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills necessary for our young people to reach their potential at school and to live a rewarding life. Although there has been some improvement in the level of pupils achieving the expected standard in literacy and numeracy, progress has been slow. The Committee is particularly concerned that there is a strong link between low levels of achievement and social deprivation. In 2010-11, there was a 33 percentage point gap in achievement at GCSE between pupils with free school meal entitlement and those without. As someone who spent their best days in the classroom, I know that free school meal entitlement does not accurately reflect the level of social deprivation in our families. Further disparities exist, with girls generally outperforming boys, and, among disadvantaged communities, maintained schools generally outperform schools in the controlled sector.

The Committee also found that there can be a wide variation in the results achieved by schools with apparently similar intakes, indicating that the problem is not insurmountable providing the correct intervention is applied. We concluded that the operation of a number of key elements consistently underlies the performance of schools that achieve high standards of literacy and numeracy: a belief that every child, regardless of their background, can learn and build on basic literacy and numeracy; and systematic and sustained intervention in a child's early years. Although I am delighted that over 200 teachers have been appointed to address literacy and numeracy issues at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4, the issue needs a strategic approach right from the first day of school. We know from experience that it is extremely difficult to address these issues with an 11-year-old or a 15-year-old.

The engagement of parents is key to the educational development of our young people. Strong leadership and management practices, involving whole-school approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy are also very important, as is the provision of high-quality teaching and learning by teachers who have acquired, during their pre-service training and in-service professional learning, evidence-based teaching practices that are shown to be effective in meeting the developmental needs of each child. How can we provide that ongoing professional development when the Department has cut over £15 million from the staff development budget and our CASS services are basically decimated? It is also extremely important to have effective school governance based on a balance between supporting and challenging a school leadership team.

The Committee concluded that the Department must implement measures to ensure that it achieves real and sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy. That should help to equip our young people with the skills required to participate in an increasingly competitive global economy. Specifically, we felt that the Department should target the number of pupils achieving well below the expected level in literacy and numeracy, in order to target the rate of performance of the most vulnerable pupils. To do that, we need baseline assessment when children start school. We need to know where a child is before we can see how that child can improve. The allocation of funding should be reviewed to ensure that higher levels of funding are directed towards the development of literacy and numeracy competencies in the early years of a child's education. Certainly, the proposed change to the common funding formula that would leave 80% of primary schools worse off does not address the issue.

The next recommendation is to support and encourage good teaching and leadership and put in place measures to identify and assist teaching staff whose performance has fallen below acceptable standards; ensure that there are opportunities for high-quality professional development for all teachers; and encourage and support innovative practices, both locally and from international experience, to promote literacy and numeracy. Good practice, such as Achieving Derry and Achieving Belfast, has to be disseminated across the Province.

In the report, the PAC made a total of 16 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Department of Education. The Committee looks forward to seeing the full and timely implementation of the recommendations made and to ensuring that there are benefits. In the words of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation in Holland:

*"Many things can wait, the child cannot.
Right now his brain is being formed
His blood is being made,
His senses are being developed.
To him we cannot say Tomorrow.
His name is Today."*

Time is of the essence. The Department must adopt a strategic approach to raising standards in numeracy and literacy now in order to ensure that young people have the skills to meet the demands of work in the 21st century.

Mr Hussey: I wish to address the report published this year by the Committee in respect of the transfer of

former military and security sites to the Northern Ireland Executive. I declare an interest in this specific topic because of the fact that two barracks in my constituency of West Tyrone — St Lucia Barracks and Lisanelly Barracks — are not included in the report. I will keep an eye on them over the coming months and years.

The Public Accounts Committee examined the regeneration and redevelopment of six former military and security sites that were gifted to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in 2003. The six sites are at the Malone Road; Magherafelt; the former army base and prison at Maze/Long Kesh, which we have heard about at some point during the past few weeks; Ebrington; and Crumlin Road Gaol. They offered the opportunity for economic and social regeneration either through using the proceeds from their disposal, which was the case at the Malone Road and Magherafelt, or through developing masterplans and the establishment of appropriate bodies to develop and deliver them.

The Committee recognises that regeneration is a long-term process. Equally, it is important that tangible benefits are seen from the considerable investment that has already been made. Up to 31 March 2012, OFMDFM spent £62 million preparing the sites for redevelopment by private companies or government bodies. Despite that expenditure, we found that progress had been disappointingly slow. Masterplans had gone through a number of iterations and were not finalised, as agreement had been difficult to reach.

The Committee welcomed the Department's actions to put strategic oversight arrangements in place. However, the report highlighted the need for improvement in the standards and quality of performance reporting on the regeneration through clear and transparent targets. They should be measurable and linked to expected outcomes for the sites. That is essential to demonstrate the value for money of the substantial investment of public funds in the sites. They must also include strategies for engaging with local communities and their representatives.

The Committee was also concerned about the disposal of the Malone Road and Magherafelt sites. The Committee's investigations into the sale of the Malone Road site for £3.8 million found that neither OFMDFM nor Land and Property Services were aware, until the Audit Office and Committee's investigations, that the purchaser was acting on behalf of another developer who provided the finance for the purchase and to whom the site was immediately transferred on the day it was sold. We consider that the Department could and should have got more for the site. Our report makes important recommendations on the disposal of public land and buildings, ensuring that any sale process is both transparent and well documented.

We were concerned that the Department could not make use of the £870,000 achieved from the sale of the Magherafelt site. Of greater concern was that the Department was unable to state definitively that the £870,000 had not been lost to the Northern Ireland block.

Finally, the Committee was disturbed and frustrated that papers supporting many of the key decisions made on the sites were either not available or were made available only late in the day. The establishment and maintenance of a complete and proper public record, apart from being a legal requirement, is a key aspect of open and transparent

accountability and is one of the principles at the heart of good administration.

The Public Accounts Committee report made 11 recommendations — I do not intend to read them out — which, it believes, will deliver significant improvements in governance arrangements that will help drive forward the regeneration process and ensure that sound financial and administrative procedures are in place and adhered to.

Like other Committee members, I pay tribute to the Committee staff, who have assisted us throughout our investigations and whose cooperation has been first-class. Like the Chair of the Committee, I also thank my colleagues on the Committee for their support.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension. I propose, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. When we return, the first item of business will be Question Time, and this debate will continue after Question Time at 3.30 pm.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.31 pm.

On resuming (Mr Speaker in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Finance and Personnel

Civil Service: Jobs in Derry

1. **Mr Mitchel McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why the proposal to outsource Civil Service jobs from Waterside House in Derry developed almost under the radar, given that he is probably aware that the civil servants involved have been distressed to learn of the plans and the fact that he might make a statement on the matter, which I am sure he was not trying to keep secret, in the near future. (AQT 341/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I welcome the Member to the House. It was a very timely and efficient arrival.

I take exception to one of the terms that the Member used, which was that this has happened “under the radar”. Trade union staff in Waterside House, in our Civil Service pensions branch which is based in Londonderry, have been consulted throughout the process. The Member also said that there was a proposal to outsource the work that they do. This gives me a useful opportunity as, indeed, will, I am sure, the Adjournment debate on public sector jobs in the north-west later this evening, to clarify a few points that, I think, have been whipped up for some particular purpose by some ill-informed public comment on this topic. I can understand the concerns that staff in pensions branch might have — if I were one of them — when they read some of the comments that said that 80 jobs in their branch could be made redundant because of the outsourcing of the work they do.

Let me make it clear to the Member and to the House that the work that we are doing for a future service delivery project comes out of necessity. The IT systems that we have that pay and administer pensions are run on two separate IT systems at the minute, and they are coming to the end of their life. Although it is not a determinative factor, it is an issue that pension reform across the water is necessitating that we streamline what we do. Therefore, we are having to procure one new IT system to pay and administer pensions.

I believe that I am duty-bound to provide the best service that I possibly can for everybody in Northern Ireland and to do so in a value-for-money way. I would be remiss in my duties, and the Member would, perhaps, be the first to attack me if in seeking solutions for the future delivery of pensions in Northern Ireland I did not look at all the options that were there, including outsourcing, if, indeed, that provides the best value for money, the best service and the best outcomes.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I thank the Minister for his answer. I assure him that, although I might criticise him, I will not attack him.

He and I have done some useful work over the years on the Finance Committee. I have to say that this came as

a bit of a surprise to members of the Committee. I spoke to some of those civil servants in Derry, and it is they, not somebody whipping it up, who are seriously concerned. Will the Minister indicate whether outsourcing is one of the options in the mix? Will it affect the wider Civil Service as well? Is that an option?

Mr Hamilton: I have no ideological problem with any form of service delivery model, whether it means doing it in-house, as a joint venture with the private sector, or outsourcing it to, perhaps, the private sector or the third sector — the voluntary and community sector. I have no dogma that drives me in one particular way or another. The only ideology, and the only dogma, that drives me in respect of this is getting the best service that provides the best outcome for the people who elect us to serve them.

I understand the concerns of the staff in Waterside House, but let me make this clear: they have been informed throughout the process that, because of the necessity to produce a new IT system, there will be a requirement for fewer staff. No matter what option is chosen, there will be a requirement to have fewer staff in Waterside House. Let me make this clear as well: no matter what outcome is chosen and no matter in which direction the outline business case suggests we head in this matter, there will still be the necessity for a pensions branch, because there will be high-level work, particularly in terms of policy, financial accounting and other areas, that will still be required, and those people will be civil servants.

Some people will not be required in pensions branch in the future.

They will not be made redundant. They will be moved around the system in accordance with the customs and practice of the Civil Service. Those who are publicly saying that 80 civil servants will be made redundant are wrong with their numbers and are wrong to say that those people will be made redundant. I hope that now, and later, I can give some assurance to those people that the concerns that have been whipped up through public comment are not valid.

Civil Service: Car Parking Costs

2. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, given the amount of money that Executive Departments spend each year on car parking spaces in the Belfast area, whether his Department has any plans to increase the number of staff who use more sustainable transport. (AQT 342/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I appreciate that there is a desire across society to try to be more sustainable and more environmentally friendly in our use of transport. By necessity, the Civil Service, and particularly my Department in its stewardship of all properties across the Civil Service, will have a number of properties that have car-parking spaces attached, but the Member will be aware of many schemes that we run in the Civil Service, including a cycle-to-work scheme and car-sharing initiatives that the Minister for Regional Development is responsible for, that encourage civil and public servants right across the board to be more considerate about the mode of transport that they choose to use. However, we have to accept that, in many cases, using motor vehicles to get to a place of work is the best and only option available to people.

Mr McElduff: I suggest to the Minister that one way of reducing such costs and the number of car-parking spaces would be to have a serious approach to the decentralisation of public sector jobs to towns such as Omagh. Are we serious about the relocation and decentralisation of public sector jobs or are we merely paying lip service to it?

Mr Hamilton: The Member will be aware that his party colleague the Minister of Agriculture intends to decentralise headquarters jobs from the Department of Agriculture to Ballykelly. I think that he would welcome that. The town of Omagh, which he is obviously fond of, given that he lives there and represents it, has one of the highest levels of people per 100,000 of the working population working in the public sector. In that respect, there has been a decentralisation of jobs to that area.

I do not accept the argument that, if we were to take all our Departments and put them all in provincial towns, we would suddenly see the end of people driving into work. My experience in Northern Ireland is that people will drive even very short distances to work, so, in that respect, there will still be a need for car-parking spaces whether the headquarters or agency is in Omagh, Belfast, Newtownards or wherever.

Ulster Bank

3. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has any concerns about the review of the Ulster Bank and its operations here that was announced last week by its state-owned parent bank, the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), and whether he has sought a meeting with RBS to discuss the review. (AQT 343/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I would have been more concerned at the outcome of the announcement had the decision that was taken by the Government in conjunction with RBS been one of the options that was being talked about publicly. We know that the Ulster Bank has been a serious problem within and for the RBS group. Indeed, much of the detail behind the report shows the extent to which Ulster Bank is a problem in the group. We would have had more cause to be concerned today if the option of hiving off the Ulster Bank and all its assets, whether good or bad, and establishing it as a bad bank, either internally or outside of the group, had been taken. We would have more cause for concern if that were the case.

I therefore welcome the fact that the Treasury has taken the decision to retain the Ulster Bank as a core part of RBS's operations. The Member has acknowledged that it is our biggest lending bank, with over 30% of the market. It is the only nationally owned bank, and therefore it is the only bank that takes forward national lending initiatives such as funding for lending and the export finance guarantee scheme in Northern Ireland. It is essential that we have a properly functioning Ulster Bank here. That has been recognised by Treasury.

Do I have concerns? Absolutely. There are areas in the report that cause concern. The second review to establish Ulster Bank on a long-term and sustainable footing is, I think, code for a further restructuring of that bank. I think that it is probably inevitable that there will be further job losses in Ulster Bank and, indeed, other banks before they get to the position where they are functioning properly.

I have some concerns about the timescale of three years for the sale of assets. As the Member will know, doing that in a depressed property market, such as that which we currently have in Northern Ireland, is cause for concern.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for that answer, and I am banking the first part of it. It is reassuring to hear Treasury and RBS's view of Ulster Bank. However, when I hear the word "review", particularly from banks, I think that I am right to be nervous, given that, over the past number of years, the banks have butchered branches and staff numbers. I, therefore, ask the Minister to have direct contact with RBS and —

Mr Speaker: I encourage the Member to finish.

Mr A Maginness: — to say to it, "No more branch cuts, and no more staff cuts".

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. It was remiss of me not to address whether I have met Ulster Bank. I have spoken to senior management in Ulster Bank, and I am scheduled to meet them next week. Following on from that meeting, I hope to meet the new chief executive of RBS, Ross McEwan, because I think that there are points, such as those that the Member made, that we need to reiterate.

I think that the report gives us the argument, which we can take to RBS and Treasury, that there is an acknowledgement of Ulster Bank's importance to the Northern Ireland economy. We need Ulster Bank to function properly, because, as the Member and the House will know, businesses are starting to see signs of recovery, and if that continues to be the case, they will want to get the sort of credit that they need to develop their businesses. So, in that respect, we need Ulster Bank to do its job, which is to lend money to people who have viable propositions. So, I also hope to meet Treasury, and I have already spoken to it on the telephone. The joint ministerial task force, on which Arlene Foster and I sit, will, I am sure, concentrate on and drill down into that issue.

In meeting Ulster Bank, I hope to try to influence, as best I can, this new bad bank creation, because Northern Ireland's property market is not the same as that in London and the south-east. Flooding our market with assets over a very short three-year period, which is, of course, distinct from what NAMA is doing in taking a much longer view to distressed assets, could have a seriously detrimental impact on a property market that is languishing close to the bottom but that is at least showing signs of some improvement. We do not want to kill that stone dead before it has even started.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ceist uimhir a ceathair. Question 4.

Mr Speaker: Order. This is topical questions. Just ask the question directly to the Minister.

Mr F McCann: First of all, I congratulate Simon on his recent promotion to Minister.

Air Passenger Duty

4. **Mr F McCann** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what he will do to deal with the serious problems that the South's decision on air passenger duty will no doubt cause in the North. (AQT 344/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question and his congratulations. The announcement in the Republic of Ireland Budget that the Government will eliminate air passenger duty (APD) has obviously brought the issue to the forefront of people's minds once again. In itself, I do not think that the elimination of APD from €3 down to zero will have a massively significant effect on traffic from Northern Ireland's airports down to Dublin Airport. In fact, that was reflected in public comments that Belfast City Airport made after the Irish Government's Budget announcement. I think that it is fairly transparent why that is the case. Saving €3 on a flight is not enough justification to go down to Dublin Airport considering that you have to pay for petrol, the toll and parking and so forth. However, I accept that having APD in Northern Ireland causes a problem and a distortion.

APD is the very definition of an unfair tax, because it works against regions of the United Kingdom, such as Northern Ireland, Scotland and some parts of northern England as well. In that respect, I am sure that the Member would echo my concerns and join me in saying to Treasury that it is time that it eliminated APD for all flights — it has already been done for long-haul flights — so that we can have a fairer tax situation in Northern, encourage more airlines to operate out of Northern Ireland and increase and enhance our connectivity to the world.

Mr Speaker: That concludes topical questions to the Minister of Finance and Personnel. We now move to oral questions to the Minister.

2.15 pm

Rating Review

1. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what considerations will be given to businesses in town centres when conducting the non-domestic rating review. (AQO 4970/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I thought that we had got rid of you earlier.

The ongoing revaluation exercise involves the interpretation of open-market rental evidence, and that will dictate the new rateable values that my Department will publish by the end of next year. The legislation requires that businesses in town centres are treated in exactly the same way as businesses elsewhere, and, therefore, Land and Property Services cannot give special consideration to any location or sector of business. The valuation process is entirely evidence-based and, naturally, that rental evidence reflects the relative advantages and disadvantages of particular trading locations. At the end of the day, it is the open market that establishes current rent levels and thus the new rateable values as well. That alone will determine who pays more and who pays less following the revaluation.

Mr Speaker: Questions 2, 11 and 13 have been withdrawn.

Mr McElduff: I thank the Minister for his answer, which was quite rigid and did not suggest much flexibility. I would like to think that the Minister is a listening Minister. Among businesses that are under pressure, rising energy costs and rates are often quoted. Can I ask the Minister this directly: will he agree to meet, either here in Stormont or in Omagh, a representative group of town centre businesses

from that area to hear at first hand their concerns about rates?

Mr Hamilton: I am more than happy to meet any group of traders, including those from Omagh. Indeed, since assuming office three months ago, I have met traders from Ballymena, Ballymoney, Belfast and everywhere. I am, in that regard, a listening Minister.

What I am able to do for those people is perhaps a little bit more limited, although I would point out to the Member the raft of initiatives that predecessors in this post have brought forward to try to assist the sorts of businesses that he is talking about. The likes of small business rate relief has been of great assistance to businesses right across Northern Ireland, and, wherever I travel, businesses tell me how important that has been to them. In some cases, it has ensured that they have remained in business and, in some cases, that they have retained some staff.

I accept entirely that there are problems and difficulties in many town centres across Northern Ireland and on many high streets, and I think that some of those will continue. However, we would be in a far worse position if it had not been for the small business rate relief scheme, which has given £1.5 million in relief to properties in Omagh. Of course, his constituency extends beyond Omagh, in case I need to tell him that, and the Strabane District Council area has seen almost £1 million in relief through the small business rate relief scheme.

My Department has also frozen the non-domestic regional rate — I think that we are into the eighth year of that freeze — and, of course, we have introduced empty properties relief to tackle vacancies that are dotted right across town and city centres across Northern Ireland. In the West Tyrone constituency, eight new businesses in Omagh and Strabane have benefited from that 50% rates concession.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. The Minister mentioned in his response the small business rate relief scheme, which is a time-limited scheme, as far as I remember, governed by a sunset clause. Will the Minister consider extending that scheme at the end of its present period?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. I am very fond of the small business rate relief scheme, as I mentioned in response to Mr McElduff's question. It has done a lot of positive things for small businesses right across Northern Ireland. That has been recognised by this House, which has approved not just one but two extensions of the small business rate relief scheme to the extent that over half of all business properties in Northern Ireland now receive at least 20% off their rates bill. Compared to similar relief across the United Kingdom, it is an exceptionally extensive and positive scheme. He is right that it is time-limited, but on the question of extending it, I will conduct a valuation of the scheme next year, and I want to do that after the revaluation has reported its initial findings to see what impact the revaluation has had. The small business rate relief scheme was brought in partly in acknowledgement that we had not had a revaluation for a number of years, and that there were potentially some distortions in the market. If those distortions are ironed out by the revaluation, then the necessity for a small business rate relief scheme may be eliminated. But if it has not been, I am certainly not averse — resources depending,

of course — to reintroducing something similar to what we already have.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for his answer so far, but in relation to the 2015 sunset clause which was referred to, if a further extension were to be looked at, would there be any possibility that the rates valuation figure could be increased? I appreciate that it started at £5,000 of rateable value and went up to £10,000. However, we understand that there is still a small number —

Mr Speaker: I encourage the Member to finish his question.

Mr Girvan: — which require some assistance as well.

Mr Hamilton: As this very successful scheme comes towards the end of its life, there will increasingly be a conversation about what we do beyond 2015. As I said to Mr Bradley, I am not against having a small business rate relief scheme, but there must be a need for it. We must also see the extent of the positive benefits that the scheme has had. I believe that it has had positive benefits, and I am sure that the Member could report from his own constituency that many traders and businesses have benefited from the scheme. It is not that I am against doing it, but I want to see evidence that it has worked. I want to see, through the results of the revaluation, that there is indeed a need for it. If we have seen, as some might anticipate, a correction, move or shift in the balance of where rates are payable to, say, edge-of-town or out-of-town shopping centres or complexes, that might then be to the benefit of small businesses in town and city centres. Therefore, there may not be a need for a relief scheme at all, or to the extent of the one that we have had.

The Member's question allows me, once again, to reiterate my message to people who expect that, because their rents have gone down, their rates will automatically go down as a result of the revaluation. As the Member knows, that is not necessarily the case. It is an average taken right across Northern Ireland that determine whether they go down or not. I await the results of the revaluation, and then the evaluation of the small business rate relief scheme, to decide what we should do beyond 2015.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answer, and certainly I welcome any rate relief schemes. Paying rates will always be painful. Is the Minister thinking outside the box? Is he working with the Treasury to think of completely new ways to finance our councils?

Mr Hamilton: No one likes to pay rates, ourselves included. No Member in the House wants to pay rates.

Mr Kinahan: Especially me.

Mr Hamilton: The Member declares a personal interest there. I would not like to be paying the rateable value of his house, I would like to say. *[Laughter.]* It is a lovely house, though.

Mr Bell: It is a castle, is it not?

Mr Hamilton: I am not sure. House, castle, stately home — I am not sure whether that shows up on the rates bill. It is a lovely property nonetheless.

The Member is right to identify a longer-term problem. Well, it is not even a longer-term problem, because we are starting to see the effect of it now. In their rates bills, retail properties probably pay a higher than proportionate amount, in respect of their contribution to the economy. As we all know, and it does not matter to what part of

Northern Ireland you go, town centres are under pressure. They are under pressure from changes in lifestyle and shopping trends, and they are under pressure, as well, from the fact that all of us are using more and more online shopping. Obviously, if you have a shop, the bricks and mortar is a cost, not just in the maintenance and keeping of it and paying for it, but also in the rates bill.

The Member is right to identify that the Treasury, perhaps, has a role and responsibility in this. One of the suggestions mooted is that we move to something where we put a tax on online transactions. I would be interested to see what money this Administration would get from that. By the end of this revaluation, it will be close to 10 years since we in Northern Ireland have looked at our non-domestic taxation system. It would be a timely opportunity, given those other changes and the moment that it is, once again to look at the options that there might be to amend our non-domestic taxation system.

Without prejudicing that review, I am not entirely sure what system we should move to and whether there are any systems available that would be massively better than the rates, which is a fairly understandable and easy-to-implement system.

However, I am happy to look at any and all options. It might be timely to do that once we get through the revaluation.

Mr Speaker: I remind the Minister of the two-minute rule.

Rate Relief

3. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what rate relief is available in town centres where a significant proportion of retail premises are vacant. (AQO 4972/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I am tempted to refer the Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago. A range of rate reliefs can apply in town centres. The small business rate relief is now awarded to almost 25,000 business premises that get at least 20% rate relief. The empty shops rate concession introduced by my predecessor in April 2012 has been extended until 2015. More than 170 new businesses across Northern Ireland have now received a 50% first-year discount. Owners of empty properties benefit from a 50% reduction in rates, unlike the position in the rest of the United Kingdom. Another unique measure is specifically targeted at improving the appearance of town centres. It allows the use of window displays in empty shops for non-commercial purposes without triggering the full occupied rate.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his response. Given the plight of town centres throughout Northern Ireland, has the Minister made any assessment of making it easier for owners to convert shops that have been lying empty for some time for other uses, thereby reducing the rates that would be demanded?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. From the people in towns and chambers of commerce that I have already visited, I frequently hear of their belief that, in the future, our town centres cannot be so dominated and led in development by retail. That is because, as I said in response to Mr Kinahan, our retail habits and behaviour are changing. Therefore, town centres need to change. They need to become much more commercial and have a lot more office space. They certainly need to have more

residential space, and they probably need to have a lot more cultural and leisure space as well. If our town centres are to survive and thrive, they need to be different from the ones that entered the downturn. Indeed, many traders will openly admit that there were far too many shops in their town centres. Although some might have been sustainable when we were going through boom times and there was a lot of money about, it was a false sustainability in the longer term. Unfortunately, we have seen that in many town centres across Northern Ireland.

There is a planning element to converting retail premises for other uses through change of use. The Member should take that up with the Minister of the Environment. I would be keen to see more residential use, particularly of the space above shops. A good scheme was run by the Department for Social Development a number of years ago. Perhaps you could take up with that Department. That, resources permitting, would be a good scheme to diversify our town centres. I again point the Member to what we have already done with empty property relief to get vacant retail units back into use. In our Ards Borough Council area, seven shops have availed themselves of £15,000 worth of relief in their first year of operation. Although it is only seven and he and I know that there are many more than seven vacant units across the area, it is at least a start.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. How does our non-domestic rating system compare with the rest of the UK?

Mr Hamilton: I like to think that it compares favourably. I would not for a second stand in front of the House and say that Northern Ireland has by far the best non-domestic rating system. The nature of devolution is that devolved regions and Administrations will choose what they think is best for their area. However, I think that we compare exceptionally favourably with what happens in the rest of the United Kingdom. I will give two examples of that. One is the 50% relief that we give to empty premises. I am not talking about those that are occupied in the first year, although, that said, our empty property relief has been replicated in Scotland and Wales, so, sometimes, Northern Ireland is in the vanguard and is doing innovative things that others copy. The relief that an empty property gets in Northern Ireland is 50%. That compares exceptionally favourably with England and Wales, where such ratepayers pay 100%, and Scotland, where they pay 90%.

Another positive of the business rate system that we have in Northern Ireland is that increases in GB are determined through the September retail price index (RPI) figure. For this year, that was 3.2%. In Northern Ireland, we set the increase for the regional rate part of our bill using the lowest inflation measure that there is, which is the GDP deflator. For this year and next, that is set at 2.7%. When rates and regional rates rise, the rise is lower in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. I would not argue that we are by far the best, but we have shown by our innovation in the Department that we are prepared to listen and respond to the problems. As a result, we have a very favourable and comparable non-domestic rating system in Northern Ireland.

2.30 pm

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his responses so far. In Belfast city centre, along with all the pressures that were addressed

today, there was an extended period of disruptive protests. Will the Minister accept and promote the fact that, this incoming year, especially pre-Christmas, we need a city centre that is free from such disruptive protests?

Mr Hamilton: I do not wish to get into who caused it and who started it all; I do not think that that would get any of us anywhere. I am sure that the Member will join me in protecting and defending anyone's right to protest in Northern Ireland. There are plenty of Members in the House who, down through the years, have protested about a lot of things. I agree to the extent that I do not think that anyone wants our city centre or, indeed, any part of Northern Ireland crippled during the important trading period over Christmas by repeats of any of the scenes of violence that we saw last year. I absolutely defend and protect the right of anyone to protest, but it must be done in a lawful and peaceful way.

Mr Allister: The Minister may be aware of the news today that, according to a survey, Ballymena is now in the unenviable position of having the highest proportion of empty shops across Northern Ireland, with a staggering 27% of shops being empty. What can the Minister do to address that? I appreciate that he cannot rig the rating system, but, if the present concessions are not arresting the decline, surely he can do more. Is his mind open to doing more on relief for town centre shops so that we can arrest the situation in a hitherto prosperous town such as Ballymena?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his comments, and I agree. I can remember, many years ago, as a child being taken to Ballymena by my parents. It was a vibrant and dynamic shopping town. Across Northern Ireland, we can see changes in shopping trends and behaviour and the impact of edge-of-town and out-of-town retail, and Ballymena is one of the first places to spring to mind. I was in Ballymena a couple of weeks ago and met the mayor, several councillors and the chamber of commerce. Although I do not deny that there are many vacancies in Ballymena town centre — I have seen them for myself — I was somewhat surprised in that the message that comes from the publication of the report today does not chime with what I heard from many retailers in Ballymena, who accept that their town is under pressure and that there are vacancies but are reporting to me that, through many initiatives that the council is leading, they are seeing trade start to go up, particularly in and around the town centre. I understand that the report is not just about the town centre but about peripheral areas, and that, as the Member will know, will sometimes distort the figures and make them look far worse than they are.

What assistance and support can the Executive give to Ballymena? It is about towns right across Northern Ireland and not just Ballymena, but I will highlight what we have done in Ballymena. Through the small business rate relief scheme, 1,183 properties have got £1.7 million of relief on their rates bills. Ballymena was slow to start on the issue of empty properties and trying to address some of the vacancies. That is uncharacteristic of the Ballymena area, given that there was free money on the go. Four new premises are now open in Ballymena that are availing themselves of £11,000 of relief in the first year of their operation. I accept that there are probably other things that we could do, but I operate with a very defined spending envelope, and, no matter how many things I could do, even

if I eliminated rates for some businesses, having no rates bill at all is no substitute for not having sufficient turnover. If you do not have a viable business and do not have a turnover that is enough to keep you above water, there is nothing that I or anyone else can do with the rates bill to keep a business in operation.

Fiscal Powers

4. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the review of fiscal powers, which forms part of the economic pact, including details of the terms of reference and the proposed programme of work. (AQO 4973/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. DFP is undertaking a scoping exercise to examine the Scottish Calman and Welsh Silk commission reports and the positions taken on the possible devolution of each individual tax or duty in those jurisdictions. After that, a work programme will be developed to progress the exercise in order to put recommendations on the possible devolution of additional fiscal powers to the Executive by autumn 2014, in line with the commitment in 'Building a Prosperous and United Community'.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle, agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. Are there any plans to involve external experts' opinion in the review?

Mr Hamilton: There are no specific plans at this stage, but people have already come forward with opinions. I think particularly of the recent NICVA report, which looked at additional tax-raising powers that the Stormont Assembly may wish to take upon itself. I am by no means against listening to outside voices and involving those in giving some evidence to any review, but, ultimately, as the Member will appreciate, the final decision rests with us in the Assembly about whether we want to take the powers upon ourselves.

Mr Humphrey: Is the Minister pressing the national Government at Westminster for Northern Ireland to be treated the same as Scotland and Wales?

Mr Hamilton: The nature of the devolutionary settlement is that we will all want to be treated in slightly different ways depending on what our particular objectives are as regions. So far, we have pursued the devolution of tax powers that would be of economic advantage to Northern Ireland. So, we continue to pursue corporation tax powers, and work is ongoing in respect of ensuring that, should a positive decision be taken by the Prime Minister next autumn, we are ready to devolve those powers as quickly as possible. Obviously, the Member and the House will know the positive economic benefits that being able to reduce our corporation tax rate would bring for Northern Ireland. The other power that we have already devolved is air passenger duty for direct long-haul flights. Although we did not pursue that as a tax per se to devolve for Northern Ireland, it was the solution to a problem that we had and brought economic benefit to Northern Ireland by retaining the direct connection between Belfast and New York.

The approach adopted by other regions such as Scotland and Wales has been much more dominated by politics in trying to increase fiscal accountability there and was particularly aggressively pursued in Scotland by the

Government for, I think, more political reasons than we have here. Regions will want to be treated in different ways for different reasons. I am not against devolving more tax powers to Northern Ireland if there is a defined benefit for Northern Ireland in doing so, but we always have to be mindful of the gap that it might cause in the revenues that we receive as an Executive and, therefore, our ability to spend on providing services to the people who elect us.

Mrs Cochrane: Does the Minister believe that we in Northern Ireland can learn any lessons from the recent Calman commission and Silk commission in Scotland and Wales respectively? Is there any danger that they could now outflank Northern Ireland on tax-varying powers?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for her question. I do not think there is any risk of us being outflanked, for the reasons that I mentioned to Mr Humphrey. I think that regions will want to choose different powers depending on their particular interests. What has come out as a result of the announcement in Wales in the last week following on from the Silk commission is that, in some respects, Wales is just catching up with where we are. The biggest thing that it got were borrowing powers, which we have had for the past number of years and have maximised over the past decade or so in order to deliver more capital infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

There is a frequent demand to devolve more powers, but it may not always be the case that Treasury will want to give you those powers. It appears from Silk and Calman as well as the response from Treasury that the only powers on offer are land-based powers, such as stamp duty and landfill tax, which cannot be easily moved across boundaries.

I do not fear that we will be outflanked or fall behind other regions. In many respects, particularly on APD, we are well ahead of other regions. The ability to adjust APD for direct long-haul flights is something that the Welsh and Scottish Finance Ministers look at covetously.

NAMA

5. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on his level of engagement with the National Asset Management Agency's Northern Ireland advisory committee, including the issues he has addressed with it. (AQO 4974/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. I met NAMA's chairman, Frank Daly, and the Northern Ireland advisory committee on 7 October as part of my regular engagement with the agency and other banks. We discussed a broad range of issues around NAMA's management of its Northern Ireland assets, including the importance of ensuring that they are released at a suitable time and without having a negative impact on the market here, which is beginning to show some first signs of recovery. The committee assured me that its approach is to encourage a phased and orderly realisation of the assets while seeking to avoid saturating the market with additional unwanted supply.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat a Cheann Comhairle agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra. How will the Minister ensure that NAMA's Northern assets are redirected? How will the NAMA committee be stepped when it comes to efficiency and accountability?

Mr Hamilton: I will take those points in reverse.

The committee is accountable to the Government in the Irish Republic, who established it, and to its board; it is not accountable to me. I have to say that I do not have any particular desire for any element of NAMA to be accountable to me, given the headache that that would involve. However, as the Member will, I am sure, want to hear, I am prepared to engage with NAMA at any and all times on any and all issues because of the importance that it has for Northern Ireland. NAMA holds assets with a nominal value of around £3.5 billion spread across Northern Ireland but primarily in Belfast and in Counties Antrim and Down. Those are assets that I would like to see put into the market at an appropriate moment, because NAMA has some very good properties that could be developed and could benefit Northern Ireland's economy.

My biggest concern and one that I will always engage on — my predecessor did likewise — is to ensure that, when releasing those assets, which we ultimately want to see developed, it is not done in a way that would harm the property market in Northern Ireland in the way that I talked about to Mr Maginness earlier. RBS seems to be heading towards moving its assets on very quickly, in contrast to what NAMA has said that it would do. To be fair, NAMA has shown, through its behaviour, that it takes a much longer-term approach to the assets that it has. That is encouraging.

Mr Craig: I thank the Minister for that detailed answer. Will he update us on NAMA's portfolio in Northern Ireland and outline what efforts the Executive will make to encourage it to engage in public projects that would be to the benefit of all of us?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. Overall, NAMA's Northern Ireland portfolio had a nominal value of about £3.5 billion; its acquisition value is, I understand, £1.3 billion, which is, as the Member will appreciate, a substantial holding in a Northern Ireland context. We have better information about NAMA's assets than we do about some of the banks' assets. I understand that 18% of what it has is office accommodation, 17% is retail, 10% is residential, 5% is development and 3% is hotel and leisure. The balance is made up from land, at about one quarter of the portfolio, and 22% is made up of other investment assets. As I mentioned to the Member opposite, 46% of the assets are in Belfast, and 80% are located in Counties Antrim and Down, with the balance being elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

As for encouraging NAMA to do some specific projects, I can, to be fair, think of two projects in different areas. One was moving forward with a residential project on the outskirts of Belfast at Millmount, Dundonald, where 95 properties are being developed and which will create 100 jobs during the construction stage. The other significant one was moving forward with Lanyon Plaza and the Soloist in the centre of Belfast, which brings much needed grade-A office accommodation that we can utilise for the growth of existing companies or for attracting foreign direct investment.

Mr A Maginness: NAMA has done some very good development work, particularly in the South and in Britain. I know that the Minister referred to development at Dundonald and so forth, but did he get any indication that NAMA would expand that work? It is important that that investment takes place.

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his third question on the topic today.

I encourage NAMA and will continue to encourage it to do so in a sensible and prudent way. Interestingly and to follow on from what I said to Mr Craig, NAMA has lent around £140 million to businesses in Northern Ireland so that they can add value to the assets that it will ultimately realise value for in the longer term.

As we know, it has a lot of cash at its disposal. It has employed that elsewhere and is starting to employ it in Northern Ireland. I encourage NAMA to do that in a sensible, measured and prudent way over the years to come.

2.45 pm

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Speaker: We start with topical questions.

Heart Attack Survival Rates

1. **Mr Newton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to improve the survival rates for those people who suffer a heart attack. (AQT 351/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I thank the Member for the question. We are taking a number of actions to improve survival rates from heart attack.

First, my Chief Medical Officer is devising a community resuscitation strategy to ensure that people are better equipped to respond when a heart attack takes place, and especially where defibrillators are available that they can make full and best use of them in a safe way. Very importantly, we have also established percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) units on a 24/7 basis. The Belfast PCI unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital has been launched. It will cover 75% of Northern Ireland's population and make a massive difference. The other unit will be in Altnagelvin Hospital and will be in place from next summer. It will cover the rest of Northern Ireland, and it will probably also offer a service beyond Northern Ireland. We will have 100% coverage for PCI.

The difference that PCI can make is absolutely fantastic, and we are looking at a reduced mortality rate of around 2%, which equates to around 20 people living as a result of having the PCI unit in place. Not only that, but for every hour after someone has had a heart attack without having such an intervention, it does damage to the heart muscle. Having PCI units in place to respond very quickly to the needs of people will ensure that the heart muscle is not damaged. Consequently, people who suffer heart attacks and receive PCI will live considerably longer.

Mr Newton: I thank the Minister for that. That is good news. Will he comment on how cardiac catheterisation laboratories — cath labs — might be rolled out across Northern Ireland?

Mr Poots: We have a series of cath labs. The cath labs that I referred to — the PCI units — will be provided on a 24/7 basis in the Royal Victoria and Altnagelvin hospitals.

Cath labs will be available in other parts of Northern Ireland but will not be provided on a 24/7 basis.

Interestingly enough, PCI works by pushing a very fine wire through the patient's artery. Medical staff can then identify where the blockage is, and the procedure takes the blockage out. All that it leaves behind is a small mark on the patient's arm. It is a non-traumatic intervention, but it is hugely effective. I know that our consultants and others are looking at the possibility of using that intervention on stroke patients. If we ever got to that point, it would have a massive impact.

Currently, if people suffer from what are known as ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) heart attacks — in other words, they have in their bloodstream a blood clot or a piece of fat, which people generally bring upon themselves by eating the wrong foods — we have the ability to remove that very effectively if we get them to hospital on time. By setting those units up in the Royal Victoria and Altnagelvin hospitals, we will be able to get people into hospital very quickly.

Accident and Emergency: Recommendations

2. **Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he plans to respond to the recommendations in the recent report from the College of Emergency Medicine. (AQT 352/11-15)

Mr Poots: I had a look at the report from the College of Emergency Medicine, and it was certainly not the negative report that was reported in the press and other media. It identified that a lot of good things were happening in our emergency departments.

The report identified that, right across the United Kingdom and beyond, there is a problem with getting emergency medical consultants. The royal colleges, in particular, need to look at how we can ensure that adequate numbers of emergency medicine consultants, registrars and doctors are available to carry out the care. I think that many of the things that we have done will help us to make best use of the available resources. Certainly, although many people criticised us when the City Hospital closed initially, it is recognised that, when you have two hospitals in such close proximity, you are better to have your consultants based on the one site where they can support each other, provide cover for each other and ensure that there is adequate cover on a 24/7 basis.

Ms Ruane: The Minister may or may not be aware that there are 10 different recommendations. Given those 10 recommendations, will the Minister outline what additional resources will be allocated? We want to see safety for our patients right across the island of Ireland and, indeed, in this part of Ireland. Will the Minister let me know what additional resources he is going to provide to the hospital to ensure that it can fulfil the recommendations?

Mr Poots: For the Belfast Trust's emergency departments, there were 7,700 attendances in September 2013. Of that number, two people had to wait for more than 12 hours. So, we can see that turnaround is working quite well. It is recognised that safety and performance are very good in the Royal Victoria Hospital and, indeed, across our hospital sites.

You talked about resources, and we have ensured that we have supported additional nurses across the system.

We are very keen to support all the hospitals that are looking for additional consultants. Altnagelvin is struggling to get those additional consultants; nonetheless, we as a Department are supporting the trusts in identifying consultants, having those people there and having that qualitative medical resource to carry out the necessary performance. So, I think that there are actually a lot of good-news stories on emergency departments.

Antrim Area Hospital was constantly in the headlines when I came into office, but you are not hearing about that now because of the considerable good work that has been done by the people, the management, the staff, the doctors, the nurses and everyone else to ensure that they are turning that facility around and are using it well.

City Hospital: Medical Assessment Unit

3. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an assurance that 5 North, the medical assessment unit in Belfast City Hospital, will remain open and be further developed. (AQT 353/11-15)

Mr Poots: The medical assessment unit works well in conjunction with the emergency department in the Royal Victoria Hospital. The medical assessment unit enables us to take in people who require treatment in which the City Hospital specialises. It enables that to happen in a way that is very convenient for the public and that causes less trauma for the individual who is receiving care. That is important.

I have not heard anything to suggest that there is any threat to the medical assessment unit. No one has mentioned that to me. The Member might have heard something different, but, as far as I am concerned, the medical assessment unit is working well and, to the best of my knowledge, that will continue to be the case.

Ms Lo: I thank the Minister for his assurance. Does he agree that not only does 5 North provide very necessary rapid and targeted early intervention for patients, especially older people, but it reduces overcrowding in A&E, which is in keeping with the aims of Transforming Your Care?

Mr Poots: Direct admission to key wards such as that is very important. If GPs can refer people to medical assessment units and avoid emergency departments and all the others who are in those emergency departments, all the better, particularly for older people. As we know, the City Hospital specialises in urology, and an awful lot of older people will have infections in their bladders. So, it is very important that we can treat those people with dignity and respect. That is not always the case in the health service, I have to say, but we need to ensure that it is the case as often as possible. I would like it to always be the case that those people are treated with respect and dignity. I get very positive feedback on the medical assessment unit from people who go through the facility and into the City Hospital.

Homosexuality: Treatment

4. **Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given his responsibilities, whether he still holds the view, expressed by him and by members of his party, that homosexuality is an illness treatable by medical or psychiatric means. (AQT 354/11-15)

Mr Poots: I do not think that I ever said that.

Mr Lunn: I will try to find the reference for him. I will ask the same question again: does he think that homosexuality is an illness treatable by medical or psychiatric means or does he think that, as has been expressed by another Member of his party, it is an abomination?

Mr Poots: I do not think that it is an illness, in the first instance. I think that many people have various elements to their lives. When it comes to sexuality, many people who are heterosexual desire lots of other folks, and those of us who are married should not be doing that, so people can resist urges. I encourage people to take a sensible, rational view on these issues. I know that there have been a number of challenges about me and the various stances that I take. I will make it very clear that my stance on blood safety is purely about safety.

When it comes to my stance on adoption, I have just come from a midwifery-led unit in Lagan Valley, and all the people who were giving birth in that unit were women, and all those women were not impregnated by other women. So, whether one believes in God or in evolution, the natural order is for a man and a woman to have a child. Therefore, that has made my views on adoption and raising children very clear; it should be a man and a woman who raise a child. People can criticise me for that, and they can challenge me for that and say that it is backward. The truth is that still today, in this modern era, it is only a man and a woman who can produce a child. Therefore, it is in the best order for a man and a woman to raise a child.

Jobs: Health Sector

5. **Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the report by the economy and jobs initiative task and finish group. (AQT 355/11-15)

Mr Poots: That work has run on from Connected Health and the work that our Department does with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. We want to ensure that every opportunity is taken to enable us to maximise the benefits to our economy associated with our healthcare. Healthcare accounts for around 10% of jobs in Northern Ireland and about 9% of spend in Northern Ireland. Therefore, it is very important that we identify how best we can use that resource, how we can encourage that resource to be spent and maximise the spend that happens in Northern Ireland in respect of the development of drugs, procedures and innovation, so that a lot of that takes place in Northern Ireland. We have done a lot of work on that. We have established an ecosystem, which will involve the universities, the health and social care trusts and the business sector. It is looked on quite enviously by lots of other bigger areas. For example, I am in negotiations with the state of New York on a memorandum of understanding on these issues. We have three-star reference status in the European Union, which is the highest status that has been awarded thus far. Thirteen regions fitted into it, and Northern Ireland is one of those. We are making huge progress on this front, and Northern Ireland is being seen in Europe and the United States of America as a place that is hugely progressive. Sometimes, our media wants us to be demonstrated to be a place that is backward and regressive, when others are looking to us and saying that Northern Ireland is leading the way.

Mr Speaker: That concludes topical questions to the Minister of Health. We now move to oral questions to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Questions 5, 8, 10 and 15 have been withdrawn.

3.00 pm

Elective Care

1. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether elective care was his Department's priority for the October monitoring round. (AQO 4985/11-15)

Mr Poots: Elective care was one of three DHSSPS priorities in the October monitoring round, alongside clinical negligence settlements and Transforming Your Care (TYC) transitional funding. For the purposes of the monitoring round process, clinical negligence, at £20 million, was ranked as the top priority, as it is inescapable and, therefore, has a direct impact on the scope to meet the wider pressures across Health and Social Care (HSC) in 2013-14. The bid for the TYC transitional costs, at £18.7 million, was ranked second on the basis that it is the most important strategic change programme being undertaken within DHSSPS. The bid for elective care was ranked third. It is aimed at assisting in addressing backlogs in elective care waiting times across a range of specialties.

However, the final prioritisation of bids is ultimately determined by the Executive when they approve the outcome of each monitoring round. I received some £14 million of my £26 million bid for elective care in the October monitoring round, and intend to resubmit the bid for the remaining £12 million in the January monitoring round.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle, agus buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Can the Minister enlighten us as to how the Executive changed his priorities, as he outlined them, from clinical negligence, Transforming Your Care and elective care, to come out in a different order when it came to resources?

Mr Poots: It might be above my pay grade to do that. I ask for the money, and they give it to me. I ask for it for my priorities, and they might see it somewhat differently. Very often, that is the case, and it has been the case in other Departments that I have been in. I think that it is the case for other Ministers in other Departments, too. Sometimes what we might see as a priority, others might view differently and look on it more strategically, in a sense, and think that a wider view can be taken by the Executive than by a single Department.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer so far. What progress has been made with elective waiting times in his time as Minister?

Mr Poots: The number waiting for an outpatient appointment, for example, has been cut by 4,182 since June 2011, with excess waits reduced by 12,277. The number waiting for an inpatient admission is down by 7,361 compared with what it was in June 2011, with excess waits reduced by 5,936. However, I think it is very important that I state here today that we are not complacent. Things are going in the right direction, but there is considerably more work to be done. We have excellent people working in our health and social care trusts and our systems,

turning things around very, very well. We need to keep the momentum going, build on the momentum and ensure that we can continue to reduce waiting times to a time in which people should reasonably expect to be seen, without having to have excessive waits.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Will the community care and treatment centre play a role in providing healthcare in Newry in the future?

Mr Poots: Obviously, we have said that we would support Newry with a proposed £40 million health treatment centre. That is something that has been advertised and on which we are working. I know that there has been some degree of reluctance from some of the GPs on the issue. I think that we need to iron that out, because if Newry does not want to proceed with that, there are other places that, obviously, would. If Newry wants to do something that is a bit different, which might involve doing something close to the existing GP site that has, I know, a Roads Service car park close to it, and involve us doing a scheme there, that is something that we would be happy to look at. We are not interested in imposing solutions on Newry; we are interested in delivering solutions with Newry, and that is something that we will continue to do.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that elective treatment using National Health Service assets in a planned fashion can be better value for money than contracting out healthcare?

Mr Poots: Yes, I do. However, in some instances where you do not have the requisite consultants or surgeons, are we to sit and wait until new people are appointed? Very often, the market can be quite limited and, therefore, the appointment process can be quite slow. Do we allow others to wait while that happens? Or, will we go out and ensure that people get care at the appropriate time? I am not prepared to say that I will never use the private sector. By using the private sector occasionally, we can ensure that waiting lists are shorter and that people do not suffer pain for longer because of someone's socialist viewpoint that the private sector is evil and we can never use it, whereas the public sector is good and we should always use it. We need to be practical, sensible and rational as we move forward and use services that are best value for money and can deliver for us within an appropriate time frame.

Waiting Times: OT Referrals

2. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he will reduce the current waiting times for an occupational therapist referral visit in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area, which is currently approximately 18 weeks. (AQO 4986/11-15)

Mr Poots: Occupational therapists (OTs) use a variety of activities and/or equipment — for example, specialist seating, wheelchairs and adaptations — to enable recovery after illness or injury and to support independent living and health. A number of actions have been taken forward over the past few years to improve waiting times. Standardised access criteria are in place across Northern Ireland to ensure that all trusts have a consistent approach. The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has commenced a capacity and demand analysis for occupational therapy services in the Western Trust to understand more clearly the reasons for the deterioration in waiting times. In the interim, the HSCB has provided

non-recurring funding to the Western Trust, which is expected to ensure that the current waiting time for assessment is reduced and that, by March 2014, no patient will have been waiting more than nine weeks for assessment.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister for his response and welcome the standardising of waiting times. Will the Minister also assure the House that a process will be put in place to ensure that reports from OT visits will be speedily completed and forwarded to the appropriate bodies without undue delay?

Mr Poots: I think that occupational therapy is hugely important. Anyone who knows someone who has received the services of an occupational therapist will recognise how important it is. Many people need reablement and many have suffered major traumatic incidents in their healthcare. A few years ago, the OT waiting time target was 26 weeks. It was then reduced to 13 weeks, and I have reduced it to nine weeks. It is important that we seek to ensure that we can deliver. In March this year, 127 people were waiting for more than nine weeks. That is transformationally better than a few years ago. I remember, as an MLA, often trying to get an OT to visit someone who had had a stroke. The person had fallen quite ill and was unable to get about as they had previously and so forth, so they really needed this, but it was delayed.

I am not responsible for other Departments. When an OT provides a report to, for example, the Housing Executive, it is for the Housing Executive to respond within an appropriate time frame. I am responsible for the trusts. So, if OTs refer issues to trusts and the equipment does not come out in time, I would certainly be happy to ensure that it does, but I do not believe that to be the case.

Ms Brown: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Will the Minister update us on the implementation of the allied health professionals' strategy?

Mr Poots: I thank the Member for the question. I launched Northern Ireland's first allied health professionals' strategy, and a lot of work has already taken place in implementing that. A good example of the work of OTs in delivering on the strategy is reablement. OTs are working in and, in many cases, leading reablement teams in the community. The reablement model promotes greater independence. It reduces unnecessary reliance on statutory services. The ethos of reablement is to provide planned, short-term care support that is person-centred and promotes daily independence in personal and domestic activities.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his answers and acknowledge his endeavours to reduce the waiting time for assessment. Does the Minister agree that bed blocking is still an issue and that the waiting time for assessment contributes to that, hence displacing other patients?

Mr Poots: The issue of bed blocking is considerably improved and was improving even before I became Minister. We all recognise it as a problem and one to which the trusts have, I think, been trying to respond.

It might still happen on occasions, but we are in a considerably better place. In many ways, we are envied across the UK because we have a wholly integrated health and social care system. In England, councils and local authorities look after social services. The result of that is that, when people get out of hospital, councils very often do not facilitate things as quickly as they should

because the cost burden is on them. When it comes to costs being transferred, there is not the same issue with our integrated system. It is, of course, hugely beneficial, for individuals and hospitals, to get people out of hospital at the appropriate time. Therefore, bed blocking is not the issue that it was a few years ago, but I suspect that it may still happen on occasions. However, I think that the system works relatively efficiently.

Mr Speaker: Mr Wells is not in his place to ask question 3.

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry

4. **Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the terms of reference for the independent, expert-led inquiry into child sexual exploitation. (AQO 4988/11-15)

Mr Poots: As the Member will be aware, in an oral statement to the House on 5 November, I announced the appointment of Professor Kathleen Marshall to lead the inquiry into child sexual exploitation. I also informed Members that, as is normal practice, Professor Marshall was given the opportunity to shape and agree the final terms of reference for the inquiry. As agreed, the inquiry will seek to establish the nature of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland and measure the extent to which it occurs; examine the effectiveness of current cross-sectoral child safeguarding and protection arrangements and measures to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation; make recommendations on the future actions that are required to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation and who should be responsible for those actions; and report the findings of the inquiry within one year of its commencement.

In addition, the inquiry should consider specific safeguarding and protection issues for looked-after children, taking into account the ongoing thematic review by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI); seek the views of children and young people in Northern Ireland and other key stakeholders; and engage with parents to identify the issues that they are facing and seek their views on what needs to be done to help them to keep their children safe from the risk of child sexual exploitation.

The inquiry will not focus on the circumstances of and/or responses to the 22 children who are part of the ongoing police investigation that is known as Operation Owl. That will be the focus of the separate thematic review that is being undertaken by the SBNI. However, available learning that is generated from that review will be taken into account by the inquiry.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. It is unfortunate that he did not go to the Committee before coming to the House because if he had, he may have learned something, and we may have a better inquiry. What guarantees can he give to assure the House that the inquiry will be more than a report?

Mr Poots: There are three inquiries. The police investigation is happening, and it is important that they conduct their course of work. There is the thematic inquiry into the 22 cases. The inquiry that I have launched will look at the overall scenario and how we could do things better, and it will also look at policy.

Perhaps I would have learned something from the Committee. The Member may think that the former Scottish commissioner for children's health, who is an eminent professor and hugely qualified to conduct that work, also needs to learn something. I think that Professor Marshall is very well placed to conduct the inquiry. She is a very knowledgeable individual who has the requisite skills to identify the issues that we should look at. I tend to take a lot of cognisance of what she might have to say.

Mr Campbell: Given that there is a land border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, will the Minister outline what steps might be taken in the future to try to ensure that cross-border child sexual exploitation is prevented as far as possible?

Mr Poots: Predators, of course, do not recognise borders as blocking them. They will, in fact, often use borders to assist them. It is important that we are aware of that and work closely with our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland to ensure that the border does not become a barrier to child protection. We have a cross-border work programme that is taken forward by a cross-border steering group on child protection. It was agreed in July 2012. The steering group has identified key areas in which, together, our respective jurisdictions can continue to make significant progress over the next few years.

3.15 pm

The work programme will promote shared learning and contribute further to improving practice in specific areas of safeguarding and child protection, focusing on five work streams.

Work stream 1 is a knowledge exchange forum, which will promote continued learning through the use of research and evidence-based practice. Work stream 2 is quality and effectiveness, through which we will progress initiatives to build workforce capacity and improve the quality and effectiveness of social work and social care work, interventions and practice.

Work stream 3 deals with the deaths of children in care and will contribute to the learning about the deaths of children in care by developing an overview and analysis of the features of deaths of children in care in both jurisdictions. Work stream 4 is cultural competence and safeguarding and will assist in developing common guidance for practitioners who work with other cultures. Work stream 5 deals with specialist services, exploring opportunities to develop cross-border specialisms.

So, there is clearly a course of work that is being done. We have seen evidence in recent days of those who have sought to use the border to evade prosecution. I am glad that that was overcome and that, recently, someone was prosecuted for that very action.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for his replies thus far. While these inquiries are taking place, what interim processes are there to ensure that children in care are appropriately looked after and not put in vulnerable positions?

Mr Poots: The children are being looked after and, as far as possible, the staff in our residential care homes will seek to ensure that they are not put in vulnerable positions. Some of the children will believe that they are in a loving relationship. I believe that, sometimes, that is misplaced. In

some instances it may be a 16-year-old with a 19-year-old — try to convince them that it is anything other than their boyfriend and so forth — but it is still wrong. We need to assist the young people in their learning and knowledge of the risks that might be brought upon them.

There is much more serious stuff out there as well. Children might go to party houses where high levels of abuse take place. The majority of people in this House, if not all, would find that wholly repellent. We need to ensure that we protect children as far as possible from those circumstances.

If learning becomes obvious to us during the inquiry, we will not wait until the end of the inquiry to implement it. Implementation will take place immediately where we are advised that we should change procedures for the benefit of children.

Mr Beggs: In your September statement on child sexual exploitation, you indicated that you were open to the involvement of the Education and Training Inspectorate for the benefit and protection of children. Given the apparently dysfunctional relationship between you and the Minister of Education, what makes you so confident that he will approve the involvement of the Education and Training Inspectorate in working with the inquiry?

Mr Poots: The Education and Training Inspectorate helped us to draw up the guidelines. What makes me confident is that Minister O'Dowd told me he would. *[Laughter.]*

Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Services

6. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on making a decision on the future of paediatric cardiac surgery services for Belfast. (AQO 4990/11-15)

Mr Poots: I met the Republic of Ireland's Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly TD, on 12 September 2013 to continue my discussions on the potential for a two-centre model that would provide paediatric cardiac surgery services in Belfast and Dublin. Consideration of that proposal is continuing at an official level to determine whether such a model would be feasible. I will inform the Assembly of the outcome when I announce my decision on the future commissioning of that service, which I hope to do as soon as possible.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he accept that now, more than a year since restrictions were placed on children's heart surgery in Belfast, the lack of clarity and the ongoing delay of an outcome causes increasing distress for families? Will he give us a more concrete timescale for the completion of the review? Does he accept that an all-Ireland network of children's heart surgery, with a footprint in Belfast, is what is needed?

Mr Poots: I accept that the delay is undesirable and that it causes further consternation to families. That is not what we wish to have. However, I need people to cooperate with me and to be agreeable to what this House wants, and that is what we have been working on. That is a course of work that will have to be seen through if we are to be successful.

I urge people to be patient a little longer. Time is of the essence. Professor Wood leaves his role in December, so we need to have something in place before that happens. That is a course of work that we are continuing to engage

in. I hope to be in a position to give the House a full update in the not-too-distant future, bearing in mind that we are losing one of our surgeons in December.

Mr I McCrea: The Minister will be aware of joint services such as those that operate in Toronto and Ottawa and other parts of North America. Has he given any consideration as to how that type of model could work with regard to how the service is delivered in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Republic?

Mr Poots: We have, and Minister Reilly and I agreed that we would look for some international expertise that could give us advice on the issue. On a recent trip to Boston, I met an eminent surgeon who has overall responsibility for around 1,000 procedures taking place in his hospital. We are jointly seeking his help to give us advice and to provide advice to the clinicians as to how best we can continue to support the children in Northern Ireland who require congenital cardiac surgery. I think that that has the potential to be a significant advance forward.

Mrs McKeivitt: Does the Minister think that the new funding recently announced by the Minister of Finance and Personnel for the new children's hospital will change the context of the debate?

Mr Poots: No. I think that we will be able to provide a better facility for people to be cared in. However, at this moment, the care received, certainly in cardiology, is world class and second to none. The care provided in the surgical side, again, is a very safe service. We want to ensure that we can continue to provide the full cardiology service and continue to provide a surgical service in Belfast.

Children's Hospital

7. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the new regional children's hospital will allow for children's heart services to be located on site. (AQO 4991/11-15)

Mr Poots: The future provision of children's heart services at the new children's hospital is a matter for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in conjunction with the Health and Social Care Board. However, I can advise that the new children's hospital has been sized to accommodate children's heart services, and it is the intention that all paediatric cardiology services currently provided in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children will be provided in the new children's hospital.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. I wonder whether he can provide us with clarity around a timeline for a decision on children's heart services.

Mr Poots: The clarity is that a timeline has to be delivered before the end of December. Therefore, I will certainly bring something to the House in this term to make very clear how we are proceeding with congenital cardiac care.

I am delighted with the funding that is coming from the Minister of Finance and Personnel for the children's hospital. It is something that I have been working on consistently for the past two and a half years. The facility is not as good as we would like it to be with regard to the care that is being provided for our children and young

people. When I took the Minister down there, he had the same reaction and has supported the proposal.

I was criticised some time ago for saying that roads were not as big a priority as other things. I know that Mr Allister and others criticised me for that. This, I believe, is the number one priority for capital spending in Northern Ireland, and it should be the number one priority, because it is wrong that children are being cared for in a facility that is wholly substandard in its physical capacity. I am delighted that we are able to respond very positively on this front.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. I am pleased to hear that paediatric services will be retained in Belfast, but will he say more about the outline business case for the new hospital in Belfast?

Mr Poots: The Belfast Trust has developed an outline business case for the construction of a new 155-bed regional children's hospital. In addition to the services currently provided in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children (RBHSC), bed and theatre modelling for a new hospital also includes provision for services for children up to 16 years of age, with flexibility to increase that to 18, as the outcome of the review of paediatric services recommends; activity currently undertaken outside the RBHSC; and activity currently transferred to other facilities because of insufficient capacity there. In addition to the enabling works and decants to facilitate the development of the hospital, site infrastructural updates including an energy centre are required. As I said, existing facilities are cramped and unfit to deliver healthcare in the 21st century. It is critical that we do all these things.

A lot of children in hospital, when they become teenagers, are transferred to adult hospitals, so there could be 14- and 15-year-olds lying side-by-side with very elderly people. It is not a good mix for either the young person or the older person, so expanding and extending the service that is offered at the children's hospital will, I believe, be positively received.

Mr Gardiner: My party warmly welcomes the Minister's announcement on the children's hospital. Can I push you a wee bit further, Minister, and ask you to tell us when it will come into operation? Will it be this year, or do we have to wait until next year or the following year?

Mr Poots: That is a very good question, Mr Gardiner. By the time we go through all the processes and engage in decant and demolition — the hospital will have to be rebuilt on the existing site — and engage in the development and commissioning of the facility, it will be 2019. I would like that time frame to be shorter, but that is a reality that I have to accept. It is all the more incumbent on us to get the announcement out there and develop the funding cycles to ensure that all the funding is available. Minister Hamilton has made an initial £15.5 million available, which gives us the basis to move forward and complete all the consultancy work that will take place beforehand and allow us to start the programme that will ensure that we have a state-of-the-art children's hospital that we in Northern Ireland can be proud of.

Abortion: Guidelines

9. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the recent cases around severe

foetal abnormalities, what steps he is taking to revise the guidelines on abortion for women whose pregnancies have been diagnosed with severe foetal abnormalities. (AQO 4993/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware of the interest that the Member has in this area, and I thank her for responding to the Department's consultation on the draft guidance. I remind her that the law in Northern Ireland does not address the issue of lethal foetal abnormality. It is clearly a difficult area, and we must fully support our health staff. However, they can act only within the law, and, ultimately, only the Executive and the Assembly can change the law.

My views on the issue are well known. I am opposed to the liberalisation of the law, but I will consider any proposals put forward by the Minister of Justice that seek to address some of the issues that have recently come to the fore. As the Member is aware, the position on the termination of pregnancy in Northern Ireland is provided for in the body of criminal law as it has been interpreted in the courts. Any guidance document produced by my Department can only reflect existing law; it cannot change it. The recent consultation has been successful in highlighting the concerns that health professionals and others have about this sensitive issue. I have asked officials to consider all the consultation responses, with the aim of producing a document capable of supporting our health staff as they deal, every day, with difficult issues faced by women and their families, often in tragic circumstances.

Mr Speaker: Order, Members. That concludes Question Time.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I think that sackcloth and ashes are in order. I inadvertently missed my question to the Minister of Health. My only feeble excuse is that his productivity is much higher than that of other Ministers and he was getting through the questions much faster. However, I realise that I should have been here for the start of Question Time.

Mr Speaker: I appreciate Mr Wells's coming to the House to apologise so quickly.

3.30 pm

Committee Business

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly takes note of the following Public Accounts Committee reports:

Committee Reports

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report (NIA 43/11-15)

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners (NIA 45/11-15)

Report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute (NIA 48/11-15)

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11 (NIA 58/11-15)

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings (NIA 64/11-15)

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009-10 and 2010-11 (NIA 88/11-15)

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts (NIA 99/11-15)

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts (NIA 102/11-15)

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools (NIA 116/11-15)

Report on Invest NI: A Performance Review (NIA 109/11-15)

and the following Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda of Reply:

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners

Report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009-10 and 2010-11

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools

Report on Invest NI: A Performance Review. — [Ms Boyle (The Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee).]

Mr Dickson: Given the important issues examined by all of the Public Accounts Committee reports that are before us today, it would, in fact, be beneficial if each of them could be brought to the Assembly on its own for proper examination. However, that is not the case. As party spokesperson on the motion, I will try to cover in an overarching way various points as best I can in the time allotted to this debate.

*(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker
[Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair)*

It seems that, if we were to master a very few basic things in government in Northern Ireland, we would perform a great deal better than we currently do and would deliver a great deal better for people. I would like to address three issues: transparency, administration and, quite simply, joined-up working.

The first issue is transparency, which is a cornerstone of good government and good governance. The Committee is to be commended for the reports, which bring further transparency, but it would be much better if that had always been there in the first place. It is concerning to read lines such as:

"It is important that departments can clearly track and report on how funding is spent."

Really, that is a very basic requirement and one that, I am sure, the taxpayer wished was implemented in every Department every day so that it did not need to be highlighted in a Public Accounts Committee report. However, that is clearly not the case.

Lack of transparency raises its ugly head in several of the reports. There are serious questions to be answered about housing maintenance contracts, and, hopefully, the upcoming inquiry by the Social Development Committee will shed some light on what exactly has been going on there.

There are issues elsewhere. The 'Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts' says that there is a lack of evidence to show that safety has improved in the past decade. That is 10 years. There is an absence of a robust measure for the level of patient and client harm, which makes it difficult for the Department to demonstrate improvement.

The report on the transfer of military and security sites talks about serious issues with oversight and governance. It is astounding that the Department was unable to tell the Committee whether £870,000 from the sale of the Magherafelt site had been lost to the block grant. Where is the paper trail?

That leads me to the next general problem: administration. It seems as though many of the issues raised in the reports could be mitigated simply by better reporting, better documentation and better processes. How much longer do we have to wait to get those things right? The sale of the Malone site is one of the most striking examples. The report refers to documentation not being clear enough about valuations and advice for officials to make properly informed judgements. It also refers to the importance of retaining all documentation relevant to ongoing office investigations. Those are all simple, straightforward administrative matters. What sort of public service do we have that it requires the Audit Committee to report in this way?

Similar issues are raised in the health and social care report about confusing complaints procedures and the lack of appraisal. As a councillor for over 30 years, I have represented and continue to represent many of my constituents on healthcare issues and problems. As a councillor, I knew who to go to, what to do and how to deal with a complaint. As an MLA, I find it confusing and difficult, and the processes have been made harder and harder. Quite simply, the health service does not want to hear about or deal with complaints in the way in which it did 20 or 30 years ago.

Mr McCarthy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does he agree with me that it was shocking to read in last night's edition of the 'Belfast Telegraph' that the health service has had to fork out over £400 million in compensation for negligence over the past 10 years? That money would have been better spent providing a better service for our people.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. Yes, Mr McCarthy, I wholeheartedly agree with you: £480 million is a substantial sum of money and, when we hear during Question Time today what the Health Minister is struggling with, we can only imagine how far that would go, how many lives could be saved and how many people could have better healthcare. Those are basic things, and clarity, full documentation and evaluation are all key to running an effective administration. If there were improvements, a lot of the problems raised in the report could, quite simply, have been mitigated.

A final point that cuts across all the reports is the importance of cooperation and a joined-up approach. We have talked a lot in the House about the importance of Departments not working in silos but working together to solve problems and share best practice, but it is also clear that those external to central government must also be included, where appropriate. Many of us will know from dealing with vulnerable older people in our constituencies about the trust in the voluntary and community organisations and the potential for them to play a key role in delivering services, including encouraging the uptake of benefits and services. We also know that, to improve numeracy and literacy, schools must involve parents and, to improve procedures in health and social care systems, there must be input and feedback from patients and clients. Increased transparency, better administration and more joined-up working are basic and fundamental matters. They are not novel, and it beggars belief that they have to be repeated time after time in Public Accounts Committee reports. People are not listening to what is in those reports.

One report talks about regeneration being a long-term process but processes being slow. Improving governance in Northern Ireland is also a long-term process, and it is often too slow as well. I note that, among the raft of reports debated in June 2012, there was one that confirmed the unsustainability of the governance model of Northern Ireland Water. To date, no alternative has been brought forward. Nothing has been done. Where do these audit reports end up? Gathering dust on a shelf, I suggest. It is important that the Audit Committee does not let the reports gather dust but returns to the reports and demands answers on the queries that have been raised. Then and

only then will the Audit Committee actually be doing its job on behalf of all our citizens.

Mr Girvan: On behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, not the Audit Committee, I will deal with the subject of safeguarding Northern Ireland's listed buildings. The report highlighted major problems in how the Department of the Environment manages and delivers that function. There are currently some 8,500 listed buildings of one degree or another in Northern Ireland, and a report to be compiled of all the listed buildings was to be completed by 2008. Unfortunately, that report was not completed by 2008, and we are now told that we will not have it until 2020.

During the time between the report supposedly being commissioned and buildings supposedly being on a listed footing, a number of our key and historic buildings have, by one means or another, bumped into diggers, had mysterious fires or have just been allowed to get into a state of dereliction where the only way of dealing with them from a public safety point of view was either to remove the building or just shore it up. Unfortunately, the people to blame for that are those who have been tasked to protect our buildings and ensure that they are not allowed to get into that state. They have a list of buildings to be looked at. Unfortunately, with 60% of the buildings that they are supposedly going to assess, when they assess them they find that they do not require listing in any form, shape or fashion. Therefore, prioritising seems to be a bit of a problem. As a consequence of not doing that, they have wasted roughly £1.57 million — a rough figure — in unnecessarily surveying buildings that neither merited nor warranted listing in the first place.

Certain things have happened, and I will probably move on to an example. There was one building in Sion Mills — a stable block — that had deteriorated to such an extent that immediate action was required to ensure that it did not fall down or whatever. Within the Department's control there is a grant scheme that can be used and applied to by those who own buildings. Private owners can apply for grants and make use of them. Some £20 million of that grant funding has been used by others who have accessed it. Unfortunately, there are no measurable outputs that can tell us whether that was effective or not. That was one of the things highlighted in the report: for spending that was made through the grants process, were measurable benefits identified? Unfortunately, that was not demonstrated in the Department.

Another example is the Crumlin Road Courthouse, which was in public ownership, albeit in a fairly bad state when it was purchased for a miserly amount of money. I do not wish to make mention of the price, but I am sure that a Mars bar comes close to it. When the building was purchased for that amount of money, it probably was handed over in a very bad state, but inaction over time has let it get into an even worse state, when it could have added to the work that has gone on in Crumlin Road Gaol and link in with what has happened there, as an exhibition centre or whatever it might be. There were some wonderful, grandiose ideas about creating a hotel on that site. If the building is listed, there is merit in ensuring that it does not get into a state where probably the only course of action is to put a bulldozer through it. It is similar to what happens with the listing of trees. They mysteriously bump into JCB diggers for no reason, and then they have to be removed because a tree report comes out and states

that it is unsafe to retain the tree. As a consequence, that is what happens. Unfortunately, some well-meaning people — I use that term — deem it easier to let buildings deteriorate to such a degree that a bulldozer is the only solution to the problem.

The report highlighted the total ineffectiveness of the Department in safeguarding some key buildings. Buildings were being surveyed that were not necessarily that worthy of listing. The Department was devoting time to undertaking those surveys, when it should have been prioritising and using surveys in the proper fashion. This comes back to the point made by Stewart Dickson of East Antrim. Seven recommendations were to be carried out. It is vital that we go back, revisit that and ensure that those reports and recommendations are carried forward and that proper use of public money is demonstrated and that we do —

Ms Boyle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Girvan: I will indeed.

Ms Boyle: Does the Member agree that Departments and their agencies should work more closely with councils? Councils want to rectify problems with listed buildings in their area, but they come up against a brick wall in Departments when they try to do so.

3.45 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Member for her intervention. That brings in the point that some of us, as local representatives, are plagued day in and day out about buildings that cause nuisance because they are used as gathering points for antisocial behaviour and all sorts of things go on in them. Local authorities are trying to address the issue through other measures, but they do not have the spending power to deal with it. They should use their teeth to get the Departments to use their powers to ensure that they deliver what they are supposed to, which is the protection of these buildings.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I wish to address the Committee's report titled 'Invest NI: A Performance Review', which was published in April 2013. It analysed the performance and reporting standards of the organisation as revealed by the Audit Office.

Invest NI was established in April 2002 as the North's main economic development organisation. Between 2002 and March 2011, it spent almost £1.5 billion. The Committee examined Invest NI's performance over that period. Invest NI estimates that its activities resulted in the promotion of 42,500 new jobs, the safeguarding of 19,400 jobs and planned investment of £5.5 billion in the local economy by March 2011. Recent performance was particularly strong in the areas of job quality and encouraging businesses to spend on R&D. However, in the Committee's view, long-standing issues with target setting and the lack of independent validation of performance data are yet to be resolved.

In 2000, the Westminster PAC recommended that the Industrial Development Board (IDB), which was Invest NI's predecessor, report figures for job creation and duration as standard. Although IDB implemented that recommendation, it was not sustained by Invest NI.

Instead, it reports on jobs promoted, which are those promised by an investor at the outset of a project. The Committee considers the fundamental test of Invest NI's performance to be jobs on the ground and how long they last. Invest NI provided assurances that it has recently implemented systems that will assist the future tracking of jobs created, but it will be some years before meaningful data becomes available.

Since Invest NI's establishment, some of its targets have been set at lower levels than previous performance achieved, and some have been significantly overachieved. Although the Committee welcomes positive outcomes, these can be undermined if the perception is that the targets are soft. The Committee welcomed the establishment by Invest NI of formal job quality targets in the period 2008 to 2011. Performance improved significantly, with 75% of jobs promoted having salaries above the private sector average, compared with only 50% in an earlier period. However, that performance reporting was based on investors' promises rather than outcomes achieved. From 2008 to 2011, Invest NI comfortably overachieved its target to encourage 70% of FDI projects to locate within 10 miles of a disadvantaged area. The Committee considered that a weak target, however, particularly as it provides no measurement of how many people living in disadvantaged areas gain employment in supported projects. I am sure that many in the Chamber today share the view that this is a weak target.

The completeness and accuracy of Invest NI's performance data are fundamental to demonstrating the value and impact of its activities. The Committee has seen little evidence of meaningful independent validation of Invest NI's performance data. That is a key weakness. The Committee is a firm advocate of benchmarking and considers it a key tool for driving improved performance. However, Invest NI has never undertaken a comprehensive benchmarking exercise with other economic development agencies. We therefore welcome Invest NI's plan to commence the ongoing benchmarking of its efficiency and effectiveness in the near future. The recommendations of the Committee related to developing a system for measuring outcomes in job creation, sustainability, job quality and funds invested. Speaking as a Sinn Féin Member, I call on the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to look at that as a matter of urgency. In fact, in the absence of evidence-based policy development, Invest NI cannot claim to have a determining influence on growing our economy.

The Committee also recommended introducing a mid-term review process for its corporate plan targets and the setting by DETI of a fair but challenging target to measure Invest NI's contribution to improving local productivity. It also recommended working collaboratively to identify growth sectors and to make appropriate training available; measuring and reporting key quantitative outcomes through its virtual small business unit; and the urgent development of clear alternative strategies and measures for measuring and promoting economic development. Again, speaking as a Member, I think that Invest NI should explore the potential of subregional clusters, including the promotion of specific industries in relevant areas where the skills and expertise already exist.

The Committee also recommended the setting of targets to measure the people living in disadvantaged areas who

obtain employment in the assisted projects to redress the geographical imbalance in financial assistance offers made to investing companies. Thus far, Invest NI has perpetuated regional investment inequality. For decades, Invest NI and its predecessors have drawn investment into the greater Belfast area, thereby failing people and businesses in areas such as south Down. Again, I say that with my Member's hat on and not as a member of the Committee. Invest NI's regional disparities regarding inward investment and social and economic inequalities are clear indicators that the current economic policy is not delivering for large sections of our community. The Committee recommended the commissioning of annual independent validation of Invest NI's performance data.

The recommendations of the Committee got a mixed response from Invest NI, with only three recommendations accepted, three partially accepted and three not accepted. I believe that this was the first time that DFP used the category of "partially accepted". The Committee discussed the issues at its meeting on 2 October, and it was clear from members' views that the Committee saw a high rate of acceptance of PAC recommendations as essential to good public governance systems. I agree with my colleagues and will wait keenly to see that the recommendations are implemented by Invest NI. Although I joined the Committee only at the point of considering the draft report, I feel strongly, as, I am sure, all my colleagues do, that the recommendations can go a long way to improving the performance of Invest NI. I look forward to the Minister's comments on the report.

Mr Wilson: Let us remind ourselves of what we are debating. These are the reports that are under discussion today. I am holding in my hand £1 million worth of work by the Public Accounts Committee. The reports cost an average of £100,000, and there are 10 of them. There are 109 recommendations, and one would expect from that —

Mr Dallat: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. Is there not something in the rule book about the use of visual aids?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I think that the Member has made his point, and it is on the record. I will take guidance from the Speaker's Office.

Mr Wilson: It is not a visual aid, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, simply my notes. *[Laughter.]* I have only five minutes, so I had better be quick.

Mr Girvan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wilson: No, I am not going to give way.

There are 109 recommendations, and one would expect that, with that expenditure and that number of recommendations, we would have seen some improvement in governance across Departments in Northern Ireland. Let me make something very clear: I believe that there is a role for an effective Public Accounts Committee scrutinising expenditure across Departments. However, when I read the reports and listen to the points that Members have made, I ask myself whether we are improving government or making government more difficult in Northern Ireland.

The report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute was referred to, and there are recommendations on that. Before the report even came out, as a result of some of the discussions that were had, we find that DETI had already

introduced a casework committee; guidance manuals were revised on three occasions; there was a biannual quarterly assurance process; there was an accountability and casework branch; and there was a risk management committee. In spite of all that, the Committee asked for more governance to be put in place. For businesses that get a grant of more than half a million pounds, there were test-drilling appraisals, post-project evaluation, memoranda of understanding and internal audit reviews, yet the Committee asked for more appraisals. I ask the Assembly this: is that really the way to make quick and effective government processes and not strangle government processes in Northern Ireland?

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wilson: No. I would lose time, and I do not have much time left anyway.

Secondly, let us just take the one on the health and social care trusts. Look through that and its recommendations and ask yourself what kind of bureaucratic demands that has made on trusts. There have to be safety-related indicators set, then routine evaluation of those safety performances, regional collection of the relevant information, data on all adverse incidents in the use of wrong drugs, links between the data and complaints and other safety data that presumably, the staff all had to read. When are they going to do their work?

Mr Hazzard referred to the Invest NI one. I found that one really odd. The Committee already indicated that it was almost impossible to collect the data, but, nevertheless, when firms are setting up in Northern Ireland:

“Notwithstanding difficulties in obtaining data, the Committee recommends that Invest NI sets a target which measures the number of people living in disadvantaged areas who obtain employment in assisted projects and reports performance on this basis.”

Who collects that information? Is it more information that employers have to collect? Do you live in a disadvantaged area? Some people would not even know whether they live in a disadvantaged area. If there is a turnover of employment, does that have to be reported on a yearly basis — people who have come in and people who have left?

I sometimes wonder whether any thought is given to some of the recommendations in these reports. Let us just look at the one on literacy. There is a raft of things there, with no thought at all given to the expenditure. Look at recommendation 3:

“Early intervention initiatives ... Developing the capacity and capability of schools and teachers ... Rigorous tracking ... Setting targets”.

It also refers to continuous mentoring and training of all teachers, no matter what they teach, in numeracy and literacy. I loved this one, because many of the people who recommended it are probably now having a go at the Education Minister for his common funding formula decision: there should be a redirection of funding in the common funding formula to direct money towards schools with specific problems. If recommendations like that are going to be made, all I am saying is that consideration ought to be given to whether we make governance more difficult, more costly and slower in Northern Ireland. Do

we ask for additional information that has to be gathered, read and assimilated and slows down the ability of front line staff to deliver what they have to do? Do we impose burdens on firms that we are trying to attract into Northern Ireland because it is a business-friendly environment? Do we make recommendations that have cost implications, with no indication given in a report of how those costs will be met?

If we are going to have Public Accounts Committee reports and they are going to add value to government in Northern Ireland, let us make sure that at least some thought has gone into them and into the recommendations and that those recommendations are practical in their outcomes and their application, rather than simply saying, “We produced 10 reports: aren’t we good? Here are the recommendations, and, by the way, somebody else can live with the consequences”.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I rise to follow the former Minister of Finance. I thought that he was coming in with a list of his MP expenses in front of him today, but obviously that was not the case.

On a serious note, I think this is a healthy debate. The Committee has done a lot of good work on a cross-party basis and continues to do so. We have to provide some oversight, on a cross-party basis, with a constructive approach, as we have done, in order to get down to the nitty-gritty detail. We have done that by having some lengthy meetings — four, five or six hours long — every Wednesday. We have to do some of the work that the other Committees do not get an opportunity to delve into.

My colleague Chris Hazzard referred to Invest NI. I used to be on the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee. Job promotion really annoys me: it is not job creation, but people assume that it is.

Members of the public assume that, when you are talking about job promotion and certain figures, you are talking about actual jobs created. That is certainly not the case.

4.00 pm

Invest NI has to get away from using job promotion as a primary measurement of job creation, because it does not reflect reality. It is a slippery term, and the Committee was right to recommend that Invest NI move away from the trend of measuring jobs promoted ahead of jobs created. Jobs created is what the public are interested in, and it is what we need to be focusing on, given the times that we live in. That is acting in the public interest and something that we need to continue to do.

There was reference to Crumlin Road Gaol by Mr Girvan, I think. That is a fantastic tourism resource in north Belfast. Over the summer, I went with my family to visit Crumlin Road Gaol — and came out again. [*Laughter.*] When you come out the front door, you see an eyesore. It seems a great shame, given that tourism product and the good service provided by those who work there, that when you come out you are greeted by an eyesore rather than something that should be complementary to the tourism product. Crumlin Road courthouse is something that, as a society, we should be ashamed of. It should be restored because of its architecture and not to its past usage. That is something that the Committee should focus on and follow through on in its work.

I am going to focus on Ilex. Significant expenditure had been incurred by Ilex without proper approvals from sponsor Departments or, in some cases, without business plans having been prepared prior to spending taking place.

Some of the governance issues raised were quite concerning and it was important that we put a focus on that. The practice by Ilex flouted well-established rules governing spending on projects, which we found particularly surprising given the chief executive's previous experience as an accounting officer in two major Departments. To be fair, she was candid in recognising that both she and the organisation got things wrong in applying those controls over several years. There is an assurance that an action plan is now in place to ensure that no new issues will arise in future. In the Committee's view, it is important that the action plan developed by Ilex to ensure that spending rules are followed is fully implemented to prevent new cases of breaches of control arising in the future.

The governance arrangements of Ilex were also problematic, as it was funded by two Departments concurrently. The sponsor Departments shared accountability for Ilex. That arrangement, which essentially meant that Ilex served two masters, was part of the problem. The Committee was assured that, in future, one Department would be established as having a clear lead responsibility for Ilex. I am sure that the Minister will update us on that when responding to the motion.

Clarity of roles is particularly important with arm's-length bodies (ALBs) such as Ilex, even when only one Department is involved. ALBs must be given a clear mandate regarding their responsibilities. The Committee recommended that, as Departments remain ultimately accountable, their accounting officers need to ensure that oversight arrangements are effective in managing and monitoring financial delegations and that there is adequate information to provide assurance that value for money is being secured for public spending, wherever that spending takes place.

There have been a number of cases where the governing body seems to have been distant from the arm's-length body. The one that comes to mind is the Fire Service. The Department of Health did not have a grasp of the issues or appropriate oversight of some of the scandalous things that took place within the Fire Service, on which the Committee did a lot of work.

Another contributing factor to the problems that arose was the poor quality of financial information provided to the Ilex board. The board agreed to take on the tax liability for travel expenses for one employee even though he travelled from England to do the job. The Committee recommended that non-executive board members should have details of who is responsible for paying any tax liabilities formally agreed before appointment and included in the contract of employment. For wider application and to try to prevent such a situation being paid for out of public money anywhere else, the Committee also recommended that the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) issue guidance that clarifies the tax position of travel expenses that are paid to other non-executive board members throughout the public sector.

In procurement terms —

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Member for giving way. I want to bring you back a wee bit. You spoke about the health service and the shenanigans that went on in the Fire and Rescue Service. The Health Committee explored some of what happened there, as did the other Committee.

Will the Member join me in expressing surprise that, as yet, no one has accepted any responsibility or accountability for what went on in that particular period?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. That is the problem with a lot of the cases that we have looked at. The real focus of our work should not be only on getting the information and reports out. It does not end there, and there needs to be follow-through. I totally agree with the Member that there needs to be follow-through on the Fire and Rescue Service by the PAC and, if necessary, the Health Committee to ensure that someone is held to account for any wrongdoing in the public service.

There was also learning from the Ilex case in procurement terms. A firm agreed a price of £64,000 for consultancy on the Peace Bridge but then subsequently had its contract extended for a project, which resulted in revised costs of £479,000. It is quite incredible that the extension of those costs was not approved by sponsor Departments, and, of course, it is not acceptable. The extension of the contract without going back to the market also meant that it cannot now be demonstrated that value for money was achieved.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr McKay: To conclude, the Public Accounts Committee is doing a lot of good work, as can be seen from the amount of paper in front of the former Finance Minister. We will continue to do so.

Mr Copeland: I rose with some difficulty, for which I apologise.

I begin by thanking the Committee Clerk and her staff for the very professional way in which they equip us to do our duty, or job, depending on how you look at it. I also pay tribute to the Chair and the Deputy Chair for the way in which they manage to help us keep party politics out of the way in which the Committee works in order to do what is right for the people who have an expectation that their money will be properly looked after.

Mr Wilson produced large amounts of notes, which he denied were a visual aid. He claimed that they represented £1 million of expenditure. I have two small pages that represent the loss or misappropriation of £2.2 million of public money and £1 million of private investors' money. I think that there is a balance to be held between those two cases.

Unfortunately, it is the Bioscience and Technology Institute (BTI) that I wish to refer to. That case had everything. It could have been made into a television drama. It had foreign travel and offshore bank accounts. It also had the great and the good and those with titles after their names doing something that should have been a good idea. It promised much, with 10 new start-up companies, jobs for 50 Northern Ireland graduates and six new inward investors. It could have been a major success story for

Northern Ireland. Instead, the project failed to achieve any of its objectives. Worse still, as I said, it spent £2.2 million of taxpayers' money, left £1 million owed to the estate of a private investor and left another almost half a million pounds owed to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. It was a devastating end to a venture that had great potential.

In the view of the Committee, the handling of the project was extremely poor by the funding bodies and the BTI board. From beginning to end, the Committee noted a catalogue of negligence and ineptitude —

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Copeland: Should I risk it?

Mr Wilson: I am glad that the Member has given way. Reading through the report, it is quite clear that the losses were due to human failure on the part of those from the Department who were meant to scrutinise the agendas of meetings and go to the meetings and of those who were in charge of the accounts etc. What recommendation in the report can ensure that those human failures will not happen again?

Mr Copeland: How much time do I get?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Copeland: Incidentally, all the recommendations in the report were accepted. The truth is that you can never eliminate human error or malfeasance. It cannot be done. However, what you can do is set the rules to ensure that such risks are minimised where possible.

As I said, the handling of the project was extremely poor by the funding bodies and the BTI board. There was a catalogue of negligence and ineptitude, the nature of which was staggering, ranging from finder's fees to second floor premises being acquired without the rights to use the stairwells. In some respects, the truth is that the average person is pursued to the ends of the earth for £100, £200 or £300 of housing benefit that may have been overpaid, underpaid, falsely claimed or incorrectly claimed, yet, because of the nature of the people who are involved in this, an enormous amount of money went up in smoke.

The Committee has sought to emphasise that it does not want the Department or Invest NI to be risk averse. We emphasised that. Supporting new and innovative projects is a risky business, and some will fail. In this case, however, the Department completely failed to manage the risks in the existing system, which is the point that I think my colleague was trying to make. More worryingly, most of the shortcomings emanated from a failure to apply existing controls, rather than from an absence of controls.

The Committee has serious concerns about the way in which the Department responded to suspicions of, and I use these words advisedly, fraud and impropriety. The Department adopted a piecemeal approach, particularly in its consultations with the Police Service of Northern Ireland. In the Committee's view, matters should have been dealt with holistically, with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) formally consulting with the PSNI on all matters of concern. Fraud and impropriety, whether actual or attempted, are serious issues that this Committee expects Departments to address comprehensively and professionally, rather than

in the disorganised, disjointed and haphazard fashion that was apparent in this case.

One of the issues that the Committee found most disturbing in the BTI project was the extent to which some of the most senior officials in both DETI and the IDB were apparently complicit in the many failings that occurred. In my view, one of the most important messages coming out of this report is the stressing of a particular onus on an organisation's top management to ensure that procedures are followed and that the ethos of their organisation is fully in keeping with the proper conduct of public business. In truth, if this had been a community group or a local voluntary community-based organisation that was dependent on government funding, they would have shut the doors on it.

In the memorandum of reply (MOR) from the Department of Finance and Personnel, all the recommendations in the report were accepted, and we expect to see them implemented in due course.

I want to rectify an omission that I made at the start by thanking the Comptroller and Auditor General and his team for the very valued service that they allow us to provide for people who look to us to ensure that their moneys are well and properly spent.

Mr McQuillan: I will refer to the Committee's work on pensioners' uptake of benefits. Before I do, I will add my thanks to the staff and to the Clerk of the Committee for looking after us so well during the Committee meetings and for giving us all the information that we required. I thank you for your input to some of the reports, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, before you moved on to greater things.

The main public sector agencies and bodies that are involved in the administration of these benefits are the Department for Social Development (DSD) through the Social Security Agency and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the Department of Finance and Personnel through Land and Property Services.

4.15 pm

People of pensionable age represent an increasingly large portion of the Northern Ireland population. This section of the population is highly dependent on benefits. Almost 20% of Northern Ireland's pensioners — approximately 55,000 people — are classified as living in poverty. That is a testament to the importance of the uptake of benefits.

Benefit expenditure does not come out of the Executive's block grant from Westminster, so it should be clarified at this early stage that ensuring that pensioners receive their full entitlement does not, therefore, compromise the delivery of other public services. It is also a way in which a significant amount of additional funds can be injected into the local economy. Uptake of these benefits is, therefore, important on a number of levels, not least to the pensioners who receive them but also to the wider population. In view of that, the Committee recommended that benefit-paying agencies formally adopt improving uptake as a core business objective.

While there are no accurate estimates of the size of the benefit uptake gap, the Committee was extremely concerned to discover that unclaimed pension credit and housing benefit was most likely to be in the region of £100

million a year. The Committee recommended that the work to produce robust uptake estimates was initiated with immediate effect to inform future uptake strategies and to ensure that challenging targets are set for the future.

The Committee noted the outcomes of DSD's annual benefit uptake programmes from 2005, which targeted over 112,000 pensioners and generated an additional £23 million of benefits for successful claimants. That equates to £11 being gained in benefits for every £1 that was spent on the programmes. However, the Committee found that the targeting used by the Social Security Agency was intelligence-led, which meant that the response and conversion rates of the programmes were disappointingly low. Less than half of all those contacted replied, and only 9% were successful in obtaining additional benefits. The Committee recommended that DSD develop a range of options to follow up initial contacts in order to improve the success of the programmes.

The Committee values outreach services as a means of reaching the more vulnerable, but members were concerned that the level of resources committed to outreach activities was not significant. Concern was also raised that the outreach work of three benefit-paying agencies is not sufficiently joined up to maximise uptake of the benefits, and, as a result, the work of the community and voluntary sector in that area may not complement that of the agencies. We, therefore, recommended that the benefit-paying agencies jointly review their outreach arrangements, coordinate their work practices and more fully engage with those sectors. Two initiatives taken up by DSD — the Make the Call campaign and the innovation fund — are welcomed by the Committee, but it will be of the utmost importance to watch their performance closely over time and to learn from them in the future.

The Committee also identified that data-sharing across government bodies is an effective means of identifying individuals with unclaimed benefit entitlement. We welcomed the proposed introduction of legislative powers to share the personal data held by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Data-sharing activities need to be coordinated strategically, and it was recommended that benefit-paying agencies develop a joint data-sharing strategy, supported by a detailed action plan. The project needs to be given priority if work in this area is to be progressed.

It was the Committee's view that benefit-paying agencies must offer assurance to the public that benefit entitlement will be calculated correctly first time. It was noted that, often, there can be a reluctance to engage with officials and government agencies when it comes to sharing the personal data that is needed when assessing benefit entitlements. In light of that, agencies were told that the Committee expects all cases of pensioner overpayment to be dealt with sensitively, and a recommendation was made that agencies should revise their guidance to enable that. For example, it was suggested that pensioners should be informed of any large overpayments face to face rather than by letter.

The complex nature of the current benefit system also contributes to the reluctance that a large number of pensioners have about coming forward to the appropriate bodies about their benefit entitlements. Under future welfare reforms, there will be a move towards a single-tier pension, and housing benefit will be abolished. It

is expected that those moves will greatly simplify the system, and the Committee has highlighted the need for the benefit-paying agencies to rigorously appraise the potential implications of the changes on uptake rates. The Committee also recommended that, as part of the reform process, DSD and DFP consider whether a single agency could be tasked with providing a joined-up benefits service.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Trevor Clarke. You have four minutes before I must call the Minister.

Mr Clarke: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. At the outset, I thank the Committee staff and the Comptroller and Auditor General for the work that they have done. At this point, I will disagree with my colleague on the Back Benches, who previously found himself on the Front Benches when he was Minister of a particular Department. I suggest that there is not so much waste. If the Departments managed their Departments much better, in some cases, we would not find the waste that we have come across in the reports. Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, you sat on the Committee for a number of years, and for a period since I have been on it, so you will know what I am talking about when I say that.

I am going to stray slightly, and I hope you let me, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. We will take the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and another report that is going to come up. A contractor was allowed to strip off a part of a contract with a value of £400,000 and add it in at a later date to give himself an advantage. I think that that is in a recommendation in that report, which is coming forward at a later date.

Yes, I appreciate where the former Minister is coming from on the cost of each of these reports, but these reports are done on the basis that we are scrutinising what is going on with public money within the Departments. In this one, the CPD or the Department itself did not send an official for the opening of the tenders for an arm's-length body. That could have saved hundreds of thousands of pounds. So, yes, the previous Minister is right about the amount of money that these reports cost, but, if the misgivings were not found in these reports, maybe there would not be the same necessity to do that.

My colleague raised another point about the recommendations. I do not know if he used the word "silly", but I think he took enjoyment out of some of those recommendations. I remind the Member that when these recommendations go, they are accepted by Departments. So, if they feel that they are silly or inconsiderate, maybe the person responsible for that Department should make a recommendation to the Public Accounts Committee, because, you will know, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, from your time on the Committee, that each of the recommendations is carefully considered and debated by all of the members who are on that Committee, and sent to the Department for consideration. Yes, sometimes there is much debate about how we get to a conclusion on those, but, if it has made its way to the report, that suggests to me that it has been accepted by the relevant Department.

I will not diminish the work that the Public Accounts Committee does. It is invaluable work, and it has been enlightening. I have been on the Committee for only a short time, but it has certainly been enlightening. For a person who has been a ratepayer and a taxpayer, it is

useful to have that extra layer of scrutiny to make sure that we are getting best value for money from the public funds.

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. Have we reached the stage at which not only is the Public Accounts Committee the exclusive preserve of MLAs who belong to Government parties, but, when we have this meagre annual debate on its reports, only MLAs from Government parties are permitted to speak? Is that the situation that we have reached in this House?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Member is well aware of what is and what is not a point of order.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I think that the volume of criticism that there has been of all Departments from all quarters in the Chamber shows that the PAC is not afraid to attack even its own parties' colleagues. In fact, we had party colleagues attacking party colleagues in the last contribution. I think that that job is being done, whether the Member likes it or not.

I am pleased to be able to contribute to this debate on the Public Accounts Committee reports for the first time in this capacity. Before I move to the main business of the debate, I want to try to get through and respond to as many Members as I can. I would like to note the work undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee and the Northern Ireland Audit Office since the previous debate, which was held in June 2012. Much has happened in the intervening period, as Mr Wilson's stack of paper shows, so there is plenty to debate.

We are all too aware of the financial constraints that we face today and the need to ensure that every penny of public money is spent wisely. It is equally important that we account for it properly. Since taking up office, I have been setting out my vision for the public sector and our need to push forward with a significant reform programme and an efficiency agenda. In these times of diminishing resources, we all recognise that we need to find new, innovative and better ways to deliver public services. We have to do things differently. We can no longer do what we do and what we have always done just because that is what has always been the way. The status quo will no longer suffice.

The landscape of public service delivery is changing at a significant pace. To enable us to deliver world-class public services, we have to become leaner, more productive and more efficient. We need to identify best practice locally, nationally and internationally, and integrate the best of what we find into the working practices through which we deliver our public services. Reform is the key.

In so doing, we need to determine how we make optimum use of technology, assets and, most importantly, our staff, who, as everyone is aware, are our greatest asset. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that we need to go about our business responsibly and be held properly accountable for it, and I will return to that theme later. However, all that I have just told you is not new. According to 'Managing Public Money' — the "bible" of public expenditure in Northern Ireland — it is what we should already be doing. It states:

"Public sector organisations can and should innovate in carrying out their responsibilities, using new technology and taking advantage of best practice in business efficiency. This could mean new kinds of

organisation, new institutional arrangements or new delivery methods."

More than ever, Northern Ireland needs a public sector that is motivated, energised and ready to take on the challenges ahead. I believe that the staff across the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) are all of those things and that the wider public sector has the skills and drive to deliver the quality of services that the public deserve. The Civil Service has already demonstrated that it can embrace reform, as evidenced by the centralisation of key internal services in Enterprise Shared Services. However, more needs to be done, and it needs to be done without delay.

In moving forward, we need to create a culture of openness in which ideas from staff at all levels are encouraged and listened to, in order that we nurture and exploit what I believe to be the huge, largely untapped potential and creativity in our public sector. We also need to understand and appreciate, though, that by breaking new ground, doing things differently and striving for those rewarding opportunities, we will not always get it right from day one. We will make mistakes and get things wrong from time to time, but sometimes the eventual rewards are so great that that is exactly what we need to do. So I ask that we understand that mistakes happen when you strive to achieve, when you dare to do things differently and innovate. We must accept those mistakes. They happen in the private sector, too, and they are part of life. They can and do arise, even after careful, risk-based decisions are taken. Although I do not condone reckless decisions, sometimes it is acceptable to make mistakes.

Moving forward, we need to ensure that we eliminate the factors that stifle innovation. One such factor is the fear of making mistakes because of the potential consequences and criticism. However, as the old saying goes, "To avoid situations in which you might make mistakes may be the biggest mistake of all". Constructive criticism is important, if delivered in an appropriate manner. It allows us to learn and to develop, but I suspect that it is sometimes not delivered with those thoughts in mind.

We all have our individual roles, and it is incumbent upon each of us to carry them out responsibly. Although I accept that the Public Accounts Committee and the Audit Office have important functions, there are times when I hear members of that Committee speaking to the media, or I read a press headline and ask myself what it has achieved. Does it champion our public servants or promote our public services? Does it motivate our public servants to take the measured risks needed to provide the world-class services that our citizens deserve, or does it do the opposite? I ask you all to consider that.

Let us take one example: for more than five years, the Comptroller and Auditor General, in his annual report 'Financial Auditing and Reporting', has commented that the "standards of financial reporting" across central government "remain high". I view that as a very positive statement and one to be welcomed, but has it been a headline in the press or championed by the Committee? Unfortunately not.

All too often, when the Audit Office or the Public Accounts Committee publishes a report, some are only too keen to jump on the bandwagon of criticism, say their piece and grab the headlines. In doing so, they can, in one fell

swoop, denigrate the very service that others are working tirelessly to promote. The result is that people become even more risk-averse and bureaucratic.

We currently have a perverse situation in which, on the publication of an Audit Office or PAC report, there are those who are only too keen to say their piece to the media, while those who, for want of a better phrase, stand accused, are expected to stay silent. That, however, presents an unbalanced view to the general public, and we need to retain some perspective. I ask whether, before commenting, we should not all be expected to follow the same protocols of waiting until the entire Assembly process has been completed and all have had their say.

Today, we have had reference to a report that has not even been published. That is simply not acceptable. I can inform the House that I will not respect a protocol that the PAC itself is not prepared to respect.

4.30 pm

Let me say, however, that I am not suggesting that we do not uncover wrongdoing or inappropriate practice or that we gag the press. Are there flawed practices in the public sector? Absolutely there are. Is there, from time to time, fraud? Without a doubt. Should they be uncovered and dealt with? The answer is a resounding yes. What I am suggesting, though, is that we take time to consider the repercussions of our words before we speak. I am sure that that will raise some Members' hackles because I recognise that that will require quite a significant sea change for them.

The Public Accounts Committee's scrutiny of officials starts with the Audit Office's glossy blue reports, to which Mr Wilson referred. They are described as value-for-money reports. However, occasionally, when I read them, I question their value for money to the taxpayer. In its 2012-13 annual report, the Audit Office states that the average cost of a value-for-money report — I am afraid that I will have to disappoint Mr Wilson — was close to £150,000. There are 11 reports. Perhaps the former Minister did not get one of them. I am sure that we can provide him with the one that he is missing. I have to say that this is the first time that I have been in the Chamber while my predecessor has been on the Back Benches. For two years, I tried to persuade him that he had the potential to be a great Back-Bencher. I think that we have all seen that DFP's loss is the Back Benches' gain. The cost is not roughly £1 million; it is £1.65 million if we go by the Audit Office's own estimates. If we were to add to that the cost of departmental officials' time in agreeing those reports and that of the House in completing the Assembly process of each report, I am sure that we would find it to be significantly more, and, in some cases, it could be closer to three or four times that cost.

All too often in those reports, I see a preoccupation with auditing the process of what is being done. Why, I ask myself, is a greater emphasis not placed on outcomes? Instead of focusing on the non-compliance aspect of what is done, should we not focus on and be held to account for what is not being done? It is all too easy for auditors to check and report that a process has not been followed. I suggest that it is more difficult to assess and determine the cost of opportunities that have been missed when perhaps we have been too risk-averse. What is more costly: not

following a procedure correctly or not taking advantage of new technology or a more productive way of working?

Would some of that taxpayers' money not be better spent on considering what could or should have been done, for instance, to use better working practices and new technology or to identify alternative, more effective ways to deliver services — in other words, the cost of opportunities foregone? Is that not where real value lies?

I want to take this opportunity to flag up an issue that is becoming a concern to me. Indeed, the issue was discussed at the recent ministerial budget review group meeting. As members of the Executive, we are determined to put in place systems and procedures that allow for the timely delivery of major projects. This follows on from Mr Wilson's point. There is a growing sense of frustration that our accountability protocols delay projects. External stakeholders such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) have expressed frustration about that on many occasions.

The dilemma, however, is really a political one to resolve. On the one hand, we want streamlined, fast decision-making from our officials in the approval and delivery of projects, yet, on the other hand, some politicians in the House seem to take delight in battering the same officials either over being overly cautious or conservative on issues, such as ensuring value for money, or, alternatively, being cavalier in decision-making. Let us be clear: officials will do their utmost to ensure that they do not have to appear in front of the PAC for a battering. However, the fact that that is what they expect sends them the wrong signal.

I want to highlight some of the key initiatives and actions that have been taken forward by Departments following on from the Committee's evidence sessions and reports, addressing, at the same time, some issues that Members raised.

I will begin with the Chairperson's remarks. She referred to the Committee's report on external consultants. As she noted, the Executive have taken a keen interest in that area of expenditure. There has been a significant reduction in expenditure and a marked improvement in compliance with guidance in recent years. That said, the use of external consultants remains an appropriate and necessary part of our business model, especially when we seek to innovate and use technology.

For that reason, I was very disappointed to hear her raising the Account NI consultancy contract. The report that referred to Account NI was, in large part, a positive one and was about a contract on which my Department and the Committee do not agree. As clearly set out during the evidence session, the use of consultants for that project changed as our understanding of what was required and how it should be delivered changed.

A prime example of this was the shift from a target of payment within 30 days to a target of payment within 10 days. As a result of the changes made to the system, it has been very successful in ensuring that over 90% of all Civil Service bills are paid within that 10-day target.

That is what happens when you innovate, adapt and temper your plans as necessary. That is what we did. We adapted our plans and successfully delivered a world-class shared services facility, which is the envy of

other jurisdictions, for the Northern Ireland Civil Service within the contract while responding to changes in the commercial world as the UK went into recession. We changed to what our clients wanted, which was, for example, for suppliers to be paid faster in order to support local businesses. We responded to change, and we responded correctly.

Throughout this, a consultancy contract was managed proactively and in line with procurement procedures, which was underpinned by advice from CPD and the Departmental Solicitor's Office. As Minister of Finance, although I will always stress the importance of good financial governance, I will not allow process to stand in the way of progress or innovation.

The Chair also referred to the Committee's report on the safety of services provided by health and social care trusts. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) has a range of management information systems in place and is developing a whole-systems approach to strengthen reporting, analysis and learning, and it plans to introduce a regional learning system.

In addition, DHSSPS met the Health and Social Care Board, the five trusts and the Ambulance Service to remind them of the need for serious adverse incidents to be reported. Revised procedures, effective from 1 October, have been issued to serve as a reminder and encouragement to staff to report serious adverse incidents.

Mr Easton referred to the Committee's report on the Housing Executive's management of response maintenance contracts. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has investigated the full extent of contract management problems, including planned maintenance, which led it to estimate overpayments of some £18 million. Members will recall that the Minister for Social Development made a statement to the Assembly updating it on this issue on 10 June. The DSD has confirmed that it carried out a review of its sponsorship arrangements with the Housing Executive, and new arrangements were implemented at the end of June. The Housing Executive reporting arrangements have been overhauled and its performance regarding responses to planned heating and grounds maintenance contracts is now reported monthly to the board.

Mr Rogers referred to the Committee's report on improving literacy and numeracy in schools. The Department of Education is taking forward a three-stranded approach to address the gap between pupils entitled to free school meals and those who are not. It is doing this using a set of evidence-based policies that are designed to raise standards, a range of additional interventions and through raising parental aspirations. The Department of Education has committed additional funding to a number of projects to provide professional development for teachers and to encourage the sharing of best practice between schools. It is also working closely with the Department for Social Development to create 20 new nurture units in primary schools that will address early social, emotional and behavioural barriers to learning.

Mr Dickson and Mr Hussey referred to the Committee's report on military sites. The former military sites that were gifted under the Hillsborough Castle Agreement,

and which are under the control of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), were gifted on the basis that they would be used for the benefit of the Executive. Given market conditions, OFMDFM consulted on the use of the sites with a number of local stakeholders, including councils, development trusts, the community and other Departments. That consultation will continue and OFMDFM will continue to meet with and encourage commercial interest in the sites where it will have benefits for the local and regional community.

Mr Girvan referred to the Committee's report on listed buildings. I understand that a new three-year contract for the second survey fieldwork, which will identify buildings that are suitable for listing, has started, with extra personnel being recruited, and that the Environment Agency remains confident that it will meet the target of completing the second survey by 2020. I also understand that the Environment Agency is developing a performance measurement framework for its listed building grants scheme and has carried out a prioritisation exercise that has identified the most vulnerable listed buildings.

Mr Hazzard referred to the Committee's report on Invest NI's performance review. In the memorandum of reply to the Committee's report, three recommendations were accepted in full, three were partially accepted and three were not accepted. I can understand how the Committee may have had concerns that more recommendations were not fully accepted, but I hope that it appreciates that each recommendation was considered in great detail and that it was only after considerable discussion and deliberation that a decision was taken not to accept particular recommendations. The rationale for those decisions is outlined in the memorandum of reply.

As regards the target-setting and measuring outcomes that the Member referred to, I am sure that the Committee will appreciate that, although we all have the best interests of the Northern Ireland economy at heart, we may not always fully agree on the best way of promoting and growing it. The Committee recognised that Invest Northern Ireland's performance over the past nine years showed steady progress. Performance in the period 2008 to 2011 has been the strongest to date, particularly in the areas of job quality and expenditure on research and development, and that is commendable against the background of a severe economic downturn.

Mr McKay referred to the Committee's report on Ilex. As of April this year, OFMDFM assumed sole responsibility for Ilex, and that has resulted in shorter lines of communication and streamlined arrangements for accountability and governance. The Committee highlighted instances of expenditure without adherence to proper rules and procedures. OFMDFM has confirmed that a comprehensive governance action plan has been applied in Ilex and validated by internal and external audit. My Department has now issued guidance that clarifies the position throughout the public sector on the various tax issues raised by the Committee.

Mr Copeland referred to the Committee's report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute. All the Committee's recommendations have been accepted, and DETI has confirmed that it is committed to the highest standards of leadership and management, both in the Department and Invest NI. As many of the issues raised by the Committee occurred a number of years ago — several

years ago, in fact — DETI was able to set out both the organisational and cultural changes that have been made in the intervening years. Those include compliance with enhanced processes and effective risk management, annual exercises to ensure that appropriate standards are being applied, and the use of audit and casework committees, all of which provide for a much sounder form of governance.

The issue that Mr Copeland highlighted is one where, absolutely, if there is wrongdoing, it should be exposed. However, economic development, by its very nature, involves risks. There will be successes and failures, and I ask this question: when was the last time that a PAC report highlighted the successes?

Madam Chairperson made the point that she wanted the Committee's recommendations to be well measured and implemented properly, and I understand that sentiment, not least as a former member of the Committee. However, in my opinion, although the Committee chooses to base its findings on the short-sighted, retrospective Audit Office reports and frequently ignores the evidence presented to it — Mr Dickson referred to reports gathering dust — what I have said over the past 10 minutes shows clear evidence that government does respond, and responds positively, to the reports that the Committee has made. However, by ignoring the evidence presented at hearings and to ignore continually the wider social and economic impact of the matters before it, that is not going to happen. Its recommendations will risk falling short of being well reasoned. Although Departments will strive to respond —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Minister to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Hamilton: — opportunities will be lost. Thank you.

Mr Dallat (The Deputy Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, if I can recover from that.

It is my job to wind up the debate, and I thank all the Members who contributed. Certainly, Mr Wilson did not disappoint us at all. We had his usual little bit of theatre, but it appears that the pantomime season has come early this year for the Assembly.

I move very quickly to the Minister. I had written here that I was going to welcome his positive contribution. I am sorry, Minister, that it seemed to be sour grapes, and you are only in the job. The Committee is made up of all parties, and you really need to understand the efforts that we have made to make the Assembly more accountable to the general public, and particularly to the taxpayers. It is an incredibly difficult thing in Northern Ireland to get a Committee representative of all the parties, or most of them, to do that, and I commend my colleagues from the parties represented there for the courage and determination that they have shown to ensure that the Assembly, now into its fifteenth year, has a Public Accounts Committee that can hold its head high. I can say that, because we have visited Committees in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Dublin and Westminster. Therefore, we can stand over what we do.

4.45 pm

Mr McKay: I thank the Member for giving way, and I thank the Minister, in as much as that was a totally unjustified

attack on the Committee. I know that Ministers do not like Committees —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to address the Chair.

Mr McKay: I know that Ministers do not necessarily like Committees, but he has to recognise the difference between risk taking, on which I agree with his point, and wrongdoing. The PAC's work is about exposing wrongdoing and holding civil servants to account. A culture of risk taking in the Civil Service is a matter for the Minister.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Member. In fact, he has just stolen from my notes.

We have never condemned any Department for doing things wrong, provided that it had the proper assessment, that it monitored what it was doing and that it delivered what it said it would.

We have published 10 reports in the past year, and I thought that that was a very productive time. God knows, if those who criticise us had been here when we were working into the late hours, perhaps they might have a better knowledge of just how serious some things have been and how necessary it has been to address them. I, as an individual, will allow the public to judge me, but what about the idea that we are "battering" officials? That is an awfully emotive term to use. The relationship between the Committee and officials has, for most of the time, been very courteous, and although they did not accept all our recommendations, 87% have been accepted. Perhaps our work is not all that futile, and perhaps there is a need for it. I do not think that there could have been any difference in this — *[Interruption.]* Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I showed Mr Wilson some courtesy when he was speaking, so I would like him to afford me the basic courtesy of remaining silent while I make my winding-up speech.

During this time, the Committee has not shied away from looking into complex issues, nor has it been deterred from treading new ground in exercising its powers. We agree that there is an element of publicity. Of course there is if the work that we do is to enter the public domain and if organisations are to learn from others' mistakes when managing public funds. We would not have asked to debate our work here today if there was no truth in that. The most disappointing element is that several of the recommendations in these reports were made before and were not acted on by the Departments. Do not ask me who the Ministers were, because we are not party political in this. At least, I hope that we are not.

Our Committee, however, does not give primacy over getting the truth about where public money is going. It is our job in the Committee, with the help of the Audit Office and its reports, to hone in on cases where the public purse has been tapped into unwisely; to hold those who are responsible for it to account; and to ensure that measures are put in place to prevent such situations from happening again. Do not tell me that that is not what happens in any democratic part of the world. It might interest the Minister and Mr Wilson to know that developing democracies from eastern Europe and other parts of the world have come here to Belfast to see how their Governments could be more accountable. I hope that they are not picking up some of the observations that are being made here this evening.

We seek in our investigations to identify where the problems lie in the Departments or the bodies that are under scrutiny. Rather than just pointing the finger and saying that we do not want to see x, y or z happening again, we make recommendations that offer guidance about what needs to change to avoid a repeat of those events a number of years down the line. I was here when literacy and numeracy was first discussed in 2002. It is now 2013, and many of those recommendations have been repeated. That is not the only one; there are several others.

The Committee expects that these recommendations are accepted and implemented quickly where there are no robust reasons against doing so. The rejection or only partial acceptance of a recommendation is a worry to the Committee, and it is something that we will keep an eye on.

Although 87% of the recommendations have been accepted, which may seem high, quite a few have been rejected. In recent times, we have, I think, experienced resistance to the work of the PAC. Perhaps that is a good thing, and perhaps we should welcome it, because it may indicate that we are doing our job right.

Of course, all the recommendations in some of the reports have been accepted. That was the case for the report on the use of consultants, and the amount spent on consultants has gone from £42 million to £13 million. Is that not an improvement?

Only eight of the 11 recommendations in the 'Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners' have been accepted. That is not too good given that £100 million has been lost to pensioners.

In the report on military sites, again, only 11 — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Dallat: Do you know what, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker? At this stage, I do not mind. I will suffer it; not a bother.

The PAC strives to work in the public interest, seeking to ensure that public money is used in the most efficient way possible so as to ensure that the greatest value is achieved for every £1 that is spent. Who does not want that? That is a vital factor for a Committee such as the PAC if it is to achieve success.

The fact that the PAC has conducted 10 inquiries in such a short time shows the extent to which Departments and public bodies are being held to account for their actions. The PAC intends to maintain that impetus in the coming year and has already commenced its planning for inquiries that it will conduct during the remainder of the session.

Accountability is vital, and the Committee has played a constructive role in pointing out the lessons that need to be learned to improve performance. Whilst our inquiries tend to be specific to a particular Department or body and the issues pertaining to it, there are lessons to be learned throughout government, and I hope that others are taking note of what we have said and the recommendations that we have made. I, as Deputy Chair, would certainly like to see greater partnership between Departments and the Public Accounts Committee. That having been said, I have been impressed by the extent to which a positive response to our recommendations has been shown by promising a much more active effort to improve public sector spending. However, we will continue to monitor the progress of

reports in order to ensure that those are promises are fulfilled. That may take care of some of the constructive criticism that has been made. So, we will monitor that.

Michaela Boyle, the Chairperson, spoke of the independence of the Audit Office, and that is absolutely vital to this democracy. So you can forget any plans, past or present, to try to absorb it into the Department of Finance and Personnel. The people of Northern Ireland have, for many years now, had an independent Audit Office, and it is going to stay that way.

Michaela spoke about several issues that affect her constituents, not least patient safety and mental health. She highlighted the fact that money could have been better spent in helping those people, and I can think of nothing more honourable than saving money for that reason.

Ross Hussey has obviously seen what has happened to military sites, because he lives in the Omagh area. There are lessons to be learned for the future. There is a military site in Ballykelly, and I hope that the same mistakes are not made there.

Stewart Dickson certainly did not get the name of the Committee right. The Audit Committee is a separate Committee, but we all make mistakes.

Paul Girvan obviously has an interest in listed buildings, and rightly so. Again, that is part of our heritage, and I cannot think of anything more honourable than trying to protect our heritage and ensure that the money for preserving those buildings is spent wisely. I do not need to repeat everything that Paul said, but, my God, there is some scope for improvement there.

Chris Hazzard spoke about Invest Northern Ireland and focused on the difference between job creation and job promotion. I think that the public at large have at last cottoned on to the fact that you cannot, forever and a day, keep recycling promotion and claiming it as success, which, of course, it is not. Promises are one thing; achievements are another.

I am not sure whether I should afford Mr Wilson another platform or not. The only thing is, it gets boring after a while, because this was not the first time that Mr Wilson brought a pile of books into this Assembly. On the last time, Lord Alderdice threw him out for it, or told him to get rid of them. Do you remember that? Of course.

Daihi McKay spoke about the oversight of Departments and referred to job promotion and job creation. He spoke about coming out of Crumlin Road Gaol, and I am glad that he did get out all right and had time to notice the courthouse, which is a splendid building — bad management, and look at the mess that it is in.

Ilex came in for criticism, and rightly so, in the area of business planned. Last night, I tried to book a hotel in Derry for the weekend and could not get one. They were all booked out. The Public Accounts Committee accepts that, at times, mistakes were made, but we perhaps want to give credit for the end products, and Ilex played a major role in the regeneration of that town, which was so badly on its knees. All the recommendations in relation to it are totally valid, and the Public Accounts Committee has not spent all its time damning and criticising people. We have recognised good practice when it has taken place.

Michael Copeland made a very positive contribution — one of the best — on the question of biotech, all the money in the offshore accounts and the £2.2 million and all that stuff. How many of our unemployed people could have been skilled with the money that was wasted? The people who benefited from that are not here, of course.

Adrian McQuillan spoke about the role of Land and Property Services.

I was taken somewhat aback but, as the longest-serving member of the Public Accounts Committee, I can assure this Assembly that we value our role very much, and I can look the public straight in the eye and say that anything we did was not for press or publicity but to make this place workable. I cannot think of any more honourable a thing to do in this Assembly than to make some contribution to ensuring that we can justify a regional Assembly that works, and I hope that, when the new Minister has got his feet under the table, he will reflect on some of the things that were said today, because they ain't fair.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly takes note of the following Public Accounts Committee reports:

Committee Reports

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report (NIA 43/11-15)

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners (NIA 45/11-15)

Report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute (NIA 48/11-15)

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11 (NIA 58/11-15)

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings (NIA 64/11-15)

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009-10 and 2010-11 (NIA 88/11-15)

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts (NIA 99/11-15)

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts (NIA 102/11-15)

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools (NIA 116/11-15)

Report on Invest NI: A Performance Review (NIA 109/11-15)

and the following Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda of Reply:

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners

Report on the Bioscience and Technology Institute

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010-11

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009-10 and 2010-11

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools

Report on Invest NI: A Performance Review.

Private Members' Business

Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members will have five minutes.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I beg to move

That this Assembly expresses its concern at the rates of prostate cancer; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to introduce a public awareness campaign to raise awareness of the disease and to introduce a screening programme.

I thank the Business Committee for allowing this motion to come before the House and thank the Minister for attending.

In Northern Ireland, prostate cancer accounts for almost a quarter of male cancers — 23.9% — excluding the common non-melanoma skin cancers. An average of one in 85 men are diagnosed in Northern Ireland each year with prostate cancer. Indeed, there are a number of men in this Chamber today, and just think that one of us could have it unknowingly.

5.00 pm

There has been a sharp increase, almost a doubling, in the number of new cases diagnosed each year, from 593 in 2000 to 1,006 in 2011. However, the number of deaths has remained constant at an average of 216 per year, despite an ageing population.

Members, I am one of 6,646 men living with a diagnosis of prostate cancer and whose cancer was diagnosed over the past 18 years in Northern Ireland. Many of us were diagnosed through a blood test for the prostate-specific antigen, known as the PSA test. The introduction of that blood test led to a huge increase in the number of prostate cancer cases diagnosed, investigated and treated here. However, it may not be entirely a good news story.

Before I delve into screening and aftercare, I will speak a little about the cancer. The prostate is a small gland in the pelvis. Found only in men, it is about the size of a walnut and is located at the bladder. It is around the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder. Cancer of the prostate develops very slowly. You may have no sign of it for years as symptoms do not arise until the cancer has become large enough to put pressure on the urethra. Nevertheless, it can affect your life by causing anxiety or depression because, in many cases, when the cancer is at an early stage, a process of watchful waiting is common.

The prostate's position means that symptoms of the cancer include needing to urinate more frequently during the night; needing to rush to the toilet; difficulty in starting to urinate; straining or taking a long time to urinate; feeling that the bladder has not emptied fully; pain when passing urine; and, in some of the rarer forms, blood in the urine. If the disease has spread outside the prostate to the bones, that is secondary cancer, which can cause pain in the back, hips and pelvis.

It is very difficult to narrow down diagnosis to a single test. There is no single definitive test. The role of GPs

cannot be underplayed. My GP's instinct is the reason why I was diagnosed. If a GP believes that you are at risk of this cancer, he has two options: he can ask for a urine sample to check for infection; or he can take a blood sample to test the level of prostate-specific antigen. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate gland. All men have a small amount of PSA in their blood, and it increases with age. Prostate cancer can increase the production of PSA, so the test looks for a raised level of PSA in the blood that might be a sign of the condition in its early stages. However, PSA testing is not a specific test for prostate cancer. Most men who have prostate cancer do not have a raised PSA level. More than 65% of men with a raised PSA level will not have cancer, as the level rises in all men as they get older. If there is a high level of PSA in the system, as in my case, you will be referred for a biopsy and/or CT scan.

Treatment depends entirely on the cancer's type, size and grade: low to medium, medium to aggressive or aggressive. In my case, the cancer was aggressive. It also depends on whether the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. As I said earlier, in rare forms, it may move into the bones. In my case, Members, doctors are watching me because a slight spot is showing on one of my ribs, though it is too small to treat. So they are in the mode of watchful waiting in my case, and that may continue for three to five years. After that period, it might be deemed necessary to remove the prostate surgically, or there may be radiotherapy or hormone therapy.

There is a downside to PSA testing. We hear, rightly, that it is important to have cancer diagnosed as early as possible so that treatment is easier and a cure more likely: bowel cancer screening, for example, will reduce deaths from that cancer. However, PSA testing for prostate cancer does not meet the well-defined and internationally accepted criteria for a screening test. It can be deemed unnecessary to many men as it is not very sensitive to picking up the disease, and nor is it specific in defining what is wrong. It may not be cancer of the prostate but infections.

A study in Europe examined 182,000 men and found a high risk of over-diagnosis of prostate cancer. It was estimated that 1,410 men would need to be screened and 48 men diagnosed and treated for prostate cancer to save one life. PSA tests should be used only in a clinical situation and not as a screening test. The public need to be made aware that a PSA test to diagnose prostate cancer should be considered only after consultations with clinicians, during which the risks and benefits can be discussed.

Seven out of 10 men with the cancer are over 65 years of age when diagnosed. It alarms me that I was not in the age range in which that type of cancer is more common, so I was not seen as being at risk. In that age group, death from prostate cancer is infrequent compared with other causes, even when initial PSA was markedly elevated. A conservative approach to invasive investigation is appropriate for the majority of men older than 65. There are, however, at least 7,000 men living here who have had a diagnosis of prostate cancer. Many of those men are experiencing the side effects of treatments, including bowel, urinary and sexual problems. There are also associations with depression and anxiety. An assessment of the needs of those men is required so that services can

be planned and delivered to help them with the symptoms, some of which are very distressing.

My point, Minister, is not to do with new screening projects, and nor is it to change the current screening process, although I see the PSA test as being quite unnecessary. My issue is with the aftercare of men after they are subjected to the screening and diagnosis process. I went to the doctor for my usual blood test, which was when my GP became worried and sent me to the hospital. A blood test and a biopsy were done. Within two weeks, I was sitting in the hospital, and the doctor read out the chilling words, "You are confirmed as having cancer". That is how it is put. There is no other way of putting it, and I accept that. Depression sets in with a lot of men when they are told that they have cancer. I went for bone MRI scans, which were all done very well. My diagnosis meant daily treatment for seven weeks at the City Hospital. When you are in the City Hospital, it is an average of 200 or 300 a day.

I am conscious of the time. My area of the glens in the East Antrim constituency has a very high rate of prostate cancer. The figures are also very high in the Larne area. That needs to be looked at. I would like you, Minister, to look at three things out of the debate today. The first is to have a screening process for men who have been diagnosed for after-treatment, which is vital. That is not happening at present. A major publicity campaign needs to be carried out to make more men aware of the disease. Men in general do not go to the doctor and do not like —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr McMullan: — to do that sort of thing. I hope that you, Minister, take this on board today. Thank you all again for being here to listen to the debate.

Mr Wells: It never fails to impress me that, when Members have had bad news medically, rather than remaining silent, they have been prepared to come forward, raise the issue in the House and try to educate others about the warning signs and to advocate better treatment. Any of us who listened to Mr McMullan's contribution could not fail to be impressed by his honesty and bravery in raising his journey with prostate cancer. We had Mr Jimmy Spratt from South Belfast telling his story of bowel cancer, and I remember that Pauline Armitage, a former Member of the House, was very open about her cancer experiences. I am very glad to say that she has made several recoveries.

Prostate cancer is one of those very difficult areas, because many men will die with prostate cancer rather than because of it. Indeed, one study in the United States showed that 80% of men over 70 who were examined and who had died of other causes had had some form of prostate cancer which had not contributed to their death. So, that makes this a much more difficult issue to deal with than normal cancers.

It is the sixth leading cause of cancer death in the world, but there are huge variations that are difficult to understand. There is a very high level of incidence and death among Afro-Caribbean men in America, but, in the Mediterranean areas, there is a remarkably lower figure. There is a huge degree of research to be done on that.

There are very clear risk factors: diet, genetics, obesity and lack of exercise. There seems to be a very clear and direct link between a diet that is high in red meat

content and prostate cancer. Normal meat consumption does not seem to be a factor, but people for whom a very high proportion of their diet is red meat seem to have difficulties.

Genetics are incredibly important. Indeed, if someone in your immediate family has prostate cancer, that doubles your chances of contracting the disease, so it is somewhat like breast cancer in that there is a very definite genetic element. We do not understand what produces that, but it means that people who have immediate relatives with this condition need to regard it as urgent that they get in and get checked.

There is also a strange link between exposure to light pollution and prostate cancer. No one has yet come to any firm conclusion as to why this is, but the statistics show that it is a risk factor. Lack of exercise comes up time and again in many cardiovascular and cancer ailments, and it leaves one open to this condition.

As Mr McMullan said, there are very clear warning signs, but the reality is that 66% of people diagnosed with prostate cancer have none of those warning signs, and that is what makes this disease particularly difficult. Frequent urination, blood in the urine and painful urination are very clear indications of prostate cancer, but, in the cases of many men who are eventually diagnosed with prostate cancer, none of these signs showed up, and they had no warning.

I must congratulate Mr McMullan, and I think that he is absolutely right. The tendency is to demand widespread screening and PSA tests for all. Unfortunately, unlike other cancers, such as ovarian cancer where screening can improve life expectancy by 90%, mass screening for prostate cancer does not work. It leads to over-treatment, anxiety, biopsies and other forms of treatment that can be as dangerous as the condition itself. Therefore, there is no silver bullet or magic solution where you can simply decide to test every man over 60 for prostate cancer.

I was tested last Christmas as part of my normal medical examination. The PSA test was quite low, but even if a PSA test shows up early, that does not improve survival chances. The statistics show that you are no less or no more likely to die from prostate cancer even if you have the PSA test. Therefore, I think that Mr McMullan has been very responsible in saying that the key is aftercare and follow-up after diagnosis. I think that that is the best way forward.

We are making successful steps in Northern Ireland cancer treatment. Many more men are not dying as a result of prostate cancer than, say, 20 years ago. We have a long way to go, and I welcome the fact that this issue is being aired on the Floor of the House.

Mr McKinney: I support the motion and commend the proposer for bringing this important issue to the House. I echo the words of Mr Jim Wells on how other Members have reflected publicly. Too often we stay quiet on these issues, and it is important that they are reflected in a way that leads to better provision.

We have heard that the rates of prostate cancer have risen at a worrying rate over the past number of years, and we urgently need the Minister of Health to introduce a public awareness campaign. Such a campaign, coupled

with a proper screening programme, would help stem the increasing rates of that particular cancer.

5.15 pm

Today, we heard a very moving account from Mr McMullan on his cancer. Taking this opportunity to raise awareness is very important. We know that much more needs to be done if we are to encourage men to avail themselves of a new screening programme. However, the inequity that exists between cancer patients in Northern Ireland and those in England must be addressed if we are to tackle the rising rates of prostate cancer. Crucial and lifesaving medicine must be readily accessible to people living in this region. There are three prostate cancer medicines, across four indications not available in Northern Ireland, that are available through the cancer drugs fund.

Almost two years ago, the Health Minister pledged that people living in Northern Ireland should have access to the same level of care that patients in England receive. Patients in Northern Ireland have limited access to new cancer medicines. Health technology assessments lead to a high percentage of rejections for cancer medicines. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has rejected 11 of the 12 cancer medicines that it appraised in 2013. The individual funding request (IFR) process allows access only where a patient's condition represents an unusual or rare circumstance.

The Rarer Cancers Foundation produced a report in 2012 that suggested that clinicians here are hesitant to submit to the IFR process because they feel that it is overly onerous. The impact of those barriers can go beyond individual patients and also affects Northern Ireland's suitability as a destination for clinical research. It is not just medicine but surgery. I understand that there are advanced keyhole surgery procedures available on the NHS. Although there is some expertise, those facilities and that process are not as available here. Perhaps that is something that the Health Minister can look into as well.

An urgent action plan is needed to improve cancer patients' access to the medicines that their clinicians think that they need. Clinicians must be empowered to request access to the latest cancer medicines available that they think will be effective. We urge the Minister to explore options to improve the access for cancer patients, including those with prostate cancer. Those options include potentially reforming the current IFR process so that it supports clinical decision-making; working with NICE and the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) to review the way in which they currently assess cancer medicines; and introducing a cancer drugs fund for Northern Ireland.

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) has estimated that the cost of removing the inequity in accessing cancer medicines and ensuring that cancer patients in Northern Ireland have access to the same medicines as patients in England would be somewhere in the region of £7 million. In my constituency of South Belfast, there is the world-class cancer centre, staffed by highly trained and dedicated staff who provide a truly excellent service. As we attempt to raise awareness of prostate cancer, we must increase the provision of services offered by the NHS.

In conjunction with raising awareness, I also acknowledge that lifestyle factors can contribute significantly to the disease. To that end, there is a need for the creation of clear public health messages and an effective public awareness campaign. We must seek to provide a holistic approach to the treatment of prostate cancer — an approach that focuses on both prevention and cure. Men must be educated in ways in which they can reduce their personal risk factors and be able to readily access robust information to allow them to make informed choices about their lifestyle and the services available to them.

Mr Beggs: I support the views expressed by the Members who spoke previously, and I thank Mr McMullan for bringing his personal experience to the Chamber to highlight the issue and make more people aware of the condition.

The Cancer Registry indicates that prostate cancer is the fourth most common cancer in Northern Ireland in 2012. It is the most common cancer in men by a long way, yet men are generally not good at talking about their health or being aware about their health, and they are perhaps slower to seek the help of a GP. Therefore, it is important that they are aware of the risks involved with that particular type of cancer.

As others said, with it affecting one in eight of us, we all should be aware of and look out for the symptoms that have been highlighted, particularly bladder control. The risk factors greatly increase as you go over the age of 50, which is something that I and many others need to be aware of. The average age for diagnosis is between 70 and 74. Prostate Cancer UK has been very useful in providing those statistics and those on other risk factors, which also must be highlighted. If you have a brother or father who has been diagnosed, that increases your risk by a further two and a half times. If a close relative has suffered from breast cancer, particularly if it was linked to faults in genes BRCA1 and BRCA2, that is an increased risk factor.

The current testing largely starts off with the prostate-specific antigen test, which can detect a cancer before the symptoms develop. One constituent has made me aware that he believes that his regular testing, which identified a change and then allowed for further treatment to diagnose his cancer, is responsible for his still living today. So, it can be a very powerful test, particularly when changes are noted.

However, the test is also problematic. I understand that it will detect benign conditions of prostate cancer. Such cancers may not necessarily be of ongoing concern for anyone, yet their detection will heighten concern. I also understand that about 15% of men with normal levels of PSA may actually have prostate cancer. So, it is not a definitive test. We need better tests and more research.

A wide range of subsequent tests, such as the transrectal ultrasound (TRUS), kick in if the first test highlights areas of concern. However, we learn that even that is problematic. I understand that about two thirds of TRUS biopsies that are carried out as a result of elevated PSA find no detectable cancers. That means that there is ongoing anxiety for those who have been warned that they may have a cancer that has not been detected. They may well have it, but it may not have shown yet. A prolonged follow-up is then required, and concern goes with that. It is important, therefore, that there is awareness of not

only the benefits but the limitations and risks that are associated with the various tests.

I was very struck by a quotation that I came across from Professor Dan Berney from Queen Mary University of London. He told the BBC that:

"We need a better test as we are over-treating many men; most will die with, not of, prostate cancer."

Mr Wells made that point earlier. Dr Berney said that there is an urgent need to try to:

"discriminate between the aggressive forms and those that will grumble along and just need monitoring."

That would be the wish list, if you like.

There have been problems elsewhere with overdiagnosis. I noticed that a recent review in the Irish Republic concluded that:

"Currently available evidence is insufficient to recommend a population based screening programme because of concerns that it may not improve survival or quality of life and may ultimately cause more harm than good."

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Would the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Beggs: I thank the Member for raising the issue, and I hope that more will learn from it. I also hope that the Assembly and our Health Department will contribute to the research that is necessary to bring about improvement.

Mr McCarthy: I am very happy to support the motion. In doing so, I express my solidarity with our colleagues Mr McMullan and Mr Spratt, and anyone else who has been fighting their own battle with cancer. I think it right that we thank Mr McMullan for his openness and frankness this afternoon. I wish him every success with a speedy recovery back to health.

The motion reflects a general theme that has cut across a range of motions in the House in recent months, and that is the changing health needs that arise from changing demographics and, in particular, the welcome fact that more and more people are living longer, with the consequence that the range of conditions that our health system must address is evolving and challenging. In tandem with that, the particular elements of a much more general focus on public health and early intervention and prevention are brought into sharp focus, as opportunities to highlight and manage the factors that enhance the risk of certain conditions become apparent.

As mentioned, the rates of prostate cancer are increasing in Northern Ireland. As the motion points out, that is an outworking of people living longer. It is a condition that is particularly apparent in older men, and, indeed, it is one of the most frequent forms of cancer for men.

Relatively little is known about the causes of prostate cancer, but diet and obesity are likely to be major factors. That highlights the importance of early testing and the opportunities that lie with the greater provision of screening. However, as I understand it, there are downsides and dangers with the interventions that are involved in universal screening. Therefore, the scope of any revised regime will probably have to be defined and shaped on the basis of risk management.

It is also worth stressing that Northern Ireland has a strong research base in cancer studies, for which we are very grateful. Our excellent scientists are involved in important work, and the Executive and the Assembly should give them the full support they deserve.

In conclusion, I express my sincere gratitude to the Assembly's Research and Information Service, particularly the assistant librarian Kristine Gillespie, for the excellent insight into all aspects of prostate cancer that she provided in the booklet for the Assembly. On behalf of the Alliance Party, I fully support the motion.

Mr Dunne: I, too, welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion on a very important matter that affects so many people across Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, prostate cancer is a growing problem across our country. This motion is a useful opportunity to highlight the condition and to actively explore the ways in which we can try to reduce the number of sufferers and, importantly, support those who have prostate cancer. I recognise the courage of Mr Oliver McMullan, who is battling cancer, for tabling the motion. We wish him well in his recovery.

A lot of work is ongoing in support of those with prostate cancer, and I trust that we will see further advances in treatment in the near future. The shocking statistic from Cancer Research UK that boys in the UK who are born in 2015 will be almost three times more likely to be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime than those who were born in 1990 is alarming, and it really brings home how big the problem of cancer is.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

We must ensure that the provision of services is of the highest quality for the people who are diagnosed with this form of cancer and make sure that early detection is always to the fore. Early detection is crucial in ensuring effective treatment and increasing the chances of survival.

Every year in the UK, some 40,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer, with over 900 men diagnosed in Northern Ireland annually. Prostate cancer is set to become the most common cancer in the UK by 2030 unless some radical and wide-ranging effective action can be developed.

I would like to pay tribute to and commend the local charities and organisations that work with cancer sufferers and their families and provide daily support during such a difficult time for anyone who suffers from this terrible condition. Education could be improved and better targeted in our communities through public awareness campaigns and outreach programmes to raise awareness of prostate cancer, its symptoms and measures to decrease someone's chances of developing the condition.

5.30 pm

Much work has been done on highlighting other forms of cancer, such as breast cancer, with various charities leading very powerful, prominent and successful public awareness campaigns. Prostate cancer is one of the lesser known cancers and is often not spoken about. We need to change the mindset of men and encourage more men to be tested for the condition. The more encouraging statistic is that death rates have fallen in the UK by 18% in the last 20 years, largely due to earlier diagnosis. That

shows some hope that together we can help tackle this terrible condition.

Health promotion and public awareness campaigns that encourage healthier living all have a key role to play in helping to tackle prostate cancer. Encouraging a healthier lifestyle, better diets and exercise and reducing smoking and alcohol consumption are all measures that should be worked on and fully encouraged. It is vital that we broaden the scope of detection to tackle this terrible condition.

I trust that the motion will go some way to bringing improvements on this important matter and, importantly, raise awareness of the condition and help support those who are affected by it, both directly and indirectly. I look forward to the Minister's response this evening.

Mr Rogers: I support the motion and congratulate Mr McMullan on bringing it to the House.

Like him, I have had this experience. I know only too well the devastation when you get the diagnosis to both you and your family. Your emotions run riot. It is the word "cancer" that sticks in your mind. Like others, I tried to shield it from my family until my eldest daughter happened to intercept a phone call from a consultant one evening. Obviously, she asked, "Daddy, why is a consultant ringing you?"

At that stage, I knew little about prostate cancer. It was a cancer, as far as I was concerned, and that was enough bad news. I was just 50 at that stage, with a family between the ages of 12 and 22, some of whom had barely left school. I had had a few bad experiences of cancer: my father, my father-in-law and my sister-in-law had all died from cancer. Was I going to be next? No, I was not. I got inspiration from many places, but — I know I mentioned this in the last debate, too — one of my sources of inspiration was a daughter of mine who had leukaemia when she was six. She battled for two years to make a full recovery. I went through the radical surgery, and then 35 sessions of radium in the cancer centre. Eight years later, thank God, I am here to tell my story.

The bottom line in all this is that prostate cancer can be a killer if it is not got in time. In the last 40 years, the incidence of prostate cancer in the United Kingdom has tripled. In Northern Ireland, prostate cancer is by far the most common form of cancer in men. Many statistics have been mentioned today, and I will not bore you with any more.

Cancer Research UK says that early diagnosis and new treatments, such as hormone therapy and radiotherapy, are beating the trend but more work needs to be done to reduce deaths from the disease. However, with access to proper screening, early detection can be made, resulting in more cancer survivors and positive stories like my own. I was one of the 60% that Mr Wells talked about: I had no symptoms; I just had a very persistent wife. I use the word "persistent"; people could use other words, but I dare not. After losing her father to the disease, she was going to make sure I got myself checked out. In my case, the simple PSA check worked. That had to be followed up with other investigative procedures.

There are two aspects to the healing: the physical and the emotional. I thank my doctors, Daisy Hill Hospital, Craigavon Area Hospital and the cancer centre at the City Hospital. I attribute much of my emotional healing to the support I had from my family and from prayer. Getting

your head around your diagnosis is clearly the thing that gets the glass half full. Your body is not designed to take 35 blasts of radium in seven weeks, but I am quite happy to live with the consequences. The Chamber needs to send out a clear message to the public today. We need to encourage men to come forward and get tested, as early diagnosis can save lives. The PSA test does not work for everyone, but it helps. I have told my story on a number of occasions, and I know that it has made a difference to others.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr Rogers: Yes, I will, surely.

Mr Wells: We are obviously all delighted to hear of your success. I omitted the Member from my earlier comments about those who have had the courage to come to the House and tell the story of their journey with cancer. I should have mentioned his name as well. I understand that the SDLP is about to give you another 40-year contract and review your status at the end of that.

Mr Rogers: Thanks, Mr Wells.

I have told my story, and I use today to tell it again because I know that it has made a difference to others. It has encouraged men like me to get checked. It has also encouraged men who were making up their mind about whether they should go for 35 sessions of radium treatment to go ahead.

I trust that the media will pick up the stories that we have told here today and ensure that they send out the message that prostate cancer is treatable, if caught in time. For all men, access to urologists and curative treatments has improved since the mid-1990s. I call on the Minister to support and adequately fund an awareness campaign designed to inform men of the benefits of proper screening for the disease. Further clinical trials are needed, specifically of treatments for older men. We must provide services that support the patient and the family circle. The family, as caregivers, need to feel that they can access services that will provide information to help the patient on their cancer journey.

Recognition must be given to the exceptionally high standard of care that our National Health Service staff provide. We must ensure that cancer units receive the support that they need to continue to provide this vital care to patients. My hope is that the debate today highlights the issue of prostate cancer and helps to increase awareness of the disease in Northern Ireland.

Mr Gardiner: At present, four screening programmes operate across the Northern Ireland health service. In general terms, I believe that screening is a valuable exercise, and I encourage the Minister to consider the clinical possibilities of a screening programme. As far as I know, the National Health Service in England has not introduced one because of a report carried out for it by Sheffield University and based on British Association of Urological Surgeons data from 2008.

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee is responsible for reviewing screening policies every three years and making recommendations to Ministers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on whether a screening programme for a certain condition should be set up. The Sheffield study suggested that screening from the age of 50 resulted in only a marginal overall increase in

life expectancy. The screening committee considered four options: a single scan at the age of 50; screening every four years from the age of 50 to 74; screening every two years from the age of 50 to 74; and screening every year from the age of 50 to 74. It found that only a small marginal increase in prostate cancer identification was gained through moving to a policy of annual screening. There is also some evidence that, if men are screened for prostate cancer early, beginning treatment can lead to the early onset of symptoms, with men having to live with those symptoms for longer.

I do not know the specific figures for Northern Ireland. Nationally, the total additional cost of a policy of screening once at the age of 50 would be £58 million, rising to over £1 billion for an annual screening policy from the age of 50. On the basis of population, screening in Northern Ireland would cost £20 million or slightly more. So it seems to me that cost and only a marginal increase in survival times are the reasons why the screening committee has not recommended prostate cancer screening. Those are issues that the Members who framed the motion will have to consider. Although I support the aims of the motion, I think that we need to look seriously at the reasons why the National Screening Committee has not gone down this route. Perhaps the Minister could elaborate on that.

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): It is important that we all realise the scale of the challenge that cancer presents. Mr McMullan set out clearly, in a very personal way, how cancer has impacted on him. I trust that he receives good care and recovers well.

One in three people in Northern Ireland will be diagnosed with cancer at some stage in their lifetime, so everyone is or will be touched by it directly as a patient or through the experiences of friends or relatives. Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in males, and the chances of developing a prostate cancer increase as you get older. Most cases develop in men aged 65 and over.

Figures from the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry show that the number of men with prostate cancer has increased steadily from 486 in 1994 to an average of 1,000 new cases annually. That, of course, coincides to some extent with people living longer. Although incidence has increased, it is important to note that survival rates have also improved. The latest Cancer Registry figures indicate a five-year survival rate of over 84% for patients diagnosed between 2002 and 2006. That is a very significant improvement on rates from 1993 to 1996, when only 56% of patients survived more than five years.

The increase in the number of cases diagnosed over recent years reflects the increase in the use of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing in Northern Ireland. A PSA test involves giving a blood sample, and, if the level of PSA is raised, it may mean that you have a prostate cancer. However, other conditions that are not cancer, such as an enlargement of the prostate or a urinary infection, can also cause higher PSA levels in the blood. Further tests are required to diagnose prostate cancer, and about two out of three men with a raised PSA level will not have the disease.

There are other issues with the PSA test. It cannot differentiate between fast- and slow-growing prostate cancers, and, although most are slow-growing, a proportion advances more aggressively. The test can miss cancer and provide false reassurance, and it may lead to

unnecessary worry and medical tests when there is no cancer.

The UK National Screening Committee had previously reviewed the evidence on screening for prostate cancer and advised that screening should not be introduced. Following the publication of two new research papers in March 2009, the National Screening Committee was asked to consider the evidence on prostate cancer screening. One of the papers showed that the risk of dying from prostate cancer was reduced by 20% among those screened, but around 48 men had to be treated to save one life. The other paper showed no benefit from screening.

Following detailed analysis of the two papers, the National Screening Committee concluded that a national screening programme for prostate cancer was not recommended, as the potential harms from prostate cancer screening using the PSA test are likely to outweigh the benefits. Although the National Screening Committee has advised against a prostate screening programme using the PSA test, it acknowledges that men without symptoms of prostate cancer may request a PSA test, and it has advised that an informed choice programme should be available to them.

A prostate cancer risk management programme has been developed nationally. It aims to help primary care give clear and balanced information to men who ask about PSA testing. In October 2009, the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, issued a chief professional letter to relevant health professionals, including all GPs, informing them of the prostate cancer risk management programme.

It is important to bear in mind that the lack of an effective screening programme does not mean that we are powerless against the disease. We have more effective treatments for prostate cancer than were available even a few years ago. They include surgery; radiotherapy, externally or with radioactive implants, which is brachytherapy; active surveillance or watchful waiting, which involves regular check-ups to check that the cancer is not growing; hormone therapy; and chemotherapy. Belfast has been at the front line in the testing and development of new treatment techniques, and prostate cancer is one area that will benefit from the £4 million Northern Ireland clinical research facility at the Belfast Trust, which I opened in September. The new facility will increase our capacity for high-quality clinical research studies undertaken in the safety of a hospital environment and at the greater convenience of patients and staff.

5.45 pm

In addition to that progress in treatment, we must do all we can to ensure that patients are aware of the signs and symptoms of the disease, as early detection allows for treatments to be more effective and improves outcomes for patients. The Public Health Agency is currently planning a cancer awareness campaign to be launched in 2014-15. There is a wealth of evidence internationally and from elsewhere in the UK that awareness campaigns can have a significant positive impact on the number of people who visit their doctor with symptoms, and we all know how crucial that can be in improving outcomes for cancer patients.

Although the signs and symptoms of prostate cancer — such as having to rush to the toilet to pass urine,

difficulty in passing urine, passing urine more often than usual, particularly at night — are similar to other prostate problems, I would always encourage any man who experiences these to discuss them with his GP. It is vital for everyone to understand that early detection of cancer greatly increases the chances of successful treatment. We all have a responsibility for our own health.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for being here and thank all those who participated in this important debate.

It is interesting to note the postcode district with the largest number of cancer deaths is BT34, which covers Newry in my constituency and quite a lot of South Down, including Annalong, Ballymartin, Cabragh, Hilltown, Kilkeel, Mayobridge, Poyntzpass, which, is, again, in my constituency, Rostrevor, Warrenpoint and, basically, the whole area of Newry and Mourne. There, 1,150 people died from cancer between 2001 and 2010, compared with fewer than five deaths in the less densely populated Titanic Quarter in the Belfast docks area of BT3. It is an interesting statistic, because Newry and Mourne has, for instance, one of the highest incidences of multiple sclerosis in the world. That was documented in research carried out by the Mayo Clinic about 25 years ago. It is worth pointing out that, as the crow flies, Carlingford lough is approximately 67 miles from Sellafield/Windscale, and I just want to make the point that changing the name does not necessarily change the effect.

Mr McMullan gave very personal testimony of his circumstances. Prostate cancer accounts for almost a quarter of cancers in the North. There was a sharp increase in diagnosed cases, which rose from 593 in 2000 to 1,006 in 2011, although, thankfully, the death rate of 216 a year has not increased. One man in every 6,000 here lives with prostate cancer, which can be diagnosed with a specific blood test. Mr McMullan gave some details of prostate cancer. Initially, there are no symptoms of the cancer, but then there is increased frequency of urination, pain in passing urine, sometimes blood in the urine and the possibility of secondary cancer. He also stressed how important the GP's role is, and that cannot be overplayed. Mr McMullan was fortunate to have a perceptive GP who was able to send him for specific prostate cancer tests. However, further tests, a biopsy etc, were needed. Further surgical procedures may be carried out, for instance removal of the gland. He talked about prostate cancer being more common in older men and about living with the attendant bowel, urinary and sexual problems.

One of the things that Mr McMullan emphasised and that, I think, the Minister may take on board was the issue of aftercare once someone is diagnosed. For instance, many people can suffer from depression etc. MRI scans obviously need to be carried out, and Mr McMullan went through daily treatment for seven weeks. He praised the cancer unit in the City Hospital for the treatment he received there and its high quality. He talked about his own area of the glens having a very high incidence. He talked about the screening process and aftercare. He said that a major public awareness campaign was needed.

Mr Wells talked about the bravery of Members who came forward with issues that affected them and were prepared to talk about them in order to raise awareness. Prostate cancer is a difficult area. It is the sixth leading cause of cancer in the world. There is high incidence in

the Caribbean and a low rate in Mediterranean countries. He talked about diet being a factor, particularly red meat. I am sure that Mr Wells will not have that problem. As we all know, red meat is anathema to him. I understand that white meat is as well. He also talked about family history. He mentioned light pollution, which, I have to say, is a new one on me. He said that there were statistics that showed that light pollution can be a risk factor. Maybe, at a later stage, he will elaborate on that. He said that often the condition is symptomless. He mentioned widespread screening and PSA testing. He said that mass screening for prostate cancer does not work and there is no magic solution. However, he commented that fewer men die now than were dying 20 years ago.

Fearghal McKinney commended the proposer and echoed the words of Mr Wells. He said that rates of prostate cancer were rising. He talked about the need for a public awareness campaign and said that much more needed to be done to encourage men to come forward for testing and so on. He said that medicines need to be made available and that patients here should have access to the same level of treatment as those in England. He talked about advanced keyhole surgery procedures being available there but not necessarily here. He said that clinicians must be empowered to have access to the most modern and effective drugs for treatment. He mentioned the world-class cancer centre in his constituency. I think that we would all agree with that sentiment. He talked about lifestyle factors contributing to the condition and said that informed choices must be made.

Mr Beggs also thanked the proposer. He said that more people need to be made aware that prostate cancer is common in the North, that men are not good at dealing with health issues and that one in eight men is affected by prostate cancer. He said that risk increases with age and that the average age at diagnosis is between 70 and 74 years, that family history increases the risk, that PSA testing can detect the condition before symptoms manifest themselves and that it is not an easy condition to diagnose. He described different types of tests that can be carried out and said that better tests are required. He said that sometimes there is overtreatment and overdiagnosis of patients, which can lead to attendant problems.

Kieran McCarthy expressed his solidarity with Mr McMullan and Mr Spratt. I am sure that he would have solidarity with Mr Rogers as well. He acknowledged Mr McMullan's frankness about his condition. He talked about changing demographics. He said that prevention and early intervention are so important, that people are living longer and that diet and obesity can be major factors. He mentioned the importance of early testing and said that any regime put in place has to consider risk management. He expressed his gratitude to the Assembly's Research and Information Service.

Gordon Dunne said that the matter is a very important one for many people here and that the motion is important. He acknowledged the bravery of Mr McMullan. He talked about the shocking statistic that boys born in 2015 will be three times more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer than people who were born in 1990. He talked about early detection being crucial. He said that some 900 men are diagnosed here annually and that effective action needs to be developed. He rightly praised the organisations that deal with cancer patients. He said that

there are high-profile awareness campaigns for other types of cancer but not necessarily for prostate cancer. He talked about encouraging healthier lifestyles, which he said is so important, and said that we need to broaden the scope for detection.

Sean Rogers also gave a very personal testament of his experience of prostate cancer and the effect that it had on him and his family. He talked about the importance of support from the medical teams who treated him and the support of his family. He talked about his persistent wife. I think that the word that he used was "persistent". He may have used other ones in a private capacity, but I do not think that I will go into that. He talked about how important it is for men to be encouraged to be tested. Mr Wells talked about a 40-year contract. I imagine that he must have at least a 50-year contract with the DUP. However, that is only speculation on my part.

Mr Rogers also talked about prostate cancer being treatable if caught in time, and he called on the Minister to support a screening-awareness campaign.

Sam Gardiner talked about the UK National Screening Committee making recommendations on screening programmes and the different options that are available. He also talked about men being screened too early and how they can often live longer in a worrying situation with the symptoms. He said that screening here on a population basis would probably cost about £20 million. So, it seems that, in many of those cases, cost, as opposed to the type of treatment, is the issue.

The Minister talked about prostate cancer being the most common cancer in males. He discussed the registry here and said that 486 cases were registered in 1994, which has increased to 1,000 new cases annually. He said that, although incidence has increased, survival rates have also fortunately increased. He talked about the PSA testing that is used for diagnosis but said that further tests are often required, as PSA tests can sometimes give a false reassurance. He mentioned the figure of 20% and said that people who are screened are more likely to survive. He talked about the National Screening Committee and said that the screening programme is not recommended because of the nature of testing and its effects. He also said that, in 2009, Dr McBride, the Chief Medical Officer, informed GPs of prostate cancer risk-management programmes. He said that more effective treatments are now available, and he talked about the types of therapy, including chemotherapy, hormone treatment etc.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Brady: He also said that the clinical research facility would have benefits for the diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer. He said that early detection is so important and that awareness campaigns can have significant positive effects.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly expresses its concern at the rates of prostate cancer; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to introduce a public awareness campaign to raise awareness of the disease and to introduce a screening programme.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Public Sector Jobs: North-west

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes, and all other Members who are called to speak will have approximately six minutes.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I welcome the opportunity to speak at this late hour on what is a very important issue for Derry and, indeed, the wider north-west.

As Members may or may not know, Civil Service pensions administers a number of occupational pension schemes on behalf of members of the Civil Service, and it has been based in Waterside House in Derry since 1993. Members might be aware, through, I suppose, local media initially, that the Minister of Finance and Personnel is considering proposals on the future service delivery of the Civil Service pensions branch.

There are two options. The first is to outsource the computer system completely, which would involve replacing the current system but would allow Civil Service pensions staff to operate it at Waterside House. I have been told that that option will allow pensioners to carry out tasks online. Such tasks would include updating personal details and requesting benefit statements, which would lead to a reduction in the overall number of staff.

The second option is to outsource the computer system and the administration function of Civil Service pensions, with the projected loss of up to 80 public sector posts. Effectively, that would mean, in my view, the privatisation of public sector jobs and the loss of potentially £1 million to the local economy.

Although I agree that we need a new computer system, I oppose the privatisation of public sector jobs and the outsourcing of the work that is currently carried out in Waterside House and, indeed, the redeployment of staff with no guarantee that they will be based in Derry. It could mean that several staff members will be forced to resign if they are unable to work in, for example, Belfast or Bangor.

Members may be familiar with the fact that, 20 years ago, Civil Service pensions jobs were relocated to the north-west as a direct result of lobbying and pressure from politicians at the time. That was done to ensure a fairer distribution of Civil Service jobs throughout the North and to boost the local economy. The loss of approximately 80 jobs will undo that positive work and have a major detrimental impact, in my view, on the local economy.

6.00 pm

We know too well the prospect of the job losses looming due to the threatened closure of the Coleraine vehicle licensing office. Therefore, the north-west can ill afford to lose a further 80 posts. There is also concern that staff and unions were not consulted properly about the project, other than information being passed to local representatives. That does not constitute real consultation. Real consultation would have seen unions being given

sight of the key consultation document at each stage of the process so that they could input into the discussion. I know that NIPSA has been very concerned that the outline business case, which will set out and recommend the preferred option, will be approved by the Minister prior to staff and the representatives having had an opportunity to consider and comment. NIPSA would suggest that that is grossly unfair and unjustified. As it points out, that flies in the face of the project's communication strategy and totally contradicts it.

The Finance and Personnel Minister is expected to sign off on a preferred option within the next few weeks. It is expected that a notice will be advertised in the European procurement journal by December 2013. Even if the posts are privatised, that will have no benefit for the local economy, as many of those with pensions expertise who are expected to bid for those jobs are based in England.

I am aware that NIPSA is currently balloting members in pensions branch about industrial action, and members feel that they may have no option but to embark on a series of protests. That, again, is because of management's refusal to share information. I suggest that industrial action can be avoided if the Minister gives a commitment to protect those public sector jobs. The Minister has previously declared that he is keen to strengthen the link between the public and private sector. However, the outsourcing of those pensions posts will have very little or no benefit to private companies in the North.

We realise that, recently, the Minister's party sent a delegation to Westminster to meet the Transport Secretary in an effort to save the 350 posts at Coleraine, which we very much welcome. However, why is his party so keen to save the Coleraine posts and show disregard for the Derry posts? Minister Hamilton has a responsibility here. We are being told that the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) decision is being made by Westminster, so does that make it easier? Why has he or his party not shown the people of Derry and the north-west that they are committed to protecting public sector posts in Derry, as they have done in Coleraine?

In summary, although there has been no mention of redundancies or pay-offs, the fact is that, in Derry, there is a risk to potentially 80 public sector jobs. Staff will be moved, there will be an adverse effect on the local economy and staff are worried about the future. There has been no meaningful consultation with unions; management updates to staff have not allayed any fears or concerns; and staff and unions do not know what the preferred option is, which is, they suggest, because management refuses to share the information.

The DUP Finance and Personnel Minister was previously very vocal in his support for the private sector, yet the privatisation of the north-west posts are unlikely to provide any benefit to the private sector in the north-west. Although we have seen a particular focus — a very welcome focus — on Derry and the north-west over recent years through the One Plan and the investment of £0.5 billion by December 2012, and the major investment yet to be calculated in relation to the City of Culture, and, thankfully, we have now good news for the allocation of the 600 Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) jobs to the north-west, we must ensure that the commitment in the Programme for Government to decentralise public sector jobs is prioritised.

In conclusion, therefore, before making his decision, I ask the Finance Minister to consider the following: the impact on Civil Service pension staff, their families and the local economy if any decision is taken to remove those jobs from the north-west; the hard work and successful track record of the current staff in maintaining a high standard of service in administering the Civil Service pension schemes; and the lack of real, meaningful and constructive consultation with NIPSA on this most important of issues. Why has NIPSA not been permitted to see the important and relevant documentation at the key stages of this project? I put this to the Minister.

Mr G Robinson: I hope that the Member will not be averse to my bringing Coleraine DVA jobs into this debate, because it is a fact that the workforce is drawn from the entire north-west and not just the area surrounding the city of Londonderry, which has benefited from the City of Culture celebrations. That is why it is essential that the jobs that the Transport Secretary at Westminster is trying to remove are kept in Coleraine for the sake of the entire north-west economy.

Thankfully, there has been a united front to protect those jobs. Staff have visited Westminster to put their case, and the First Minister, whom I congratulate, met staff and pledged to bring the issue to the attention of the Prime Minister, which he duly did at a recent economic meeting. It is most important that we protect the public sector jobs that we have, as well as seek to bring new ones to the entire north-west and wider area.

As I was the first MLA to contact the then Agriculture Minister proposing the former Shackleton Barracks site in Ballykelly as the base for the new DARD headquarters, it is with pleasure that I hear of the slow but continuing progress in securing those jobs on site. We have been fortunate that the two Ministers involved have appreciated the value of the site for their Department's purposes. Indeed, due to the magnitude of the site, more jobs for the north-west will hopefully be created there in time. Therefore, I see a more positive trend for public sector jobs than in other areas. I am grateful for that, and will continue to hope for further developments.

It is fair to state that Londonderry was once a more economically productive place than it is today, but, like so many other areas, it was heavily dependent on the textile industry. It has suffered from the global downturn and cheap production abroad. I am thinking of firms such as Desmonds and Daintyfit, based in my home town of Limavady, which has suffered from the economic downturn. Of all the textile firms that were once present in Coleraine, very few have survived the global financial crisis that our economy has undergone. That is why public sector jobs have gained such an important place in the local economy: due to the loss of the private sector employment.

I wish to congratulate the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment as well as the current and previous Finance and Personnel Ministers, who have been tirelessly selling Northern Ireland abroad. However, in future, firms will pick and choose where they will set up business within Northern Ireland. We must be aware of opportunities from the public sector and make sure that we sell the area at every possible opportunity. Perhaps DARD's decision to relocate to Ballykelly will be the catalyst for our share of public sector jobs in the entire north-west.

I encourage all Members and Ministers to work together to try to rectify the devastating effect of the deep recession that we are hopefully recovering from. As I said, we must congratulate the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment as well as the present and former Finance and Personnel Ministers on the work that they have done to hopefully alleviate the jobs crisis in our local economy. I support the motion.

Mr Durkan: I thank Ms McLaughlin for bringing forward this topic, which is very important and topical, particularly in our home city, given the cloud of uncertainty hanging particularly over those working in Civil Service pensions jobs in Waterside House. Incidentally, some of these posts were brought to Derry by the SDLP, highlighting the SDLP's commitment to decentralisation and to Derry.

That commitment has been reaffirmed by subsequent SDLP Ministers, not that we have had that many, and manifested itself in the location of pension jobs in Carlisle House, when we held the Social Development Ministry. There were also initiatives by my predecessor as Environment Minister Alex Attwood with the creation of new posts in taxi operator licensing and enforcement, and in the administration of the carrier bag levy. Those jobs, too, are located in Derry. As Minister of the Environment, I intend to build on that commitment, and I am looking at options for job dispersal, particularly to the north-west. So, having been the only party to bring Civil Service posts to Derry, we will certainly fight to keep Civil Service posts in Derry.

The north-west is an area with huge unemployment and has, historically, been afforded little investment in comparison with that in other regions. We note the Executive's commitment to address regional economic imbalance and decentralise Civil Service posts, and we support that. However, some will question it, and it is easy enough to see why. The latest proposals to install the new IT system and outsource the managed service could ultimately result in a loss of 80 posts to the city. That is a real and genuine fear for the workers, and I implore Minister Hamilton to give us any assurance he can this evening that this will not be the case.

Last week, I went to London, with the endorsement and support of all parties in the Assembly, to defend public sector jobs in the DVA, particularly those in Coleraine, as you are well aware, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Assembly accepts and agrees with my argument that it would be completely counterproductive for the British Government to take those jobs from Northern Ireland and that it would have a devastating impact on Coleraine. As a region, we cannot use that argument against the UK Government and then proceed to do something similar to Derry workers.

Perhaps it is a bit easier — Ms McLaughlin beat me to this point — for some not to call for the retention of those jobs because the blame cannot be passed on to Westminster. Although I accept that these are only proposals, staff morale is very low, and they are getting little advice or information. Trade unions, as Ms McLaughlin pointed out, have been denied access to the outline business case and cannot, therefore, consider the proposals, properly make their case and plan for their future, nor can we properly assess the potential impact of the removal of those posts on the local economy.

The SDLP recognises the valuable service provided by public and civil servants through the years across the

North, the west included. We cannot accept the removal of one job from Derry at a time when we need more. No party or Minister can stand by the Programme for Government and One Plan commitments or targets to reduce unemployment if they allow the removal of vital public sector jobs from a region of low employment and high deprivation.

We should be building on the success of our year as City of Culture with more investment. More needs to be done to help our local economy to grow and our new and local businesses to flourish. Any attempt to remove public sector jobs from the north-west will be met with a fight. I hope that all parties here unite, as we have for Coleraine, to protect all workers in the north-west and across the North.

Mrs Overend: As an MLA from a neighbouring constituency, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. Londonderry is celebrating its year as the UK City of Culture, which it is almost three quarters of the way through. So we have much to celebrate about the city, and there is a good desire to improve the city's cultural aspect and economic development. Significant funding has headed to the north-west for the City of Culture, the redevelopment of Ebrington Barracks and the potential for additional university places, particularly for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

6.15 pm

The Ulster Unionist Regional Development Minister has shown his commitment to the north-west through improvements to the railway line from Coleraine to Londonderry as well as the infrastructure improvements that he is committing to and, depending on finance, the A6 and A5. If you consider Coleraine as being in the north-west, that also includes flexibility on road closures for the North West 200.

There is a desire and a commitment to improve the future of the north-west in many aspects. There is a great appetite for that. However, many in the north-west feel that they are being left behind, not only with public sector jobs but with jobs more generally. The success of the Regional Start initiative and the work of Invest Northern Ireland in that region has been called into question. There was the recent announcement of nearly 1,000 jobs in Belfast by Stream Global Services, which appeared, on the face of it, to follow its scaling-down in the north-west. The perception that Invest Northern Ireland paid that company nearly £3 million to relocate from the north-west to Belfast feeds the narrative that the region is being overlooked.

There is also the issue of Ballykelly, and I feel that the Agriculture Minister has not made enough progress in establishing timescales to move agriculture jobs in the public sector to Ballykelly. The number of jobs and even her general intentions for the Ballykelly site are not particularly clear at this stage, and we must make more definitive progress in that area. The Rivers Agency is also meant to be moving to Cookstown, and I am disappointed about the lack of progress on that in my constituency.

There is an ongoing debate on whether public sector jobs are being transferred or whether people will lose jobs and new jobs will be created. That question needs to be answered in each specific case. My colleagues from the city referred to Civil Service pension staff in Waterside House, and I await with interest the Finance Minister's

response on that issue and any other issues that he can address.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Maeve McLaughlin for securing the debate and welcome the fact that the Minister is present to hear the concerns. By now, he has got the flavour, and there is not much that I will be able to add to what might appear to be a wish list.

The backdrop is that there is absolutely no doubt that there is public concern about this issue. A recent public meeting in the city was well attended by workers, their families and people with a wider interest in the city. That should send a signal to the Minister that the issue has touched the public mood in Derry because of the fear of losing these jobs in circumstances in which we believe that they can be retained; Mark Durkan mentioned that.

There is another backdrop, which is that, over the years, we have welcomed the number of Civil Service jobs that have come to the city as part of trying to tackle the feeling that such jobs can be located only in one part of the North, and any undermining of that would send the wrong signal. The One Plan laid out clearly that we like jobs to be attracted to the north-west, including to areas in the broad interpretation that was used today, and I believe that DARD's suggestion for Ballykelly would be welcomed by all parties that serve the constituencies concerned.

George Robinson, Mark Durkan and Maeve McLaughlin brought the DVA jobs to our attention.

There was cross-party support, across the whole community, against the idea that those jobs could be lost because of the introduction of a centralised computer system. There was amazement at the particular logic that was brought to the situation to justify the fact that 300 jobs would be lost in the north-west. We have to avoid the situation where, in one day or in one breath, we make the case that this is counterproductive, wrong and a massive blow to our economy, which it undoubtedly would be, while on the next day or in the next breath, we try to justify computerisation as the way forward, and as the way forward that — I do not say that they do not count; it would be wrong to say that — jobs do not have the same priority as perhaps we gave them in relation to the DVA. We have to be consistent, and we have to follow it through. As Mark Durkan said, we have all campaigned to ensure that the jobs are retained and we have laid out the logic. That logic should be followed here.

Maeve McLaughlin talked about the clarity of the consultation process, and I think that there was genuine concern at the public meeting — this has been played out in the local media, be it on Radio Foyle or in the local papers — that the process of consultation needs to be more robust. Workers need to be better informed about the Department's intentions, and, obviously, I know that the Minister has to make a decision about the options in the coming weeks. There are two options. No one has spoken against the need for a new system, a better system etc. However, we need one that can be serviced without the loss of jobs in the north-west. With the second option, people are frightened and concerned that they may have to leave Derry to seek employment, with all the disruption that comes with that, albeit that it would be in another part of the Civil Service. There is also concern that perhaps another company will be brought in. Workers will tell you

that the record of some of the companies, particularly with HR Connect, has not been what was promised.

Our appeal to the Minister is, in the first place, to ensure that the consultation process is rigorous and robust. There will be complaints if people have not seen the business case, and seeing it would help to inform them. The second and most important thing is about Derry. People have said that, with the City of Culture and the One Plan, the mood in the city is vibrant and the city is projecting itself for the future. That mood can be undermined if a decision is made in the Assembly to move jobs out of Derry. Those jobs were welcome in the first place. People see not only the welcome jobs being moved but the strategic decision that Civil Service jobs can also be allocated elsewhere. I say to the Minister that we would like to see him choose the option that brings in a new computer system and keeps jobs in Derry.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I take the opportunity of speaking to the House on this important issue, and I thank my party colleague Maeve McLaughlin for bringing the motion to the House. With your indulgence, a LeasCheann Comhairle, I thank the Minister for being present for the debate. I apologise to him for not thanking him earlier, when we had the debate on the Public Accounts Committee, at the top of my motion. Thank you for that.

The Programme for Government commits the Executive to address the imbalance in public sector jobs across the North. The Minister of Agriculture is the only Minister who has taken steps to begin that process in any meaningful way by proposing the relocation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's headquarters to Ballykelly. In saying that, I recognise that jobs from other Departments exist in the north-west. Although, in general, the numbers are small, they contribute to the economy of the north-west and, indeed, to my constituency of Strabane in West Tyrone.

As an MLA from West Tyrone, I can say that having to travel to work puts an additional strain on family life for a lot of people in West Tyrone. It often means that the mother or father has a longer working day and, therefore, the costs of childcare often rise as a result of that. As a working parent who experiences long hours of travel to the Assembly, like my party colleagues from the north-west, I have total empathy for those employed in the public sector who travel long distances. If my family were still very young, I would find it extremely difficult to do that. Travelling a long distance to work can be very demanding. It is not fair that my constituents have that burden placed on them. If they wish to work in the public sector, they should not be asked to travel for two or three hours to do so. They have the right to equal opportunities to avail themselves of the public sector jobs that should be equally dispersed throughout the North.

Many public sector workers leave the west Tyrone area each day. Many of them feel aggrieved that they do not have the opportunity to work locally. Many of them feel that there is little understanding from management when they request a transfer to local jobs. They feel that the same standards are not applied to those from the greater Belfast area who live in other areas. There is a feeling that many of those workers get preferential treatment and are transferred back, sometimes within a matter of weeks.

I say that as a result of speaking to those in the public sector who have to travel a long distance to work.

Earlier this year, I wrote to all Ministers to ask, in the context of the Programme for Government 2011-15's commitment to address the regional imbalance, what consideration they are giving to creating, decentralising and relocating public sector jobs from their Department to the Strabane district of the north-west. I pointed out that the Strabane travel-to-work area continues to have the lowest distribution of public sector jobs across the 26 council areas. Strabane district is also consistently ranked number one in the NISRA multiple deprivation league tables. That imbalance and socio-economic disadvantage has been further compounded by the loss of a significant number of private sector jobs in the district since the beginning of the year. The redistribution of public sector jobs to Strabane, west Tyrone and the north-west as a whole is one of a number of key measures needed to break the negative economic spiral in the west. I urged each Minister to prioritise ways in which their Department could assist in that redistribution process. Any other loss of jobs in the north-west will have a knock-on effect in Strabane and in my constituency of West Tyrone and will add to the problems that the people in my constituency experience.

Mr Eastwood: Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that the issue is close to your heart as well.

We have had a fantastic year in 2013 up until now in the city of Derry. It has been a tremendous opportunity for the people of the city to engage in cultural, artistic and musical events and to prove to the world that we can move forward in a positive light and use our shared cultural traditions and some separate cultural traditions to do that.

It has also been an economic opportunity. We have shown the rest of Northern Ireland, the rest of Ireland and the rest of the world that, when Derry sets its mind to it, we can do something very powerful. You just have to look at the examples of how the city was able to accommodate the Apprentice Boys at the beginning of the all-Ireland fleadh and the PSNI pipe band during the biggest Irish cultural event in the world or at thousands of young people dancing and singing in a former British Army base. My argument is that, when the people of Derry are asked, they step up and do their bit. They are the people who have made sure that the City of Culture has been a fantastic success. However, as others have said, that cannot happen in isolation. The City of Culture will end in a couple of months' time, and the fundamentals are still not right. We still do not have the infrastructural development, whether it is around roads, rail or our university. We still do not have the infrastructural development that we need to embed the positive steps forward that the people have taken this year.

6.30 pm

There are a number of ways that you can develop employment. One is to attract investment from outside, and I think that Invest Northern Ireland's record on that has been atrocious. There has been a real failure on Invest Northern Ireland's part and, I argue, a failure on behalf of the Executive in not making sure that the proper targets were in place to ensure that those kinds of investments were made outside the city of Belfast and greater Belfast.

Decentralisation is another tool that can be used to encourage employment. The SDLP has played its part,

whether when we were in the Departments of Finance, Social Development or Environment, in trying our best to bring to the city the jobs that have been in our control. Unfortunately, that has not been replicated across other Departments and other parties, and I am glad to hear of the suggestion or announcement — whatever it is — for Ballykelly. I hope that that can come to fruition, and I hope that those hundreds of jobs can be created in the area.

If these jobs were to be moved from our city, it would send out the worst possible signal to the people of our city who get themselves educated and try their best to get employment. It would be a bit like the signal that was given a number of weeks ago, when Stream was able to draw down about £3 million of public funding to set up 1,000 jobs in Belfast when, the year before, it had withdrawn 1,000 jobs from Belfast after receiving public money. That sends out all the wrong types of signals to the people of our city, who are doing their best to play their part as active citizens and who, as Mr Robinson said, want to be more economically productive.

This does not all happen in isolation. A recent report on the impact that welfare reform will have shows that the most severe impact across these islands will be on Blackpool, with Derry second and Strabane third. Anybody who is from Derry or Strabane is well used to being at the wrong end of that kind of league table. The economic inactivity rate in Derry is over 40%; I am not sure what it is in Strabane. We are at the highest end with the unemployment rate.

This is not a whinge, as some Ministers would like to portray it; it is us looking to play our part. However, if the Executive do not stand behind the current jobs that are located in the city and make sure that they are guaranteed for the future and if they do not play their part in encouraging more decentralisation and more inward investment, the people of Derry will get very angry indeed.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

I welcome the opportunity that the debate presents to correct some inaccuracies surrounding the issue, some of which many contributors to the debate have repeated. I appreciate that the focus of the debate has been on the future of Civil Service pensions jobs in Londonderry, but I want to begin by outlining and recognising those colleagues who talked about the broader picture of public sector employment in the north-west.

Londonderry has the second highest number of Civil Service jobs per thousand of the working-age population — 23.6 — after Belfast. Coleraine has the equal third highest at 23.1, and Limavady has the fifth highest, also at 23.1. I acknowledge that Strabane has a much lower rate of 3.4, which is one of the lowest in Northern Ireland. However, Omagh has the second highest, so at least half of the West Tyrone constituency is well served with public sector and Civil Service jobs. Some 15,611 people are employed in the public sector in Londonderry, 1,671 of whom are civil servants. This is by far the biggest number outside Belfast. In total, across the whole of the north-west, some 26,486 people work in the public sector.

Mr Eastwood: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: Yes, I will.

Mr Eastwood: Does the Minister have the figures for the wages for the jobs that he has just quoted? How many of

those are above the average or median Northern Ireland public sector wage?

Mr Hamilton: I do not have the figures to hand. However, given that the Member raised that question, we will come back to him in correspondence as quickly as we can.

By any measure, as I hope the House will recognise, the public sector is a large employer in the north-west and is, as some have alluded to, set to become bigger. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development previously announced her decision that the location for the new DARD headquarters will be the former military base at Shackleton Barracks in Ballykelly. The posts are to be relocated to Ballykelly on a phased approach, with the two major phases in 2016 and 2020. The proposed relocation, which, I encourage Members to recall, could cause significant upheaval for civil servants based in the greater Belfast area, will stimulate the local economy through increased local spending and the provision of high-quality public sector jobs and, potentially, jobs associated with the construction and ongoing servicing of a new building.

Although there are opportunities, there is also a threat. The centralisation of vehicle licensing services in Swansea would result in the loss of 240 jobs in the north-west, 235 of which would be in Coleraine. Taking into account the other six locations with local motor tax offices, over 300 jobs are at stake directly in the public sector. Applying the multiplier effect, centralisation in Swansea would cut over 500 jobs from the wider Northern Ireland economy. I fully support the Minister in his opposition to that proposed move. The Minister has clearly set out the potential economic impact on Northern Ireland of such centralisation. A special report commissioned from Oxford Economics has demonstrated that the aggregate impact of centralisation of vehicle licensing in Swansea would be to remove over £22 million in gross added value from the local economy. I know that the Minister met his relevant counterpart in the Department for Transport, Robert Goodwill, on 6 November. I understand that at that meeting — the Minister would be better than me at informing the House on this — he pointed out not only the economic impact of the proposed centralisation in Swansea but the exemplary standard of service that staff in the DVA have delivered.

Let me turn to the issue that has been the focus of the debate. I am acutely aware that staff in —

Mr Byrne: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: Let me proceed. I am acutely aware that staff in the Civil Service pensions branch in Waterside House in Londonderry are concerned. The issue of staff morale was raised. I have to say that staff morale will not be helped by inaccurately repeating that 80 jobs will be lost. However, I appreciate that they are concerned about job security in light of the plan to replace the pension administration and payment systems, not least because their fears have been whipped up by ill-informed public comment. The bottom line is that 80 civil servants working in pension branch in Derry will not — I repeat: will not — be made redundant. Yet, again this evening, the line that 80 civil servants will be made redundant was repeated by many Members who spoke.

Let me provide you with some important background information about the project looking at the future service delivery model for the Civil Service pensions branch. By

doing so, I hope to clear up some confusion, which, I think, has been deliberately created by some. The principal Civil Service pension scheme in Northern Ireland is the main pension scheme for all Northern Ireland civil servants and a number of other bodies. Staff working in Civil Service pensions branch administer and pay pensions. They also perform several other functions, including policy, legislation and financial accounting, to name but a few, which are not being considered as part of the project. There are currently 93 staff employed in the division, not all of whom are employed on member administration and payroll functions. As of March 2013, there were 34,000 active members, 27,000 pensioner members and 8,500 deferred members of the scheme. The Civil Service pensions branch requires IT support in order to perform the administration and pensioner payroll for those members. The pensions branch currently uses two computer systems to perform member administration and pensioner payroll functions, contracts in respect of which are coming to an end. Therefore, a replacement must be procured.

Public service pension reform has had an impact on the need for a new solution to be found, although it is not the main driver for change. However, in order to implement the new pension scheme for civil servants from 1 April 2015, the new solution must be in place by that date. Treasury has made it clear that we need to press ahead with the reform of public service pensions. Failure to do so for the main schemes is estimated to cost over £300 million for each year's delay.

The future service delivery project has been established to procure a replacement. The project team must follow the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, which all Departments must follow when considering spending public money on new or replacement services. The Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation requires that all options are considered in a business case, including outsourcing.

In June 2013, a strategic outline business case confirmed that there was a need to procure a replacement solution. My predecessor approved the next stage in the process: an early market engagement exercise. This exercise allowed officials to approach the market to determine whether there was an appetite to meet the requirement and capture indicative costs for doing so. The early market engagement exercise was completed in July. The response confirmed that there is an appetite within a specialised market. It also provided indicative costs on which to base the outline business case. The main options to be considered include a system solution to be operated by civil servants or a managed service, ie an outsourced solution. My officials are currently developing the outline business case to consider the options for replacing the current systems in line with standard guidance. The outline business case considers overall value for money, ability to meet requirements and the risks and benefits — monetary and non-monetary — of each option. No decision on the preferred option has yet been made. The outline business case is still being developed and has a number of departmental approval stages to complete. I want to repeat that: the OBC has not been completed. I ask Members how, therefore, I would share that with anybody if it has not actually been completed. When the internal approvals are given, I will consider and decide what option or options should proceed to the next stage in the procurement process.

My officials have consulted and will continue to consult the trade unions and will keep staff up to date with developments as the project progresses. Whichever option is approved, there will be a reduction in the staff required in Civil Service pensions branch. Those who have said this evening that they support a new IT system acknowledge that job losses will be an inevitability. A new system will be end-to-end, with member self-service facilities, and will require fewer staff to operate it. A managed service would result in a higher reduction in staff. Civil Service pensions branch will continue to exist and be staffed by civil servants, as there are other key functions to deliver, such as scheme management, policy and legislation, and finance. So, whatever option is agreed, it will not be 80 staff who are affected. Any surplus staff will be managed in line with documented Civil Service procedures, including natural wastage and redeployment. Let me reiterate that no one will be made redundant, contrary to the public statements to that effect issued by some.

I should add that I very much regret the premature action being taken by the trade union NIPSA to ballot staff working in Civil Service pensions branch on possible industrial action, given that no decision has been made and, as I have already made clear, no one will be made redundant. I ask what purpose a strike would serve in the circumstances.

Let me make myself clear, if I have not already: I view my first responsibility as providing services to achieve the outcomes that our society needs — in this case, administering and paying the pensions of civil servants. I also, like all Ministers, have an overriding duty to ensure value for money for the public purse. I have no ideological inclination one way or the other whether the service should be provided in-house or outsourced. If it is the best value for money way of providing the service that achieves the outcome we need, I will support it. If I were to slavishly procure a new system without considering all available options, I would be negligent in my duties. I am open-minded about what the final decision should be and will base my ultimate decision on evidence.

In closing, I want to recognise the work that the staff in Civil Service pensions branch do.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Quickly, please.

Mr Hamilton: I regret that some have sought to prey on the fears of staff for their own ends. Screaming publicly that 80 jobs will be lost, when in fact nothing of the sort is the case, does those staff no service whatsoever.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I think it was important to hear those last few words.

Adjourned at 6.43 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 18 November 2013

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Matter of the Day

Weekend Violence

Mr Speaker: Mr Gregory Campbell has been given leave to make a statement on the violent events in Northern Ireland over the weekend, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. Mr Hussey and Mr Lyttle also submitted requests, and I intend to call them immediately after Mr Campbell has spoken. If other Members wish to be called, they should rise continually in their place. All Members will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject, and I remind Members that no points of order or other business may be raised while we deal with this issue.

Mr Campbell: As you said, Mr Speaker, we made an application because of the very serious nature of the problems that emerged over the weekend. I propose to be quite brief because there were a number of incidents that, I am sure, caused widespread concern across the community.

In Coleraine, at 5.00 this morning, a young boy of 15 years of age was shot in both legs by masked men.

On Saturday evening in Strabane, a police patrol was the target of a pipe bomb attack in the town. The area commander, Andy Lemon, said:

"Had this device exploded, it could have killed or maimed anyone close by."

In east Belfast, at about 10.45 on Saturday evening, there was a petrol bomb attack on Alliance Party offices. One petrol bomb ignited on the street and was put out by a passing police patrol.

In north Belfast, on Saturday morning, a number of windows of properties in the Ardoyne area were the subject of attack by people believed to belong to Óglaigh na hÉireann.

Earlier on Saturday, there was security alert that caused people to have to leave their homes as a result of a suspicious object in the area.

The combination of those events makes it very clear to us all that there are those across the community, whether loyalist, republican or not affiliated in such a way, who want to try to drive us back to the past. The community has to be absolutely clear, not just in its unity of opposition to such attacks, which, of course, we will demonstrate today, but it must take that unity further and ensure that the people who carried out those attacks cannot do so again. They must be apprehended by the police, brought before the courts, convicted and put in prison. That is the only way that they will be unable to carry out those activities again.

In some of those incidents, there were allegations of antisocial behaviour. Whether it is the police, social services or us as public representatives, we have to be absolutely clear that the system works when dealing with allegations of antisocial behaviour, so that those who try to carry out such activities are ostracised by the community, rather than some in the community welcoming those attacks. Hopefully, there will be no such welcome. We will abhor and rightly condemn the attacks and ensure that those responsible are brought before the courts.

Mr Hussey: I thank the Member for bringing the Matter of the Day to the House. One thing that all the attacks have in common is that they were committed by cowards. They were committed by people who are not prepared to stand for election or to stand up to argue with you face to face. These attacks were done in the shadows.

The attack on the Alliance Party office in east Belfast was reprehensible. At least the two MLAs and the Member of Parliament from the Alliance Party have stood before the electorate and have been elected to represent the people. The people who fire-bombed the office were not elected to do anything.

In east Londonderry, a young boy of 15 years of age was attacked in his home. What sort of hero are you to do something like that? It was not right in the past and it is not right now. That was an act of cowardice.

In my constituency of West Tyrone, an attempt was made to kill police officers in Strabane by throwing a pipe bomb at a police car. Had that bomb exploded, we would be talking about the deaths or serious injury of police officers. Not only that, a member of the public removed the pipe bomb and put it on safe ground. That person has to be commended for his actions. He at least was thinking of his neighbours. The rogue who came into Strabane with that bomb did not give a hoot for the people of Strabane. He did not care whether that bomb bounced back into the street and was picked up by a child. It was an attempt to murder and to terrorise. All those events have one thing in common; they were attempts to terrorise.

Everyone in the House will condemn all those actions. I agree with Mr Campbell that every step should be taken to have those people apprehended. They should be behind bars and nobody should support their actions in any way, shape or form. Whether it is for loyalism or republicanism, those actions were wrong. I totally condemn those actions on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, and I hope that the police have those reprobates behind bars very soon.

Mr Lyttle: I am grateful for the opportunity to add the condemnation of the Alliance Party to the serious,

cowardly and reckless violence we saw in Northern Ireland at the weekend. There was an attempted murder in Strabane of PSNI officers, who have support from across the community. A child was shot in Coleraine, and our thoughts and prayers are with that boy and his family regardless of the circumstances. The paramilitary-style vigilantism that we saw in north Down and north Belfast is completely unacceptable and has to be rejected by every right-thinking member of our community.

We also saw the latest in a line of attacks in a targeted campaign on the office in east Belfast that is shared by the democratically elected representatives Judith Cochrane MLA, Naomi Long MP and me.

I thank and commend the PSNI for its response to that incident.

Every Member of the House needs to reflect very carefully on the language that they use in demonstrating their support for the PSNI and the rule of law in Northern Ireland. We have to be very clear and unequivocal in our condemnation of all these attacks. Although PSNI officers place their life on the line in service to this community in response to such attacks, the language and actions of some elected representatives in our community have, in my opinion, fallen short of what is required from them in supporting the PSNI, the rule of law and democracy.

I also say to anyone who is harbouring individuals connected to any of these incidents to realise that, until the people who are involved in or behind the attacks are taken off our streets, any member of any family in our community could fall victim to them. We must never accept or grow indifferent to this type of behaviour. We have to work with the PSNI, and the PSNI must do all that it can to take these people off our streets.

The chair of the Police Federation has questioned the validity of the UVF ceasefire, and my colleague Naomi Long MP has called for serious consideration to be given to the reinstatement of the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC). It is an issue of serious concern that the Secretary of State needs to give urgent attention.

In closing, I will say one other thing. On the same day that the political office that I share with Judith Cochrane MLA and Naomi Long MP was attacked, I heard the Alliance Party be accused of being part of tribal furniture in Northern Ireland. Let me make this very clear: the Alliance Party was founded to stand against sectarianism, division and violence and for a shared society, democracy and the rule of law, and it will take much more than political or physical attacks to stop us from doing so.

Mr Speaker: I ask Members to rise continually in their place if they want to make a contribution.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. On behalf of Sinn Féin, I, too, condemn the events of the weekend. One of the events happened in my constituency of West Tyrone, in which there was a pipe bomb attack on the PSNI. There was also the mutilation of a 15-year-old in Coleraine and an attack on the Alliance Party offices. There are also ongoing protests that are drawing PSNI resources away from other duties.

I am very disappointed by what happened over the weekend. It is very important that the community know that there is absolutely no support for this type of activity in the community. The people involved are not presenting any

alternatives. People want to live in peace and move on, and the people who are carrying out these attacks have absolutely nothing to offer the people of this country.

I reiterate my party's absolute condemnation of what went on over the weekend. It was totally unacceptable, and we join other parties in making that very clear by sending a loud voice from the Chamber.

Mr Speaker: I remind Members that they have three minutes in which to speak. Members know that I am very reluctant to interrupt them on such a sensitive issue.

Mr Dallat: Like the other Members who have spoken, I condemn totally all the incidents. In my own area in the past three weeks, there have been four such incidents. The one in Coleraine this morning certainly was a wake-up call: a 15-year-old child's house was entered at 5.00 am by hooded men with revolvers and baseball bats. That was a time at which grown men should have been in their bed preparing for a day's work, yet this is what they were doing. In Portrush, a similar incident happened last week. Before that, a family in Garvagh had two cars burnt out, and there was an incident in Ballymoney.

We have come to use new words — well, they are not that new — in our vocabulary that should be got rid of. Words such as “paramilitary” and “punishment-style shooting” are no part of a normal democratic society. This Assembly is the democratically elected body.

12.15 pm

The PSNI is the Police Service of Northern Ireland, which is doing its best to help us, as politicians, to build a new society that does not have terms such as “paramilitary” or “punishment-style shootings”. We have a Public Prosecution Service, and we even have a Minister of Justice. However, we still have brigadiers and OCS 15 years after the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. That is not on.

However, I want to be positive and constructive. The wider community has an important role to play in this. People might not understand that this morning at the Lodge Road police station, police officers are building a jigsaw. Some individual might have the vital piece that completes the picture. I appeal to people. It was somebody else's child this morning. We do not know whose child it might be the next time the men with hoods and balaclavas call at the door.

I have confidence that the foundations are solid enough to withstand the recent incidents. However, people need to be aware that, although it might be somebody else's problem this time, next time it could easily be their problem. Therein lies the key: everyone needs to be part of the picture.

Mr Newton: I welcome Mr Campbell's initiative in bringing this matter to the Chamber. I will start by condemning all violence, including that which is supposedly politically motivated. All violence is wrong. To make it absolutely clear, the PSNI is the force of law and order, and it is the PSNI that we owe our allegiance to inside and outside the Chamber.

There were two major incidents in east Belfast at the weekend. One was a hoax bomb in Dundonald. Those who were subjected to it were unaware at the time that it was a hoax. The fear, anguish and inconvenience that they

and all who live around that area suffered was very strong indeed. We also owe a debt of gratitude to those whom we refer to as the bomb squad, who risk their lives in going to deal with these matters, not knowing whether it is a hoax or real.

The other major incident, which was the attack on the political offices, was a despicable incident that was carried out by someone already referred to as having “nothing to offer” this community.

On Saturday morning, a young man appeared in court for a previous incident. This question remains: what or who motivated that young man to carry out that incident? He is a young man who is disabled and in employment and who, according to the press, cannot come near Belfast and has to live in Lurgan. What or who motivated him to do that?

I have no doubt that the person who carried out this latest attack will be caught by the PSNI and taken before the courts and will probably face a custodial sentence. What is happening? What and who in our society is encouraging this type of action?

Gregory Campbell secured this Matter of the Day, and he, probably more than most in the Chamber, knows the effect of political violence. He suffered from it. Other DUP Members suffered from it. Not so long ago, we were in the Chamber debating the attacks on Sammy Brush. The homes of our councillors and MLAs have been attacked, and we understand and have seen the effects of those who have attacked the DUP, or any other political party, whatever their motivation.

Mr Byrne: I condemn all the acts of violence that have happened over recent weeks. In particular, I refer to the pipe bomb incident in Strabane that Mr Hussey referred to. In Strabane, over the past 10 years, excellent relations have grown between the police and the community. The pipe bomb attack is a serious setback to the confidence that people have in policing in Strabane. I utterly condemn it, and I hope that the police are successful in apprehending those responsible. A pipe bomb is a deadly device, and, thank heavens, no police officer or member of the public was killed. I commend the member of the public who removed the pipe bomb from the road and threw it into a waste site, but it is a sign that there are some dangers out there, and we cannot be complacent.

Mr B McCrea: The attack on the Alliance Party offices or an attack on any political party is an attack on democracy. I absolutely and completely condemn it, and I stand with that party on that matter. An attack on a police officer is also an attack on democracy, and I stand with the PSNI full square, without any equivocation whatsoever, and I urge all Members, when considering matters to do with the police, to support them at all times.

When we then get the situation where vigilantes think that they can take the law into their own hands and attack young people, that is also an attack on democracy. A Member who spoke earlier asked what motivates those people to go and do such things. I do not know what motivates them, but I say to Members here present that it is our job and our responsibility to make democracy work, and the language that we use should send out a very clear message to all the people of Northern Ireland that there is no future that is not a democratic future.

Mr Allister: The litany of criminality that we saw over the weekend — much of it quite patently paramilitary — was utterly shameful. Whether it was the shooting of the young boy in Coleraine, the pipe bombing in Strabane, the fire bombing of the Alliance Party offices or the issuing of vigilante threats in Bangor, all those are shameful and wrong. They are testament to the ongoing failure of the Belfast Agreement, which was supposed to bring the new dawn of peace and reconciliation, but which, in part, is the very reason why we have this continuous manifestation of criminality. If, as politicians, you support the undermining of the rule of law by the early release of prisoners — and many in this House did — and you diminish the status of the rule of law, you cannot be entirely surprised that, subsequently, others follow in that mode of diminishing and discrediting the rule of law.

It seems to me that, under the Belfast Agreement, sadly, there has emerged an acceptable level of criminality, lest the process should be disturbed. There are certain players who seem to think and to act as if they are above the law because they are seen to be key to the process. When they flex their muscles, as they do, it is a consequence of having paid the price that we paid in rewarding terrorism and criminality under the Belfast Agreement. So I think that politicians need to be more circumspect before they seek to distance themselves from the fusion of criminality that flows from the fact that, in this Province, we rewarded criminality. We are reaping what we sowed, and, sadly, that is the reality. It was so wrong, then and now.

Mr McNarry: It seems to me that, no matter what agreements we put in place in the name of democracy, there will be, as there are now, people who will try to undo them and people who are nothing short of criminals. That is what we are dealing with.

The daily violence news readout seems as normal as the weather forecast or the sports results but it is not normal. Therein lies the problem, because we are being sucked back into what some people once said was an acceptable level of violence. Indeed it is not, and it cannot be, nor can we accept what people suggest to be an acceptable level of violence.

Mr Campbell does well in creating space for our views to be heard, but I believe that we could go further. It seems appropriate that you, Mr Speaker, alongside the First Minister and deputy First Minister, should make clear the widely held views of the Assembly expressed this morning. It seems that that voice and face, representative of the Assembly, needs to be out there, along with us here and the words that are being said today. However, we need to give greater emphasis to our views and to having them heard, and to having their meaning penetrate the people to give them assurances. The people who are lying in their beds, who will go out tonight to do some damage, are not listening to any of us, but the broader audience is important. That is the audience that sent us here. I give thanks to Mr Campbell for giving us this opportunity, but I ask that we, perhaps, take it that bit further.

Mr Buchanan: All attacks, irrespective of their source, are an attack on democracy. No one, but no one, is above the law. I rise to add my condemnation of all the attacks over the weekend, especially the pipe bomb attack on a police patrol in Strabane in my constituency. There is no doubt that that was a blatant murder attempt on police officers. It is only by the grace of God that we are not mourning the

death of a police officer or members of the public in the House this morning.

There is no room in society for this type of behaviour. All that can be done must be done to bring those responsible to justice. That responsibility lies with every elected Member of the House who, if they have any information, must bring it to the police. Likewise, any member of the public who knows something or someone who may have been involved in anything must bring it to the police, because this must be brought to an end. These people must realise that there is no place for them to carry out this type of activity within society. Therefore, we send out our words of condemnation from the House this morning.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I certainly rise to condemn the violent actions that happened at the weekend in Coleraine, Strabane and east Belfast. I also take the opportunity to condemn the recent shooting in the legs of a man in my constituency in Cullyhanna in County Armagh. I visited the victim a few days ago and heard from him how four men, armed with guns and hammers, burst into the kitchen of his home, hit him in the face with a sledgehammer and shot him in the legs, while his wife and daughter were held in another room.

No statement from any group can justify that barbaric action, and there are no aims, objectives or strategy that can, in any way, justify the use of violence. It was wrong in the past and it is wrong now. Those responsible for that attack are nothing more than the armed wing of criminals whose only interest is moneymaking.

I stand with the victim of that barbaric shooting. The whole community stands with him. My hope is that those responsible will be apprehended by the police and dealt with by the courts.

12.30 pm

Speaker's Business

Mr Speaker: Before we return to today's business, I want to address a matter that is causing me and our Deputy Speakers some concern.

On a number of occasions recently, Members have blatantly and persistently ignored directions from the Chair, particularly when it comes to being told that the time for their contribution is up. I have two examples but, in all my time as Speaker, I have never known Members having to be asked on five if not six occasions to bring their remarks to a close.

If Members deliberately go over their time, they need to understand that what is really happening is that they are eating into the time of other Members who wish to make a contribution. Whether I or one of the Deputy Speakers is in the Chair, the authority is the same. I have to say that we have seen a pattern from all parties in the House — no one party is to blame — of Members deliberately going over their speaking time, particularly when they are being told directly that their time is up.

Members, I hope that I do not have to return to this subject. We have watched it for some time and the problem has been on the increase. When an issue is on the increase, I have no choice but to speak to the House and deal with it. I hope that every Member will understand where I, as Speaker, am coming from. Members will know that they get a warning that their time is either almost up or gone. When I see Members rising in their place with a huge bundle of papers, I think to myself that there is no way that that Member will be able to say all that he or she wants to say within five or 10 minutes. I remind the House that time limits are set by the Business Committee. We will leave it there.

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: First Stage

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):

I beg to introduce the Road Races (Amendment) Bill [NIA 29/11-15], which is a Bill to amend the Road Races (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 to provide for contingency days to be specified in an order authorising the use of roads in connection with road races and for the substitution of a contingency day for a day specified in such an order.

Bill passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):

I beg to move

That the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

The regulations amend the principal automatic enrolment regulations to, in effect, ban certain consultancy charges in automatic enrolment schemes. As I have said to the House previously, when dealing with pensions I am conscious that it is easy to get lost in a maze of technical provisions and pensions jargon. However, the rule that we are considering is somewhat technical. Although I will try to keep my statements and comments at a fairly high level, some jargon is, unfortunately, inevitable. I will do my best to keep it to a minimum.

The Pensions (No. 2) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, and corresponding provision in the Westminster Pensions Act 2008, introduced a duty on employers to enrol eligible job holders into a qualifying workplace pension scheme and to make minimum contributions to it. Under the legislation, employers are able to choose the qualifying workplace pension scheme that they adopt to discharge this duty. A qualifying scheme is one that meets specific criteria, for example an occupational pension scheme or a workplace personal pension scheme.

To ensure that scheme members are adequately protected, it was recognised from the outset that administration charges etc should be appropriate and as low as possible. The intention is to protect consumers by tackling high and inappropriate pension charges.

The problem with some consultancy charges is that they may be used for purposes which do not benefit all the scheme members who are required to pay them. Many consultancy charges are characterised by high upfront contribution charges which have the potential to seriously affect an individual's pension savings, particularly if they move jobs frequently, and to undermine confidence in the workplace pension reforms and pensions generally.

The regulations introduce a further condition that any part of a scheme that provides money purchase benefits must meet an automatic enrolment scheme. The scheme must not allow any deductions from contributions, investment returns or the value of the member's rights if they are to be used to fund an agreement between the employer and a third party. In effect, the regulations ban certain consultancy charges in automatic enrolment schemes. That is not meant to impinge on the normal day-to-day running of pension schemes. Trustees etc can continue to pay for important services for the efficient running of schemes.

There is, I believe, broad consensus that a key factor in the success of automatic enrolment will be to ensure that members' contributions etc are not eaten up by inappropriate or costly charges. The regulations are an important step in tackling an emerging problem.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann

Comhairle. The Minister outlined in some detail the purpose of the regulations. The Committee considered the SL1 pertaining to this legislation at its meeting on 12 September 2013. Subsequently, we looked at the statutory rule at our meeting on 3 October. As the Minister pointed out, the rule came into operation on 14 September. The Committee, after consideration of the regulations and the report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules, agreed to support the recommendation of the regulations from the Minister. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Assembly supports the regulations.

Mr McCausland: I am pleased with the level of consensus that there is on the regulations. I thank the Chair and members of the Committee for Social Development for the positive way in which they have dealt with them. I therefore commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Private Members' Business

Civic Forum

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose the motion and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Attwood: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes its decision of 9 April 2013 on the recall of the Civic Forum and the lack of progress to date; further notes that there are over 500 submissions to "Haass/O'Sullivan" from civic organisations, victims' groups, individuals and the wider community, and the authority of that input; believes that the Civic Forum can further capture this input, thereby building inclusion and helping to remedy the failures of politics; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to recall the Civic Forum by the end of January 2014.

Mr Speaker, given your earlier comments about the length of speeches, I want to assure you that I do not intend to read into the record any of these documents, but I will refer to them shortly.

I would be surprised if it was not recognised across all the parties and Benches in the Chamber — then again, the Chamber never fails to surprise me — that one of our greatest strengths in Northern Ireland and Ireland generally is our civic and community organisations, be they sporting, volunteering, charitable, rights based, community based or victims' and survivors' groups. The scale of all that is arguably unlike that of any other part of these islands. It is a measure of the calibre and capacity of people to organise themselves in order to look after their own interests and to seek to look after the interests of others.

In my view, the scale and capacity of the civic world in this part of Ireland was one of the essential elements in ensuring that, during the years of conflict, we did not see civil strife escalate beyond its appalling and traumatic scale. It is my view that conversations by parents and grandparents, between civic leaders and within community organisations held the line, especially at critical points in our history when things could have escalated and deteriorated at the same time. That thought informed the architects of and the signatories to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, when, in recognition of the scale, capacity and contribution of the civic world, it was proposed that there would be a civic forum.

I am sure that other contributors will touch on the many ways in which civic society can input into our politics and governance, including through the Committees of the Assembly, consultation exercises and a wide range of partnerships. If that is done in the way in which it is meant to be done, it is all worthwhile and healthy. However, it was the view of the House earlier this year when it passed a motion on the matter, and it is the SDLP's view now, that giving enhanced expression and an enhanced role to civic society can help our politics and our place to deal with many of the multiple issues that are all around us and that we need to address urgently.

I have brought these four documents in, Mr Speaker, without reading from them, because, as the panel of parties in the Haass/O'Sullivan process knows, the four volumes were sent to us last Friday by Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan. These are the first four volumes of contributions to the Haass/O'Sullivan talks from outside the talks room. Even these volumes will not capture all those submissions, because these are the ones that third parties and individuals consented to share with the parties.

Any of the panel parties and representatives in the Haass/O'Sullivan talks process cannot but be impressed by the authority, wisdom, ambition and generosity that marks so many of these contributions. They are not only from volunteers, sporting and charitable bodies, rights groups and victims and survivors organisations, but from countless individuals. The fact that, to date, there have been 500 submissions to the Haass/O'Sullivan process demonstrates that there are people outside the talks room in the wider world who have been waiting for this moment to have their say, to comment on the failures and fault lines of politics and to propose remedies. Although it may be disputed by other panel members, it is my view that the wisdom outside the talks room is certainly greater than the wisdom inside it, and we have a lot to learn from that.

How would reconfiguring and recalling the Civic Forum now help us and our society? Here are three ways in which that could be done. The first is to emphasise my point that the wisdom in civic society is arguably greater than that in political society. If we want to shape this society in the image of the right values, with the hopes that have been dashed and the ambition that has been squandered since 1998, the more we need to heed and hear the wider civic world. That includes organisations with which I would have some differences, including the marching orders, on some matters. Unless we try to capture, heed and hear that wisdom, our politics and this place will not prosper and live up to the hope and ambition to which we all seek to aspire.

Secondly, as with the Good Friday Agreement, some of the thinking behind the Civic Forum was to build what was known as the "inclusive society", given that, in our history, people rightly felt that there was the politics of exclusion when it came to this part of the world. Some would argue that the politics of exclusion continue. I might differ from their position on that argument or differ in the scale of what they claim, but there are clearly organisations and people who feel that peace and politics have passed over them in the past number of years. We need to learn from that, and, without indulging bad practice and wrong approaches, we need to try to find ways and means of being more inclusive.

12.45 pm

Thirdly, it is my view that if, in or close to the Building, there was a gathering of civic voices in Northern Ireland, that, in itself, would be a guide to the political parties. It would increase our capacity and challenge us to achieve more than we have done. For all the achievements of devolution — there have been great achievements that should never be diminished — such as the new beginning for policing and the united stand against terror, there is the great unfinished business of agreement politics, and there are people who could guide us with their wisdom and authority as we take forward the necessary decisions and politics over the next period. Given that those in the wider civic world are saying to Haass and O'Sullivan that they want

to participate in peace and politics moving forward, it falls to us to listen to their voices and include them more and more in how we take peace and politics forward in this part of Ireland.

There are some voices — not very loud, I have to say — who say that this would mean more bureaucracy and more cost. The evidence is that the cost is very low, especially compared with some of the acute costs that fall to the people of Northern Ireland from disputed issues, not least up in Twaddell Avenue. However, the cost of not including is much greater and cannot be measured in pounds or euros. Inclusion has the potential to ensure that the costs of division that we see all around us at the moment do not escalate and embed themselves in the future of this part of the world.

The SDLP's motion is very explicit: it calls for the Civic Forum to be reconvened by "the end of January 2014." In my view, the membership of the Civic Forum should be reconfigured because, as Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness said when the review of the forum commenced in 2008 following restoration, society has moved on since 1998. Therefore, the membership of the forum could be reconfigured to reflect that. I do not dispute that; I agree with that. I have some ideas about how the forum could be reconstructed to make it more representative and enable it to have a bigger and better input into our politics than heretofore. However, the review of its membership should not delay the reconvening of the forum, in order to send out the message that if, on the far side of Haass, we conspire together to build a better future, in doing so, we should recognise the great authority of the civic world —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Attwood: — and seek to include that more as we go forward.

Mr Moutray: It is almost with a sense of disbelief that I note that the SDLP is playing the same broken record that it plays every so often with regard to the Civic Forum.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Moutray: No, the Member will have his opportunity. I cannot seem to grasp its infatuation with the Civic Forum and the need to recall it, given that it had no purpose when it was in place. Even if recalled, it would have no purpose but cost an extortionate amount to run. I do not intend to speak for terribly long on the motion, given that, on three occasions, I have, on this very Floor, said everything that I need to say on the matter. My objection to recalling this ineffective body —

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Moutray: No, I am quite happy to let the Member have his turn later.

My objection to recalling this ineffective body is clearly documented. To be honest, I do not care if the Civic Forum is never recalled. Let us be honest, it was a product of the Belfast Agreement, which our party opposed and still does. It was operationally ineffective, with not one of its original recommendations accepted or implemented by the Executive of the day. I have no reason to believe that, if recalled, it would change.

When the forum was operational, it was largely composed of the great and the good of society. I refer to the

comments made by Lord Kilclooney when he said of the Civic Forum in 'The Irish News' that it was:

"a luxury the people of Northern Ireland cannot afford".

I am sorry, but it cost half a million pounds at that time to fund that unelected and ineffective quango. I prefer to see that amount of money, and it is probably greater now, going into something much more worthwhile, something that would help our constituents.

I welcome the SDLP's comments on the Haass talks, and I am delighted that over 500 submissions have been made to him, albeit different in their nature. I trust that Dr Haass will bring about some creative new thinking and suggestions that can be looked at seriously by the Executive, but sadly, I cannot say the same with confidence about the Civic Forum. Its historical records clearly document that, as a body, it was not expert in this field. Simply, the Civic Forum was not necessary when it was created; it was not heeded when it spoke; and it was not valued enough by some of its members for them to attend. What we will see if it is reintroduced is another talking shop, and that is not what the Northern Ireland people need.

I want to be very clear that I, like other Members, was elected to the House to represent my constituents. To my mind, the public do not want to have another level of bureaucracy, another talking shop. I want to be very clear that I am not against connecting with our communities and I am not against stakeholders feeding into the decision-making of the House to help guide us in what the needs are, but I am against elaborate and expensive structures, which is exactly what the Civic Forum has proved to be. I oppose the motion.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Unlike the previous Member who spoke, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. Sinn Féin will support it.

The recall of the Civic Forum would only seek to enhance our decision-making process and promote further inclusion. There is without doubt a growing sense of apathy in our communities, and any step taken to increase engagement must be viewed positively. This is even more apt given the unrest that we have witnessed over the past year. There is clearly a growing number of people who feel frustrated; that is illustrated by at least a dent in community relations in several places.

It would have been an excellent time for politicians to lead from the front on equality issues and on parity of esteem, but clearly we have been let down by some in that regard. I am proud of the steps that my colleagues have taken, particularly in recent times. I think that Máirtín Ó Muilleoir has shown exceptional leadership.

Any recall of the Civic Forum must ensure that it is a truly all-inclusive body, a structured outlet to allow people to have their voices and opinions heard and engaged. It is essential that room be made for the voices of young people, rural communities, women, ethnic minorities, the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) community, the disabled and people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. We need to encourage full participation by all sections of society.

As I have said, there is a growing sense of disillusionment out there, and I fear that it has grown since the last time

we debated this issue. The very make-up of this Chamber could be a contributing factor to that opinion, and serious commitments must be made to tackle the gender, age and ethnic profile of the Assembly to ensure that it is truly representative.

I welcome the volume of submissions that have been made to the Haass talks. The more engagement we have from civic society, the more beneficial it will be for all. It demonstrates a need to have an arena where civic society can be involved in tackling the bigger issues. We cannot allow those who have contributed to fall by the wayside.

Recalling the Civic Forum would be useful in tackling some of the more difficult issues that often result in little more than finger-pointing in this Chamber. The forum could be a place for measured debate on important issues and would only be enhanced by the absence of party-politicking. However, we should not limit the discussions to solely political items. There are also wider societal issues that need to be addressed, not least the way in which young people are stereotyped. We need to find ways to address the prevalence of sexism in our society and all that goes with it.

While I support recalling the Civic Forum, I think that we need to have a wider discussion about its terms and its make-up. The Civic Forum is a Good Friday Agreement commitment, so we need to ensure that other commitments are not forgotten. Both the British and Irish Governments have reneged on many of the promises that were made, and it would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity to call for the introduction of a bill of rights.

I welcome the news of President Higgins's upcoming visit to Britain and I hope that it can be a catalyst to fulfil all the commitments made between the Irish and British Governments. Having heard the merits of establishing a Civic Forum today, we should bear in mind the economic climate that we find ourselves in and we should not rush into recalling the old model. We should be exploring how to do things in a more efficient and innovative way.

We support the motion. We feel that it would give a voice to those sections of society that currently feel excluded from the daily business of the Assembly. It would provide for greater transparency, which is something that nobody in the House should fear.

Mr Cree: It seems no time since we had this same debate, and nothing has changed since then. The Civic Forum was the brainchild of the Women's Coalition and achieved very little during its two-year existence. To be fair, it certainly was worth a try, but it cost over half a million pounds, and there was very little to show for that cost.

Paragraph 22 of the St Andrews Agreement states:

"The Northern Ireland Executive would support the establishment of an independent North/South consultative forum appointed by the two Administrations and representative of civil society."

As a result of our experience here with the Civic Forum, it is difficult to see the rationale for continuing with a North/South forum. It would be interesting to know what the situation is with that proposed body and its likely operating costs.

Returning to the Civic Forum, we do not want another unelected, quasi-parliamentary organisation. Our existing Committees already perform a similar function in taking

evidence from the public, various bodies and society in general. Much more could be done to develop that system and to improve contact between government and the public.

The Ulster Unionist Party values the views of civic society, and we must continue to engage with it. So far this afternoon, little new information has come to light. We know that the First Minister and the deputy First Minister agreed to a review of the Civic Forum way back in May 2008. However, we are still awaiting a response, and perhaps we might hear something today about the current situation. In the meantime, I oppose the motion.

Mr Lyttle: On behalf of the Alliance Party, I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of the motion and our commitment to participative democracy in Northern Ireland. I expected that most democratic parties in the Assembly would have been able to give that same commitment today, but, then again, some Members never cease to amaze me.

Regarding the motion, Mr Moutray said that the SDLP is playing a broken record. Well, the Assembly previously voted in favour of a similar motion, so it is a bit strange to refer to a motion that has been given the support of the House as a "broken record". Then again, some things never cease to amaze.

Whether Mr Moutray and his party like it or not, the establishment of a Civic Forum is a requirement of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, on which these institutions and this society are founded. It is also an opportunity to enhance the representativeness and effectiveness of our political process.

I agree with Mr Cree that we have seen how certain MLAs, Ministers and Committees can work hard together to engage constituents and organisations in the political process, and the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) and Assembly Community Connect are other means through which to do that. However, I believe that the Civic Forum, or a recalibrated Civic Forum, is one way in which to include the creativity and expertise that we have in civic society in the political process and to encourage enhanced democratic participation in Northern Ireland.

The Alliance Party has consistently supported the inclusion of civic society in the political process. Indeed, Alliance Party leader David Ford wrote to the First and deputy First Minister in January this year to propose a shared future working group that would have the involvement of civic society and an independent chair. It appears that they like the idea, and they have used it in reference to the Haass talks group. The Haass talks group has received around 500 submissions. Mr Attwood physically demonstrated the extent of the bound volumes that we have to wade through in the coming days and weeks as we seek to harness those ideas expressed to find long-term solutions to difficult issues that, frankly, the Executive and the Assembly have not been able to grasp to date.

I support the motion, but I would like to put forward a number of qualifications. We heard that the First Minister and the deputy First Minister have sat on a review of the Civic Forum for a quite a number of years. Again, that is possibly not too surprising. We also heard that the deadline of 14 January may be somewhat unrealistic, so we may need to look at that again.

Any recalibrated Civic Forum would, of course, need to be focused and properly representative, not have an unwieldy or excessive budget and have a tight appointment process. I think that we can look to other jurisdictions for some guidance on such a formation. My understanding is that Scotland's Futures Forum has been able to establish itself with a balanced funding format and to utilise relevant expertise on discrete targeted themes that, in Northern Ireland, could include how we best approach the ageing population that we have here, for example. So, I think that that model could be given some serious examination.

1.00 pm

As has been mentioned, we undoubtedly have a wealth of expertise across our society. There is undoubtedly a frustration in our community with the political process, and I think that this is a way to seek to re-engage people from across our community in Northern Ireland. To be effective, we ultimately need a truly diverse membership that adequately represents our community and that will be able to make a constructive contribution to finding solutions to problems in Northern Ireland. There are clearly individuals from all backgrounds in business, academia and the community and voluntary sector who could make meaningful contributions on extremely important themes, such as the economy, integrating education and protecting against the welfare reform that lies ahead.

The Alliance Party adds its support to the motion and thinks that the Assembly needs to get on with addressing this issue.

Mr G Robinson: I will speak very briefly to the motion. I note that the proposers of the motion are keen to waste public money on what I believe to be a publicity stunt at a time when one party dragging its feet on welfare reform will cost the Northern Ireland block grant £5 million monthly from next January. This is a failure of politics, as the motion refers to, and, as a party, we will not be duplicating the services that we provide in the Assembly.

I do not believe that spending money on a civic forum can be justified. Where is the money coming from? What services will have to be cut to fund a civic forum? Where is the benefit to the people of Northern Ireland, as has been shown in the past?

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr G Robinson: No, I am moving on.

I believe that civic inclusion may be damaged, as funding could be lost to projects that provide a greater cost-benefit outcome. I also see the call for the Civic Forum as a duplication of the work of the Haass/O'Sullivan talks, and I fail to see how expecting groups or individuals to make the same submissions to a second body is of any real benefit to building inclusion.

In the current situation, where the Executive are already forced to make budget cuts, it is unreasonable to expect further budget cuts to be made to facilitate the political agenda of some in the House. That would be just another expensive consultation exercise at unjustified cost to the public purse and the creation of another quango that should never be recalled. I oppose the motion.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion. The Good Friday Agreement is about local representatives making decisions that affect us and the people that we

represent on an inclusive basis. The Civic Forum was set up under the Good Friday Agreement to engage wider civic society, and its mission statement states:

"The Civic Forum will exercise effective community leadership and directly influence the building of a peaceful, prosperous, just, cohesive, healthy and plural society."

MLAs must use every opportunity to build and continue contact with non-governmental organisations, community groups, trade unions, the business community, agricultural and rural communities, women's groups, youth organisations and so forth. We must learn of their aspirations and needs and work with them to take those forward into the Assembly and the rest of the Good Friday Agreement institutions. Outreach to those communities is elected representatives' core work.

The Civic Forum is an important method of active participation, and it could bring about change whereby people from the voluntary, business and community sector feel as though they are making a contribution to improving others' quality of life. That can be a very rewarding experience. Active participation opens up the process, and the Civic Forum was agreed in the Good Friday Agreement as a means of ensuring transparency in the political process. As identified in the mission statement, we have to build a peaceful, prosperous, just, cohesive, healthy and plural society, and we can do that by widening and deepening our engagement with individuals and groups in our areas so that they start to identify with the need for change and for a new society that is based on human rights and equality. Elected representatives need to take on their leadership role in the building of that community for change.

It is my understanding that some good work was done while the forum existed. It provided a structured approach for people to come together. However, more was to be done: that is for sure. The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) carried out a review to determine its value and see how it could be best improved.

Democracy means the strength or power of the people. We have equality and fairness for all our citizens, regardless of race, religion, gender or political opinion. Human rights are enjoyed by all. Sinn Féin is committed to efficient government that is cost-effective. However, equality and representative safeguards cannot be diluted in any fashion. Equality should not cost money. If it does, it is money well spent.

The finance argument has been used when it suits. However, when flags protests happen, they cost the economy millions, and, overall, there is silence in that regard. It is ironic that some Members argue against a Civic Forum by stating that we have engagements via all-party groups (APGs), constituency offices and Committees. I agree. However, when the flags issue became a major problem, the unionists set up a unionist forum to address the underlying reasons for the protests. The problem with that is that it was not inclusive; it consisted of only unionists and loyalists talking.

The setting up of the Civic Forum is an important action that we can take to make our society more inclusive. It is important that we are socially aware, that we are of the people, and that we understand the problems and issues

faced by community groups, NGOs and other groups that we are not part of. That is crucial. Elected reps need to exploit all available forums as opportunities through which to drive forward the participation of the people and their community groups, transparency in governance, and the accountability of the Assembly and its institutions to the people. We need to work to make those forums and working groups more than just talking shops, so that they impact on the business of the political institutions. In doing so, we will deepen the political process through social dialogue by contributing to peace, reconciliation and political progress.

Mr Spratt: I am pleased to speak on the motion today. It is fair to say that the Civic Forum was not highly regarded by my party. We have already heard examples of that. It was viewed by many as an expensive talking shop. It achieved little or nothing in the period in which it was in existence, and the wider electorate knew little or nothing about it.

My office has not received one single call to have the Civic Forum returned. I would be surprised if other Members have not experienced the same. We already have representation at local government through councils, through the Assembly, through Westminster and through Europe. Is anyone really going to benefit from another non-elected forum being put in place? It would give more opportunities for the media and public to criticise the cost of government, and probably rightly so. My party has consistently called for a reduction in the number of MLAs and Departments, so, in my and my party's view, it would be unrealistic to recall the Civic Forum on that basis. At a time of economic recession, would it not be better for some of the money that would be poured into such an unelected quango, as it has been described, to be put into mainstream government schemes so that the public would get some sort of repayment?

Mrs D Kelly: I am pleased that the Member has agreed to give way. On the issue of the proposed Programme for Government target and objective of the reduction of the number of MLAs and Departments, does the Member concede that that objective was to have been reached by December 2012? Therefore, is the Member more concerned about holding up the failure of the Executive to the scrutiny of others than he is about participative democracy?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Spratt: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I hear what the Member is saying about the failure of the Programme for Government, but there are many good, positive areas in the Programme for Government as well. Certainly there are areas that are difficult, and there are difficult areas to be got through the Executive, but, at least most of the other parties, unlike your party, Mrs Kelly, are not threatening to throw the dummy out of the pram and walk away from the Executive. At least the other parties are putting something positive in to try to resolve some of those issues.

On the recall of the Civic Forum, Members have mentioned cost. If you look back at the previous Civic Forum, you will find that, on many occasions, it was difficult to even get the people who were appointed to it to come along. In fact, the Benches were very sparsely populated on many occasions. It would also be difficult to get a body that is representative of all in civic society in Northern Ireland.

Some Members have alluded to that. Mr Lyttle alluded to making sure that it was representative of the whole community.

The flags protest has been mentioned. I notice that, for some Members opposite, the flags protest and the cost of it is something that is mentioned. The PSNI mentions this regularly as well. What about the cost of the stuff that we were talking about in the Matter of the Day — the kneecappings, the brutality and all of the other issues that are taking place in our community? I do not hear about any costs in relation to those issues from the PSNI or, indeed, from any of the Members on the opposite Benches. So perhaps we should look right across the board.

I am Chair of a Committee, and folk from civic society come along on a regular basis. Only last week, I had a conversation with members of the trade unions about some transport issues. So, many members from different areas of civic society attend Committees. In fact, perhaps three or four days a week in the Great Hall, you will get groups, many of them from civic society, appearing in the Long Gallery. Members who are democratically elected to this House are lobbied on a whole plethora of issues and concerns. I think that that is the way to do it, through this democratically elected forum.

So, I am afraid that the Civic Forum is an expensive talking shop that achieved nothing in the past. I think that it is unlikely to be able to achieve anything in the future. So, like other Members of my party, I oppose this motion.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. It has been an interesting debate so far in that most, if not all, of the contributors have said that they value civic engagement and welcome very much people participating in politics, particularly in conjunction with Members in this House within these institutions. That, therefore, is, for me, very positive, and as my two party colleagues have done, I support the motion. I may not agree entirely with the sentiment of the motion, and I do not think that it is terribly well written, either. Notwithstanding that, we very much share the purpose of the motion, which is to see the re-establishment of a Civic Forum, and we give our wholehearted support to that.

It is important to say that this is certainly not about, in our view, any attempt to have a mirror image of this Assembly or to have any sense of a second Chamber. This is, essentially, to make sure that we have people out there in wider society having the right and the ability and the format within which they can participate in the wider issues that affect all of us here in society. I would argue that, had we had a Civic Forum operational for the past number of years, we probably would not have needed to have a Haass process because, clearly, we would have had the benefit of people out there who have views on these matters as well as the political parties have. The fact that we as parties have not been able to resolve these difficulties tells us that there is a clear deficit in the substantive dialogue that is required to reach agreement on these matters.

1.15 pm

I make it very clear that we do not want to see a mirror image of this House; we do not want a second Chamber. I think that these institutions, the Committees herein and other forms of consultation are very important. That all

relates to specific policy issues and initiatives, and that is important. However, my party sees the role of a Civic Forum as being for people with a voice and a role in society to have the opportunity to participate in and have a say on wider issues, whether it is equality, symbols and emblems, the past and so on. All those voices are important and all those contributions are necessary. Therein lies a challenge for people in civic society.

In any developed democracy, anywhere around the world, there are people in trade unions, the community and voluntary sector, the business sector and in all Churches and faith organisations. That wide range of organisations has views on social matters, but we do not hear those views in general terms because those stakeholders, when confined to the limitations of the consultations of the institutions here, deal only with specific policy issues. I believe that wider civic society has a role to play, has a voice and has to have an input. Workers are involved in institutions. Why do the workforce, industry representatives or unions not have a voice on what flag flies over their roof, as well as on their working conditions? These are all matters for society and they will take more than politicians to resolve.

When we listen to contributions, we hear that people want much more dialogue. There are contradictions in the Chamber. The DUP says that it is against the Civic Forum because it is a creation of the Good Friday Agreement. Well, its Members are in this Building and these institutions, which are creations of the Good Friday Agreement. That has to be borne in mind by everybody here. The Good Friday Agreement was something that people all came to. There was a lot of give and take, and I think that a lot of hope was created. People in this room and others like us, people within the political world, have squandered some of the good hope that was generated in 1998. I think that we have an opportunity, through the re-establishment of the Civic Forum, to recreate some of that hope. It will not solve all the problems, but it will give more people a voice.

Ultimately, the whole ethos of and intent behind these institutions and the way in which they were organised was to make sure that we undo the decades of exclusivity. People in this society were marginalised, oppressed and excluded. The whole peace process was about bringing all those voices around the table, giving people a sense of their own worth and giving people equality in broader society. The Civic Forum is one means of creating a place for people who have been in those positions in the past, and, more importantly, who have things to say about the future.

Unfortunately, the Ulster Unionist Party has once again demonstrated that it continues routinely to row back on every single component of the Good Friday Agreement. I think that that is to the shame of the current party leadership. I think that it was Mr Moutray who recalled a comment from John Taylor, Lord Kilclooney —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Maskey: He was the man who said that he would not touch the Good Friday Agreement with a bargepole. Thankfully, we are all here as a consequence of the Good Friday Agreement, but we need to develop it.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Mr Eastwood: I am very glad to speak in favour of our motion. The reason for the motion is not that we are a broken record. We got the motion passed last April, but nothing has happened, unfortunately. We do not want to use our time to discuss things that we have already had passed by the House. Unfortunately, however, sometimes we have to do that, because it seems as though some people are not listening. We are lectured to all the time by the party opposite about democracy. A democratic decision was taken here, Mr Speaker, and nothing happened. I think that people need to realise that.

My party colleague Mr Attwood, in proposing the motion, talked very eloquently about the Haass talks and the fact that over 500 submissions have been received from people in civic society who have bothered to get organised and active to try to shape the future of this place. I think that that is a very welcome sign for our society. It should be a very welcome thing for this Government.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Eastwood: I will.

Mr Lyttle: Does the Member agree that the extent and substance of the contributions to the Haass talks from civic society is demonstrative of the role that a Civic Forum could play in other issues? In relation to the Haass process in particular, does that show that it is incumbent on all parties involved to agree long-term solutions to all the issues that are on the table?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Eastwood: Thanks very much. I thank the Member as well for the added minute.

The Member said exactly what I think. It says something very positive about our society that so many people in civic society are prepared to become involved in a process that, let us be honest, at the beginning, not a lot of people had a lot of hope for. We have always been hopeful about the Haass talks, and we still are. We are determined to make sure that those agreements can be made.

It has been alluded to, but the point of and reason for the Haass talks is that politics and this place failed. We had to spend tens of millions of pounds policing disputes on our streets in Belfast. Whatever about the reasons for that — this may not be the right time to discuss the reasons behind those protests — the fact is that it happened. The fact is that large sections of our society told us that they were not happy with where we were going and how we were leading things. Maybe that should tell us something. Maybe we should wake up and listen to those people out there — I might not agree with them — who were on the streets telling us that politics is not working. In particular, maybe we should listen to the people who have gone to the bother of submitting documents to the Haass talks to tell us how they think that they can become involved in society. Those people did not do that because they are anti-politics, anti-democracy or anti-Stormont Assembly. Those people did it because they want it to work. They want this place to work, and they want to help shape a better society for all our people in Northern Ireland. Sometimes they are very far ahead of this place when it comes to that.

Mr Speaker, take the example of our city in the last year and even before that. You have had a very key part to play in all that. The example is of the creation of a culture of

constant conversation in which people, from all different sections of society, get together and look at problems that might arise six months down the line. That is an example that this whole place can learn from. Why not do it in a Civic Forum? Why not cut these issues off at the pass? Why not realise —

Mr Dickson: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does he not also agree that the role of a Civic Forum is not to deal with matters in a pressure cooker forum, in which we are consulted and consultations have time limits, but to be there genuinely to take the broad picture and take non-pressure cooker time to look at issues and debates over a great length of time? We have to bear in mind that organisations such as trade unions, churches and various other actors and players in civic society have their own roles and remits and that a Civic Forum is only a part of what they want to do. However, when they come together, they have an amazing contribution to make.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Member very much for his contribution. He is absolutely right. That is the point of a Civic Forum. It is so that people can sit down quietly — out of the way, not in here — to debate and discuss and try to solve problems before they arise. That is a true benefit of a Civic Forum.

We should not be afraid of it. If people are criticising the Northern Ireland Assembly, they will do it anyway. Why not make them part of the process so that they are not only flagging up the problems but become part of the solution? That is the role of the Civic Forum. I do not understand why we would be afraid of that. People talk about cost. The cost of the Civic Forum the last time around was half a million pounds. It cost £18 million to police the flags protest. I do not know what it has cost up to now with Twaddell Avenue and all the other things that have happened.

Leaving those issues to the side, the very fact that those things happened is because of this place's failure to get to grips with some of the issues that were coming down the line but that we had not realised were happening. That is very sad. The Civic Forum would have been able to head some of those issues off at the pass.

I have to say —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time has almost gone.

Mr Eastwood: — that I am very disappointed that the Ulster Unionist Party has again rolled back from the Good Friday Agreement, whether it is on the Civic Forum, the North/South forum or whatever else. I am surprised to hear that the DUP and the Ulster Unionists —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time has gone.

Mr Eastwood: — are against what were called quasi-democratic or quasi-parliamentary forums —

Mr Speaker: Mike Nesbitt.

Mr Nesbitt: May I begin by apologising that I was not in the Chamber for the beginning of the debate? As Chair of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, I was in the Long Gallery to welcome His Excellency Mr Tulga Narkhuu of Mongolia, who is its ambassador to the Court of St James's. He was opening an exhibition in the Long Gallery, which I commend to Members. You will learn much about the history and the people of Mongolia, not least about their most famous son, Genghis Khan, who was probably not a fan of civic fora.

Two Members accused the Ulster Unionist Party of trying to row back from the Good Friday Agreement. That is not the case. Let us remind ourselves that the fundamentals of the Good Friday Agreement were not based on a civic forum but on the concepts of reconciliation, tolerance, mutual trust, partnership, equality and mutual respect. Delivering on those fundamentals is down to us, the Members of the Legislative Assembly —

Mr Maskey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Nesbitt: I will give way in one minute, Mr Maskey. That will be done not by others in another place but by us in the Chamber, the Committee Rooms, the all-party groups and the other workings that are undertaken by the 108 Members of the Legislative Assembly. The Ulster Unionist Party remains 100% wedded to delivering on those fundamentals.

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for giving way. Just a few minutes ago, the Member's party colleague said that his party is opposed to the motion. The motion simply calls for the re-establishment of the Civic Forum. That is a direct requirement of the Good Friday Agreement, which your party supported, albeit lukewarmly.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Nesbitt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I disagree with the Member's characterisation of the support of the Ulster Unionist Party for the Good Friday Agreement.

The Civic Forum is in the agreement and in legislation. However, not all legislation is good legislation. I think that the experience of those who took part in the Civic Forum and those who reviewed it was that it was not the best mechanism for engaging in consultative and participative democracy. We have no ideological difficulty with participative or consultative democracy. It is a question of whether the forum, as constituted, was the best mechanism, and very few, if any, believe that it was.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Member for giving way. He mentioned the review of the Civic Forum. The review findings have never been published, so how can you make a judgement on the findings? OFMDFM failed and refused, under FOI or any other mechanism, to publish the report.

Mr Nesbitt: By way of answer I would say that, as far as I know, you tabled the motion before any of us were in receipt of the 500-plus submissions to the Haass process, which we now have. However, your motion refers to the "authority" and wisdom of those submissions. How could you know that about submissions that you had not had the opportunity to study? I have no doubt that many of the submissions are full of authority and wisdom. I look forward to reading them, and I am sure that Mr Lyttle did not really mean that he felt that he was going to have to "wade through" the four volumes of Haass submissions. I am sure that we will all enjoy looking at them.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving me the opportunity to correct any inaccurate inference on my part, if there was any. It is the contrary. I agree with the motion. There is extreme utility in those submissions, and it is a privilege to have been able to read through them.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Member for his clarification.

As I said, I think that the question is how you best go about it. A few weeks ago, the Ulster Unionist Party tabled a motion on consultation. We made it clear that we spend

a lot of money consulting with the public, but how we do that is very variable, depending on the Minister and the Department. We called on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to publish a review of best practice. Like the SDLP, we could stand here and say that that motion was passed by the House yet nothing has been done about it, but that is the case. Hopefully, in the fullness of time, the First Minister and deputy First Minister will come back and talk about how best we can consult.

As I said, we are not ideologically opposed to engaging with the public on these issues. However, are we trying to reinvent the wheel? Take the economy, for example. We have the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, Pubs of Ulster and the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association. Is it not a question of how well the House and Executive engage with those experts to seek their views?

1.30 pm

For engaging with the voluntary and community sector, we have the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA). Even NICVA, and I point this out to Mrs Kelly, was critical of the way that the Civic Forum was run. NICVA supported a social partnership body, but it felt that there were flaws in the Civic Forum, in its structure and its operation. I understand the frustration at the review not being published by OFMDFM, because it would be useful. However, this party cannot support a motion that calls for the Civic Forum simply to come back in its old form by January 2014.

Mr McCallister: I welcome the motion and am happy to support it. I regret that we have to debate the issue for a second time in such a short period.

The return of the Civic Forum would be a welcome addition to public and political discourse in Northern Ireland. It is vital that the forum and the strong civic voice that it provides are heard. It is vital that people are engaged in the process, and we do, at times, need a critical friend to counteract the work that is going on here.

So, if we were to reconstitute the Civic Forum, we would need to give some thought to what it might look like, what form it might take and who would be on it, as well as clearly defining its role. Overall, there would be benefits to its reintroduction.

I warn of some of the downsides: things that would have to be worked out if the forum were reconstituted. I do not want a Civic Forum that is almost a challenge to the representative democracy of the House. It has to be clear from the start that the Assembly is where the people's representatives are — people were elected to here — and that the forum would be an addition to that and a useful body that would bring the knowledge of the various strands of civic society together.

Mr Wells: I thank the Member for giving way. He prides himself on being on the ground in South Down and further afield. Has he met a single person in the past decade who expressed any problem with there not being a Civic Forum or pressed him to have it reopened? Since it was suspended many years ago, no one has written, e-mailed or spoken to me about it.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr McCallister: I respectfully suggest that they knew his view on the subject and that writing to or e-mailing him about it could be counterproductive.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Member for giving way. On the latter point that Mr Wells raised, has the Member met in his constituency people who are alienated from politics and who are looking for an alternative way of expressing their point of view?

Mr McCallister: I have indeed. We have only to look at the voter turnout at times to see evidence of disengagement. At our conference on Saturday, I used the stat that less than 10% of people think that this place is doing a good job. There is enormous public alienation here, and that comes back to the dysfunctionality of the Executive and the House. That is one thing that I warn about if we reconstitute the forum: we must not devolve our dysfunctionality to the Civic Forum. I also warned about devolving our dysfunctionality to local councils, because that is where we get completely stuck.

We have listened to various Members speaking here. Alex Maskey, quite rightly, recognised that if we had had the Civic Forum, we might well have avoided a Haass-style talks process, which is an important point. We pretty well managed to create a homemade crisis. I accept that not all the submissions are on public record, but we know from talking to various groups what they are likely to be. We hear from colleagues about the foot-dragging that goes on in this place over welfare reform, one side blaming the other. We see £80 million of social investment money parked and not used. Those are signs of our dysfunction in this House that we are not tackling.

What do we need from a civic forum? We need the tolerance and partnership that Mr Nesbitt spoke about. I heard him speak before about the spirit, and not just the letter, of the Good Friday Agreement. I suggest to him, Mr Speaker, that constituting a Civic Forum is exactly what the spirit of the agreement is about. I agree with other Members that it is sad that the Ulster Unionist Party is moving back from a firmly pro-Good Friday Agreement position. There is nothing that I can do about that now, but it is hugely regrettable and a mistake to move back from the firm position of supporting the agreement.

We need something that retains accountable and responsible representative democracy. We cannot devolve our dysfunction to a Civic Forum. We must ensure that civic society remains a critical friend as opposed to almost a complicit friend.

Mrs D Kelly: It is important at this stage to reiterate our various party support for participative democracy and recognise the role that civic society has in reaching all sorts of solutions to our varied problems.

A number of Members reflected on what appears to be the rollback of the Ulster Unionist Party from aspects of the Good Friday Agreement, despite the fact that over 78% of people in the North, and 98% on the island as a whole, voted for the agreement. Some people would do well to reflect that it is the will of the people.

Some Members spoke about an expensive talking shop, and here we are sitting in one. It is really incredible when one looks at the December recess looming, yet when one looks at the business of the Assembly, other than the transposition of legislation that has to be introduced here

from Westminster, very little legislation is coming across from any ministerial portfolio.

It is sad to reflect once again that despite the fact that we have four Ministers —

Mr Spratt: Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: I will in a second.

Despite the fact that we have four Ministers in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, not one chose to make themselves available to respond to the debate.

Mr Spratt: I notice that the Member used the term “Ministers”. I assume that she is including her own party’s Minister in that.

Mrs D Kelly: As the Member opposite will know, there have been significant delays in RPA and other legislation because OFMDFM will not allow them to go forward. As the Member well knows, OFMDFM controls the legislation, so that is where those questions should be directed. I am sure that the Member also knows that not more than three weeks ago, the OFMDFM Committee had to cancel its meeting because the reports and agenda had not been made available to it by the Ministers’ Department. If one thinks that the Civic Forum at a cost of £500,000 could be an expensive talking shop, they need to look more introspectively at their own contribution and what their role here has been.

Mr Dallat: Does the Member agree that we are still a fledgling democracy and that, as such, we need the widest possible spectrum of support? It is absolute arrogance to believe that the Assembly can run this place on its own, without widespread support from the wider community.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Member for his contribution. It reflects the contributions of others in recognising the huge number of submissions by the community and voluntary sectors and, indeed, wider society. Mr Attwood referred to individuals who made submissions to the Haass/O’Sullivan talks of their own accord.

There has been a failure of political leadership in dealing with some of the thornier issues of our past and some of the issues around a shared future and the whole cost of parading. I think that it was Mr McCallister who said that the Civic Forum could be a critical friend: that is what it was always envisaged to be. When OFMDFM refuses to publish the findings of the review, one can only conclude that the review findings were in favour of a Civic Forum, given the dislike of the party opposite, in particular, of the notion of a Civic Forum and that wider engagement with civic society. I do not understand what it has to fear from a critical friend in the delivery.

When this term of office commenced, I think that it was the First Minister who said that the Executive would be judged on delivery. Here we are, over two years into that delivery, yet it is questionable what has been delivered. I think that it was again Mr McCallister who referred to the £80 million social investment fund, which he said had not been spent. That is not entirely accurate, given that consultants have benefited to the tune of over £400,000, but wider society has not benefited. Yet, we see rising levels of poverty and the threat that they will rise further as a result of the welfare reform proposals.

I do not think that anyone can have anything to fear from the motion. Hiding behind a potential cost of half

a million pounds is not a good argument. In referring to you, Mr Speaker, Mr Eastwood talked about the culture of conversation in Derry. It is not that long ago that there were horrific images of Derry, particularly around parading. How much times have moved on, and that is because people have engaged with each other. It is not just the political leaders who engaged; it was wider society that reached a conclusion. Wider society can challenge politicians to stretch themselves to move beyond their hinterland and take some risks for the greater good of the community and not just be concerned about how their own vote might rise or fall according to the decisions that they take.

A number of contributors from the Sinn Féin Benches were very much in favour of the amendment and the recall of the Civic Forum, and I welcome that. They recognise the talents and skills of wider society in leading to a more inclusive future for us all and a more inclusive society. Some of them talked about how equality is not something that we should fear, and, if there is a cost of half a million pounds for equality, so be it. One of the lessons of the past is that we had an unequal society, and we all know what happened as a consequence.

Mr Attwood, in his opening remarks, talked about the wisdom of civic society and having the right values, hope and ambition for all our futures. I do not think that too many of us, other than some on the other Benches, could disagree with that. Those of you on the other Benches have recognised the wisdom, hope and ambition of many contributors to consultation exercises and of witnesses before Committees. You have recognised the value of the contribution that others make in those instances.

There is one other point that I want to make, and it concerns the St Andrews legislation. I think that it was the First Minister again who shouted from the rooftops about how the points that he got into the St Andrews Agreement would ensure that there was greater accountability of Ministers and greater accountability and authority of the Assembly. That has proven not to be the case, when you reflect on the fact that it is now months since this democratically elected Chamber held a democratic vote and the majority voted in favour of the re-establishment of the Civic Forum. Yet, it has failed to materialise. That calls into question much of the self-pronounced praise and reflection of individuals who do not think that they should be present to hear what is said in the Assembly, which has a clear role and responsibility to hold to account the Executive and to scrutinise its action or, more appropriately, its inaction over a number of years now.

Once again, I urge the Members opposite, particularly the Ulster Unionist Party, which had the courage in 1998 and attempted to move society forward in accepting the Good Friday Agreement, to reflect and to endorse what was the will of the people, as reflected in the referenda on the Good Friday Agreement or, if they prefer, the Belfast Agreement.

1.45 pm

Question put.

Mr Speaker: I remind Members that Question Time is at 2.00 pm.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 48; Noes 45.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Eastwood and Mrs McKeivitt.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Hussey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes its decision of 9 April 2013 on the recall of the Civic Forum and the lack of progress to date; further notes that there are over 500 submissions to "Haass/O'Sullivan" from civic organisations, victims' groups, individuals and the wider community, and the authority of that input; believes that the Civic Forum can further capture this input, thereby building inclusion and helping to remedy the failures of politics; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to recall the Civic Forum by the end of January 2014.

2.00 pm

*(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin]
in the Chair)*

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: As Members are aware, Standing Orders now provide that topical questions will be taken after the listed questions. We will have 30 minutes of oral questions and 15 minutes of topical questions.

Haass Talks: Budget

1. **Mr Nesbitt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the budget for the panel of parties of the Northern Ireland Executive chaired by Dr Richard Haass. (AQO 5000/11-15)

Mr P Robinson (The First Minister): Costs relating to the work of the panel of parties are being met by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). They include the expenses incurred by the Haass team, any additional expenditure such as travel and subsistence that directly relates to its work and a small remuneration to its researcher. We are projecting that the likely cost will be approximately £135,000, with costs to date totalling £73,000. It is important to record once again our appreciation of the fact that Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan have offered their services on a pro bono basis. Therefore, they are not taking a fee for their time or the time incurred by their press officer and an additional researcher.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the First Minister for his answer. He will be aware that he has a budget line of £2.2 million in the current year and £2.39 million in 2014-15 for a body called the Public Assemblies, Parades and Protests Body. Will he update the House on the activity of that organisation?

Mr P Robinson: We have, of course, made funding available for anything that might arise out of the Haass talks. I hope that, as Dr Haass has indicated, all parties will roll up their sleeves and come seriously to the table over the next number of weeks so that we might reach some agreed conclusion as a result of the Haass talks. The Department is ready to respond to any conclusion that might be reached.

Mr Lyttle: What is the First Minister's view on whether a single, independent legacy commission with a framework of investigation and information recovery, thematic inquiry and storytelling could form the basis of a comprehensive mechanism for dealing with the past, as part of the Haass talks?

Mr P Robinson: It is important that, when we collectively appoint somebody to carry out the role of facilitating all-party dialogue on these matters, we negotiate with the panel of parties rather than across the Floor of the Assembly. There are aspects of that to which I would respond warmly and others that would need to be drilled down a little before we could reach a conclusion. Certainly,

however, there seems to be some consensus about the ability of victims to tell their stories without cross-examination or interrogation.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Notwithstanding all the challenges that face the process in the weeks ahead, what is the First Minister's estimate of confidence in the ability of Mr Haass and his team to produce a report by Christmas?

Mr P Robinson: We need to be very clear that this is not about putting the onus on Dr Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan. If there is going to be a positive outcome, it will be because the Executive parties that are on that panel reach a conclusion. That depends very largely on whether those parties are going to retreat into old ways because there is an election or two next year or whether they are prepared to look at what is in the best long-term interests of the people of Northern Ireland. I hope that it is the latter. My party is certainly up for attempting to resolve the differences on these matters. Undoubtedly, it will be more likely that we will get agreement on issues relating to parades than on flags, and it will be easier to get agreement on flags than on the past.

Mrs Hale: Given the recent comments of the SDLP that the chair should bring forward his own recommendations, will the First Minister confirm the remit of the panel in relation to consultation and resulting recommendations?

Mr P Robinson: The panel has been working with Dr Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan in the process of hearing the views of stakeholders, interested parties and individuals around the Province. That material is being collated. The next stage is when we will attempt to get agreements. The terms of reference are very clear and put the onus on the panel to reach agreement; they do not put the onus on the facilitator. He is there to urge and to meet the overall desire of the panel in reaching agreement; it is not his role or responsibility to reach agreement for us. I have no doubt that he may have views, and I have no doubt that he may want to express those views, but the recommendations, according to the terms of reference, will come from the panel alone.

Mr Byrne: Does the First Minister agree that issues such as dealing with the past are so paramount to the people that the costs of the Haass process would be negligible in relation to the wider remit and importance of making sure that we get the right outcomes at this juncture?

Mr P Robinson: I have always had difficulty trying to define what people mean by dealing with the past. If dealing with the past requires us to have a shared narrative of history, I think it is impossible for that to happen. If it is about how we deal with those who are the victims of the past, I think that it is possible to get agreement on how we might ensure that those who have suffered as a result of the past are treated in a certain way and have a proper place in the future of Northern Ireland. There is clearly a range of issues about how we deal with certain events of the past that have caused very considerable problems over the past number of months. I am not sure how, on the one side, it is possible for some people to look at an event in the past as something that retraumatises them, while somebody else, at the same time, thinks that it is something worthy of celebration or commemoration.

Investment: USA Visit

2. **Mr McQuillan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following their trip to the USA in October 2013, what measures are being taken by their Department to attract further investment. (AQO 5001/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The deputy First Minister and I travelled to Boston and Chicago from 21 to 25 October for a number of engagements to promote the Northern Ireland business message and to build on the hugely successful economic conference. Our five-day visit was an opportunity to reinforce our bonds with existing and potential investors in the US, to promote Northern Ireland as an attractive investment location and to promote healthcare and university collaboration. Our attendance at a significant EU/US Connected Health conference in Boston, attended by an international audience from over 20 countries, provided a platform to showcase our growing expertise in the Connected Health arena. We were pleased to have the support of our colleague, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, who also spoke at the conference. We highlighted the wider research and development agenda at meetings with representatives of the US universities that have established links with Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster.

In Boston, we addressed an audience of some 170 senior business executives on the competitive advantages that Northern Ireland has to offer. In Chicago and Peoria, we visited the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and Caterpillar. Those are two of our most important US investors. The visit to Caterpillar allowed us to meet the company's top management team and reiterate the Executive's support for consolidating relationships with existing investors. While there, we were particularly pleased to welcome a further investment by Caterpillar to expand its manufacturing business here, which reinforces our position as an investment location for global companies. Caterpillar is an important investor, not only regarding jobs and wealth creation but through the credibility its presence gives to doing business in Northern Ireland.

In summary, the visit provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen relationships with existing investors and to begin relationships with potential new ones. It was an extremely successful visit, and we look forward to seeing the fruits of that in the months to come.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the First Minister for his answer. Given the success of the recent trip to the United States, are any other investment trips planned?

Mr P Robinson: Of course, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is constantly going out around the world trying to encourage investors into Northern Ireland. The next visit that the deputy First Minister and I are making is to Japan in the first week in December. We were invited there by Prime Minister Abe when he was here at the G8 summit, and we look forward to meeting some of the Japanese companies that already invest in Northern Ireland as well, hopefully, as some potential new ones.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. Will the First Minister provide us with any detail on progress made since the recent investment conference in Belfast?

Mr P Robinson: Invest Northern Ireland undertook the task of carrying out the follow-up work. It is involved in speaking to the companies that were present and those who made positive remarks during the conference. We have no doubts that positive news will arise from the economic conference, but these matters take some time. Board decisions have to be taken, and there has to be follow-up work between companies and Invest Northern Ireland on any incentives that might be offered.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. Is the First Minister confident that the forthcoming investment trip to Japan will yield further inward investment in jobs?

Mr P Robinson: In keeping with every other visit that we have made, there have been positive outcomes. There is the potential of inward investment from Japan, but it is not that alone. Wherever we go, we attempt to encourage people in that jurisdiction to come to Northern Ireland as visitors to aid our tourist industry, and we look at opportunities for trade between our two countries. We expect to make some progress in all those areas. It must be pointed out that we already have significant investment from Japan.

Social Investment Fund

3. **Dr McDonnell** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the social investment fund. (AQO 5002/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: On 28 February, the social investment fund (SIF) steering group submitted area plans for each of their zones. Representatives of the wider community were involved in identifying the issues to be addressed and prioritising the interventions for inclusion in the plan, thus ensuring that they reflected needs identified locally. The plans included a total of 89 projects across nine zones, prioritised by the steering group in each investment zone. In contrast to recent reports, there is no outstanding decision by Ministers on zone allocations. Approximately £40 million of projects have successfully come through the robust internal economic appraisal process. Officials are meeting with all the chairs of the steering groups this week to talk through the indicative budget for each zone and the process of project implementation. I expect projects that have gone successfully through the process to be informed over the next few weeks. We anticipate further announcements very shortly.

Dr McDonnell: I thank the First Minister for his update and welcome the good news contained therein. What parameters are used to assess whether a project is worthy? Will the First Minister reassure us that moneys will be allocated, by and large, on the basis of objective need?

Mr P Robinson: On the Member's latter point, yes, of course: the whole purpose of the project is to try to address need. Objective need became a difficult concept to measure because the zones are of different sizes. It was not simply a case of making a determination as if they were all the same size. We had to take objective need and the size of the areas into account. SIF is, of course, part of our overall suite of measures in the Delivering Social Change policy in our Department, so we had an eye on other allocations within the overall objective of delivering social change.

2.15 pm

Miss M McIlveen: Will the First Minister outline how much more the 89 projects totalled than the £80 million in the funding pot? What action is he considering taking to support those who will not benefit from the social investment fund?

Mr P Robinson: As the House will probably have already guessed, the applications came to considerably more than £80 million. I think that the total was about £130 million. Those applications are being addressed on the basis of the priorities that the zones placed on them. They have to go through a robust business case, and, of course, our Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel are involved in that. It means that there is a shortfall. Towards the end of the scheme, we will assess the value of SIF and whether it should be extended. The deputy First Minister and I have been looking at whether there is a case for taking applications for some smaller grant schemes. There had been some indication that we might look at having £1 million worth of schemes, maybe 50 schemes at £20,000 each. Clearly, those who were unsuccessful in coming through the initial tranche might look to that kind of scheme if it were approved by the Department.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chéad-Aire. Will the First Minister indicate when money is likely to hit the ground to fund area priorities?

Mr P Robinson: The one thing that we have been certain about is that the money is ring-fenced, so nobody else is going off to spend it. The money is there to be spent, and we want to get it out through the door as quickly as possible. As I said, if there is something like £120 million worth of schemes — slightly more than £40 million worth of schemes have already gone through the process — there is no reason why money cannot start going out to those schemes immediately, provided that they are in the top two of a zone's priorities. That is the purpose of the discussions that will take place between the chairperson of each zone and officials over the coming days.

Mr Kinahan: Will the First Minister confirm that the fund has been delayed because of a failure to agree on the split between mainly nationalist and mainly unionist communities?

Mr P Robinson: No, I will not confirm that. The processes in our Department are not as vulgar as that. If one looked at the schemes that have come forward, one would see that a very high proportion of them benefit both sections of our community. Indeed, if one looked at the various zones, even where a particular section of the community might be in a significant minority, one would see that, given the overall allocation of schemes from the zone, they have been treated well. When the schemes start to play out, we will see that they have contributed to overall community cohesion, which, I think, is the Member's wish.

Together: Building a United Community

4. **Mr Campbell** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what will be the tangible evidence of a successful outcome of Together: Building a United Community. (AQO 5003/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will ask junior Minister Jonathan Bell to answer this question.

Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): On 23 May this year, we published the good relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community, which is designed to bring about interaction, mutual respect and social cohesion across our community. The strategy contains over 40 separate actions and commitments, and seven of those are the headline actions that were announced on 9 May. We have tasked design groups to work up proposals for the indicative costs and implementation timescales for those projects.

Recognising and valuing the importance of projects and groups that are engaged in the areas that the strategy will impact upon, officials have begun an intensive period of engagement with key stakeholders to seek their input into the design process. Following that engagement, we expect the design groups to be in a position to report back to us in the near future. Through this early engagement, we have been able to identify areas where it will be possible to trial some activities, building on the positive relationships and good community work already in place, prior to full-scale operation. Those trials will allow and enable real outputs linked to the strategic aims and objectives of the strategy to be achieved in the near term. The remaining actions and commitments range from the longer-term projects around, for example, the introduction of the new equality and good relations commission, which will require primary legislation, to shorter-term and more immediate actions. We are working closely with other relevant Departments to progress all those issues and actions.

Mr Campbell: Does the junior Minister agree that building a united community for the future is made much easier if people are clear about their past? Further to that, does he agree that, across the community, people know those who were engaged in terror in the past and want frank and honest admissions as we try to build a united community, and that, above all, they know the issues that are out there and know the difference between genuine and synthetic responses?

Mr Bell: We call on everybody who has any information on either their own past or about criminality and terrorism to bring that forward to the police. That is the right thing to do, and it is imperative that everyone takes on that responsibility to fess up to their past, not only to what they have done but for the benefit of those who are suffering and for whom that information could be very helpful. Of course, the justice process continues, and there will always be a legal justice process, and anybody involved in any crime should be made amenable to that process.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Can the Minister give us an update on the United Youth programme?

Mr Bell: We continue to work with a number of agencies together. As junior Ministers, we were out recently in Belfast seeing on the ground what is happening between young people from the Hammer youth club in the Shankill and the Ardoyne youth club that is associated with Holy Cross. As our officials continue to work up the programme, we will, as I outlined in my earlier answer, bring details to the House in due course.

Mr Cree: Following on from that, Minister, could you perhaps share with us which Departments are likely to be involved and whether DEL will be taking the lead on the United Youth programme?

Mr Bell: Given the cross-curricular nature of many Departments, we will involve each of them, and we regularly have bilateral meetings with individual Ministers on areas where they have responsibility. Minister Farry from DEL has met us on a number of occasions. In fact, we have been launching projects with him where there is a synergy between our two Departments. There are no divisions or difficulties, and all Departments are working together on the programme, and where it is appropriate to involve them or utilise that expertise and research, we will do so.

Planning Bill

5. **Mr Copeland** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they intend to take any action relating to the decision of the Minister of the Environment regarding the Planning Bill. (AQO 5004/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: Yes, we will meet the Minister of the Environment in the near future to discuss the position that the Executive should take on the matter. It would have been better if the Minister had had that meeting before he made his announcement. The issue of planning remains a key element in the development of our local economy. It is still the case that many potential investors that we speak to throughout the world and who are looking to invest in Northern Ireland have been put off by our planning system. It is internationally recognised that Northern Ireland has a poor planning outcome. An example of that are the remarks from the Sainsbury's chief executive, Justin King. He said that a lack of speed, logic and joined-up thinking when it came to issuing planning permissions makes Northern Ireland a challenging place in which to invest. If we are serious about getting jobs into Northern Ireland, we need to look at our planning system and ensure that it delivers the right outcomes.

Mr Copeland: I understand exactly what the Minister means. Does he, however, accept that the current position indicates that the amendments tabled by Sinn Féin and the DUP were held to be illegal following legal advice that was sought? Does he agree that, given those facts, the original Bill without the amendments is probably better than no Bill at all?

Mr P Robinson: I do not accept the premise on which the Member's question was asked. I think that we all know that there are differing legal opinions. The Attorney General takes one position on those matters, and the QC who advises the Department takes a different one. To me, the right thing to do would have been to put the legislation through the Assembly and allow it to be tested in the courts if necessary. I hope that we can reach some agreement on how we should go forward. A number of options are available to us. I know that the Member will be aware that the matter forms part of the economic pact that we signed on behalf of the Executive with the Prime Minister. It is, therefore, Executive policy. Ministers are required to meet and uphold all the decisions taken by the Executive, so I hope that we can find a way through the problem.

Mr Weir: The First Minister said that the planning provisions were a key part of the economic package

agreed with the Prime Minister. The Planning Bill was passed by the Assembly at Consideration Stage, so does he believe that the Environment Minister is in breach of the Pledge of Office?

Mr P Robinson: Clearly, the Pledge of Office requires every Minister to act in accordance with decisions taken by the Executive. The Executive took a clear decision on the matters; it is recorded in the minutes of the Executive meeting. Therefore, yes, the Environment Minister is in breach of the Pledge of Office. However, without going into his position, it is important that we resolve the issue and move forward on planning. Planning continues to be a significant problem in Northern Ireland, and we have to address that. New legislation will be required to address some of the weaknesses in the planning system at present.

Mr Brady: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister outline any concerns that have been raised by large-scale investors while on investment visits about the perception of our planning processes?

Mr P Robinson: The deputy First Minister and I have been out and about trying to encourage business to come. I can recall, for instance, being in Australia when I was Minister for Regional Development. There was some news coverage of it out in Australia, as a result of which I was asked to meet one of the most significant development companies in the world. I found that the person in charge of finding locations had originally lived in Northern Ireland. That person wanted to invest here but would not go near Northern Ireland with a bargepole because of the length of time that it took to get planning applications through and the likelihood of judicial review even when they were got through. There are many problems out there. We bury our head in the sand if we are not prepared to face up to them. The deputy First Minister and I are not saying that our way is the only way in which it can be done, but nobody has suggested a better way of ensuring that we improve the system.

Ms Lo: During a television interview recently, the Minister's colleague Mr Sammy Wilson said — I am quoting from memory — that the two amendments to the Planning Bill could be brought forward via a private Member's Bill or by the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster. Will the Minister clarify whether that is the position that the DUP is taking?

Mr P Robinson: No. The position that we are taking is that the deputy First Minister and I have agreed with the Minister of the Environment that we should sit down to try to resolve the issues. It is far better that we get some mutually satisfactory outcome. Of course, as I indicated to the Member for East Belfast, who even though we are still on his question has left the Chamber, a number of options are open to us. One of those options is that a private Member's Bill could be brought forward. Another option is that another Minister could bring the Bill forward. However, the best option by far is that we get some agreement with the Minister responsible for the Department on how we move forward.

2.30 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Union Flag: Belfast City Hall

1. **Mr McQuillan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, as we approach the first anniversary of Belfast City Council's decision to remove the Union flag, whether they believe that the protest march planned for 30 November should take place. (AQT 361/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The first thing that I should say is that there are very few people in the Chamber who have not been involved in protest politics at some stage in their careers. So I think that we need to recognise that demonstrations, protests and picketing are part of the democratic process. They allow people to express their views and to show opposition. So, of course, we support people's right to demonstrate, providing, of course, that they do it within the law and peacefully. Equally, of course, we have to defend other rights, including the rights of traders who want to ensure that their businesses can remain open and that they have the opportunity to be able to trade, particularly in the run-up to Christmas, which counts for a significant part of their business. Of course, there are also the rights of consumers who want to avail themselves of those services. So, as is so often the case in Northern Ireland, we are dealing with competing rights.

Given that the actual anniversary of the decision by Belfast City Council comes earlier in the week than the Saturday and that the decision that led to the flag being lowered occurred on a day other than Saturday, it appears to me that a lunchtime protest would do less violence to trade in Belfast and would be a more accurate way to protest against the people who took the decision. I suspect that very few of those people will be in the City Hall on a Saturday. Although it is not ideal for anybody, it would be a worthwhile compromise.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the First Minister for his answer. Does the First Minister believe that such demonstrations can succeed in effecting change?

Mr P Robinson: I am not sure that even the organisers believe that they will effect change by the protest. We have all been involved in protests, and they are held to highlight an issue to ensure that people are aware of concerns. I suspect that the objective of this particular demonstration is to show that, even a year afterwards, people are still opposed to the council's decision. If change is to take place, it will take place through the democratic process, which means involvement in politics, involvement in elections and making sure that people who represent your views are elected to Belfast City Council in the future. That is the way to make real change.

Fiscal Powers

2. **Mr Spratt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they agree with the leader of NI21 who, at his party conference on Saturday, proposed greater fiscal powers for the Assembly. (AQT 362/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: We have, of course, as an Executive, sought additional fiscal powers, and, unlike other parts of the United Kingdom, we have been successful with, for instance, air passenger duty for long-haul flights. We are also pursuing additional fiscal powers on corporation tax. However, I think that the Member for Lagan Valley was referring to income tax powers. I note that the Member did not tell anybody during his speech whether his intention

was to raise or to lower taxes. I am always suspicious about people who seek a headline, perhaps without having done any research, and who do not give details of their intentions. I suppose that the "Basil tax" might be to have an additional tax burden on women who are over size 12 or, perhaps, to give tax breaks to polygamists.

Mr Spratt: I thank the First Minister for his answer. What are the Executive doing with the tax-raising powers that they already have to make business more competitive and to keep the cost of living down for householders right around this Province?

Mr P Robinson: I think we should point out that we have that ability for local taxes. Local taxes could refer to the regional rate, water charges and so forth. It is worth noting that Scotland has had a power in relation to income tax for about 14 years now and has never used it. That should perhaps be a lesson to people as to what is likely to happen if it were to come here. If we are to reduce income tax by having a local power, that means reducing the services that are available to our community. I have not been convinced that there is any real advantage in devolving income tax powers.

As to what we are doing already, we have used the ability to bring to zero air passenger duty to ensure that we retain the connection with the United States, which was vital from an investment point of view. We are seeking to have the ability to set corporation tax, because we want to reduce it to enhance our offering and the package available to investors. For us, it is to have a positive outcome with our economy that we have used it. Where we have held down the regional rate and refused to bring in water charges, it is because we recognise that, particularly during this period of recession, a very heavy burden was being carried by householders in Northern Ireland.

Violence: Executive Separation

3. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether, in the wake of a further attack on a constituency office, attacks on the police and the shooting of a 15-year-old child, they feel that Executive Ministers are doing enough to separate themselves from those who seek to threaten democracy and the rule of law. (AQT 363/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The deputy First Minister and I have publicly expressed our condemnation of these actions. I sense a feeling in our community of, almost, helplessness to be able to affect what is happening at the hands of violent organisations and individuals. However, the public are not powerless in these matters. We all have the ability to stand up to agitators and aggressors; no matter who they claim to represent, we all have the right and ability to speak out against them. We can provide evidence, where it is available, to the police, to ensure that prosecutions take place. We must always show such organisations and individuals that they cannot succeed and demonstrate that, the more that they do, the more they will be resisted.

Everyone in the House can, I believe, recall the days when we woke up in the morning to headlines of mayhem and misery. We can all recount the horrors and tragedies of the past. I do not believe that anyone wants to go back to the bad old days. When devolution returned to Northern Ireland in 2007, we all committed and pledged ourselves to this new era in Northern Ireland and to the peace and

stability that had been created. I hope that each of us will renew that pledge today.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the First Minister for his answer. Public opinion suggests that it is important that no elected representative sends mixed messages or gives comfort or cover to those who would advocate breaking the law. Will the First Minister now call on Nelson McCausland to stop sharing platforms and media opportunities with people who are widely considered to have links to paramilitary organisations?

Mr P Robinson: I think everybody recognises that elected representatives have clear responsibilities with their own constituents to try to do everything that they can to ensure that peace is maintained. The role of every elected representative in this House is to ensure that they make those views known to everybody they meet in society and do everything that they possibly can to overcome the difficulties that that might present them. I have no doubt that the Minister for Social Development uses all his powers of persuasion to attempt to resolve the issues that are causing real difficulty in his constituency and elsewhere.

Narrow Water Bridge: Funding Withdrawal

4. **Mr D Bradley** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they can confirm or deny that they agreed to the SEUPB's withdrawal of the Narrow Water Bridge letter of offer at a recent North/South Ministerial Council pre-meeting. (AQT 364/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: Quite contrary to that position, the deputy First Minister and I agreed at the meeting of the British-Irish Council that we would examine other ways of trying to keep the project alive. We both indicated that, in principle, we are supportive of the project. We recognised that the application came from Louth County Council and that there was a projected cost attached to it. The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) was to give a certain amount of money, and the council was to pay the rest.

When the projected figures were found to be significantly less than the actual tender price, it became clear that Louth County Council could not, and was not prepared to, pay the balance. The position, therefore, is that we have to look at the project and see whether it can be brought forward in any other way. For instance, it was specifically mentioned that it was a pre-designed scheme, and we might look to see whether a design-and-build scheme would bring a better result. We might look to see whether a different specification might bring a different result. We might look to see whether there is any other opportunity for funding to come forward.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the First Minister for his answer. Given where we are now with the Narrow Water Bridge, will he go to the Minister of Finance and ask him to find new moneys so that Belfast jumps first and this great project goes forward?

Mr P Robinson: The SEUPB has already indicated that it is looking to allocate the funds elsewhere because it does not believe that it can proceed with the present timetable. We must respect its decision. The SEUPB has the responsibility to ensure that the money is spent and that we are not handing money back to Europe without having

any local advantage. It is important that we ensure that we get as much funding as possible from Europe. It is part of our Programme for Government that we do that. Therefore, we do not want any time delay to have an impact on us.

As for going to the Finance Minister, the Finance Minister has to act within Treasury rules, just as, in the South, they, too, have to operate on the basis of value for money in a business case. Therefore, any proposal has to be able to get through that business appraisal. The original projected figure that we were offered for the scheme was clearly satisfactory, or the then Finance Minister Sammy Wilson would not have approved the business case at that stage. However, a business case on the basis of the new tender figure would not get approval. Therefore, we need to look at what other ways there are of ensuring that we can have a project that gives a value for money outcome and can go forward.

Welfare Reform Bill

5. **Mr Anderson** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the recent calamity surrounding the stalled Welfare Reform Bill, to give an assessment of when the Bill will be back on the Floor of the Assembly and the specific Northern Ireland measures that have been agreed. (AQT 365/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: I cannot say exactly when it will come back to the Assembly, because we require cross-party support for legislation that comes forward. I find it a bit frustrating in that it is not actually the Bill that is the issue but the regulations that are attached to the Bill. Perhaps one way forward is for the Bill to go through its early stages and for the Final Stage to be left until the draft regulations are available and people can see their content.

However, the proposals that we have would ensure that Northern Ireland has the best welfare system in the United Kingdom. We have addressed a number of issues. The three, in particular, that were raised in the Assembly and by the Committee have been addressed. Those were effectively matters that dealt with administration, the number of occasions on which payments are made etc.

In addition, I think that it is publicly known that we have attempted to address the issue of the bedroom tax for existing tenants. I suspect that tenants in England, Scotland and Wales would give their right arm for that. It is a significant advance. We have also looked at how, through the use of resources, we can help other vulnerable people.

2.45 pm

Regional Development

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that we will start with listed oral questions. I inform Members that questions 3 and 9 have been withdrawn.

Traffic: Bridge Street, Strabane

1. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department will consider bringing forward a scheme or remedial measures to help alleviate the traffic bottleneck on the Bridge Street side of Strabane's old bridge. (AQO 5015/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department has received a number of complaints about traffic progression on Bridge Street, Strabane. Although higher levels of congestion are to be expected at urban locations of that nature, it is acknowledged that the problem is compounded by occurrences of illegal parking on Bridge Street.

Due to the actions of a minority of drivers, I have had to direct my officials to increase the level of parking enforcement on Bridge Street to deter illegal parking, which should help to reduce congestion. In addition, a yellow box junction will be provided on Bridge Street to assist vehicles turning right onto Melvin Road, where legal parking is available. It is expected that that work will be completed within the next four weeks.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Has the Minister had any discussions with the owner of the derelict buildings at the corner of Bridge Street? Will he give any consideration to vesting and demolishing those properties to provide additional parking? That would go a long way towards solving the problem at Bridge Street.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary question. Obviously, those are matters that my local officials will want to carry forward if they have not done so. I am happy to provide an update to the Member on any possible progress. However, she indicated that vesting property or land may be involved, and that, of course, can be a lengthy process. I am happy to look at the possible solution that she indicated and will correspond with her on that.

Mr Byrne: Will the Minister state whether Roads Service is doing anything about improving the image and general condition of the old bridge at Bridge Street?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. The Member will know that there are potential projects in mind for two bridges in Strabane, with the upgrading of one and the construction of a new bridge that will link the bus station to the town centre.

The revised upstream bridge is known as Melvin Bridge, and a scheme that is being carried forward by Strabane District Council, part-funded by the Department for Social Development (DSD), is making progress after delays to the original proposal. Previously, I committed £873,000 to part-fund work on that bridge as one of my Department's active travel pilot projects. Subject to the necessary technical approvals, my Department will adopt the structure and approach footways when the project is successfully delivered.

In relation to the downstream footbridge to link Melmount Road and the bus station to the town centre, I can advise that my officials are continuing to investigate ways of providing a cost-effective river crossing. However, the delivery of a landmark structure would require additional sources of funding on top of potential Roads Service funds.

Mr Gardiner: Will the Minister provide an update on the two pedestrian and cycle bridges in Strabane?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question, which largely concerns the points that I have just addressed to Mr Byrne. As I said, we are actively progressing, to the best of our ability, the scheme at Melvin Bridge, having indicated previous support of

£873,000, and we will continue to progress through the necessary stages.

Roads Service: Rural Support

2. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he will take to ensure that rural businesses, particularly those in the agrifood supply sector, will receive adequate support from Roads Service this winter to ensure that their supply routes remain traversable and safe in ice and snow conditions. (AQO 5016/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Roads Service's winter service programme is based on the well-established practice of targeting the resources available on the busier main through routes, which generally carry in excess of 1,500 vehicles per day. In areas with difficult topography, roads carrying over 1,000 vehicles per day are salted.

In addition, small settlements in rural areas containing 100 dwellings or more have salted links to roads on the main salted network, and priority secondary salting is provided to a number of rural schools that are most affected by the adverse weather conditions. Salting is also undertaken in urgent situations; for example, to provide access for the emergency services, for unforeseen occurrences, such as funerals, or to help get fuel or feed stocks to farmers.

I fully appreciate and understand the concerns of rural businesses, particularly those in the agrifood supply sector. The Member will of course know that it is simply not practicable to salt all roads in rural areas.

Roads Service will continue to use its best endeavours during any severe weather events to help rural communities. However, the primary focus must remain the main through routes, which carry the vast majority of vehicular traffic.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for his reply. I know of two rural businesses in the Minister's constituency, which is also my constituency, that employ 300 people and provide the agrifood sector with fresh food daily. Is it acceptable that the 300 employees and the delivery lorries have to travel on ungritted roads every day in the worst of the weather?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I suspect that I know the businesses that he is speaking about. Indeed, I have had contact with local businesses in my constituency, and we should not underestimate the challenge that we face in providing adequate and effective winter services.

These are long-established guidelines that have been agreed, even by this Assembly. Indeed, they were enforced by my predecessors, who include party colleagues of the Member. Nonetheless, I take seriously those issues. I am aware that a number of businesses in my constituency avail themselves of self-help provision with the cooperation of my Department. I encourage that, and where it is possible, we will certainly try to provide assistance.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. Can local farmers and other agricultural contractors still apply to get on the Department for Regional Development (DRD) list for the clearing of roads? If so, how do those people go about getting on that list?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. After the winter weather that

we experienced earlier this year just before Easter, a number of additional farmers and local contractors came forward to be registered and processed. The first port of call would be to make contact with the local section office to see how we can assist. There are a number of things that are necessary in order for people to be properly registered. I very much hope, as I said in response to an earlier question, that self-help and help in a community, particularly in the rural areas, can go a long way to ensuring that snow and ice are cleared at the earliest possible times.

Mr Dallat: I pay tribute to the people in Roads Service who, in times of inclement weather, carry out outstanding work to ensure that the wider community can stay in contact. Given that snow is forecast, does the Minister agree that many dairy farmers must be wondering how they will get their milk tankers onto main roads and their feeding stuffs in? Does he agree that there is now scope for better integration of those services to ensure that rural communities get the service that, hopefully, will be available?

Mr Kennedy: I entirely understand the Member's point. My Department is already on alert for its winter preparations. My understanding is that a yellow warning has been issued by the Met Office for later this evening and into tomorrow. It is also indicating strong winds or gales for Wednesday, so we are very much into the winter season.

In general, Roads Service will continue to provide the services that it can. We have in the region of 100,000 tons of salt. We have 300 operatives, who are our own staff and, perhaps, agents or contractors, but they make an essential contribution to ensuring as much normality as possible. Some 4,800 salt bins and almost 50,000 grit piles are provided on public roads. It is a major operation. We do not have the resources to salt every road, which, as we heard, is an issue even in my constituency. The resources are not financially unlimited, and we make the best use of them. I thank and want to encourage all the operatives who will undertake this important work on behalf of the entire community in this winter season.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his good thorough answer. I praise those from Roads Service in my patch who have always responded well, particularly over self-help. Will the Minister look at promoting self-help more so that all of us know exactly when and how to respond? Many people do not know that it is there, and we should encourage people to use it.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his acknowledgement of the work undertaken by staff, particularly in his area but also Province-wide. The Member will be aware that, as in previous years, we have again issued the winter services leaflet to every household in Northern Ireland with the best advice available. Northern Ireland Water has done likewise, offering sensible advice as we approach the winter. We will continue to do that. It is also a good thing when we have the assistance of public representatives.

Giro d'Italia

4. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to upgrade roads that are on the route of the 2014 Giro d'Italia. (AQO 5018/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is represented on the Northern Ireland local steering group, which is the overseeing committee organising the Giro d'Italia events in Northern Ireland. Officials from Roads Service are involved in the operational aspects of the event through the race committee and have been liaising closely with the race organisers in agreeing the route of the 2014 Giro d'Italia in Northern Ireland.

Based on an inspection, the organisers were very content with the condition of the roads to be used for the three stages taking place in Northern Ireland. Although there are a small number of issues to be addressed by my Department prior to the event, no upgrades were requested. The delivery structure of the event has targeted legacy as a primary objective. Although the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is leading that aspect of the event organisation, my Department will assist wherever possible.

3.00 pm

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his very detailed response. Does he agree that first impressions are last impressions and that we have an opportunity only to make a first impression? Is he willing to get on his bike and join me in a cycle from Titanic to Stormont over the next number of weeks to see the good, the bad and the ugly status of our roads?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary and for the challenge that he has posed to me. I am not sure who will identify the good, the bad or the ugly, but I am very happy to join him.

The only engineering measure identified is the removal of some road studs — in other words, catseyes — on the approach to the two finishing stages. We are generally very happy with the roads, and the organisers have expressed satisfaction with their condition.

The start of the 2013 Giro d'Italia was held in Naples, as the Member will know. Some parts of the stage routes were in very poor condition, so I have no concerns about the condition of our roads or their suitability to accommodate the 2014 race. It reminds me of the phrase, "See Naples and die." My version is, "See Newry and Mourne." [Laughter.]

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Are there any implications for the legislation on road closures during the Giro d'Italia?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his supplementary. I am not aware of any particular issues presented by that. We are all looking forward to this major international event, its potential impact on showcasing Northern Ireland and the opportunity to continue what I like to think is the cycling revolution, even in Northern Ireland. As a legacy of the Giro d'Italia, I want cycling to be carried forward in a meaningful way that will make it not only a landmark event but a means of encouraging and promoting cycling as we go forward.

Consumer Council

5. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the review of the Consumer Council, which was commissioned by the Department of Enterprise,

Trade and Investment and carried out by Mr Paul Simpson, in so far as it relates to NI Water and public transport. (AQO 5019/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As the Member points out, the review was commissioned by the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. My officials met the independent consultant to provide information on the role of the Consumer Council in its water and transport functions. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has launched a three-month public consultation on the future of consumer representation arrangements in Northern Ireland, and I respectfully suggest that anyone who wishes to express their views should do so through that process.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for his answer. The Consumer Council can be a very effective link between Departments and consumers. Specifically on water reform, I know that it played a key role in informing consumers. Does the Minister acknowledge that? Given the importance of the Consumer Council to certain remits in his Department and the fact that the proposals are cross-cutting, should any such proposals to change how it is run be taken at Executive level?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary. I acknowledge that there will always be a role for independent scrutiny on behalf of the consumer so that best value can be achieved for the consumer.

On the impact that the Consumer Council has within my responsibilities, the Member will know that the initial Consumer Council water budget was agreed during preparations for the introduction of major water reform and reflected the expectation that there would be three quarters of a million paying customers. Instead, there are fewer than 80,000 non-domestic customers paying direct charges, which means that the number of complaints investigated by the Consumer Council is small. The current budget for the water and sewerage remit for 2013-14 stands at £435,661. I think that there is scope for some savings without undermining any activities of the Consumer Council or any other body.

Since 2010, my Department has also provided in the region of £60,000 per annum to the Consumer Council for work carried out to inform the public transport reform proposals and the implementation of those arrangements.

Mr Spratt: I thank the Minister for his answer so far in relation to issues around the Consumer Council. Does he agree that, since devolution, many of the complaints that the Consumer Council dealt with in the past relating to water and transport now come through MLAs' offices, that consultation in relation to transport and water issues very much takes place in the Committee for Regional Development and that there is, in many respects, duplication in much of the work?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member, the Chair of the Regional Development Committee, for his supplementary question and contribution. He raises a very fair and reasonable point as to the changed situation that devolution has brought. An indication of that is that the initial funding in 2007-08 was something like £756,000. This year, it is less than £500,000, and I think that there are still opportunities for further savings on that.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Does the Minister acknowledge

the role that the Consumer Council has had in not only representing consumer interests on a range of issues, but in helping the Department on matters such as water, transport and a range of other consumer issues, which input into policy formulation at his Department?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I have already acknowledged that there will always be a role for an independent body to be a champion for the consumer. The fact that a major consultation review is under way into the current Consumer Council is welcome, and I think that people should contribute their views to it. It is time for a healthy debate on the issue, and we will see what outcomes arise from that. I very much agree with the main tenet of his question, which means that there should always be a role for independent scrutiny on behalf of the consumer.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. There has been some criticism of the governance model at NI Water. Has the Department made any progress in carrying out a review of that model?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question; it is nothing to do with the Consumer Council, of course, but I will take it anyway. The Member will, or should, know that the issue was remitted to the Budget review group, as part of the Executive. That is where the discussions on the funding and governance of NI Water issues will be resolved and brought forward. Of course, it is important to say that the Executive, per se, would want to be part of what, I think, would be an important landmark decision for the future governance and financing of Northern Ireland Water. No doubt, his political colleagues around the Executive table and in the Budget review group will want to play their part in that.

Flood Alleviation: South Down

6. **Mrs McKeivitt** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on any flood alleviation schemes his Department is undertaking in the South Down constituency. (AQO 5020/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Road Service and NI Water, and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (DARD) Rivers Agency, provide key infrastructure that contributes to drainage and the alleviation of flood risk in the south Down area and throughout Northern Ireland.

All three bodies carry out the cyclical inspection of sewer, road gully, culvert and designated watercourse infrastructure, taking account of risk and weather conditions. Where necessary, remedial work is carried out to maintain the drainage infrastructure by, for example, removing sewer blockages, cleaning gullies and ensuring that inlet grilles are operating properly.

Work to improve our drainage systems in south Down is currently being progressed at various locations, including St Judes Gardens in Rostrevor and Newry Road sewage pumping station in Warrenpoint. A scheme has recently been completed at Water Street/Horners Lane, Newry, and essential improvements to the sewer infrastructure in Downpatrick are planned that will also help to reduce the risk of flooding in the area. Appraisal studies on potential improvements in other areas are ongoing.

Unfortunately, severe rainfall will always have the potential to overwhelm drainage systems. However, my Department and NI Water, along with the Rivers Agency and other statutory agencies, will continue to work towards reducing the risk of flooding and mitigating its impact on people's homes and lives.

Mrs McKevitt: I thank the Minister for his answer and welcome the flood alleviation schemes that the Department has introduced, particularly those around St Judes in Rostrevor and Newry Street in Warrenpoint, where, I know, work has started. Has the Minister any plans to develop further flood alleviation schemes in south Down in the near future?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her positive comments on the work that has been done in St Judes, Rostrevor, and Newry Road, Warrenpoint, which I think is close to her advice centre. I am sure that that is not why she asked about it, but anyway. Northern Ireland Water will spend over £5 million on appraisal studies and flood alleviation works in south Down from 2010 to 2015. It would be prohibitively expensive to build the infrastructure necessary to deal with all that our weather can throw at us. However, we need to invest more in our water and sewerage system. Investment in infrastructure is an effective measure to mitigate the impact of flooding, and I am keen to play my part in taking the actions necessary to address the problem. I have sought and will continue to seek additional investment for water and sewerage services through our budgets.

Mr Storey: To widen the issue beyond the confines of south Down into my North Antrim constituency, will the Minister outline what discussions he has had with the Rivers Agency and other agencies around flood alleviation schemes to prevent in particular what happened early in May this year, when we had severe rain and the train line between Ballymoney and Coleraine was closed as a result of flooding?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: It is for Mr Kennedy to decide whether he wishes to answer, because that has widened the question considerably. It is his choice.

Mr Kennedy: Yes, well, I know him quite well. That does not make any difference, of course, but anyway.

The Member will of course know that flooding was the subject of a performance and efficiency delivery unit (PEDU) report commissioned by the Executive after the severe floods that we had in June 2012. PEDU reported back to the Executive, and its report contained many recommendations, including greater cooperation and collaboration between Departments. In the case of my Department, it meant between Roads Service and NI Water and with the Rivers Agency, which is under the competency of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. I went on record to say and it remains my view that, in line with the PEDU report recommendation, the best way forward is that the Rivers Agency should transfer to a single Department that includes Roads Service and NI Water. Minister O'Neill did not agree with that, and the situation remains unchanged. However, every effort is certainly made in every area. I understand that the area that the Member raised is in his constituency, but I believe that there is good cooperation between the various agencies, whether or not bringing them under

one ministerial responsibility would give added benefits. However, we are not quite there yet.

3.15 pm

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Following on from your previous answer, Minister, can you confirm whether you have had any discussions with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development about bringing the Rivers Agency within your Department's remit?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. As I said, the issue was raised generally during the formation of the PEDU report. Views were very clearly expressed at that point. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development continues to hold the view that she prefers to keep Rivers Agency within her remit. I have a different view, and there the matter continues to sit.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for questions for oral answer. We will move to the topical questions that have been listed for the Minister. Questions 3, 6 and 8 have been withdrawn.

Craigantlet Crossroads

1. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Regional Development to advise when he is likely to announce the results of his options study for Craigantlet crossroads, or does the ongoing maintenance work mean that an upgrade is unlikely? (AQT 371/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. Indeed, he will know about the work that is planned for the resurfacing scheme at Craigantlet. That work is very welcome, but it is separate from and additional to the issue that he raises about the crossroads. I know that there has been significant interest among public representatives on the issue. The Member will recall the meeting on site some time ago. We received further correspondence from residents in the area. We are reflecting on that, and we hope that, at some stage, most likely early in the new year, there will be a public consultation. There still seems to be a difference of opinion about which option we should choose. We will continue to work at the issue, and we will, hopefully, resolve it.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he give us more information on how he will carry out the proposed consultation on the options? Does he recognise the upgrade of the junction as a priority in his programme? Does he recognise how important it is to local residents, farmers and the North Down commuters?

Mr Kennedy: I assure the Member that, as is normal with public consultations, every opportunity will be given for people, including public representatives, to express their views on the issues. We will certainly provide that opportunity.

The scheme itself will always be subject to available finance. Of course, the Member knows that finance is a very real issue when it comes to upgrading and improving the road network and, indeed, for structural maintenance. It costs something like £130 million to maintain the road structures that we have. Obviously, we seek to make improvements over and beyond that. However, it is a significant challenge. I have no doubt that the Member

will want to put in a good word on my behalf to his party colleague the Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton.

A5: EU Habitats Directive

2. Ms McCorley asked the Minister for Regional Development what contractual arrangements DRD has in place with the consultants that are carrying out the review of the EU habitats directive in relation to the A5. (AQT 372/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There has, of course, been significant debate on and responses from me about the A5 over the period. We continue to work to deal with — to remedy, if you like — the issue that the High Court highlighted in its determination. We have continued to work on the preparatory arrangements for the ground works, and we will continue to do that. Preliminary works were carried out on the reinstatement of lands and rectifying works between January and March 2013. They involved erecting fences on the vesting line, geotechnical and archaeological investigations, ecology works and a full range of works. Of course, we had given individual farmers the option of carrying out those works themselves to our satisfaction. I understand that most of those works are now completed, and we continue to work with farmers in the area to work through all the issues.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he provide a costing for the retention of consultants on the A5 project?

Mr Kennedy: I will respond to the Member in writing with an absolutely detailed and accurate response to that question. I can say that £108 million has been reallocated from the A5 budget since the court ruling. The Member will be aware of that because of the announcements made. Of the money spent on the new preparatory works, £748,364 was spent between April 2013 and the end of October 2013 for traffic and environmental surveys, reviews and assessments. I assume that that includes consultants' fees, but I will confirm that for the Member in writing.

Parking: Ballymena

4. Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development what comfort he can bring to the elderly residents of the Upper Princes Street area of Ballymena whose lives have become almost intolerable because of the abandonment of cars in their quiet streets due to the lack of parking at Ballymena train and bus station. (AQT 374/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. Despite the real successes of increased rail usage, problems have emerged in some areas because of a lack of available parking. We are always in the business of improving those parking facilities, be they park-and-share or park-and-ride facilities, and I can think of stations that have benefited from that. We will continue to work on the issues around Ballymena, and, if the Member wants to write to me in more detail, I will happily correspond with him.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. I will, indeed, take him up on his offer and write to him. He will be aware that the issue in Ballymena has been exacerbated by the fact that the train station in Cullybackey has virtually

no parking facilities. Is he prepared to give us an update today, after 40 years of lobbying from various parties in the area, on whether we are any closer to getting a park-and-ride facility in Cullybackey?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I will correspond with him directly and provide an update on that issue. He will know that it is not possible to cover every aspect of topical questions, and car parking in Cullybackey did not feature this time. However, we will make sure that we provide an answer at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I hope that the Minister is better prepared for questions on car parking problems in Enniskillen.

Parking: Christmas Period

5. Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development why towns such as Enniskillen were left off the map when it came to the improved parking facilities and park-and-ride schemes for festive shoppers in Belfast, Derry, Newry and Lisburn that he announced on 13 November. (AQT 375/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: If the Member knew anything about parking anywhere, he would know that we did not introduce on-street car parking charges. That was the policy of my predecessor and his party colleague Conor Murphy. We avoided that, and we provided relief in a great many towns across Northern Ireland. That continues to be the case. The difference in some of our other locations — the locations that he mentioned, including Londonderry, Lisburn, Newry and parts of Belfast — is that on-street car parking charges were introduced there, and therefore it was felt appropriate and fair in the run-up to the festive period that people should benefit in those areas from the same advantages as people have in other towns across Northern Ireland.

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Minister for his answer. He did well in evading the question, so I will try again and use the actual terminology of a car park instead of car parking. Can the Minister tell us what consideration he has given to extending free car parking charges to car parks in places like Enniskillen for the festive period?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. He seems to be confused between on-street car parking and car parking. I have made clear both in the House and outside the House my desire that, where a town or a location wished to avail itself of a special period of free parking, the local council in that area could negotiate with my Department to provide such a facility for the benefit of ratepayers. The Member has considerable influence in Fermanagh District Council, and I am sure that he will want to bring that to bear so that it happens in Enniskillen and other potential areas. It has already happened — for example, Newtownabbey Borough Council has made similar arrangements for Ballyclare in the run-up to Christmas. I want to encourage that, and I think that a positive attitude can be taken on behalf of my Department, hopefully, to benefit not only the ratepayers but the traders and shop owners in towns across Northern Ireland, including Enniskillen.

Parking: Belfast City Centre

7. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he plans to announce relaxed parking restrictions for Belfast city centre in the run-up to Christmas. (AQT 377/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question; indeed, the Member knows that I recently made an announcement in respect of Belfast and other places that included free Saturday park-and-ride services that began last weekend, 16 November. Free evening park-and-ride services will start on 2 December in line with late night shopping arrangements. Of course, he will know that Translink has discounted fares and restrictions and is offering considerable savings. There will also be the annual moratorium on roadworks in the Belfast area.

Mr McGimpsey: I welcome those announcements. However, bearing in mind the challenges that Belfast city centre retailers have had this year with congestion, roadworks, bus lanes etc, which all grievously affect businesses, and bearing in mind also that Christmas shoppers will use the car as the preferred means of transport as opposed to buses, bicycles or walking, is it not sensible to extend the moratorium on restrictions to the motorists in Belfast city centre in the run-up to Christmas, particularly at weekends? Could I suggest abandoning the bus lanes?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. There is evidence of increased bus usage in the centre of Belfast, with buses carrying even more passengers consistently — over 1.5 million more journeys were made last year — and there has been an increase in train journeys. A great many people access the centre of Belfast by using public transport, and I welcome that. I had the opportunity, not last weekend but the previous one, to go shopping in the centre of Belfast with my wife and family. I found it a very good experience. I think that there is a buzz — hopefully a Christmas buzz — that will impact positively on Belfast. I want to see that continue. That is why I brought forward the measures that I have outlined.

I do not underestimate the challenges that other towns and cities have in the run-up to Christmas, and I encourage everyone to shop locally. The measures that we seek to bring forward to improve public transport are showing benefits and will continue to do so.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends topical questions. The House will take its ease while we make a change at the Table.

3.30 pm

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Private Members' Business

Police Ombudsman's Office

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. As two amendments have been selected and published on the Marshalled List, an additional 15 minutes have been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes in which to propose and five minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes. Before we begin, the House should note that, if amendment No 1 is made, the wording will have changed to such an extent that it would not be in order to put the Question on amendment No 2.

Mr D McIlveen: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the consultation paper from the Department of Justice on the powers of the Police Ombudsman's office; and calls on the Minister of Justice to bring forward proposals that will ensure an effective organisation that commands broad public support.

I thank the Business Office for making the time available for this timely and worthwhile debate on the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI). I speak as a member of the Policing Board, so I declare that interest.

I want to set a couple of things in context to set the tone for the debate. It is worth briefly setting out the history of OPONI, how the office has developed and how it came into being. The legislative framework for the office was set out in the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. The office began operation on 6 November 2000 and has, therefore, been in operation for 13 years. In that time, we have had three ombudsmen, an extension of the powers of the office, a series of very critical reports and a suspension of the powers that were extended in 2001.

The office, the office holders and the ability to conduct independent investigations have come under serious criticism in those 13 years. Only recently have historical investigations recommenced. Among the myriad problems highlighted by the reports have been issues of independence and interference by the Department of Justice. The reports have shown a skills gap in the fundamental ability to carry out investigations, and there have been serious concerns about the ability of the office to deal with some sensitive information. In short, the office was not working independently, those charged with investigating did not know what they were doing and there was no guarantee of confidentiality. All that from an office whose aim is defined as providing an independent, impartial police complaints system for the people and police of Northern Ireland that is effective, efficient and accountable and is designed to secure the confidence of the public and the police.

As I mentioned, I am a member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, and, through that body, I have been very fortunate to work closely with many of our retired police officers in the Retired Police Officers Association. I take the opportunity to pay tribute to that group of former officers, who champion the rights of former police officers and have done some very important and challenging work in recent years. From talking to those officers, I know that they welcomed the proposals in 1998 for a mechanism whereby complaints against the police would be independently investigated. Everyone agreed that that was inevitable, necessary and absolutely vital in order to increase public confidence in the police complaints process. However, as I have set out, that has failed. Again, from talking to retired police officers, I know that no one is more disappointed by that failure than them.

I remind the House again of the aim of this office, as set out in the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. The Act states:

"The Ombudsman shall exercise his powers ... in such manner and to such extent as appears to him to be best calculated to secure—

(a) the efficiency, effectiveness and independence of the police complaints system; and

(b) the confidence of the public and"

— more importantly —

"of members of the police force in that system."

Let us be clear: the ombudsman must secure the confidence not only of the public but of members of the police force. I can tell you now that members of the police force have been failed in that regard, and many of them have been vocal in making that point. OPONI has entirely lost the confidence of the officers through the overextension of its powers, its difficulty with impartiality and, at times, its sheer incompetence.

The Minister of Justice issued a consultation on the future operation of OPONI in March 2012. In my opening remarks, I declared an interest as a member of the Policing Board: I am also on the performance committee of that board, which was recently asked to respond to a further consultation. In that consultation, questions were put in front of us, and we were asked to respond to four of them. I have those questions or proposals in front of me, and I will mention them quickly. First, recommendations and findings by the Police Ombudsman should be binding on the PSNI Chief Constable. Secondly, the PSNI should not interview or debrief serving or retired officers who are known to be a witness or a suspect in existing or pending investigations by the Office of the Police Ombudsman. Thirdly, the Police Ombudsman must be empowered to arrest and interview agents and informers of the PSNI or any other agency if it may assist an investigation by the Police Ombudsman. Fourthly, all protocols and memoranda of understanding governing the release of information from the PSNI and other agencies to OPONI to assist an investigation should be available for scrutiny by the Policing Board or the Justice Committee.

Even the terminology in those questions — findings should be "binding" on the Chief Constable; the Police Ombudsman should be "empowered" and the PSNI should not — causes me huge concern. I find that those questions in the consultation already have a predestined outcome,

and we should express serious concern about that. Where are the proposals to oversee the work of OPONI? Where is the call for an adequate appeal mechanism? Why is there not a call to focus the work of OPONI on current complaints against the police rather than on dealing with historical cases? The original consultation in 2012 centred on the individual skills of the ombudsman, issues regarding their appointment and the overall structure of the office, but this latest consultation looks like nothing less than a last-minute attempt to add even more powers to a body that has far from proved its ability to fulfil the purpose it has at present.

We are back to the old "blame the Brits" mentality, which does nothing at all to help us adequately deal with the past. Tomorrow, in the High Court, the Chief Constable will answer a judicial review of his decision not to release a Historical Enquiries Team report into the McGurk's Bar bombing. Despite an ongoing, live police investigation, the Chief Constable will stand in front of a judge tomorrow. In a fair justice system, it is shameful that, during a live investigation, continued pressure is put on the Chief Constable to release information that will clearly compromise an investigation.

The powers of the Police Ombudsman have gone far too far compared with where they were supposed to go. This is not a call for policing not to be accountable, but the bottom line is that this political system has now moved on. Justice is now devolved fully to the Assembly, and that was not the case 13 years ago when the Office of the Police Ombudsman was initially set up. Therefore, we call for those powers to be reduced and for an entire overhaul of the Office of the Police Ombudsman. We will, therefore, oppose the amendments today.

Mr Givan: I appreciate the Member giving way. He has articulated our position very well. The Member will recall that the Assembly debated and resolved a position on these issues two years ago. A DUP amendment was agreed to, and it called on the Justice Minister to:

"bring forward proposals to create public and police confidence in the ombudsman's office, including independent oversight." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 66, p187, col 2].

Two years later, the Justice Minister has failed to implement a resolution of the Assembly to create an independent oversight body for this organisation. Does the Member not agree that the Justice Minister should have got on with his job of implementing the amendment that the Assembly agreed to rather than us having to repeat the arguments today?

Mr D McIlveen: The crux of the matter is that we do not have confidence, as an Assembly, in the Office of the Police Ombudsman. A review is needed, and it must be about finding a way for the ombudsman to be accountable also. We have an unaccountable ombudsman whose findings are determined by an outcome that is beyond any reproach. In a system of government such as we have in Northern Ireland, we cannot have an office, particularly in the family of policing and justice, that operates with such lack of accountability. Therefore, without reservation, we call on the Justice Minister to make sure that we have an ombudsman who commands the confidence of all the people in Northern Ireland, and, importantly, the way to gain that confidence will be through accountability.

Mrs D Kelly: I beg to move amendment No 1:

Leave out all after "will" and insert:

"build on the powers and effectiveness of the organisation, including statutory requirements in relation to the co-operation of current and former police service personnel with the investigations of the Police Ombudsman."

It is with a high level of dismay that I have listened to the true intent behind the motion being expressed by the Member opposite. Broad community support appears to mean "If the retired police officers say that it is OK". That is the only group in society, other than his colleagues in the DUP, to which Mr McIlveen referred.

Our amendment seeks the fullest account of the truth about the past. Only today, we heard politicians from across the divide ask people to come forward and give information to the police to apprehend and bring to justice those who are alleged to have committed crimes, whether that be the so-called punishment shooting of the 15-year-old in Coleraine, the attack on the Alliance Party offices or other crimes. Woe betide any organisation that is specifically charged with policing and the enforcement of law that does not comply with the law and does not do what they ask others to do during the tenure of office. It really is quite incredible.

No one in the Chamber, regardless of his or her opinion, can deny that policing and the transformation of that service has been one of the major success stories of the past 15 years. It has the highest level of support year after year in the ombudsman surveys, and, in public opinion surveys, 80% to 90% of members of the public routinely express confidence in it. In the past couple of weeks, the former Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde has called for a reform of the policing accountability mechanisms in GB, and they look jealously from across the water at our policing accountability and scrutiny mechanism here.

3.45 pm

It is also a fact that, when people sought improvements in and greater accountability of policing, officers had to believe that they would be treated fairly in any scrutiny role. It is my understanding that, by and large, the PSNI has a high level of confidence in the existing Office of the Police Ombudsman. What we have heard from the Benches opposite and from the Retired Police Officers Association over the past number of weeks is a call to refuse to cooperate with any Police Ombudsman or other inquiry into the past. Who does that protect? Only those who were guilty of wrongdoing. What do people have to hide by telling the truth about what happened? We all acknowledge that they were not living in a 'CSI' environment in the 1970s and 1980s. Forensics and other tools available to those who investigate crime today were not there. We recognise that there were murders day and daily across that time and that there were difficulties. Nonetheless, there has been account after account of wrongdoing over the past number of weeks, including the publishing of a book about collusion, information about the Glenanne gang, McGurk's bar and other heinous crimes. The fact is that there was an abject failure by some police officers, who brought the whole organisation into disrepute.

It was only —

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: I will.

Mr Allister: The Member argues for maximising accountability in policing. Applying the same yardstick, will the Member point to the degree of accountability of the ombudsman's office? Where is the independent oversight of that office? The ombudsman's office provides independent oversight of the police, but where is the independent oversight of the ombudsman's office?

Mrs D Kelly: As the Member will know, the Minister of Justice and his Department look at the governance arrangements for oversight of the ombudsman's office. The ombudsman's office has given evidence to the Justice Committee and the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee. Are we now calling into question the integrity of ombudsmen, whether the Police Ombudsman or the Parliamentary Ombudsman? Where does it stop? The fact is that widespread public confidence exists in the Police Service as a result of the level of accountability and scrutiny available to the Police Ombudsman. Over the past number of years, there have been critical reports because of the failure of and meddling by some in the administration of that office. However, I believe that we now have in place a Police Ombudsman who has steadied the ship and put in place many of the recommendations that were required to enable him to look at how to deal with the historical cases that had been sitting on the desk.

We know that there were omissions, whether it was Loughinisland or others, by the previous ombudsman in the delivery of those reports. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the Police Ombudsman's office has the highest level of accountability mechanisms available. It is an absolute disgrace that former police officers, whose duty it was to uphold and enforce the law, are refusing to comply. What other profession or organisation would get away with that? Would nurses or social workers get away with that? They would not. The foremost pillar of democracy is a system of fair and effective policing, and yet we are about to say that it is OK for some police officers not to comply with the standards required of the position or repay the trust of their colleagues and the wider public that enabled them to perform their duties.

Mr Givan: I thank the Member for giving way. Can she point to any example of a current or retired officer who has broken the law in respect of their cooperation or otherwise with the Police Ombudsman's office?

Mrs D Kelly: That is not what I said. I will read what I said, if the Member requires me to. The Member and his party have expressed concerns about the failure of the police today to tackle the UVF, particularly in and around Belfast. We have heard that today from people on the streets as well as other contributors.

Ms Ruane: Will the Member take an intervention?

Mrs D Kelly: I will, yes.

Ms Ruane: First, I welcome everything that the Member has said to date. I will tell you someone who has refused to cooperate: David Russell, the senior investigating officer in the Loughinisland case, where there were six murders, refused to cooperate. I thank the Member for taking the intervention.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Member for that. It is important to note that, as the first Police Ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan, said, many retired officers did assist investigations. In fact, she said that many were helpful. She said:

"Officers varied a great deal in the manner in which they responded to questions. Some, including some retired officers dealt with challenging questions in a professional manner."

That is a matter of record from Nuala O'Loan. However, the following paragraph goes on to add:

"Others, including some serving officers, gave evasive, contradictory, and on occasion farcical answers to questions. On occasion those answers indicated either a significant failure to understand the law, or contempt for the law. On other occasions the investigation demonstrated conclusively that what an officer had told the Police Ombudsman's investigators was completely untrue."

I do not know who can stand over such a pattern of behaviour by law enforcement officers. I, for one, and my party will not.

We have asked Richard Haass and others to examine how we will best deal with the past. How will we deal with the past if the Retired Police Officers Association and the party opposite believe that we should not have a mechanism to deal with the past and that would compel police officers to give the fullest account of what happened? How are we best placed to understand the difficult circumstances that many police officers operated under if we do not get a full account of the circumstances when, perhaps, some of their colleagues were actively working against them?

We, in this House, are being asked to endorse the National Crime Agency and have another law enforcement agency in this place. Given our experiences of a force within a force in the past, how important is it to ensure that the accountability mechanisms that we have now and into the future for tackling new forms of crime have the highest standards of professionalism and integrity and will ensure that officers comply with and have respect for the law?

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the fact that, in many ways, there will be some agreement with the proposer of the motion that this is timely, but perhaps that is where agreement will end. Indeed, when we first read the DUP motion, we were hopeful that there was a realisation that the office, by its stated objectives, is doing good work and that perhaps, with more structure and efficiency, could continue that good work. I wrote on the margins of my copy of the Order Paper that we would wait and see how that was defined. Unfortunately, it was defined very narrowly. We will support the SDLP amendment, because, as it reads, it is the proper way forward.

David McIlveen, the Member for North Antrim who proposed the motion, supported, to some degree, the idea that there should be an ombudsman to look after the ombudsman. No doubt, if that ever happened, there would have to be an ombudsman to look after that ombudsman as well. In designing this type of architecture around policing, it is accepted and agreed that there was a lack of confidence in the office when Al Hutchinson was in charge of it. We welcome that the Minister, in outlining

his proposals, accepted that. The Tony McCusker report pointed out the issues around that. It did not work and there was a lack of confidence because it did not do the job that it was designed to do. If an office does not do the job that it was designed to do, the public will see that and judge it accordingly.

If people are looking for scrutiny, then that is the role of the Criminal Justice Inspection, which is an independent and objective body that looks at the work. It may not look at every case, but it certainly looks in a very general way at the work of the ombudsman.

It is important, as we take this forward, that we seek to ensure that there is maximum public confidence in the Office of the Police Ombudsman. In 2005, Criminal Justice Inspection was able to say that the ombudsman's office was delivering on its stated aims and objectives, with public confidence in the system increasing. However, in 2011, it found that there was a lowering of operational independence and that the office was failing to do the job as laid out in its aims and objectives. How did we get to that situation? Perhaps that is what we need to address today. In my opinion, it will not be addressed by allowing the Retired Police Officers Association to determine what is a good or bad office. I do not think that, in any walk of life, you should allow a small group of people to provide the definition of anything, particularly when they have an obvious conflict of interest. That would be a very silly way to go forward.

The role of the Police Ombudsman, by its design, was part of the restructuring of policing and justice. It was part of the new architecture and about accountability and scrutiny. I think that any person would welcome that. Indeed, we have seen very recently, further afield in London, instances in which, if there had been proper independent scrutiny, we would not have the scandal that is now unfolding. Everyone said that the failing in that particular case — over whether someone was called a member of the proletariat — was the fact that the police were investigating themselves. We have seen in the North that when you leave it to the police to investigate themselves, it does not happen. England is now finding that out as well.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Member for giving way. In some ways, he has hit the nail on the head. He is right when he says that the Office of the Police Ombudsman was brought in as part of the new era of policing, as he calls it. Can the Member therefore not see that for the same Police Ombudsman to investigate a case that took place in 1971 is getting to the crux of where the real problem lies here?

Mr McCartney: I do not see why it should. When the Police Ombudsman decides to do that, it will either be covered by the legislation or not. If we design legislation, and the person who is tasked with taking it forward decides that, under that legislation, a, b, c and d can be done, it is not for us then to sit back, second-guess and say, "Oh, this particular thing that you're doing does not suit us, so we have to reinterpret the legislation". The legislation is clear. If it were not clear, I am sure that some of the groups that you named would have challenged it, and they would have perhaps found that they were not too successful in their challenge.

I will go on. It is very important that we talk about the way forward. Look at the reports of Criminal Justice Inspection,

which provides the independent scrutiny. There is no need for another ombudsman. I can imagine that, if you set up another ombudsman's office, some Members would be the first to run to the media to say, "Here we go again: another unnecessary tier and more money being spent when it is not necessary". It is the task of Criminal Justice Inspection to provide scrutiny of that type of body, and it has been very good at doing that. Indeed, I think that it focused the mind of everyone involved, in particular, as I said, through its report that — I will not say "forced the Minister" — compelled the Minister to bring in Tony McCusker. When Tony McCusker compiled his report, it became very clear that what was going wrong in the ombudsman's office at the time was down to external interference. We can all guess from where the external interference came. Indeed, the report does, in some way, examine that.

If we want proper scrutiny and accountability, the way forward has to be to make the office more effective. One way of doing that, as will no doubt form part of the debate today, is to ask this: why would anyone who was a serving member of the PSNI or the RUC not want to cooperate with an investigation that, at its core, wants to bring out the truth? Why would anybody not want to cooperate with such an investigation? As Cairtriona Ruane pointed out, why did that particular retired member of the RUC not want to cooperate with the Loughinisland murders investigation? Why did he not want to bring to light for the public whatever he knew about that investigation? That is when people start to ask questions.

There are other aspects that the Minister may address when he speaks. We now have former members of the RUC employed in the PSNI on a civilian basis who are not as accountable as the PSNI. We feel that that should be addressed.

4.00 pm

Where retired officers are concerned, we also feel that mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that, whenever there is an investigation, no stone is left unturned so that we get the proper, required outcome. Legislation should be put in place to ensure that no one can prevent themselves from having to present to the ombudsman. So, that is why we are taking this forward.

It is regrettable that the DUP did not come at its motion saying, "Yes, this is the time to ensure that we have public confidence. This is the time to ensure that we have a good and effective ombudsman." Any lowering of the current standards is something that we —

Mr Givan: I thank the Member for giving way. The Member and others in his party will be familiar with natural justice and the ability, in the first instance, to take things to court, whether it is the Court of Appeal, potentially the Supreme Court or even the European Court. Does he not feel, though, that retired police officers should have the same right of appeal? When a section 62 statement is made, it is protected and privileged, and the only way to deal with it is to quash it through judicial review. There is no appeal mechanism and no form of natural justice for those officers.

Mr McCartney: In the first instance, I would ask this question: why would a retired officer who went through the Patten proposals and took the payout and all that came with Patten not want to cooperate with a process concerning something that they were involved in at the

time as an investigator or perhaps an operative? Why would they not want to involve themselves in that process? I think that you will come to the conclusion that it is because they have something to hide.

When the ombudsman is doing his or her job, nothing should be placed in their way to prevent a proper and effective investigation from being carried out so that we can ensure that, at the end, we do not have what we have had with different investigations in the past. The former Police Ombudsman accepted that he changed the outcome of an investigation and did not follow due process because of external interference. That is the type of thing that we are addressing in Haass, and we are all committed to ensuring that no stone is left unturned as we go forward.

A very large group of people benefited from the Patten proposals through their payouts. Those people are saying, "Strip away the powers of the Police Ombudsman's office in case it comes and asks us too many questions." However, we are saying that the office should be given more powers so that no one will refuse to answer questions in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I listened very carefully to the Member. I may have missed it, but will he confirm whether or not he moved amendment No 2?

Mr McCartney: My apologies; perhaps I did not.

I beg to move amendment No 2:

Leave out all after "organisation" and insert:

"which is properly resourced and fully independent; and further calls on all members of the public or public authorities with information that would assist investigations by the Police Ombudsman to bring forward that information and cooperate fully with the office."

Mr Kinahan: Reforming the Police Ombudsman's office has been on the agenda for quite some time, stemming right back to the time of the first ombudsman, Nuala O'Loan. In more recent times, a Department of Justice consultation on the future operation of the Office of the Police Ombudsman was published in March 2012. The Ulster Unionist Party responded and set out that the office had undoubted failings in its investigation of historic cases. That has been borne out by a number of critical reports, including from the current ombudsman's former organisation, the Criminal Justice Inspection. We also set out that we were in favour of an appeals process and that we disagreed with a blanket preclusion from that role being placed on those in the background of policing.

In general, we remain of the opinion that the current mechanisms for dealing with the past, including the Police Ombudsman's office, are operating in an ineffective and imbalanced manner. That is because there is clearly a disproportionate and undue focus on the state's actions, despite the fact that 90% of the killings during the Troubles were carried out by terrorists, with 60% by the IRA.

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kinahan: No, I will carry on, if I may. Thank you.

Following the above consultation, I am aware that the Minister continued his engagement and, taking into account the consultation responses, produced a reform package policy paper that the Justice Committee

passed at its meeting on 13 June 2013. I understand that the intention is that a Bill incorporating all the agreed legislative changes will be introduced to the Assembly by February 2014.

In advance of any legislation, I want to set out specifically where the Ulster Unionist Party stands. First, any recommendation to compel retired police officers to attend for interview with the ombudsman needs to be considered carefully. That relates directly to the amendments tabled by the SDLP and, in particular, by Sinn Féin.

In relation to the welfare of retired police officers, I believe that it is immoral to have that type of threat hanging over them: that, at any point, they could be subjected to interview. I also believe that it would be counterproductive to having a positive relationship between police officers and the Police Ombudsman. This party will not allow legal procedure and the rights of individuals to be trampled on in some sort of crusade against the very people who sought to defend the citizens of this country from terrorism.

Perhaps the Minister will also outline the sanctions for non-compliance that he intends to have alongside the power to compel retired officers. I assume that he has something in mind. I find it unacceptable that there is no provision to introduce an independent complaints mechanism to hold the ombudsman and his staff to account. Perhaps the Minister will tell the House why a body that will hold such power to compel witnesses etc will not be subject to any sort of grievance procedure. That cannot be right. Judicial review cannot always be the answer, not least due to the cost and delay considerations. I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to address some of those issues during his contribution.

As will be outlined by my party colleague Tom Elliott, we will support the motion as tabled and oppose both amendments.

Mr Dickson: The motion and the amendments provide for appropriate ways of dealing with the future of the Police Ombudsman's office. We will listen carefully to the debate to determine how we wish to proceed with those matters. I have to say that the nature of the debate has not been particularly helpful in trying to guide one to a sensible and logical conclusion.

Public confidence in the police is essential to ensuring that they are able to operate successfully in Northern Ireland. However, as with any public body that is given significant powers to compel individuals or to deter them from going about their business, accountability is a part of ensuring that confidence.

We have one of the most scrutinised police services in the democratic world. That comes from our long and difficult past, and it is right and proper that our police service delivers a modern and professional police service but is available and subject to the scrutiny of an ombudsman. The Police Ombudsman is part of the arrangement for pursuing that accountability and that confidence. My party is aware that the role of the ombudsman is important in those arrangements, alongside the other scrutiny mechanisms that have been referred to and the Policing Board.

Elected representatives have a role to play in how they interact and comment on the role of the Police Ombudsman. Confidence in the office is important.

There will not be widespread public support when some of the remarks that have been made in the Chamber today are heard. Quite often, the office is used to pursue particular political agendas in the name of one section of the community or another. The politicisation of the police service and its scrutiny bodies undermines widespread public confidence that they act impartially and outside of the political sphere.

I know that the Minister will take seriously any detailed proposals to improve the Office of the Police Ombudsman, including proposals for a new model, additional powers or an increase in resources, if the case for such changes can be made. Indeed, the case for some of those has been made. With that in mind, we will support the motion with a caveat that politicians of all shades have to act in a way that helps us to ensure that confidence. Events of the past few days have shown how important upholding the rule of law is in Northern Ireland. Let us hope that the debate does not descend into one of our needing an ombudsman for the ombudsman. Mr McCartney stole my line, but I said that in Committee, and it is worth repeating it.

I have a serious question. The position of an ombudsman is one that normally sets the high standard or watermark for any investigation into wrongdoing or concerns in public life. Therefore, it verges on the ridiculous to suggest that there should be further scrutiny of the ombudsman beyond that of the legal process and the courts.

There are new personnel in place. They are doing a good job, and destabilising that is not the way forward. I am disappointed that the DUP does not wish us to have an ombudsman's office that is properly resourced and fully implemented.

Dealing with the past —

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: Yes.

Mr McCartney: In light of that, if your reading of the DUP motion is that it does not want the ombudsman's office, it is difficult to see how you can support the motion as tabled.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Dickson: Thank you.

I said at the outset that we would listen to what the other parties have to say. The main motion in front of us is what we are debating, and there are additional amendments to that. We need to decide how we intend to approach those.

Dealing with the past is a toxic mix, not only for the ombudsman but for politicians, this Chamber and wider society in Northern Ireland. We all have a duty and a responsibility, whether it is through the Haass talks or through other mechanisms that are going on throughout our community, to deal with the past. It has to be dealt with in a much wider context. To place the whole responsibility of dealing with the past entirely on the ombudsman is unfair and unreasonable, but it is the task that the office has been given, and it has to deal with those cases that are referred to it.

We have a duty, as a community, an Assembly and a society, to relieve the ombudsman of that burden where it is appropriate and possible. It is not only ex-police officers who sometimes fail to cooperate: there is also a failure on the part of others, including witnesses and quite often the

perpetrators of crime, to cooperate with the ombudsman in investigations.

As I have said, it is important that dealing with the past is not left entirely to the ombudsman. This community has a responsibility to get its head around some of the most difficult issues that need to urgently be resolved. Public confidence in the role —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Dickson: — and office of the ombudsman is paramount, and that is the responsibility of this House in this debate.

Mr Craig: It is no great surprise that I support the motion and oppose the amendments.

I start by declaring an interest: not only am I a member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, I am unfortunately chair of the performance committee. That means that on an almost weekly basis I have to interface with the ombudsman's office. As I pointed out to the ombudsman after a long meeting of several hours, the only conclusion I could come to was that it was going to be a love/hate relationship: sometimes I would love what he saying and other times I would hate what he is saying, but we have a very good working relationship.

The ombudsman's office was originally set up as an independent complaints organisation for the PSNI. I accept that there is a role for the ombudsman's office in doing that. Originally, our party had huge concerns about the office becoming a police-bashing organisation, but there is plenty of evidence that that has not been the role that it has taken up. In fact, the vast majority of complaints against the PSNI, when they are investigated properly, are dismissed by the ombudsman's office.

A small number of complaints that go on that sometimes raise procedural issues. There are other issues uncovered by the ombudsman's office that lead to procedural improvements in policing. A case in point is a recent ombudsman's report on an individual who went missing at the Ulster Hospital and how the case was handled. Not only did that lead to improvements to the procedure of how missing persons cases are handled by the PSNI, but when a chief superintendent looked into all missing cases around that, it led to the uncovering of the child exploitation cases that we have recently witnessed. That has led to prosecutions for the sexual exploitation of 22 individuals in Northern Ireland. So, some positive things come out of the ombudsman's office. That said, something unusual was stated earlier, namely that it is the role of the ombudsman's office to investigate the past. I will agree to differ with the Member who said that, because I do not believe that that role was ever envisaged for the ombudsman's office. That is a role that the ombudsmen took up due to their interpretation of the legislation.

4.15 pm

Logically, the role of investigating the past was handed over to the Historical Enquiries Team (HET), within policing. Does the ombudsman's office have a role in checking some of those investigations? Probably, but, at the end of the day, it was never envisaged as being the body that would reinvestigate the past. Therein lies the poison in the ombudsman's office. It makes it toxic. It is

continually looking into things and not taking a balanced view of the circumstances at the time. For all the criticisms that I have of some things that have taken place in the HET, it takes a far more balanced view of the circumstances of when historical crimes took place.

There is a case in point. A report just completed by the ombudsman's office on a case right at the heart of the Troubles in Londonderry comes to the conclusion that the police failed in their duty. I have read it and subsequent reports, and I do not believe for one second that they fully took into account the circumstances of the time. I will leave it to my colleagues to elaborate on that.

If we are to instil further confidence in the ombudsman's office, it is vital that it gets back to the role of investigating the police and complaints against them as they stand. The office has a role and purpose in doing that —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Craig: — and it is working with the Policing Board to highlight some of the failings and deficiencies in the police. That is a role that will bring confidence to that office.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Office of the Police Ombudsman is an essential component of the new policing architecture that was negotiated as part of the Good Friday Agreement and given legs by the Patten commission. The office plays a key role in the accountability of policing and therefore has a fundamental role in building and maintaining public confidence.

Lack of accountability was a poison at the heart of policing for many years, so it is in the interests of everyone in society here that we have a fully accountable policing service. The Office of the Police Ombudsman plays a crucial and indispensable role in that. It would be catastrophic if the public's confidence in that office were fundamentally challenged.

Dolores Kelly was right when she pointed out that David McIlveen let the cat out of the bag. The DUP are past masters at putting forward motions that, on their face, appear quite neutral, but there is, of course, usually a subtext. The subtext today is that broad public confidence means the Retired Police Officers Association, or it may mean the unionist community or the DUP, or maybe it is Jim Allister up in the corner. Who knows? As long as we get the say-so from them, we will do whatever they want. But, you see, broad public confidence is a lot broader than that.

We have listened from everything from the sublime to the ridiculous today. Let us start with the ridiculous. My learned friend the Member for North Antrim suggested that we should have an ombudsman for the ombudsman. As he is a member of the criminal justice family, I thought that he would have heard about the Criminal Justice Inspection, but no, he has not. Strange. If we have an ombudsman for the ombudsman, who scrutinises the second ombudsman? Do we bring in another ombudsman? It reminds me of a discussion that I had with the Parades Commission when it allowed a protest by residents against an Orange march. The unionist residents then went in and said that they wanted to have a protest against the other residents protesting, so those residents could have gone for another protest against that protest. Where does the ridiculousness end? Maybe the learned Member will let us know at some stage during this debate.

The fundamental point was made by my colleague Raymond McCartney. When the office of the Police Ombudsman goes to former or current members of the PSNI or the RUC and asks them to cooperate with an investigation, why on earth would they refuse? What reason is there to refuse? Danny Kinahan made the point that there are no proper complaints or grievance procedures in that office. I am suggesting here and now that, even if there were grievance and complaints procedures that would satisfy everyone on the far side of the House, they still would not agree to the compellability of former officers. It is interesting, too, that the Chief Constable agrees with the ombudsman's office having powers to compel former members of the PSNI or RUC to cooperate with investigations.

Mr Givan: I appreciate the Member giving way. He mentioned the comment that Raymond McCartney made earlier, but does the Member not recognise that, if retired officers have anything to hide, and if that relates to anything illegal, the Police Service has the power to arrest, investigate and bring forward prosecutions. That power exists.

On the issue of compellability to get information, a colleague of his — Laurence McKeown — pleaded the fifth amendment when it came to Gerry Adams's involvement in the IRA. Should he be compelled to reveal what knowledge he has about Gerry Adams's role?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Sheehan: I thank the Member for his intervention, but he still has not answered the question. If former police officers are asked to cooperate with an investigation, why on earth would they refuse? Can anyone answer that question? Why would they refuse to cooperate with a live investigation? There is absolutely no reason other than that they have something to hide. There is no other reason for it. If the Member wants to get up and offer a view on that, feel free; I will let you in again.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Would the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Sheehan: We support the amendment from the SDLP.

Mr Wells: I have been around longer than most, and I remember with gratitude the sterling service given to Northern Ireland by members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I pay tribute to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and to those who were injured mentally and physically.

I could not see very much wrong with the RUC. I think that it did an excellent job, particularly under huge criticism from those who tried to murder and maim members of the RUC. The only fundamental problem with our former police service was that there were not enough members of the Roman Catholic community who were serving officers. That is the only real concern that I had. The reason why there were so few members of the Roman Catholic community serving was that you are 14 times more likely to be murdered by the IRA if you are a Roman Catholic police officer than if you are a Protestant police officer. There was a specific role worked out between members of the IRA to target those brave members of the Roman Catholic community who had to move home.

As a result of the Patten report, the Police Ombudsman's office was established 13 years ago.

There are those who think that everything that comes out of the Police Ombudsman's office is Holy Writ. We all remember the controversial days under Nuala O'Loan, when much of the work was under the blaze of publicity. That lady was responsible for some very controversial decisions that brought the Police Ombudsman's office very much into the political sphere.

Things have moved on in the 13 years since the office was established. I have said this in the Chamber before, and I will say it again: the Police Service of Northern Ireland is the most scrutinised police service in the world. There are so many people in Northern Ireland whose only role seems to be to keep an eye on the work of the PSNI. We have the ombudsman's office — we are discussing that at the moment — the criminal justice review; the DPPs, which have become DPP/CSPs; and, of course, the Policing Board and the Justice Committee. Some of those bodies came into being after the establishment of the Police Ombudsman's office. Instead of a Police Ombudsman's office continuing to carry out independent reviews of complaints, it has decided to try to garner powers to itself to give it a bigger role in policing. Policing is under so much scrutiny that you wonder how police officers get the time to go out and do what they are meant to do — catch criminals — because they are constantly under review and being examined.

I am certainly very uneasy about any additional powers being given to the Police Ombudsman's office, particularly powers to compel former members of the PSNI and, indeed, the RUC to come forward and to give evidence. I would like to think that someone who serves the community well for 30 years and who eventually retires as a police officer should at least be given the right to retire in peace and not have the threat of being hauled before this unelected body to give evidence.

Mr Eastwood: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: I certainly will.

Mr Eastwood: How would a retired officer being interviewed get in the way of the continuation of unimpeded, normal, everyday policing?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Wells: I am not suggesting that that would impede the work of a normal PSNI officer, but if that retired officer had committed a criminal act and the statute of limitations does not apply, the police are perfectly at liberty to arrest the individual and question him or her. If the Director of Public Prosecutions decides that there is sufficient evidence for a court case to be taken, so be it. However, it is totally unacceptable for a police officer who has not committed any crime to have the threat of being hauled in by the ombudsman's office hanging over his head. That is like one of us retiring as an MLA and having the threat of the Committee on Standards and Privileges to haul us back at a future date to quiz us on our misdemeanours. As one who has gone through that rather painful experience within the past 18 months, I know what it is like. Once a police officer has retired, he or she should be allowed to live out his or her retirement without any coercion to come before any ombudsman to give evidence. Similarly, the idea that a decision made by the Police Ombudsman can be binding on the Chief Constable is totally unacceptable.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland is generally doing a good job, and I find that the community is relatively content. Indeed, I recently attended a meeting in a very staunch republican part of south Down at which there were six uniformed police officers. The meeting was packed, and people were screaming at the police and calling them everything under the sun. Interestingly enough, they were saying, "Why are there not more police on our estate? Why are there not more patrols? Why is petty vandalism and antisocial behaviour being accepted on our estate?"

Many of the battles have been won, and I would say that 95% of our community are perfectly happy with the level of policing that they are getting and the standard of integrity of our officers. So why do we tend to reinvent the wheel and constantly put up more obstacles to stop policemen getting on with what they should be doing — fighting crime — rather than endless form filling and covering their backs.

I believe that the role of the Police Ombudsman is clear. If someone is unhappy with what an individual officer has done, he has a right of independent appeal to the Police Ombudsman. I agree with that; I think that it is right that that is done by someone who is independent. However, all the other powers should not be in the hands of the ombudsman. We should leave that to other levels of scrutiny or to the Justice Committee at Stormont, which can carry on that role.

Mr Eastwood: In all of this, we forget what some of the ombudsman's work is about. A lot of it is about getting to the truth of what happened in our very difficult past. All the parties around the Chamber are involved in the Haass talks, and all of us have committed to coming up with a solution.

I do not think that we will ever get the solution that we really need unless everybody comes to the table and tells the truth, whether they be members of the IRA, UDA, British Government or RUC.

4.30 pm

The DUP seems to rely heavily on the Retired Police Officers Association. Mr Craig referred to its recent report on an incident in Derry in August 1988, when the IRA kidnapped a man and his friend. The man was taken out of his flat in Creggan for six days. His good neighbours came looking for him, and three of them were killed. Sean Dalton and Sheila Lewis were killed at the scene, and Gerard Curran was seriously injured and died seven months later. Their families are the people who require the truth of what happened in the past.

In July this year, the ombudsman issued a public statement upholding three of the four complaints made by the family of Sean Dalton. In October this year, the Retired Police Officers Association sent out a press release announcing a so-called rebuttal of the ombudsman's findings in the case. It also informed the media that copies of the rebuttal had been given to certain politicians. When members of the Dalton family asked for the rebuttal of the report, it took 10 days for the former police officers finally to provide it to them. So the association gave it to certain politicians but would not give to one of the families of the deceased.

In fact, anybody who reads the report and knows anything about the issue and about Derry will realise that the supposed rebuttal is riddled with factual inaccuracies. The retired officers transformed McD's hot food bar into

a McDonald's, which did not arrive in Derry until about 12 years later. There are a number of mistakes, and they are not all as simple as that. The chair of the Retired Police Officers Association, David Turkington, was informed several weeks ago that the date of the bombing and murders was wrong. That date is still incorrect on the association's website. The rebuttal places a hijacked vehicle in the wrong street and even the name of one of the victims is incorrect. What confidence can people have in that organisation coming to the truth if it cannot get even simple facts such as that correct?

The Dalton family is deeply hurt by the insinuation in the report that Mr Dalton was to some degree responsible for his death. According to the rebuttal, instead of informing police of his concerns for a neighbour who had not been seen, Mr Dalton chose to enter the flat where the booby-trap bomb exploded. Is the association trying to make the point that it was somehow Mr Dalton's fault and not the fault of the IRA for placing the bomb or of police officers for not going in, dealing with it and making the area out of bounds? Other very serious allegations surround the document, and I know that some of them have been brought to the attention of the Minister of Justice.

I think that one real concern that the Dalton family and other families will have is that it seems that, in this document and in a radio interview, the retired officers have put information into the public domain that they were not authorised to. The most glaring example concerns the allegation that the area was declared out of bounds and local people were not informed of the presence of a booby-trap bomb in order to protect an agent in the IRA. Mr Maguire was unable to substantiate that aspect of the complaint. The difficulties in getting to the truth in all these issues are well known. The Police Service, the security services and the British Government never publicly acknowledge the presence of an agent, so it is extraordinary that the retired police officers feel able to do so today.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Eastwood: The —

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Eastwood: Gladly, yes.

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member acknowledge that the ombudsman does not want to have to deal with all the historical cases? In fact, Nuala O'Loan proposed setting up a single unit to deal with the legacy of the past.

Mr Eastwood: That is right, and I hope that all —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Eastwood: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, and thank you, Mrs Kelly. I hope that all parties are committed to finding an ethical and comprehensive mechanism for dealing with the past.

The investigation into this atrocity has faced major obstacles of non-cooperation and the absence of key documents. The divisional commander of the RUC in Derry at the time, Mr David Turkington, refused to cooperate, as did Special Branch officers. Mr Turkington, who is now chairman of the Retired Police Officers Association, is threatening to encourage his former officers to withhold

information. They are doing that already, so it is a hollow threat.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Eastwood: The families in this and many other cases deserve the full truth of what happened to their loved ones and for the Police Service and retired police officers to come forward with all the truth that they know. The same goes for paramilitaries.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Elliott: I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. To follow on from Mr Eastwood's last comment about the family needing to get to the truth about what happened in Londonderry, I think that there are over 3,600 victims' families — families of murdered people — in this community who deserve the truth. I fully accept what he said about the family in Londonderry, but that must include families, wherever they are, who have been failed.

I note that the Police Ombudsman should rely on fact and evidence. A report that I read that the Police Ombudsman published recently said that decisions had been reached on the balance of probabilities. Where are fact and evidence in the balance of probabilities? There are none. The reality is that we have processes in Northern Ireland to deal with the past that are totally one-sided. They rely on and are directed against the state. I think Mr Sheehan asked earlier why police or former police officers do not cooperate with the Police Ombudsman. Maybe it is because they do not get a fair hearing. Had he thought of that? Maybe it is because there is no appeal mechanism. Why does Mr Sheehan not ask some of his party members to be open and honest and to cooperate not only with the Police Ombudsman but with other bodies here, instead of the deputy First Minister saying at the Saville inquiry that he was bound by some code of honour and that he could not give any more information?

Mr Sheehan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: I am happy to give way to the Member.

Mr Sheehan: I am glad to hear the Member ask that because our position is quite clear: if there is an independent truth recovery process, republicans will cooperate with it. While the Member is on his feet, I would just like to ask him about the organisation to which he belonged and many of his colleagues who had dual membership. Was he some sort of Colonel Blimp who did not realise that they were out killing Catholics while he was doing his duty?

Mr Allister: That is absolutely shameful, shameful, from a killer.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask Members to have good temper and regard for what they are saying. Mr Elliott, you have an extra minute.

Mr Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. For someone who is a convicted terrorist to make such scurrilous remarks against the people who uphold law and order in this Province is shameful. Why does he not go to Mr McGuinness and tell him to come and give the evidence that he should —

Mr Sheehan: How many of your friends and colleagues were in the UDA and the UVF?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Elliott: If I am going to be shouted down, Mr Deputy Speaker, it shows that he does not have the courage. Just like the way he sneaked behind ditches when he was in the Provisional IRA. Is that what he wants to continue to do? This is a democratic process, Mr Sheehan. Something you might not be overly au fait with, but it is what we have here.

I did not go out and murder people in the streets of Northern Ireland like he and his colleagues did. If he wants Mr McGuinness to come and give information and evidence, he should do so. Mr Kelly refused to give information about the murdered prison officer. Shameful. It is shameful from those people who now declare themselves to be democrats.

Mr Sheehan: What about the Miami Showband?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Elliott: Let us go back to the debate on the Police Ombudsman. There are no internal procedures for police officers or members of the public to appeal the findings of the Police Ombudsman's investigations. Why not? Maybe that is one of the reasons why people will not cooperate. There should be an appeals mechanism. Regularly, we hear from these Benches that there should be the right to appeal. There should be democracy. There should be opportunities for people's views to be heard.

Why not let them be heard through having a proper appeals mechanism, if that is the way that it should be? Why not?

There have been other instances when the Police Ombudsman's office has had to apologise to police officers and, indeed, former officers, for phrasing in public reports. It has also had to withdraw some reports because of legal challenges. However, it took a legal challenge to have reports withdrawn, not a proper appeals mechanism that should be in place.

Criminal Justice Inspection also identified instances in which the Police Ombudsman's office delayed and reconsidered the contents of draft public reports. It took Criminal Justice Inspection to do that. There were no opportunities for those who were being investigated or had been named in reports.

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: No. I have heard enough from your Benches, Mr McCartney, in your Provisional IRA places. The fact is — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like the Speaker to investigate what was said, especially that comment, and I would like him to come back to me.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has made her point on the record. The matter will be referred to the Speaker.

Mr Givan: Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, I note that the Member for South Down did not raise the issue that, from a sedentary position, Mr Sheehan referred to the friends of Tom Elliott as being in the UDA and the UVF. I trust that the Speaker's Office will look at those remarks and rule on them.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I think that it is all on the record. Members, can we move on?

Mr Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. Quite clearly, what we have had here are reports in which mistakes have been made, with no right of appeal. I am calling today for a review of the Police Ombudsman's office —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Elliott: — and that we have a proper mechanism of appeal.

Mr Allister: I am sure that we have all experienced Police Ombudsman's reports with which we have agreed or disagreed, and that is the nature of the process. The essence of the real point about the Police Ombudsman's office is that it is set up to hold the police to account, and it has statutory functions in that regard. However, the flaw in the process is that it is an utterly unaccountable body.

The failed hunger striker Mr Sheehan berated me for saying that there should be an ombudsman for the ombudsman. I said no such thing. I asked this question: where is the accountability of the Police Ombudsman? He asked had I not heard of Criminal Justice Inspection (CJI). Of course I have, but I also know that, in law, Criminal Justice Inspection cannot investigate an individual case. Therefore, a complaint about how the Police Ombudsman's office handled a particular complaint cannot be investigated by CJI. That is a fact. There is no oversight and no accountability. That is the fundamental flaw in respect of the Police Ombudsman's office.

I found it very ironic, but not surprising, that those who demand the loudest that former police officers cooperate with the Police Ombudsman's office, even though they have no means of challenging or no internal mechanisms for appealing findings or anything like that, are tellingly silent when it comes to a body such as the Historical Enquiries Team. They do not call for colleagues, or even themselves, given the past of some of them, to cooperate with the HET. There is no pursuit then of any concept of justice or anything approaching truth. When it comes to that, they are in the business of concealment by those who have the most to hide.

Those in this debate with the most to hide are not brave police officers, who served this country well. They are the low lifes who were terrorists in this community —

4.45 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Allister: — who crawled around the ditches, shot people in the back and then took refuge in the IRA code of honour, so called, and refused to tell the truth about anything. Truth? They would not know it if they met it.

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I was going to say that I welcome the debate that we had. I am not sure that I can say that I welcome the content of the debate, but I believe that it is important that we address this issue. It also provides me with an opportunity to update the House on some of the work that is going on and on the progress of the reforms package for the ombudsman's office.

Members will be aware that a lot of work has been ongoing on a package of reforms that I propose to take forward to further enhance the good work that the Police Ombudsman's office has done to restore police and public confidence in the office's operation. The proposed package has been informed by the views of parties in the Assembly, and it includes some new proposals that were put forward in responses during the consultation process. My Department will provide the Justice Committee with an update, including the final proposed package, at a meeting on 10 December. I am afraid that one Member, at least, who encouraged me to announce that today will have to be disappointed and wait for a couple of weeks.

I am grateful to the Committee for its input to the process and for the keen interest that it has shown in the reforms. The consultation papers were widely circulated, and the reforms fall into two distinct categories: those that require legislation; and those of an administrative nature.

The legislative proposals include the appointment of an interim ombudsman; reducing the ombudsman's term of office, with the option to reappoint the ombudsman; and extending the Office of the Police Ombudsman's current remit to include all civilians working alongside police officers, which is a point that some made in the debate. They also include extending the power to recommend disciplinary sanctions for police officers to all civilian staff who are subject to investigation by the Police Ombudsman; repealing the requirement to serve a notice on officers who are the subject of a complaint where the complaint is not substantiated and there is no investigation; the introduction of a local resolution procedure; and an amendment to remove the compulsion for the Police Ombudsman's office to submit files to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), even though the offence may be statute barred.

From the consultation summary response report that my Department published from the targeted consultation that has just been completed, and from my engagement with the political parties over the past few months, Members will be aware that not all the recommendations in the Department's discussion paper or the Police Ombudsman's five-year review achieved full support. Crucially, some lacked cross-community support, which has been well demonstrated over the past hour or so. Compellability is one of those areas, and it is still under consideration.

At the present time, there is a general requirement for serving and former officers to provide information and evidence. Material held by the PSNI is provided to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI), the HET and the Coroners Service as and when requested. That is done in accordance with the law and under statutory provisions, which are the Police (Northern Ireland) Acts of 1998 and 2000 and section 8 of the Coroners Act (Northern Ireland) 1959. Any disclosure is done in compliance with article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and public interest considerations.

The PSNI also has a number of policies that are related to the management of information and covering journals and notebooks, highlighting that they are the property of the Chief Constable and must be submitted to the service when an officer leaves or retires. The code of practice that was issued under Part II of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 sets out the manner in

which police officers are to record, retain and reveal to the prosecutor material that was obtained in a criminal investigation and that may be relevant to an investigation and related matters. It is not clear that those provisions are inadequate.

As has been well highlighted on both sides of the House, former officers cannot be compelled to cooperate with the Police Ombudsman's investigations. The only exception is that, if OPONI is conducting a criminal investigation, it would then have the ability to arrest a former officer if there were sufficient grounds to do so. Whether or not there is compellability, I certainly urge anyone who has information to cooperate with the Police Ombudsman in all respects, which, indeed, was the point that was made recently to me by Mr Jimmy Spratt, a DUP Member of the House, who wrote to me as a retired officer. I will quote a point that I made to him in a letter of 1 November. It said:

"I am unable to comment on any discussions or consultation that may or may not have taken place within NIRPOA before the statement issued. This is clearly a matter for the association. However, I share your concerns that individuals and, in particular, former police officers are being encouraged not to cooperate with the investigation of serious crime. The Police Ombudsman's office is the appropriate and lawful mechanism for investigating criminality and misconduct of police officers. I note that you have also written to NIRPOA, and I hope they will reconsider their position as the cooperation of former officers as witnesses in Police Ombudsman investigations is vital in ensuring that the public can have confidence in the policing architecture in Northern Ireland."

That is my general position. Indeed, I could quote a comment that I had recently from a retired officer, which made a point that is slightly contradictory to something that was said by Jim Wells. The retired officer said:

"As a police officer, I had specific powers which were not available to other public servants. I am getting a good pension, having carried out those powers for a number of years. I am prepared to cooperate if I am requested to do so at any time."

I think that that statement of intent would be well recommended to other retired officers.

The outstanding issues will be informed by the views of the Justice Committee in December when I take to it the paper that will take account of all the recommendations contained in the ombudsman's five-year review.

I have been engaged in discussion with all the political parties on the immediate and future legislative programme for the Department of Justice (DOJ). I have also recently met the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Justice Committee to discuss the draft programme. To implement the package of reforms, my current plan is to bring forward a Bill in autumn 2014 incorporating the required legislative changes. It was said earlier that it would be introduced in February 2014, but the reality is that, due to the legislative programme for the Department, it will be the second, rather than the first, of the two key Bills of next year. That will allow time to consult with the Committee, to finalise plans, to seek Executive approval and to prepare the draft legislation. If everything goes to plan, and if smooth

passage through the Assembly is achieved, I expect to have the legislative changes in place by autumn 2015.

I referred to the legislative and administrative changes, and, on the administrative side, the proposed changes relate to the tracking and trending of officers who are the subject of multiple complaints; engaging with the Police Ombudsman on matters of relevant and necessary statutory change to his office; carrying out a review of the statutory guidance on police complaints; and introducing a 12-month time limit on the making of maladministration complaints against OPONI.

There are four administrative changes in total, two of which are for OPONI to implement and the other two for my Department to take forward. I can confirm that the new complaints procedure has been introduced and that the Department continues to engage fully with OPONI through quarterly governance meetings.

On the issue of restoring public confidence in the office as a whole, Members will be aware of the substantial work that OPONI has carried out in response to the McCusker and Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) review reports. There have been significant changes in the senior personnel in the office. Following Dr Maguire's appointment in July 2012, a new corporate governance framework was put in place to strengthen the corporate governance arrangements in the office, a new chief executive has been appointed and the post of senior director of investigation has been suppressed. The new corporate governance framework clarified that the ombudsman is responsible for setting the direction of the corporate and business planning processes, with the chief executive and senior management team responsible for day-to-day operation of the office. A new memorandum of understanding has also been agreed between my Department and OPONI in order to define the parameters of our relationship. I believe that that is working well.

These revised arrangements clearly helped provide CJINI with the assurances it needed as part of its follow-up review of the office, which also led to the lifting of the suspension on the investigation of historic cases by the ombudsman in January 2013. The chief inspector of CJINI, Brendan McGuigan, noted that substantial progress had been made in OPONI and will return to the issue when OPONI has published three substantial historical reports. If there were concerns about a deterioration in public confidence in the office between 2005 and 2011, I believe that we are now seeing significant progress led by Dr Maguire and with the support and supervision of CJINI.

I hope that Members will appreciate that much work has already been carried out towards that enhancement of confidence, although, clearly, much more needs to be done. I am grateful to Dr Maguire and his team for their input to date and the work of their office to restore confidence in its work. I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure the best operating model for the Police Ombudsman's office in the future.

One key point that was made by every unionist Member who spoke today was the issue of an appeals mechanism against any findings from the ombudsman's office.

The reality is that, across the water, the Independent Police Complaints Commission in England and Wales and the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner in Scotland do not have an appeals mechanism. That is the

pattern for all people fulfilling ombudsman roles in different areas of public service across the UK. If the ombudsman is expected to give the final answer, the only way in which that is normally addressed, as with any other quasi-judicial body, is through the process of judicial review. I see no prospect of changing that to any benefit in Northern Ireland.

A number of Members pointed out that we all need to work on dealing with the past. Certainly, there is a lot of hope riding on the five-party talks chaired by Dr Richard Haass. What is absolutely clear is that the ombudsman's office has suffered in the past from being one of a limited number of bodies that deals with the past, alongside the HET and inquests. What is absolutely vital is that we get away from day-to-day fighting over individual decisions when ombudsman's reports are published and that we get a comprehensive way of dealing with the past. That can only be done through a wider vision that we trust Dr Haass will bring to us.

Mr Givan: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. He drew a parallel with the Independent Police Complaints Commission. I do not know the answer to this; it is always very dangerous to ask a question that you do not know the answer to, but do the parallel bodies in England and Wales have the same role in looking into grave and exceptional matters that go back 30 years? Do they have the power to make section 62 statements?

Mr Ford: What is even more dangerous is when a Member asks a question and the Minister has not got the precise detail to hand. Certainly, my understanding is that the general powers are sufficiently similar that they are a useful example to draw on. Before coming back to the Committee, I will certainly ensure that, as part of the final work, we look into that for the Chair.

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: Yes.

Mr Allister: Is the situation in GB not that the independent investigator can express an opinion but cannot reach a determination? Is that not, at the moment, subject to a legal challenge in the English courts?

Mr Ford: My understanding is that decisions of the IPCC are subject to judicial review in the courts of England and Wales, just as a decision of the ombudsman here is subject to judicial review in the courts of Northern Ireland.

It seems to me that the key issue standing between the SDLP amendment, which, as I understand it, has now been accepted by Sinn Féin, is the statutory requirement to cooperate, as opposed to the belief we have that people should cooperate with any investigation. Given the complexity of that issue, and given the work that is still being done, I cannot support that amendment at this stage. However, I hope that my remarks have made it perfectly clear that I believe that individuals should always cooperate to the best of their ability in such investigations.

My Department has worked hard with the ombudsman, CJINI and others to restore confidence in the operation of the office. I believe that we now have an opportunity, through the proposals that I will bring back to the Committee next month and subsequently to the House, to ensure that that confidence is fully justified.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. We have had a debate here that has not been

particularly good. It has thrown up some very worrying comments from the Benches opposite, some of which I will go through now. I declare that I am a member of the Policing Board, along with some of the Members opposite who spoke. It is so interesting that different things are said at the Policing Board than are said here.

We had the retire and rehire debacle, where RUC and PSNI officers left and then, a couple of days later, came back through the little revolving door to work as civilians. We have procedures in place for developed vetting, which I would call discrimination against nationalists and republicans. That leads to the outcomes that Jim Wells claims he wants but that, in reality, people do not want — a representative, accountable, effective policing service. What we had throughout the RUC's time was a litany of failures to investigate properly, whether it was Omagh, Loughinisland or McGurk's. In the European Court, the RUC was found guilty of torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, collusion and shoot to kill. Yet, those on the Benches opposite, from the UUP and the DUP, are still glorifying the good old RUC. There is a complete and utter failure to understand the reason why we need accountable and effective policing.

5.00 pm

Retired police officers are publicly encouraging each other not to cooperate with the ombudsman in article 2 cases. Can you imagine that happening in South Africa or in any other part of the world where there is conflict resolution? It is an absolute disgrace, and what it makes it even more worrying is that the people opposite, who bay at us regularly about the rule of law, suddenly want to depart from the rule of law and are worried about the threat of interview. Will you listen yourselves? If they are proper policemen and policewomen, they should not fear interview in cases where people were murdered and, in many cases, where mass murder was committed.

The other excuse that we hear is that it is one-sided. Tom Elliott said that it is "one-sided". Yes, one-sided. Over the past 30-odd years, over 15,000 loyalists and republicans went to jail. How many of Tom Elliott's mates went to jail? How many members of the RUC went to jail when murder was committed? Now their mates in the old boys' network do not want to give evidence. Why? Oh it is because they are getting older, they do not know, they cannot remember, and it is all one-sided.

Mr Elliott: Will the Member give way?

Ms Ruane: No. Do you know what? I am sick of listening to justification — *[Interruption.]* — the justification —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — for what happened.

At all the Policing Board meetings, Jonathan was very critical of the HET because families were giving out about it. He stands here today supporting the HET, which is not article 2 compliant. Therefore, what if retired police officers fail to cooperate on, for example, Loughinisland, where there were 177 exhibits, agents left, right and centre, and getaway cars hidden and destroyed by the RUC? David Russell, the senior investigating officer, will not even cooperate. Why will he not cooperate? What has he to hide? This tips over and reaches the point of withholding

information in cases of mass murder. Mass murder.
[*Interruption.*]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: It worries me — [*Interruption.*]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: — to hear that Alliance is sitting on the fence. I note that the Minister says that he will launch his report on 10 December, which is Human Rights Day. Minister, I hope that the ability to compel retired officers is part of your programme because, if it is not, it is not article 2 compliant and does not reach international human rights standards.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw her remarks to a close, please?

Ms Ruane: All families deserve truth, regardless of who was killed. Tomorrow, we will have another debate and will listen to the other side of the House talk about the rule of law.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr A Maginness: If anybody thought that we did not need a mechanism for dealing with the past, think again, because this debate is redolent with people trying to deal with the past in their own specific ways. The debate is not about the Police Ombudsman but about dealing with the past and our failure, as a community and as politicians, to create a generally agreed mechanism for dealing with the past.

I listened very carefully to Mr Craig. He sort of suggested — I am not saying that he suggested it in absolute terms — that the Police Ombudsman had perhaps overstepped the mark in investigating the past. That is not the case. It is quite clear that the functions of the office were extended to include retrospective matters by the RUC (Complaints etc) Regulations 2001. That was done deliberately. Why? Because the actions of police officers in the past needed to be investigated. That is what the Police Ombudsman is doing, and that is what has given rise to all this controversy, particularly on the unionist Benches. However, that is absolutely essential, colleagues, in the absence of any other mechanism for dealing with the past. If you want to create a new mechanism for dealing with the past, do so and put it forward to all of us in the House so that we can consider it, but until such time as you do that, this is the way in which the past will be dealt with as far as policing is concerned. That is where all the controversies have arisen.

Of course, we have to move forward. We had a crisis in the Police Ombudsman's office under the previous ombudsman. The office was literally driven apart by different factions and all the rest, and there was gross mismanagement in the office. That has been repaired, which is good. The present ombudsman is giving considerable leadership to that office. He has put in place proper management and compliance so that the office can work effectively. All of us should respect that and should be comforted because that is the situation.

The Minister of Justice listed a number of things that he would like to see done to improve the office. We in the SDLP are generally supportive of those things. It is necessary for there to be further statutory powers, particularly for the ability to compel retired police officers. The DUP has emphasised that that is unreasonable. I cannot for the life of me see how it is unreasonable for those who were intimately involved in investigations in

the past to give an account of that, despite the fact that they are retired. It would be quite unreasonable for them to say no, which is within their rights at the moment. They should be made compellable. That is the right position, particularly when there is a widespread view from an organisation, which I do not believe is fully representative of retired police officers, that police officers should not cooperate in such investigations.

The other point — the SDLP is very strong on this — is that the decisions of the ombudsman should be accepted by the Chief Constable. That is right and proper.

Another point that was raised by colleagues on the opposite Benches is about the —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr A Maginness: Right. The other point is — [*Laughter.*] — you have put me off. I will conclude there. There is much work to be done, but I hope —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr A Maginness: — that there will be full cooperation in the House so that we can see —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr A Maginness: — and make a way forward together.

Mr Givan: My colleague Mr Wells made the point in his contribution that confidence in the Police Ombudsman's office has always been a matter of controversy from its very inception. Some take the view that it became an issue only when Al Hutchinson took up the post. We take the very different view that, from when the office first commenced, controversy has marred the way in which it acts. Confidence in the Police Ombudsman to act impartially, independently and professionally has always been a matter of debate.

As I pointed out in an intervention, we debated the issue two years ago. It was actually on 19 September 2011. The Assembly passed a resolution about what needed to happen, which was to bring forward proposals to create public and police confidence in the office, including independent oversight. I appreciate that, two years later, we will get some proposals coming to the Justice Committee. It makes a little bit of a mockery of the Department's approach to tackling avoidable delay in the court system, however, when it is two years from when the issue was first dealt with. I will leave that as an aside.

During the debate two years ago and during the debate now, the Minister and his colleague Mr Dickson made contributions, and they talked about ensuring public confidence. Every contribution from Members opposite was about public confidence in the Police Ombudsman's office. I see Mr McCartney nodding his head in agreement. The following words are not mine but are the words of the Police Ombudsman's office in its published annual report. It states that its mission statement is:

"to provide an effective, efficient and accountable police complaints system, which is independent, impartial and designed to secure the confidence of the public and police."

That mission statement did not finish at "public" but included "and police".

Mr Ford: I appreciate the Member giving way. If he reads Hansard, he will find that, on at least one occasion, I talked about the confidence of the police and the public.

Mr Givan: I am glad that the Minister now wants to clarify the position. The remarks were more aimed at SDLP and Sinn Féin Members.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Member for giving way. The Member will acknowledge that it was about fairness and that I did make a contribution. What is more important to this debate is that, when the DUP talks about public confidence, it is not just talking about retired police officers, which was the implication of Mr McIlveen's contribution.

Mr Givan: I was going to get to the Member's contribution later. Unlike her colleagues, at no point did she mention getting to the truth when it comes to paramilitaries. Instead, the Member's contribution was all about the need to get to the truth of the past and that the Retired Police Officers Association is blocking that. The Member's contribution speaks volumes when she did not once mention anyone else who was involved during the terrorist campaign. Not one mention did the Member make of the IRA, the UDA or the UVF.

Ms Ruane: Will the Member give way?

Mr Givan: I am not going to give way any more. I am going to make some progress.

Ms Ruane: The Member is afraid of the answer.

Mr Givan: I am not going to give way.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Givan: I will get to the Member for South Down later on in my contribution.

Mr Eastwood talked about the controversy that has surrounded the "good neighbour bombing" and the response from the Retired Police Officers Association. He rightly pointed out the circumstances surrounding it. It is worth noting that it is unprecedented for the ombudsman's office to have found an organisation in breach of article 2, and all Members need to take cognisance of that. Without going into the particular case, it is clear that the RUC did not know the precise location. There was general information about the area, but it did not know the precise address and location. The IRA set a booby trap that was targeted for security personnel, but we all know that the IRA was indifferent to the consequences for the community that it purported to represent. I believe that the actions of the people who were tragically killed fall within the ruling of *Osman v the United Kingdom* around the unpredictability of human conduct. Therefore, I think that the ombudsman's office got it wrong to have found that the organisation breached the article 2 violation, but I think that it is important that we consider the fallout from that.

At this stage, I want to bring in the recent judgement from England to which Mr Allister referred. This finding by the ombudsman's office has very serious consequences for the reputation of that organisation, and to have found this breach should not ever be taken lightly. The judge in that case talked about the report of the Independent Police Complaints Commission. He said:

"The language employed in reports is of crucial importance for very obvious reasons. These reports

are frequently of huge importance and need to be carefully crafted within lawful boundaries. An ill chosen phrase or imprecision of expression or infelicity of language could have damaging consequences. IPCC reports are sensitive documents that can drastically affect the complainant and/or a police officer (and his or her career). A very clear grasp of the lawful extent of the role of the IPCC in the preparation of a report by an investigator is of paramount importance. I also regard it to be important that reports are correctly phrased and do not imply, still less, purport to exceed their lawful ambit."

That puts into context the importance of the statements that will be made by whatever police ombudsman authority, whether in England and Wales or in Northern Ireland. In this case — the "good neighbour bombing" — the statement 62, which is protected and privileged and can only be quashed through a judicial review, is based on the balance of probabilities. It is not based on fact and clear and unequivocal evidence. It is based on the balance of probability. I have to question that as a basis for ultimately finding a very serious breach by an organisation of article 2.

5.15 pm

What I find more serious is that there is no appeal mechanism. I believe that article 13 of the European Human Rights Convention requires there to be an appeal mechanism for aspects of the work that the ombudsman's office carries out. So I think that it is worth noting that particular report and the fallout from it. Whether people always agree with what the Retired Police Officers Association say or otherwise, for it to have said what it said is something that all of us should take note of and want to address because, as I read out earlier, the mission statement of the ombudsman's office is to have confidence from the public and the police.

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Givan: If I have time later, but I do not think that I will. I want to get to a number of the recommendations on going forward.

One recommendation that Members opposite elaborated on is the compellability of retired officers to be forced to answer questions. If ever one wanted evidence for why that should not happen, one need only read the bucket of bile that came forth from the Member for South Down in her contribution. If ever there was a reason to ensure that that never becomes a reality, the Member for South Down crystallised it in the minds not just of Members but of the public. Nobody should be surprised that Sinn Féin wants to denigrate the record of the Royal Ulster Constabulary — no one. It lost the war; it now wants to win the witch-hunt. That is what this is about for Sinn Féin.

I want to put on record that I met David Ford, along with Peter Robinson, and we discussed this recommendation. Let there be no doubt that this is a redline issue for the Democratic Unionist Party. We will not allow this to become law. If the Minister of Justice puts forward any proposal to legally compel retired officers, we will use our veto and we will block it. It will not happen.

I want those who committed criminal acts brought before the courts. If you are a retired police officer and you committed a criminal offence, you are subject to proper

police investigation. I say this to the Sinn Féin Members opposite: Sinn Féin has not met the Historical Enquiries Team, and republicans refuse to cooperate voluntarily with the HET, so when Sinn Féin Members talk about getting to the truth, I say that we should let them step forward and provide the truth about what they were responsible for during their terrorist campaign. They are quick to lecture everybody else on what they should do. We have public inquiries, the Police Ombudsman's office and all these mechanisms to hold the state to account, but let us not deal with what republicans get up to. The truth about the terrorist campaign is the dirty war that was waged by the IRA and the suffering that it inflicted on the people of Northern Ireland. The police officers whom they wanted to hold to account then by putting a bullet in the back of the head, they want to hold to account now —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Givan: — through the Police Ombudsman's office. We will not allow that to happen.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind Members that, if amendment No 1 is made, I will not put the Question on amendment No 2.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 37; Noes 54.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McKinney and Mr Rogers.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr D McIlveen and Mr G Robinson.

Question accordingly negated.

5.30 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: I have been advised by the Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is an agreement that we can dispense with the three minutes and move straight to a Division.

Question put, That amendment No 2 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 37; Noes 53.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Ms Ruane and Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr D McIlveen and Mr G Robinson.

Question accordingly negated.

Main Question put.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I have been advised by party Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is an agreement that we can dispense with the three-minute rule and move straight to the Division, so I now call for Tellers. Do we have Tellers?

No Tellers have presented for the Noes.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the consultation paper from the Department of Justice on the powers of the Police Ombudsman's office; and calls on the Minister of Justice to bring forward proposals that will ensure an effective organisation that commands broad public support.

Adjourned at 5.46 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 19 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. From time to time, I and other Members have raised the issue of excessive delay in the answering of questions for written answer. I tabled a question on 17 June 2011 to the Minister for Social Development. I received an answer two years to the day later, 17 June 2013. My point is this: I have now discovered from a freedom of information enquiry that the Minister was in receipt of the draft reply 11 days after the question was tabled and chose to sit on the answer for two years before issuing it. What facility exists to deal with such bad faith by a Minister in dealing with a question for written answer?

Mr Speaker: I have listened to the Member's point of order. I have always encouraged Members to raise such points of order on the Floor so that they are least highlighted and on the record. There is a procedural avenue, and if the Member wants to talk to the Clerks or to the Business Office, he will be guided in such a way that, hopefully, the issue he described will not happen again. I think that that is vital. As the Member will know, I always encourage Ministers, as far as possible, to get answers to questions out to Members. There is an avenue that the Member could pursue, and I encourage him to do that.

Before we start today's business, I was asked by Members to look at Hansard, and especially at the debate that we had yesterday on the ombudsman's office. On an initial look at Hansard, it does not make good reading. We are almost halfway through this term of the Assembly, and I have to say that the debates have fallen very much to a point where Members should question some of the offensive language that they use in the Chamber.

I have continually reminded the House that the standards that I expect are courtesy, good temper and moderation. It amazes me that a number of seasoned politicians in the Assembly, parliamentarians who have been in the House for some years, feel that the only way in which they can make a contribution is to be offensive to other Members.

Reading yesterday's Hansard tells me that Members deliberately rise in their place to be offensive to other Members. I refer in particular to remarks made by Mr Sheehan, Mr Allister and Mr Elliott in the Chamber yesterday. Some of their contributions fell far short of the good temper and moderation that we should all expect in the Chamber. I will be closely watching the three Members whom I have named, and, if I find that they have crossed a line in future, I will not call them for their contribution. In fact, I will go further: I will ask them to take their place and I will move on.

Members need to realise that my job here is to protect the integrity of the Assembly and the business that goes through and is debated. I just cannot allow Members to make a contribution and to be so offensive that, coming from senior politicians, it is unbelievable. Members can make a robust contribution to the debate, and there can be a very strong exchange of views, but it should not be offensive to any Member of the House. I will not take any points of order on the issue. I ask Members to observe the good standards of moderation and language of the House. Let us move on.

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting

Mr P Robinson (The First Minister): In accordance with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, I wish to make the following statement on the twenty-first summit meeting of the British-Irish Council (BIC) held on 15 November 2013. The deputy First Minister has agreed that I make this statement to the Assembly on behalf of both of us.

The Government of Jersey hosted the summit and the heads of delegations were welcomed by the Chief Minister, Senator Ian Gorst. The UK Government were led by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP. The Irish Government delegation was led by the Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD, and the Scottish Government were led by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, Mr John Swinney MSP. The Welsh Government were led by the First Minister, the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM. The Governments of Guernsey and the Isle of Man were led by Chief Ministers Deputy Peter Harwood and the Hon Allan Bell MHK respectively. A full list of participants is attached to the copy of the statement that has been provided to Members.

The summit again underlined the British-Irish Council's important role in promoting and developing links between its member Administrations and providing a forum for consultation and exchange of information on matters of mutual interest within the competence of each Administration.

Following the decision taken at the twentieth summit meeting in Londonderry to establish a BIC creative industries work sector led by the Government of Jersey, the Council considered and approved a work programme for the next two years at the Jersey summit. We discussed how the work sector might nurture and further support the environments from which a new generation of creative people, creative ideas and creative businesses can emerge and flourish. From a local perspective, we reported on how a determined focus by the Executive on the creative industries has seen significant investment by globally recognised companies and produced sustainable jobs locally for many hundreds of people.

The Council discussed the current economic situation in the member Administrations, with a particular focus on youth employment and unemployment. Building on previous discussions on youth employment, the Council examined the progress made in each member Administration through their various policy initiatives and programmes aimed at specifically helping young people into employment.

The Council also reported on the latest relevant local employment statistics and reviewed the activities within each BIC working group specific to the employment opportunities for young people. In a wider context, the Council was updated on the work that had taken place across each of the Council's 11 work sectors since the last summit in June 2013.

Finally, the Council received an update from the secretariat on the progress it had made against its business plan during the first six months of this financial year. Members

will wish to note that the next BIC summit will be hosted by the Government of Guernsey in June 2014.

Mr Nesbitt (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):

I thank the First Minister for the statement. Which member Administrations are making best progress on helping young people into employment? Where does Northern Ireland fit in the league table, and did the First Minister bring back any initiatives that can be applied to Northern Ireland?

Mr P Robinson: I suppose that it depends largely on which Administration provide figures that indicate, according to their size, the extent to which there is a problem. For instance, the Government of Guernsey said that 41 young people were out of work. It seems that unemployment in those cases would be a simple matter. I think that the Minister said, "You'd probably think that I should hold a barbecue and make a few phone calls to sort this out". So although we are talking about very small numbers in the Crown dependencies, when it comes to the main jurisdictions of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, Northern Ireland, relatively speaking, fares very well. Indeed, a look at the figures up to August showed us to have the lowest level of youth unemployment of all those regions. Back then, the figure for the quarter ending in August was 18.8%, compared to the high 20 per cents in some of the other regions and, indeed, the UK average. The figure in Spain is in excess of 50%. So, youth unemployment is a worldwide problem.

It seems to me that many employers look at young people as people who are inexperienced and who will cost them something in getting them ready to be employed, whereas the more intelligent employer will see people who have fresh and innovative ideas who can be moulded to become perfect employees. It is very much about the outlook that employers take in times of recession.

Mr Moutray: I thank the First Minister for the statement. Will he advise how he reported that the Northern Ireland Executive are specifically seeking to tackle youth unemployment?

Mr P Robinson: The only way to tackle unemployment issues is to provide more jobs, and doing that, of course, comes directly from the private sector. We take a number of steps through the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to encourage the economy, whether that be through the incentives that we give to local companies or by encouraging foreign direct investment. We have been very successful in doing that.

On the other side, which is getting people prepared for work, the Department for Employment and Learning has a suite of programmes. Obviously, it has the youth employment scheme, First Start, Pathways to Success and a number of different projects that are all aimed at getting people ready for employment.

For instance, in our Department, through the Delivering Social Change programme, the deputy First Minister and I have, under the programme that we brought forward arising from Together: Building a United Community, the proposal for 10,000 placements for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), which, again, would be divided into looking for pathways into work and, at the same time, looking into civic responsibility and cross-community programmes.

10.45 am

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I will concentrate on the last and fourth-last sentences of the statement.

I am looking ahead to the next meeting of the BIC. I suggest to the First Minister that very many people in the construction industry commute to work weekly because opportunities exist in England, Scotland and Wales. Ahead of the next BIC summit, would it be a good idea for the Executive to work, perhaps with the Construction Employers Federation, to secure an even greater proportion of work in England, Scotland and Wales for local companies so as to provide opportunities for the hard-pressed construction industry? It is in line with the whole theme of work here.

Mr P Robinson: I congratulate the Member for his ingenuity in getting out of the statement something that was not there. I have to say that I agree with him. Considerable numbers of people leave the Province to take up employment, in GB in particular. Indeed, when we were flying back, the deputy First Minister and I met and spoke to a large number of people who were doing just that — leaving on a Monday morning and coming back on a Friday. Our greatest desire is for the construction industry in Northern Ireland to be revitalised to such an extent that people do not have to leave to get employment. Of course, because it is the private sector, it is ultimately the job of those who use employees from Northern Ireland to employ them. It is not everybody's desire to leave their family for the whole week to get employment. However, if there is no local employment, one can understand why they do it. Indeed, I would encourage them, because it shows their desire to carry out a productive, remunerative job, with the dignity that goes along with that.

Mr Dallat: I thank the First Minister for his statement, which to me appears to be very positive. In light of the recent news that the president of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, will pay an official visit to Britain next year, is there an opportunity to exploit the maximum jobs and tourism gains that will flow from that visit?

Mr P Robinson: The fact that he is going on a state visit indicates that the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is at an all-time high. It indicates that we recognise the value not only of the friendship but of being trading partners that can flow from that through the structures that we have. We make the best political value that we can, on a North/South and an east-west basis. I very much welcome the fact that President Higgins will take part in a state visit and that it comes off the back of a very successful visit by Her Majesty the Queen to the Irish Republic. It also indicates the kind of progress that we are making as a society, where there is a normalisation of the kinds of relationships that should take place between any two friendly neighbours.

Ms Lo: I think that the Minister is quite right to blow our trumpet over the success of the creative industries, which must be the envy of other Administrations. However, Northern Ireland still has the lowest rate of public arts funding in the UK. I wonder whether the role of arts funding in stimulating economic growth was discussed at the meeting. If so, at what lessons or best practice will the Ministers be looking?

Mr P Robinson: Although the meeting did not deal specifically with that subject, the underlying trend from all the Administrations during the discussion was a recognition that the creative industries are a significant part of local economies. They provide employment, and not just, it has to be said, for the artists, whether they be actors, actresses, people in the music industry or painters. The facts are that, when it comes to television and film series, you are dealing with electricians, people in the construction industry, gardeners and so on. About 700 people have been employed in 'Game of Thrones' alone. I am delighted by the fact that the film 'Dracula' is going to be made in Northern Ireland. I am sure that there are people in the Assembly who would be well equipped to land a role in that production, but I will not point the finger anywhere.

So, there are real opportunities that help our economy. As far as arts funding itself is concerned, I recall from my days as Finance Minister that, when I increased arts funding, the sector was very grateful for those increases. I believe that there are real benefits for society beyond the economic benefits of having an increase in arts funding. All those things, however, have to be weighed against other priorities, and I am sure that the Finance Minister will have heard what the Member had to say.

Mr Spratt: I thank the First Minister for his statement this morning. Staying on the theme of the creative industries, will he outline some of the successes that there have been in attracting and securing investment in the creative industries and how those compare with other BIC Administrations?

Mr P Robinson: When we talk about the creative industries, there is a tendency in Northern Ireland, because of the success of film and television series, to concentrate on those issues. Beyond those, however, there have been many successes, including with mobile phone apps, digital gaming and music. Music for television series, for instance, can be done in my constituency in East Belfast for the west coast of the United States.

A lot of opportunities are available in the creative industries sector. Everybody will be aware that the television series 'The Fall' is made in Northern Ireland. Not only do we have the Paint Hall, now renamed Titanic Studios, but the additional studios that have been built there indicate that this is a growing and prospering element of our economy. It is one that the deputy First Minister and I were very supportive of and wanted to encourage. I believe that the potential for young people in Northern Ireland to be able to get opportunities here instead of having to leave our shores to get them indicates that we have a very exciting future in the creative industries.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the First Minister for his report. He referred to youth unemployment here in Northern Ireland. Whatever way you look at it, it is highly problematical. It seems that other jurisdictions are suffering similar problems. Was any thought given to a follow-up conference to focus purely on dealing with youth unemployment throughout all the jurisdictions in Britain and in Ireland?

Mr P Robinson: We have had several discussions now in the British-Irish Council on youth employment/unemployment, which indicates just how seriously it is being taken. I want to be clear that, when I talk

about us hovering around the 18% to 20% level of youth unemployment and how that is less than the rate everywhere around us, it is nothing to crow about. Those are still very high levels of unemployment. I think that the kind of steps that we are taking are bearing down on that level of unemployment. That is an indicator. This goes back to a previous question, in that I think that our programmes for tackling youth unemployment are, perhaps, more successful than those in some of the other jurisdictions. I think that, if we can get our scheme under way, where we will have 10,000 placements of young people who are NEET, that will really eat into the figure. I also think that people who go through that programme will turn out to be more rounded individuals. The very fact that they will have been on the programme will be an incentive to employers, who will know that they have somebody who has skills and training in a wide range of areas that makes them a more suitable employee.

Mr Cree: I thank the First Minister for his statement. At this stage, First Minister, Members need to be innovative in the questioning because we have already covered all the ground pretty well.

First Minister, you referred to the business plans and the progress made. Could you perhaps share some of the detail with us on how that progress has made itself known?

Mr P Robinson: I am not clear which business plan we are talking about. If the Member wants to clarify that, even from a sedentary position, I will follow it up.

Mr Cree: It is in the penultimate paragraph.

Mr P Robinson: You are talking about the business plan for BIC itself. The BIC has a series of groups that carry out work and study in individual areas. Following on from the previous question, one of those areas that Jersey is taking responsibility for will deal with youth employment. There is a whole series of work streams. The various jurisdictions and the Ministers involved in those areas will meet and prepare reports, which will eventually come back to BIC when they are completed. It is ongoing work as part of our business plan.

In relation to the overall business plan for BIC, we had the secretariat's report, which indicated that £20,000 was underspent during the period. The new arrangements that we have with our head office in Scotland are working well. I would like to say — I am reluctant to make this too public — that we need to have a greater presence from those with the prime responsibility in jurisdictions, rather than their handing it down to Ministers who might be considered to be, and I do not want to be offensive, lower down the line.

Mr Rogers: I thank the First Minister for his report. I want to follow up on the matter of youth unemployment. Was there any discussion on the youth guarantee scheme, which is the scheme where under-25s are guaranteed work, an apprenticeship or training within four months of being unemployed?

Mr P Robinson: There was no specific discussion. Each jurisdiction outlined the proposals that it has in its own area. As I already indicated, we dealt with the youth employment scheme, the Pathways to Success strategy and the youth employment First Start programme. Those were the offerings that we had. We also mentioned the Delivering Social Change policies. Each jurisdiction set out the schemes that it has. Some of them are similar, but then the problems in the Crown dependencies are at a much lower level than they are in the other jurisdictions.

North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make the following statement on the sixteenth North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meeting in the health and food safety sectoral format, which was held in the NSMC joint secretariat offices in Armagh on Friday 18 October 2013. Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA and I represented the Northern Ireland Executive at the meeting. The Irish Government were represented by Dr James Reilly TD, Minister for Health, who chaired the meeting on this occasion. This statement has been agreed with Minister O'Neill, and I am making it on behalf of us both.

Ministers received a presentation on the work of Safefood from the CEO, Martin Higgins. The presentation highlighted the completion of the infectious intestinal disease (IID) telephone survey and its publication, which allows for a comparison between disease incidence in Northern Ireland and facilitates an all-island estimate of the burden of the disease. The survey revealed that the estimated rate of IID in Ireland is similar to the rate in Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole.

11.00 am

The CEO's report also included findings of research exploring the knowledge, attitude and skills of primary care health professionals on the island of Ireland towards weight management. The success of the all-island obesity action forum workshop and meetings that focused on childhood obesity was referred to in the presentation, as was the commencement of a new communication campaign on childhood obesity. The new campaign, which was launched on 21 October, will focus on helping parents tackle the everyday habits that are associated with excess weight in childhood and on maintaining awareness of the health challenges posed by excess weight. One in four children starting school is overweight or obese, and the campaign is Safefood's contribution to tackling the problem.

We welcomed a presentation from Ms Anne Walsh of the East Belfast Mission on the practical work undertaken by the mission in tackling health inequalities, access to healthy and nutritious diet, and healthy eating education programmes for those in poorer circumstances. The presentation focused on the positive impacts of the funding provided by Safefood over the period 2011-13.

Ministers reviewed progress on the development of the Safefood business plan and budget 2013 and on the delivery of efficiency savings. We also received an update on the Safefood 2012 annual report and accounts, which have now been signed off by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland and the Irish Comptroller and Auditor General. We were updated on the development of Safefood's draft 2014-16 corporate plan and draft business plan 2014. The key priority for the corporate plan 2014-16 is centred on enhancing the relationship with and relevance of Safefood for the island of Ireland consumer. The strategic intent is to maintain consumer confidence in the food supply chain, supported by relevant robust research and targeted communication and education initiatives, encouraging ultimately safer food and healthier food choices.

A particular priority will be to help communities at disadvantage, and in particular those in, or at risk of, food poverty or deprivation, by continuing the development of the community food initiatives programme, which supports food safety and nutrition programmes in disadvantaged areas. There will also be an emphasis on the environment in which food is sold, in order to influence choices made in the interests of food safety and healthy eating by working with the broader food industry and developing research programmes on the psychology of consumer choice.

The 2014 business plan will identify the specific deliverables required in the first year of the corporate plan 2014-16. In 2014, Safefood will continue the delivery of the three-year childhood obesity campaign in partnership with key agencies on the island of Ireland. A key priority for 2014 will be the development of the website and other digital and social media channels as access points and information channels for all stakeholders. Ministers approved the appointment of Dr Christine Domegan as a new member of Safefood's scientific advisory committee, the reappointment of Mr Robert Huey as vice chair and the reappointment of six existing members of Safefood's scientific advisory committee.

In relation to health promotion matters, Ministers recognised the progress made on strategies to prevent the harm related to alcohol misuse in both jurisdictions, including close cooperation on the North/South alcohol policy advisory group and on awarding a joint contract to conduct research and health impact assessments on minimum unit pricing. It is anticipated that the research will be available in early 2014.

We commended the progress made on strategies and initiatives to prevent overweight and obesity in both jurisdictions, including the Northern Ireland obesity prevention framework, Caloriewise and front-of-pack labelling, and similar measures in Ireland under the aegis of the special action group on obesity and the agreement at EU level for an action plan on childhood obesity.

Ministers welcomed the launch on 3 October of the report of the Tobacco Policy Review Group titled 'Tobacco Free Ireland' and agreed that an all-island tobacco conference should be held in November 2013. We welcomed the joint launches of the all-island Young Men and Suicide Project report in January 2013. We were also briefed on the new Northern Ireland breastfeeding strategy. The strategy includes actions for partnership working with Ireland, including exploring opportunities for all-island research and campaigns to raise awareness and promote public acceptance of breastfeeding, particularly in public.

Ministers received an update on the business planning process for the establishment of a new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin. That is progressing, with the construction due to commence in the spring of 2014 and completion scheduled for the summer of 2016. Officials from both jurisdictions have developed an agreed text for a memorandum of understanding on the project and continue to work together to ensure the delivery of a service level agreement for the operation of the unit.

We were informed that the Health Service Executive, the Health and Social Care Board and the Western Trust have intensified discussions on service delivery costs for patients from the Irish healthcare system, as there is an urgency to reach agreement on the service

level agreement in order to deliver the project within the required time frame.

Ministers acknowledged the continued progress through the work of the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium.

We also acknowledged the continued success of the US-Ireland R&D partnership and the plans to raise awareness internationally of the value that it adds to excellent research, focusing on improving healthcare, population health and economic development.

On child protection, Ministers welcomed the success of the all-Ireland child protection conference held in May 2013, which was attended by over 250 delegates. It facilitated practitioners, managers, policy-makers and legislators from both jurisdictions to share practice, knowledge, research, experience and learning in relation to safeguarding and child protection practice. We reviewed the continued progress of the agreed work programme on child protection and agreed that further progress on the work of the child protection programme will be reported at future NSMC meetings.

Finally, on EU matters, Ministers acknowledged the North/South engagement during Ireland's presidency of the Council of the European Union and the progress made during the presidency in the area of health, including the agreement of a general approach on a revised draft EU tobacco directive and the first reading agreement with the European Parliament on a decision on serious cross-border threats to health.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his statement. First, I welcome the update on the new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin, with construction due in spring 2014 and completion by summer 2016. I seek assurances from the Minister that all the issues around the cross-border memorandum of understanding have now been resolved.

Regarding the update on child protection, are there any plans to address the issue of child sexual exploitation on an all-Ireland basis? Will the inquiry that the Minister has announced consider whether there is a cross-border issue in relation to child sexual exploitation?

Mr Poots: People need to understand that there is a difference between child sexual exploitation and child abuse. Both are deplorable, but they are different things.

We held an all-Ireland conference on child protection in May. Borders certainly should not provide an opportunity for people who want to exploit or abuse young people and children, and we need to ensure that we can reduce those opportunities. It is important to remember that research indicates that the majority of young people at risk of sexual exploitation live at home, in their own community, and may not be known to professionals or agencies on either side of the border. My Department and its arm's-length bodies — the health trusts and the Health and Social Care Board — have worked to raise awareness of the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation as one form of child sexual abuse and have worked cooperatively with the PSNI to respond to those concerns.

The British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect and the Northern Ireland

Association of Social Workers jointly delivered a conference to over 250 professionals working in the field. So, there has been a lot of development there. Also, the Safeguarding Board has identified child sexual exploitation as one of its key areas of focus. That will assist in ensuring that child sexual exploitation is a key area of concern for all member organisations of the Safeguarding Board and that they work together to address this despicable crime.

Kathleen Marshall is obviously heading up an inquiry, and, if she feels that she needs to speak to people in the Republic of Ireland about any element of it, she is more than welcome to do so in seeking to ascertain the facts and to identify best ways forward for the future.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his statement today. What is being done to tackle cyberbullying and websites that promote suicide?

Mr Poots: Cyberbullying can be quite a problem. The UK Council for Child Internet Safety addresses issues around online bullying and promotes safer internet usage. It has developed programmes to increase parental awareness of how to keep safe online and to improve the resources available to schools to teach children about using the internet safely and to build their resilience to potentially inappropriate content that they may encounter online. My Department is represented on the council.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Websites that encourage suicide and memorial social networking pages on which young people continue to interact with a deceased person are of serious concern, and parents need to be educated on those issues so that they can monitor their children's activities. I understand that that is a lot harder now. There used to be fixed computers, but youngsters now use laptops, iPads, tablets and mobile phones, so it may not be as easy for parents to monitor to the extent that they should. However, parents need that support and education to ensure proper monitoring, and pressure also needs to be maintained on internet service providers to take down inappropriate sites.

Mr McKinney: I refer to the communication campaign on childhood obesity and the Safefood three-year childhood obesity campaign. Given the pressures that long-term obesity puts on the health service, what measurables and targets are being put in place to ensure that those campaigns are successful?

Mr Poots: We have had some discussions because one area of concern is the crossover with organisations such as the Public Health Agency and the Food Standards Agency. We have been very clear that those organisations need to work together because we cannot afford a duplication of services and costs. Consequently, those organisations will hold quarterly meetings on these subjects to identify the progress that they are making, how they can collaborate to get key messages out — there is a potential crossover — and how to ensure that best use is made of resources and we eradicate waste on that front, allowing us to spend more money on tackling what is, as the Member stated, a very important issue.

Mr Beggs: I thank the Minister for his statement. He welcomed the launch of the tobacco policy review group's report, 'Tobacco Free Ireland', and agreed that an all-island tobacco conference should be held. Will the Minister

advise us of the report's key recommendations and outline the particular focus of the conference to be held this month?

Mr Poots: The conference was actually held yesterday and was very successful. It was held in Riddell Hall in Stranmillis, which is part of Queen's University.

In a 10-year strategy, we have set a target to reduce tobacco smoking to 15%. The Republic of Ireland wants to go to 5% by 2025, which is very challenging. I believe that 15% is achievable, but we have to be very focused and strong if we want to achieve it. In Australia and in a number of states in the United States of America, for example, smoking is down to 17% and below, so it should be achievable for us to reach 15% in 10 years. We need to confront the issues and be prepared to indicate that what is going on with tobacco smoking is intolerable.

Many people are still exposed to second-hand smoke in homes, cars and other places, and we need to engage in an education process. You cannot tell parents that they should not smoke or ban them from smoking in their own home, but we should tell them that it is not appropriate to do it and that it is not appropriate to do it in cars. We can look at banning smoking in cars, particularly when children are being carried. We can look at the types of cigarette packaging. We have dinky little packages that look like lipstick, slim packs and so on that become almost a fashion accessory. We need to challenge those who supply tobacco. Our biggest issue is stopping young people smoking. The tobacco industry is clearly targeting young people, and, every year, many more people start to smoke, and we have not reduced the figures much in recent years.

For everybody who dies and for everybody who ceases to smoke, the tobacco industry, in spite of all the marketing restrictions, still succeeds in recruiting new people. We, as an Assembly, really need to challenge that. We need to give a lot of thought to it and be very strong in our deliberations.

11.15 am

Ms Lo: I thank the Minister for his statement. I particularly welcome the new communication campaign on childhood obesity, which is a growing problem — excuse the pun — not only in the UK but in other rich countries, including China. A healthy diet is not the only solution to obesity. Does the communication campaign include a strong message to encourage children to take part in more physical activities, such as sport and more PE lessons in schools?

Mr Poots: I have often said that every Department and Minister has a role to play in the delivery of good healthcare. We have constantly encouraged young people to participate in physical activity through the Public Health Agency and other bodies. I look to other Departments, such as the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and the Department of Education, and organisations such as Sport NI. A series of Departments has a role to play. Local councils and their facilities are also involved. We need to work as closely together as possible to ensure that we work in a joined-up way to get those messages out.

Weight control is 80% diet and 20% physical activity, so there will always be a strong focus on diet. There is not much point in going to a fast-food outlet after you go for a

swim, because you probably undo any good that you have done with your swimming, and then some. We need to encourage people to, in the first instance, take control of their diet. Good regular exercise will also help.

Mr D McIlveen: I, too, thank the Minister for his statement this morning. He will be aware of quite a lot of recent publicity about legal highs. Will he tell us what discussions took place at the meeting about that issue?

Mr Poots: Legal highs are a relatively recent phenomenon — I said that better than Ivan Little. We have seen the emergence of so-called legal highs such as mephedrone. I am pleased to say that we have been working closely with our colleagues across the UK and Ireland on the issue. Legislation has been passed in Westminster that will allow emerging substances to be placed under a temporary ban while full consideration is given to their harm. That should help us to react more quickly and prevent substances from gaining a foothold in the UK. Our general message is clear: the fact that the products are labelled as legal does not mean that they are safe. In fact, these potentially lethal substances may pose a serious health risk. In addition, many of the substances, when tested, are shown to contain banned substances. Therefore, you are also at risk of being prosecuted and getting a criminal record for drug possession.

The legislation in the Republic of Ireland is considerably better than that in the United Kingdom. I have corresponded with the Home Office on the matter because Northern Ireland has more so-called head shops than the Republic of Ireland. In spite of a larger population, the Republic of Ireland, as a consequence of its legislation, has fewer. The Home Office could be more proactive in challenging this misuse of drugs, which are being passed to young people on our streets.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I, too, thank the Minister for his statement. Childhood obesity has been addressed on a few occasions. I think that you, Minister, will accept that, if it is not properly addressed, an even larger burden will be placed on the health service, which might restrict the roll-out of Transforming Your Care. The Minister mentioned other Departments' responsibilities. Has any discussion been held with the Department of Education and the school sector about the provision of healthy school meals?

Mr Poots: Yes, that is an area that our officials work quite closely together on, and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Education cover a range of issues. Childhood obesity is a very important one. We have high levels of childhood obesity, and the reality is that, if you are obese when you are a child, the very strong likelihood is that you will be obese as an adult. The consequences of that are higher levels of morbidity and mortality, lower quality of life and generally poorer prospects. So, we need to ensure that young people have the best opportunities in life. Therefore, tackling the issues when people are children will give them better opportunities as a result.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his statement and his answers so far. What is the specific role of the child protection steering group?

Mr Poots: The child protection steering group and all these bodies have important roles to play in that we need to identify how we can ensure that we can best protect children and best meet their needs. A cross-border

steering group was established by my Department and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to cooperate on a range of child protection matters, including an all-Ireland child protection awareness campaign, sharing information to enhance and improve safeguarding in child protection practice and strengthening the arrangements for sharing information on a cross-border basis in connection with individuals seeking work with children or vulnerable adults. As I have repeated in the House, a border should not be a barrier to child protection, and it should not be something that perpetrators on the vulnerable can use to their benefit. We must seek to eradicate such opportunities.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for his statement. In border areas, the whole way from Lough Foyle to Kilkeel, we have issues with different suicide helpline numbers North or South of the border. Also, we have an issue with roaming. Are there any plans to address this with one free phone helpline for all of Ireland?

Mr Poots: Obviously, we have a free phone service, and we contribute around £2 million to providing the 24/7 Lifeline service. We are not proposing to change that. It is a service that works well, and we encourage people who have distress and need help to make the call. It is certainly a very important element of our suicide prevention campaign.

I should say that we had people over from the United States recently who were looking at the suicide issue and were very impressed by the work that we were carrying out. You might say that it has not been very successful because we still have close to 300 suicides a year, but I believe that we have saved many lives as a result of the work that has been carried out. We need to continue to put the messages out there that help is available, that we can support people, that we care for them and that there is a better way. All of us have a role in doing that, and, whether it is Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland or across the board, we all have a role to play in reducing the scourge of suicide in this community.

Mr Allister: Was there any discussion about paediatric cardiac services, and is there any update that the Minister can give the House? When does he anticipate making a definitive statement about the protection and provision of such services in Northern Ireland?

Mr Poots: On the day and outside of the meeting, Minister Reilly and I held a bilateral meeting on paediatric cardiac services. We are in the endgame on that issue. Hopefully, meetings will take place this week or, if not, next week to continue work to resolve the problem. We need goodwill from the clinicians in the Republic of Ireland, and we need their support and help in identifying a solution to the problem that we have. A lot of us can see what the solution might look like, but we have not got it over the line at this point. Nonetheless, work is ongoing to achieve that. Time is of the essence. Professor Woods leaves our service on 9 December, and we are looking for a replacement for him. The position has been advertised, and there is interest in it, which is gratifying. Therefore, work is going on, and I hope to report to the Assembly on the issue over the next two to three weeks.

Community Resuscitation Strategy

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make a statement to the Assembly advising Members of my intention to begin a public consultation on the draft community resuscitation strategy for Northern Ireland.

In February 2013, by way of a written statement, I informed the House that I had asked the Chief Medical Officer to arrange for a working group to be established to develop a strategy aimed at coordinating the use of available resources to maximise the number of individuals trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) skills. The working group has produced a draft strategy, which is now ready to publish for consultation. The working group was chaired by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) and included representatives from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), Health and Social Care (HSC) bodies and community and voluntary bodies involved in resuscitation training. There was also representation from several other Departments: the Department of Education (DE); the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD); the Department of Social Development (DSD); and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI).

In the past year in Northern Ireland, over 1,400 cardiac arrests occurred in the community outside of a hospital environment. Fewer than 10% of people who suffer an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survive to be discharged from hospital. Experience from elsewhere has shown that community resuscitation can help save lives. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation and early defibrillation are the two critical interventions that are required for a person to survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. CPR is the act of providing the rescue breaths and chest compressions that can keep the person alive until professional help arrives. There is a well-known model called the chain of survival, which is a series of actions that improve a person's chances of surviving a cardiac arrest. Like any chain, it is only as strong as its weakest link. The chain illustrates the vital importance of speed, in particular in the following areas: early recognition that a cardiac arrest is happening; early CPR to buy time; early defibrillation to restart the heart; and post-resuscitation intensive care to restore quality of life. In parts of the world where a higher proportion of the population is trained to perform CPR, the survival rate for those who suffer an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest is higher than in areas where the proportion of the population trained in CPR is low.

Typically, it takes just two hours for someone to be trained to perform CPR. In Northern Ireland, significant effort and resources are invested in CPR training in schools and other settings. I believe that a Northern Ireland community resuscitation strategy will help to focus a drive to increase the number of people of all ages trained in CPR skills, and it will help us to make the best use of available resources to achieve that. Some people who may not have been trained to do CPR are wary of intervening when someone appears to be suffering a cardiac arrest, even though they can be coached on the spot by the 999 emergency operator. As well as increasing the number of people who can perform CPR, the strategy aims to overcome the anxieties that make some people wary of getting involved.

By definition, a community resuscitation strategy has to be a collaborative effort involving the active participation of many people in all walks of life. I am grateful for the contribution made so far to the development of the strategy by our partners in the voluntary and community sector, in other Departments and in the Health and Social Care family. The whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. Continued partnership working will be an important factor in the long-term success of the strategy. This is not just about interventions by Health and Social Care but about the whole community getting actively involved. The whole spectrum of public bodies, including Departments, can lead by example.

I am confident that, across Northern Ireland, there is a shared commitment to work together and the potential to save many lives. This strategy document is a draft. I am publishing it for consultation, and I encourage everyone to contribute any ideas that could strengthen it in any way.

11.30 am

Northern Ireland has been a world leader in this field. The late Professor Frank Pantridge, a constituent of Lagan Valley, and his colleagues at Queen's University and the Royal Victoria Hospital not only invented the portable defibrillator but made an important contribution to the development of CPR. The late Professor John Anderson from the University of Ulster was an outstanding figure in biomedical research. Part of their legacy is their vision and leadership. So, the purpose of this strategy is to save lives, and we should be ambitious.

The strategy document sets out the case for a community resuscitation strategy. It describes the scope of the proposed strategy, which focuses on the first three links in the chain of survival. Those are: early recognition of a cardiac arrest; early cardiopulmonary resuscitation; and early defibrillation. It describes how the strategy has been developed, including a literature review and an overview of current CPR training provision in Northern Ireland. It proposes a vision and objectives for the strategy. It also lists a series of actions to be undertaken by DHSSPS, Health and Social Care bodies and other Northern Ireland Departments to further the objectives.

The vision for the strategy is to increase, to the highest level that can be achieved across Northern Ireland, survival for those who suffer an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. The strategy partners will seek to realise the vision by pursuing the following objectives: raising public awareness of the importance of early recognition of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and the significance of early intervention; encouraging members of the public to intervene in the event of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest; increasing the availability of, and access to, appropriate and effective CPR training provision across Northern Ireland; achieving higher uptake of CPR training; making the most efficient use of the resources that are available to support community resuscitation training; improving the availability of, and access to, the automated external defibrillators that are in place across Northern Ireland; and enhancing the capacity of information systems to capture and provide key data on out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and patient outcomes.

The public consultation on the draft regional community resuscitation strategy for Northern Ireland will be launched on 20 November. I encourage everyone to contribute any

ideas that they feel could strengthen it in any way. The strategy document will be available on my Department's website tomorrow.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his statement. I think that it is right and proper that we look at increased CPR training. I hope that the strategy looks at increasing equipment, particularly in some of our council venues.

I want to ask the Minister specifically about health inequalities. Rates of cardiac disease are higher in the more economically deprived communities and areas. Therefore, it makes sense for extra attention to be targeted towards those areas. Has that been factored in to the strategy at this stage?

Mr Poots: The biggest challenge facing us on that front is public health. I believe that health inequalities are wrong, and I also believe that we have to challenge these issues. For example, the rate of tobacco smoking is twice as high in many areas of deprivation as it is in more affluent areas. It is one of the key causes of heart attacks. We need to recognise that we should avoid heart attacks in the first place, and there is much that can be done to achieve that.

We want to have the strategy, CPR and all these things right across Northern Ireland. We want the ability to do these things and for them to be readily available to you, whether you live in the most affluent or, indeed, the most disadvantaged place in Northern Ireland. We want to ensure that, if you have a heart attack, there will be someone there who will be able to take actions that will give you a chance of surviving, as opposed to people standing on the street scratching their heads wondering what they could do to help but not actually knowing what they could do. I think that this should be viewed very positively, because it will save lives.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his statement. Does he believe that the provision of CPR training in Northern Ireland is adequate?

Mr Poots: The Department recognises the importance of people being trained in CPR. It issued a standard in the 'Service Framework for Cardiovascular Health and Wellbeing', which was published in June 2009 and which states:

"Health and social care professionals should work with schools, workplaces and communities to raise awareness of and access to emergency life support (ELS) skills".

As resources are finite, the challenge is to achieve as much as possible with the available resources.

Since I came into office, we have engaged in a course of work with a number of sporting organisations. The good thing about CPR is that it is quite easy to cascade training. You can easily train trainers and train large numbers of people relatively quickly. I think that that is where we want to go on this issue. We want as many people trained as possible to ensure that, in most circumstances, somebody will be around who has CPR and resuscitation skills.

In places such as Seattle, where programmes like this have been carried out, the difference in the number of people who survive heart attacks is really dramatic. Some

1,400 people have heart attacks outside of hospitals here each year, and we have a survival rate of less than 10%. If we were to double that survival rate — that would be modest — and move that up to 20%, an extra 140 people would be alive as a result of this strategy. This is a very important piece of work, and we should embrace it.

Mr McKinney: The Minister has rightly outlined the early parts of the chain, and, of course, the later parts of the chain are the emergency services and further hospital services. Does he accept that there is a weakest link potential in the area of communication, particularly in remote areas? Is he having any conversations with other relevant Departments in an effort to ensure that mobile communications, in particular, are as robust as they can be in remote areas to ensure the further success of his strategy?

Mr Poots: That is an important element for us in all aspects of health. As we move more towards telehealth and telemonitoring, it is absolutely critical to have good communication opportunities.

Northern Ireland has good communications, although I accept that there are black spots in a relatively small number of areas. We need to continue to work with the communication companies. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is obviously the lead Department on that issue, and we will always encourage that Department to continue to ensure that the communications network is as strong as possible because it assists us greatly in a whole range of areas to do with health.

Mr Beggs: The Minister mentioned that fewer than 10% of those who suffer from a cardiac arrest outside of hospital will survive. Earlier, a Member mentioned more remote areas. Organisations such as Islandmagee First Responders have been established by volunteers to support areas that are an extended distance from hospitals and medical support. Will the Minister advise what support is available for such organisations and what training is available to nourish and develop them and to encourage other communities to self-help where such groups exist?

Mr Poots: We have set aside quite a lot of money to support the voluntary sector, and it makes bids to the Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency and the trusts for funding. That is carried out through needs analyses, and there are mechanisms for doing that. A series of organisations provide support, and we all see them at many sporting events and other large events.

This strategy is about moving it beyond the voluntary sector to every possible individual. If we go to a youth organisation or a sporting club, training should not be restricted to half a dozen people in those organisations. It should be available to everybody who wants to do it, because, many times, incidents happen outside of those contexts. It may be in the home or elsewhere where there are only two or three people around. We will continue to support organisations such as first responders. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service provides support and training for them, and that will continue.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Minister, for your statement. CPR training has been rolled out to a wide range of organisations in Northern Ireland for 50 years, including youth groups, schools and the various ambulance organisations, but the new portable defibrillators are now seen in supermarkets and in all sorts of places across

Northern Ireland. There is a need to provide training for those, because that is the next step in CPR. The training has been delivered in many ways to many people, but many people are scared to use those new pieces of equipment. How does the Minister intend to get the community over the fear of using those?

Mr Poots: The Member is absolutely right. AEDs, or defibrillators, are very successful in getting the heart shocked and reset. There is a huge asset to us in that. There is no actual record of how many AEDs there are. People and organisations acquire them, and they do not have to be licensed, so we do not know about them all. We believe that there are roughly 1,000 AEDs across Northern Ireland. If somebody has a heart attack and one of those is on the wall, and people do not know where it is or how to use it, the fundraising to acquire one is then not of much benefit. We will train more people to use AEDs. The first element will be the CPD, but it is important that we have defibrillators widely available and that 1,000 is a reasonable number, although we would like to see more, and that people are equipped to use them.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his statement. What decisions has he taken over the past two to three years to try to reduce cardiac and circulatory disease?

Mr Poots: We discussed in the previous statement the primary prevention campaigns aimed at the known factors of cardiovascular diseases, such as smoking and obesity. Those are key areas in reducing the number of heart attacks in the first place.

We also have a quality and outcomes framework in the general medical service. The contract has an emphasis on the minimisation of risk factors for heart and circulatory disease, and on the secondary prevention of heart and circulatory disease. In addition, a three-year directed enhanced service supports the service framework for cardiovascular health and well-being, which was introduced in 2008-09.

The cardiovascular service framework which was introduced in 2009 sets out comprehensive pathways and standards for prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, long-term management and palliative care in relation to cardiovascular disease. The Public Health Agency leads on that.

More recently, we established a 24/7 cath lab in the Royal Victoria Hospital. A 24/7 service will become available at Altnagelvin in early summer next year. Those will bring about an astonishing improvement in recovery from heart attacks, including saving lives but also improving the quality of life. If people have a heart attack, the damage done to the muscle of the heart can be hugely detrimental to having a good quality of life thereafter. The primary and community care investment programme interventions will ensure that considerably less damage is done to the muscle of the heart, so it will not just save lives but extend them and improve the quality of people's lives.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for his statement. In my constituency, the Carnbane league is one of the largest amateur soccer leagues in the North. Because of the incidence of young players in other areas and in our own suffering cardiac arrest while playing football, it is policy to send young players to be tested for possible heart defects. That proved to be very successful. Will the Minister encourage that policy? Will he accept that many

sporting clubs, if not all, should have access to CPR and defibrillators?

11.45 am

Mr Poots: The screening of everybody would be hugely challenging. It is not a route that we have gone down thus far, and I do not think that the analysis would lead us at this point to consider that to be the best use of resources. I believe that encouraging all young people in sporting organisations to get involved in the implementation of a community resuscitation strategy and ensuring that they are capable of carrying out resuscitation is core to a lot of these issues so that we can respond very quickly when someone falls ill. As I indicated, the more young people who can be trained, the better the chance of them assisting someone in the workplace, in the home or at some other event outside the sporting organisation. I do not believe that it should just be a core from each organisation. I want it to filter through and cascade to as many people in the organisation as possible.

Mr Storey: I thank the Minister for what is a very important statement. Will he join me in placing on public record our appreciation of the work carried out by the late Mr Shaun Esler MBE from Ballymoney, who spearheaded the work of the placement of defibrillators in Ballymoney retail premises? It follows on from the point that was made by Mr Dickson.

Wearing another hat as Chair of the Education Committee, can I ask the Minister whether he believes CPR training should be compulsory in our schools? Programmes such as the North Eastern Education and Library Board's Heartstart are to be commended.

Mr Poots: It is not for me to interfere in another Department. As Chair of the Committee, you will challenge that Department on many occasions, and rightly so. That is the role. Education has a major role in assisting other Departments across a range of issues, as other Departments have a role in assisting Education, but if we are to ensure that young people are well rounded, their education needs to be very broad.

I see the introduction of CPR as being very positive regarding having better rounded young people. It would not take a lot of time away from their curriculum, and there would be a great opportunity to participate in high schools, but that is exclusively a decision for the Minister. I hope that the Chair of the Education Committee and his colleagues will be very encouraging to the Education Minister to ensure that that will be the case across our schools.

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Minister for what I see as one of the most important statements that he has ever made. I come from the south Down area, and we have witnessed three young people lose their lives on the football field: Oisín McGuinness; Patrick Dinsmore; and our own Councillor Mickey Cole. The families of those young men have campaigned tirelessly for such a campaign to take place by raising funds for local sports clubs, schools etc to have training and have defibrillators at hand. I welcome the fact that you are asking all Departments to lead by example and realise the vision of what we are after. What plans does the Minister have to deliver the campaign to everybody in our community through advertising?

Mr Poots: We have not got to that point yet. Obviously, this is a consultation document, and I encourage as many people as possible to respond to it. If they have ideas, and if there is anything that they think that we have not covered, we would be very keen to hear about them. Very often, you can get ideas coming from the community that are not always obvious to a civil servant or public health official. So, we will encourage people to participate in the first instance by responding to the consultation.

We will try to turn the strategy around as quickly as possible. The sooner it is implemented, the better. I asked the Chief Medical Officer to work on the draft strategy, he completed that work, and I am bringing it to the House immediately. I want to make progress as soon as possible because the bottom line is that the sooner we can cascade training across Northern Ireland, the more lives we are likely to save.

I particularly appreciate where the Member is coming from in speaking about the very personal incidents that have happened in her community. It has happened to young people who looked the picture of health. We are not talking about people standing on the touchline with a cigarette in hand and carrying a lot of weight. Fit young people can have heart attacks as well. Our response can give them a chance of living, as opposed to people not knowing what to do.

Mr Gardiner: I thank the Minister for his statement and warmly welcome today's announcement. As the Minister said, many schoolchildren are already receiving training in emergency life-support skills. However, unfortunately, some schools do not accommodate that. Will the Minister speak to the Minister of Education to ask that such training become a formal part of the teaching programme in our schools?

Mr Poots: Given that this is a document for consultation, that certainly may be a suggestion that people will put to us and, indeed, to the Department of Education. It may be a point that we can amend during the consultation process, should the Department of Education wish to state clearly that it wants to engage in such training provision. I cannot speak for the Department of Education. That is purely a matter for it, and it is a matter for Members how they wish to lobby me and the Minister of Education. However, I can see the logic in what Members have said.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his statement and his answers so far. How is he ensuring that sufficient liability cover is in place in Northern Ireland for first-responder schemes?

Mr Poots: That is a very important question because people are sometimes fearful of intervening in case they do something wrong and a claim is made against them.

In order to support fully the important role of community first responders in assisting statutory agencies in responding to emergencies, the Department is prepared to underwrite the costs associated with legal claims for damages made against the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) as the organisation that is responsible for dealing with emergency incidents and the governance of first responders who are members of community first responder (CFR) schemes with which the Ambulance Service has an agreed memorandum of understanding (MOU). That applies in any case that arises from performance or non-performance in any medical or

associated procedure that is carried out by a CFR in response to an emergency incident and when insurance cover for medical malpractice has been withdrawn by a commercial insurance provider from a relevant scheme.

In addition, the Department is prepared to underwrite the costs associated with any legal claim for damages made against individual CFR schemes, or first responders who are members of CFR schemes with which the NIAS has an agreed MOU, in any case arising from performance or non-performance in a medical or associated procedure that is the response to an emergency incident and when insurance cover for medical malpractice has been withdrawn. That undertaking is predicated on the assumption that a first responder who was tasked to an emergency incident by the NIAS and is the subject of a legal claim for damages in respect of malpractice will have been acting in good faith when dealing with the incident and within the terms of competence as set out in the MOU in force between the NIAS and the CFR scheme of which the first responder is a member.

I might add that the courts have previously taken the view that people who have acted in emergency situations with best interests at heart should not be liable to prosecution. I am not aware of successful prosecutions in such incidents.

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour for the debate, which is on a cross-party motion. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr McGlone: I beg to move

That this Assembly calls on the Executive to take all necessary steps to create an effective delivery pipeline of major infrastructure work to alleviate the current economic and social difficulties being faced across the community.

Go raibh maith agat. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development uses a simple and general definition of infrastructure:

"the system of public works in a country, state or region, including roads, utility lines and public buildings."

The effectiveness of any region's infrastructure is a critical factor in its economic growth, competitiveness and social well-being. As the world changes, there is a need for a new economic and social infrastructure to accommodate that change and maximise the potential for economic growth. In addition to the new infrastructure, the existing infrastructure must be maintained, upgraded and, where necessary, replaced. That requires long-term planning, access to consistent levels of capital investment and, importantly, the political will to use that investment wisely and deliver the necessary infrastructure work.

A key part of that long-term planning in Northern Ireland is the Strategic Investment Board (SIB). Established in April 2003, the SIB is, in effect, an expert consultancy group that operates within government, working with Northern Ireland Executive Departments and agencies towards the delivery of major infrastructure projects at a lower cost, with reduced risk and faster than would otherwise be the case. That is the aim. The SIB drafts the investment strategy for Northern Ireland, which is the rolling 10-year plan of the Executive's priorities in public infrastructure as determined by Ministers. It covers all areas of government, including education, health and transport.

When the Assembly was restored in 2007, there was a commitment from the British Government of access to £18 billion for capital investment over the next 10 years. That commitment was not kept by the coalition Government in London; instead, the promised capital investment budget was slashed by about 40%. Although some £5 billion was invested in capital projects in the first three years of that commitment, the Executive have not been able to sustain that level of investment. The necessary funds have not been found in the budget available to the Executive, and the alternative finance mechanisms needed to make up the shortfall have not yet been identified or, if they have been identified, have not been used. Alternative finance mechanisms to fund major infrastructure work will be an essential part of the toolkit needed by the current and

future Executives, if our economic and social infrastructure is to be fit for the future.

Those alternative mechanisms have been talked about for some time. Whether the political will exists to choose or implement them remains to be seen. The mechanisms are not exclusively partnerships with the private sector, although some parties may be predisposed to promoting what could be seen as the privatisation of sectors in which investment is needed. Other public sources of funding for major infrastructure projects are available and should be accessed. The UK infrastructure guarantee scheme has a target of unlocking up to £40 billion of infrastructure projects. The European Investment Bank has an annual fund for investment in infrastructure of about £43 billion. Extending the existing reinvestment and reform initiative could also be used to benefit infrastructure investment locally.

The Executive need to pursue the devolution of further fiscal powers to ensure that we have greater control over our finances and a greater ability to plan for the longer term. However, it cannot be emphasised enough how important it is that political will and, more importantly, political coordination across Departments are needed to deliver the major infrastructural work required. As we saw recently with the Narrow Water bridge, the slightest political hesitation, wherever that may be, can result in the loss of partners and funding for an infrastructure project. In my constituency, the community safety college at Desertcreat has been delayed because of costly mistakes in the planning of the project. We all know about the A5 scheme and the problems that arose as a result of a legal challenge to that. We have also seen how, on occasions, party political differences have been allowed to take precedence over the delivery of much-needed investment regeneration projects, such as that at the Maze/Long Kesh site.

The Assembly cannot afford to ignore the warning signs of serious problems in the current mechanisms for bringing forward major infrastructural work. What is needed is a focused and coordinated approach to delivering the first-class infrastructure that is required to assist the building of sustainable economic growth and help create a fairer and more just society.

12.00 noon

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr McGlone: Yes.

Mr McKinney: Does the Member agree that it is important for Departments to look at new, different and imaginative ways to access funding for such projects, not just for major projects but also for smaller projects? I think particularly, for example, of contributions from the Green Investment Bank, which has something in the order of £3.8 billion to spend on projects nationally. If government could access some of that, it would make sense.

Mr McGlone: I accept that and, indeed, recently the Green Investment Bank and potentials arising from it were discussed at the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee.

More recently, a report from the Confederation of British industry (CBI) pointed out that we should benchmark our delivery of infrastructure projects against delivery in Scotland and on the rest of this island. The Executive need to learn from the example of those jurisdictions and create

an effective delivery pipeline of major infrastructure works. Not only is that essential to the creation of an infrastructure that is fit for purpose, it is essential for the regeneration of our economy. An effective delivery pipeline of major works would build public confidence in the Assembly's ability to get on with the work. It would build confidence in the business community that we are serious about investment in the future and help sustain and create thousands of jobs in the construction industry.

In its report, the CBI advocates a number of changes that are required to develop and deliver infrastructure projects. A new, centralised procurement delivery agency, with a clear mandate from the Executive and, as I have mentioned, benchmarked against the agencies operating in Scotland and the rest of Ireland, should have responsibility for the procurement and delivery of public sector education and health capital projects, for example, as well as a role in the prioritisation of other capital projects. The CBI recommends the development of an accurate pipeline of infrastructure works with regular updates on the progress of departmental capital plans. There should be at least one strategic project in an advanced state of readiness in Roads Service at all times. An effective delivery pipeline would also assist in efforts to attract foreign direct investment, clearly demonstrating to all the importance that the Assembly places on improving our infrastructure and on delivering on our promise to do so.

Indeed, I heard recently from the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) on Friday — I am sure that other Members, including Mr McElduff, will refer to it — about its concerns over the lack of infrastructure capital projects west of the Bann. That pipeline should contain projects with a three- to five-year period, and there should be regular updates on progress. There must be commitment on the part of the Executive to make sure that timescales and promises with respect to the infrastructure and that pipeline are met.

The CBI report also includes some interesting proposals regarding the creation of a department of the economy and the appointment of the Minister in the Executive with overall responsibility for the delivery of infrastructure and the capital budget. The Finance Minister, along with others in the Executive, may not relish that prospect, but it is a proposal that deserves to be considered seriously.

It is essential for the Executive to create an effective delivery pipeline of major infrastructure works to alleviate the current economic and social difficulties faced across the community. The all-party working group on construction looks forward to its meeting with the Minister of Health, the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister of Justice on 3 December. The Minister of Education is unavailable for that meeting, but I hope that senior officials from his Department will attend. We hope to drill down and see what major capital projects can be got out into the community and prioritised by Departments. I really do not care whether the concept is called "spade-ready" or "procurement-ready". The community wants the projects ready and to see work begin.

I thank my colleagues from other parties for their support and participation in the debate.

Mr Spratt (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): The Committee for Regional Development has not discussed the motion in advance of

today's debate. I therefore base my comments on previous conversations conducted in our Committee meetings, principally during scrutiny of departmental bids during the monitoring rounds.

The Department for Regional Development and its arm's-length bodies are integral to sustained investment in our infrastructure. The Programme for Government, for example, has a target of £66 million to be invested in water and sewerage infrastructure. The price control determination for Northern Ireland Water up to 2010 called for £564 million for capital investment, while PC13 seeks a further £324 million investment. With regard to our roads infrastructure, we have the deferred A5 project at £330 million and the A2 at a cost of £57 million. There is also the A8 project, costing in excess of £110 million, including €18.3 million through the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) projects. The Committee supports those significant projects, and, to give credit where credit is due, the Department on the whole delivers them.

The Department also has a major role to play during the monitoring rounds as a means of reallocating declared excesses from other Departments. In the October monitoring round, my colleague the Finance Minister allocated £75 million to structural maintenance projects. The Committee has always been supportive of a planned schedule of infrastructural works that could be delivered in a strategic and effective manner.

It costs £116 million a year just to maintain our road network. Although the Department has been very successful in the past couple of years in hitting or getting close to that target as a result of in-year bids, we are nevertheless running a backlog in structural maintenance to the tune of £830 million. The Committee has stated in the past that a sustained effort needs to be made to reduce that backlog, not only so as not to stack up problems for future years but in recognition of the significantly positive impact that addressing the backlog would have on the construction industry and the suppliers of the materials needed to complete the works.

In times of austerity, it is no coincidence that investment in construction and infrastructure is a tool used to help rebuild the economy. The roads and sewerage systems were all built with the stimulus money spent on infrastructure. We cannot overlook the ancillary consequences of a strategic, effective and well-maintained infrastructure on, for example, tourism, imports and exports.

The Committee has on a number of occasions called on both the Department for Regional Development and Northern Ireland Water to identify and progress any shovel-ready projects to the stage at which, if major investment is identified, they will be in a position to react. Particularly in Northern Ireland Water, those are issues in which accounting practices restrict the ability of the organisation to plan effectively its capital investment programmes. I know that the previous Finance Minister and the current Minister have sought and are seeking to resolve the issues with Treasury, but we as a Committee continue to call for investment in our infrastructure to be a priority, because it makes sense, because it is essential to the development of our economy and because it is the proper thing to do. I support the motion.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I will preface my remarks by reiterating a point

made by Mr McGlone. The British Government did renege on a commitment of major investment in our infrastructure, and we are working within those parameters.

However, it is a fact that too many crucial public sector infrastructure projects and too many vital public buildings that would benefit our communities are being stalled and delayed. I do not want to overstate it, but that really causes huge despondency. Hardly a day goes past that people do not mention that the A5 — the western transport corridor that is a North/South Ministerial Council and an Executive priority — is stalled; that the Maze/Long Kesh development is stalled; and that the Narrow Water bridge is stalled. I hear those three projects mentioned non-stop in my constituency, and the delay is doing huge economic and social damage to people, communities and morale. At the end of the day, roads, buildings and bridges are about people. They are about improving connectivity and jobs. People need to be assured that every effort is being made to deliver and to fast-track projects into work on the ground, particularly the big projects that promise to make a difference.

I will now highlight a major feeling of deficit and grievance that exists west of the Bann and concentrate on the view of the construction industry there. Last Friday afternoon, along with other MLAs who are present for this debate, I attended the Tyrone and Fermanagh association meeting of the Construction Employers Federation, which was held at QMAC Construction between Pomeroy and Donaghmore. The overwhelming feeling there was that there is a dearth of construction work on the ground at this time, particularly west of the Bann. They cited difficulties with procurement. People said things such as, "A local company would not get as much as a screw nail in a big job" and "We're good enough to do the work, but we're not good enough to qualify for the list". Another phrase that I remember from that meeting was "We are PQQed to within an inch of our life". There were a lot of references to young people emigrating to Australia, Canada and New Zealand in search of work, as well as to the number of people who commute weekly to England, Scotland and Wales. I raised that point earlier with the First Minister. So, a lot of economic and social damage is being done to our communities, and that affects morale. People find it hard to understand and to stomach delay after delay. I have to say that, among the constituents that I represent, the A5 is the most acute example of that.

It needs to be remembered that the construction industry pump-primes the wider economy, as every £1 that is invested in construction tends to generate £2.84 in wider economic activity. So, to cut to the chase, people want to see a list published of every public construction project that is on the ground and/or in the pipeline at this time.

As an MLA, I appreciate Ministers' efforts to translate a promise into reality on the ground. Earlier, I took the opportunity to discuss the schools programme directly with the Minister of Education, John O'Dowd. Not enough of the schools are on the ground at this time. The Minister expressed his frustration at bureaucracy and red tape, which are often to do with the business case and economic appraisals. However, we need to overcome such hurdles and get work out and on the ground as soon as possible. People want to be absolutely assured that public projects are being monitored and managed properly and fast-tracked into real action as quickly as possible. In

my constituency, again, there is the A5 and the Lisanelly shared education campus. I welcome the progress that is under way there. There is not enough progress on the enhanced local hospital that is to be built in Omagh and other local capital investments, such as primary care centres and the A32. All those cause huge concern.

My final point concerns the rural planning policy statement, PPS 21, which needs to be revisited.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr McElduff: I believe that it needs to be revisited so that rural people have greater opportunities to build a single home in the countryside. That will also make a difference, especially for local companies.

12.15 pm

Mrs Overend: I, too, welcome the debate and the opportunity to participate in it. Indeed, the Ulster Unionist Party recognises that a vibrant and fit-for-purpose infrastructure is a key driver in promoting growth and is, therefore, a principal component of the economy. The value of capital expenditure in economic recovery cannot be overestimated. The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to delivering the benefits from major capital projects.

The current situation is felt ever so acutely by the construction industry. Just last Friday, along with other Members here, I met representatives of the industry in my constituency of Mid Ulster. Mr McElduff gave very precise details of where that meeting was in my constituency, and I appreciate that. Although there is a glimmer of optimism in the construction industry, it has undergone a hugely rapid decline since 2007. Recent figures that were stated at that meeting showed that the industry's output was down by 43% for the quarter ending June 2013 from its peak and was down again by 5% on last year's figures. Although private housing starts are up by only 15%, completions are up by 50%. However, that is only half the level of completions in 2003 and 2004.

Over the downturn, we have heard of many construction employers going out of business, no more so than in my constituency of Mid Ulster. Looking back to when agriculture was in decline, many farmers moved from farming into construction. Now, we see many of those construction firms in decline and going out of business. Of the businesses that remain, the state of trade survey tells us, 63% of construction companies are working at only 75% capacity. Many do not expect that to get much better over the next year, but many are also hopeful that it will rise.

Although the motion concentrates on the delivery of major infrastructure work, it is important, too, that we realise and consider the implication of the downturn for the construction industry. There is a small expectancy of a labour squeeze. With people moving out of the construction industry over the past few years, we need to ensure that sufficient workers remain in the construction industry and are ready to work when projects get under way. I understand that the average age of a man on site is 50 years old. That is something that the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning need to consider when looking at apprenticeships and people moving into training in that sector. It is important that the industry receives the focus that it deserves from those Departments.

It is vital that all Ministers step up to the mark to bring forward work programmes and deliver them ready for procurement. From the point of view of both government and the general public, it is, obviously, essential that infrastructure schemes are delivered on time, on budget and to the highest agreed standards. From speaking regularly to representatives of the construction industry, I am well aware of their concerns. A major one relates to the procurement process, where the need for fairness and transparency is a constant theme. Just last week, the Public Accounts Committee highlighted concerns over aspects of the rebuilding of the Lyric Theatre in Belfast. Those concerns must be addressed, and they highlight the need for appropriate and robust checks and balances to be built into a procurement process for all contracts, including major infrastructure ones.

I am pleased to say that one major infrastructure project relates to my constituency, Mid Ulster, in the shape of the new state-of-the-art emergency services training college at Desertcreat. The scheme appears to have been subject to undue delay. I very much look forward to real progress on that vital scheme, which will benefit not only Mid Ulster but the whole of Northern Ireland for decades to come.

My party's Minister for Regional Development, Danny Kennedy, has been instrumental in progressing various road infrastructure schemes, such as the Magherafelt bypass in my constituency and the recently announced A26 project in North Antrim. However, responsibility lies not only in roads but, as the motion implies, in all Departments round the Executive table. As the Member for West Tyrone mentioned, there are major concerns that the school building programme under the Department of Education for Northern Ireland is not progressing quickly enough. Last year, the Education Minister announced new school builds, but I understand that they are not going to tender, never mind being built.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mrs Overend: Goodness me.

Mr Deputy Speaker: In fact, it is up.

Mrs Overend: I support the motion.

Mr Girvan: I, too, support the motion. I want to make some points about some of the positive things that have happened recently. Seventy per cent of all ongoing capital spend on projects in Northern Ireland comes from the public sector. That is happening, but unfortunately, probably not all locals benefit from it. There are some areas where some investment could be made, and I appreciate that it is vital to take a strategic look at this.

We have invested £51 million in our telecommunications network. That sector has necessarily supported some jobs, but we have to look at what is going on in other jurisdictions and ensure that we remain competitive in that area. In doing so, it is important that we put capital in to ensure that we stay as a world leader. Eighty-nine per cent of all businesses have access to fibre-optic broadband, and we want to make sure that we have a world-standard telecommunications network.

Another area that would benefit the wider economy is the interconnector between Northern Ireland and the Republic, which would provide some access to cheap energy, and that would benefit businesses, as well as the wider economy.

I will move on to some of the major projects that we have undertaken. I appreciate that the Department for Regional Development is one area where we have major spend on our roads infrastructure. The A8 project is going through in my area at present, causing major disruption to a large area in a rural economy and to the land. As a consequence of that, local businesses feel that they have benefited very little from the project. They have not tendered, because of their interpretation of red tape. They believe that it is not necessarily worthwhile to put in a tender, even for simple projects such as the fencing project. Local people involved in that industry said that it was not worthwhile doing it.

People may be unaware of some measures that have been put in place by the Executive through the Finance Department and the Finance Minister, including the prompt payment process, which ensures that businesses get cash flow and are not hamstrung. That has been of great benefit in addressing some of the cash flow issues associated with some of our minor projects. The introduction of project bank accounts has been another good initiative, and that needs to be brought out. The industry needs to be aware that it can have access to projects. We need to ensure that red tape does not prohibit local businesses from tendering for them and to actually help them to access funding.

I am a Euro-sceptic, and as such I believe that some of the tender processes that have been put in place do not necessarily help local businesses but have created difficulties in some areas. We need to ensure that we get something back. Even if you class it as a social economy clause in the project, that is a way of overcoming some of those difficulties. Those are things that need to be done.

In 2012-13 we invested £1.3 billion in road and rail, upgrading park-and-ride facilities. All of those are areas which are being brought forward. The CBI identified some of those as key areas. We invested £77 million in a capital project in the Titanic Quarter that has created 250 full-time jobs in that area. In doing so, it has spread out to a big tourist draw for that area. Those sorts of projects are very good, but it is about identifying key projects and ensuring that local people have that access to them.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is virtually up.

Mr Girvan: Thank you very much indeed.

Mr Rogers: I support the motion. Just a few days after the announcement by the SEUPB of the withdrawal of funding for the Narrow Water bridge project, these are bad days for South Down. Our chambers of commerce right around the coast were depending so much on that not just as a major infrastructure project to boost our construction industry but to boost our tourism industry.

I want to keep my thoughts on education. I have spent many years in education, and I fully understand the importance of providing a good physical environment for our young people. I am the former principal of St Louis, Killeel; I retired in 2007. The principal before me thought that he would turn the first sod of the new school, but we are still waiting. The condition of the school building impacts on the type and quality of education that teaching staff can deliver. I welcome the announcement of school enhancement projects, but, like anything else, they need timely delivery.

We are gravely concerned about information in the October 2013 update on major capital works. What makes

it more frustrating is that the Education Committee recently visited Scotland and saw how their capital investment programme is working, progressing and benefiting the construction industry, education and everyone. Indeed, as other people mentioned, many of our workers get on flights on Monday morning to go over to work there. The capital investment programme of the Department of Education here in Northern Ireland makes grim reading. The delays in major works affect schools across the North, from Belfast to Derry to Newry. They affect primary schools, secondary schools, Irish-medium schools and the special needs sector. The slippage in the special needs sector seems to be worse than in others. Those who need it most seem to be suffering most. The inability of the Department of Education to build what it promises covers all of the education system.

Construction companies are holding on for when they hear that projects will be shovel-ready on a certain date. When that does not happen, many of them unfortunately go under. The reasons for these significant delays include revised economic appraisals, lack of planning approval and waiting for the appointment of specialised teams. Each of these projects is valued at millions; indeed, one project is valued at up to £20 million. This is a large amount of money in Northern Ireland terms, and it is needed to stimulate our construction industry and provide the physical environment for the education of our young people.

The case for the new school buildings has been made. It is outrageous that schools, pupils and teachers endure substandard environments because of the inability of the Department to deliver the projects in a timely manner. The Minister has questions to answer in this regard. He needs to explain to the House why the Department is unable to work effectively and efficiently, but, more importantly, he needs to explain the delays to the young people who continue to be educated in substandard conditions.

This is not just about our education sector; it is about our construction industry and everybody. We need to get this right.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension. I propose therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.28 pm.

On resuming (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Justice

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We will begin with 30 minutes of oral answers to questions, followed by 15 minutes of topical questions.

The Disappeared: Justice

1. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Justice what measures he will take to ensure the appropriate departmental resources are available to the relevant criminal justice agencies to bring to justice those responsible for the murders of the disappeared. (AQO 5029/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): It is very important for me as Minister and for my Department as a whole that the PSNI and other criminal justice agencies are adequately resourced to bring those responsible for the murders of the disappeared to justice. I will continue to work with colleagues at the Executive to ensure that sufficient funding is made available to them. Anyone with any information, no matter how small, should pass that on to the relevant authorities. It is important that every effort is made to help to ease the terrible ongoing suffering of those unfortunate families.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. With the finger of blame being pointed very firmly in the direction of Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, from beyond the grave by Brendan Hughes and from among the living by Billy McKee, will the Minister join me in calling for the Sinn Féin president to provide the authorities with the information that they need to give the families of the disappeared the peace that they need and to allow the bodies of the disappeared to be buried with dignity?

Mr Ford: I cannot point the finger at any individual, whether that be the president of Sinn Féin or anyone else. I do, however, repeat the Taoiseach's words in the Dáil on 5 November:

"somebody ordered that Jean McConville be murdered, someone instructed that people take her away, someone instructed Dolours Price to drive the vehicle used across the Border and ... someone gave the instruction in respect of what took place."

Whoever has any information, regardless of what that may be or what office they may now hold, has an absolute duty to do all that they can to assist in the recovery of those who were disappeared.

Mr Elliott: I appreciate the Minister's remark about the provision of additional funding. However, can any other investigative process be progressed by the Department of Justice or the Police Service of Northern Ireland, even on a cross-border basis with the Garda Síochána?

Mr Ford: I appreciate Mr Elliott's question. Certainly, it is up to the PSNI and an Garda Síochána to pursue criminal investigations with whatever evidence they have. We also have the role of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains, which has specific duties to follow up in the recovery of bodies. What is essential is that anybody who has any information whatsoever that might help in the recovery of victims or in the prosecution of perpetrators should provide it.

Mr Allister: Does the Minister agree that it is quite clear that the murder of Jean McConville was the product of a very elaborate and extensive conspiracy and that there are, therefore, many aspects of that case to be investigated, including not just those who perfected the murder but those who conspired to that end and those who have since withheld information about it? What confidence can the House have, through the Minister, that all those various persons involved are being rigorously pursued, or is it a situation —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Let us address the question.

Mr Allister: — where no one wants to disrupt the process?

Mr Ford: If Mr Allister is suggesting that the PSNI, the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and, indeed, their colleagues on the other side of the border are not doing all that they can to deal with serious crime, I think that he is making a mistaken assumption. I have no evidence to believe that everything that can be done is not being done at this stage. We have to reflect on the fact that we are talking about very difficult circumstances from many years ago. I repeat the point that somebody knows who carried out those actions, and anybody who has information that would help to recover the victims should provide it.

Judges: Complaints

2. **Mr McCallister** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is aware of any complaints made to his Department of unfair treatment or personal bias by judges in court cases. (AQO 5030/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am informed of any complaints that my office receives from individuals or their elected representatives in respect of the conduct of members of the judiciary. To safeguard the principle of judicial independence and the effective operation of the justice system, I have no authority to address complaints about judicial office holders. Any complaints of that nature are referred to the Office of the Lord Chief Justice, as he has sole statutory responsibility for determining complaints about the conduct of judicial office holders.

Mr McCallister: The Minister will be aware, having presumably agreed to the Pledge of Office, that 1.4 (cd) states that a Minister is:

"to uphold the rule of law based as it is on the fundamental principles of fairness, impartiality and democratic accountability, including support for policing and the courts".

Does the Minister believe that the Health Minister was in breach of the Pledge of Office when he questioned whether he would get a fair hearing in the Court of Appeal?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is an absolutely different question, but I will leave it to the Minister's discretion.

Mr Ford: I can say only that the operation of the ministerial code is not for me to police on behalf of the Assembly or the Executive. It is certainly the case that Ministers collectively, and in the issue that he highlights, the Health Minister specifically, may wish to reflect on his recent comments about the independence of the judiciary, but it is not for me to determine on behalf of any other body what his actions should be.

Mr Givan: The Minister will be aware of the evidence provided to the Justice Committee by His Honour Judge Marrinan, who said that the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) acted irrationally, unfairly and illegally in the appointment of a High Court judge. Is the Minister concerned, on the basis of the evidence provided to the Committee, about the way in which NIJAC operates, given that its chairman is the Lord Chief Justice?

Mr Ford: I am certainly aware of the Justice Committee meeting, at which it appeared to take a significant length of time to take evidence from Judge Marrinan. However, the issue is not one for the Department of Justice, because NIJAC is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). I am concerned that there appears to be a breakdown in the relationship between Judge Marrinan and other members of the judiciary, but it is not for me to go into the detail of that. I will certainly be interested to see what the Justice Committee determines after its consideration of the issues relating to the appointment process.

Mr Gardiner: Has the Minister any plans to review the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission?

Mr Ford: No. As I have just said, NIJAC is an arm's-length NDPB of OFMDFM, so it is not for me to consider a review of it.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Fra McCann is not in his place.

Dissident Unionists: Definition

4. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Justice to clarify what he means when he uses the term dissident unionists. (AQO 5032/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are a small number of disaffected people on both sides of the community who are seeking to take Northern Ireland back to the past. We have seen their recklessness and willingness to endanger life, whether that is through acts of terrorism, organised criminality or public disorder. The term "dissident republicans" is well understood. During the previous oral questions to me, I used the term "dissident unionists" in a reply to Alban Maginness to refer to unionists who also engage in criminal behaviour and do not accept the current political arrangements. Neither group of dissidents can be allowed to thwart the progress that Northern Ireland has made. They need to see the futility of their violent actions and pursue exclusively peaceful means. Nobody engaged in democratic politics should do or say anything that would encourage the dissidents.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 5 has been withdrawn.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for his answer. The term "dissident unionist" is offensive to law-abiding unionists, and I wish you to put it beyond all doubt and confirm that you do not regard those engaged in legitimate peaceful protests, such as those about the flags issue and the ongoing protests at Twaddell Avenue, as dissident unionists and that we must all be very careful in our choice of words.

Mr Ford: I regard those who break the law, whether or not they claim to be peaceful, as dissident.

Mr Dallat: My question has almost become superfluous because the Minister has made his view absolutely clear. Does he agree with me that those involved in loyalism who are causing disorder and mayhem are, in fact, dissidents?

Mr Ford: Mr Dallat has correctly identified the way in which I used the phrase last time and the way in which I have used it again today. I believe that Members sitting here with a democratic mandate need to be very careful that they do nothing to encourage such dissidents.

The Disappeared: Columba McVeigh

6. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Justice what steps he will take to encourage those with information relating to the abduction and murder of Columba McVeigh to pass this information on to the relevant authorities in order to help find his remains. (AQO 5034/11-15)

Mr Ford: The family of Columba McVeigh has suffered greatly throughout the past 38 years. It is a matter of great sadness that both his parents passed away without being accorded the dignity of giving their son a Christian burial. His family and the families of the other disappeared are to be commended for their continued efforts to establish the truth behind the events that led to the death of their loved ones. The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains is the body established to help in those cases. I encourage anyone who has any information that would help in any way to bring an end to the suffering of those families to make that information known to the relevant authorities.

Mr McGlone: I thank the Minister for his answer. Those who carried out any such form of nefarious abduction, murder and subsequent burial were responsible for one of the worst abuses of our civil rights that has ever existed. Would the Minister be prepared, following on from his answer, to meet the McVeigh family or its representatives?

Mr Ford: In my time as Minister, I have met a number of families, including those who were bereaved or suffered in other ways because of various aspects of criminal activity and terrorism over the years. I am quite happy to extend that to the McVeigh family and its representatives.

Lord Morrow: I welcome the Minister's answer and the assurance that he has given to the House today. I wonder whether he will go a little bit further by further reassuring the House that he, in particular, and his Department are doing everything they possibly can to have a resolution to the nightmare that the McVeigh family has gone through for numerous years. As one who has met them, I am acutely aware of the sorrow and grief they are experiencing. If the Minister were to go the second mile on this — and I am not saying that he is not — it would bring some degree of reassurance to that family.

Mr Ford: I certainly take Lord Morrow's point. I am not sure that much can be done by my Department as opposed to agencies such as the PSNI and an Garda Síochána to deal with the specific concerns that family members have, but I am certainly prepared to meet them and see whether there is anything that they would wish that can be done by my Department.

Mr Cree: When the Minister meets his colleagues from the Republic of Ireland, does the issue of the disappeared appear on the agenda regularly?

Mr Ford: The issue of the disappeared does not appear regularly on the agenda for Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) meetings with my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality. However, the ongoing issues of terrorism feature; we look at a joined-up approach across the island. Each of us ensuring that we fight criminality in all its various forms is part of the issue. The specific responsibilities for the recovery of remains are not for my Department specifically, but ongoing issues about how we address those problems are very much part of our concern.

Maghaberry: Death in Custody

7. **Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Prison Ombudsman following the death in custody of Colin Bell in HMP Maghaberry. (AQO 5035/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Prisoner Ombudsman's report into the death of Colin Bell was published in January 2009 and made 44 recommendations. The Northern Ireland Prison Service accepted 43 of the recommendations, and they have all been addressed. The Prison Service takes its responsibility for the safe custody of all those in its care extremely seriously. The safety and care of vulnerable prisoners continues to be a priority.

Every death in custody represents a personal tragedy for someone, and lessons can be learned in every case. I am satisfied that the Prison Service has made significant progress in that respect. It has implemented a number of measures to deal with the serious failings identified in the ombudsman's report.

Mr Spratt: The Minister will be aware that, in some of the recommendations on procedures, a number of prison warders were charged by the PSNI. In fact, they were used as scapegoats by the PSNI and the Prison Service. Will the Minister look at that, given the fact that at least one of those men was suffering from cancer at the time? It caused undue and added stress to a person already seriously ill.

Mr Ford: I cannot accept that an appropriate disciplinary response can be regarded as scapegoating. I am also very aware that there is a criminal case before the courts today on this issue, so it would be unwise to say anything more.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. I reassure him that the Justice Committee likes to think that it gives significant time to all the witnesses who appear in front of it. We do not select particular ones and give them more attention than others.

Does the Minister agree that the death of Colin Bell in Maghaberry could and should have been avoided?

2.15 pm

Mr Ford: On Mr McCartney's opening remarks, I will say briefly that any session with any individual witness that lasts longer than an entire Executive meeting seems to me to be a fairly significant contribution.

On the serious point that he raises about the death of Colin Bell, the recommendations made by the ombudsman and the implementation of all but one of those recommendations by the Prison Service are clearly an indication that the death should not have happened — that Colin Bell should not have died — and that there were serious issues to address concerning how vulnerable prisoners are cared for. I believe that those lessons are being learned, but we are also well aware that prisons in every part of the world will see deaths in custody. We need to do all that we can to eliminate them.

Mr Rogers: What further steps are being taken to assist prisoners who have mental health issues to ensure that they get effective treatment for their illness?

Mr Ford: I can assure Mr Rogers that the issue of mental health is one that is being taken very seriously. A number of the recommendations from the prison review team, led by Dame Anne Owers, are on specific aspects of healthcare, including mental healthcare. At the most recent meeting of the oversight group, we had a detailed response from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust on the work that is being done there, and the permanent secretary of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) sits on the oversight group to ensure that those lessons are being learned. Only earlier today, I was discussing ongoing healthcare issues with the director general of the Prison Service. Therefore, it is fully acknowledged that there is a lot of work to be done, but that work is under way.

Mr Nesbitt: To follow on from Mr Rogers's question and the Minister's answer, on foot of his discussions, which he has just outlined, how much is being spent on healthcare in the prison system, and what proportion is being spent on mental health issues?

Mr Ford: I am afraid that Mr Nesbitt will have to ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety that question.

PCSP: Paramilitary Members

8. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Justice what action he can take to remove any members of an illegal paramilitary organisation from continuing to serve on any policing and community safety partnership. (AQO 5036/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Policing Board has responsibility for appointing independent members to policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) and the four Belfast district PCSPs, in line with the requirements of a statutory code of practice issued by my Department under the Justice Act 2011. Following appointment, independent members can be removed if, for example, they fail to disclose a conviction or have demonstrably acted in breach of the terms of a declaration against terrorism; and/or they are convicted of a criminal offence. In line with the requirements of the 2011 Act, responsibility for removing independent members rests

with the Policing Board, or the relevant council with the approval of the board.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his reply. What he is actually saying is that he has no power of removal and that the Policing Board has some power. Is it not a scandal that a well-known member of an illegal organisation now sits on the Belfast policing board? Is that not something that ordinary members of the public would rightly object to?

Mr Ford: I need to be cautious about referring to whether someone is or is not a member of an illegal organisation and about which individual Mr Maginness may be referring to, but the arrangements for removal are quite clear if someone has demonstrably failed to uphold the declaration against terrorism made on appointment to the PCSP or the district PCSP. That is the way in which the law as was put through the House is currently formulated. If there were changes to be made regarding vetting prior to appointment, they would have to be considered by the House at a later stage. I certainly understand the concerns that are being expressed by Mr Maginness if that is the feeling of sections of the community about some individual members. The key issue is to ensure that we see all members of PCSPs acting to uphold their responsibilities, acting lawfully and upholding the rule of law and the democratic institutions of the state.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answers so far. In the light of recent events in Coleraine and east Belfast, what discussions has the Minister had with the Chief Constable about illegal loyalist activity and the status of the UVF ceasefire?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is a totally separate question, and answering it is at the Minister's discretion.

Mr Ford: I think that we need to be careful how we actually handle those particular issues. The specific matter of a UVF ceasefire or lack of UVF ceasefire and issues of specification in the organisation are not for the Department of Justice but remain with the Secretary of State. However, the Member and others will appreciate that, naturally, when I meet the Chief Constable, I discuss a range of issues, including criminal and terrorist activity.

Human Trafficking

9. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the 63% decrease in the number of referrals for human trafficking between 2011 and 2012, as stated in the second report of the interdepartmental ministerial group on human trafficking. (AQO 5037/11-15)

Mr Ford: The figures for referrals of potential victims of human trafficking to the national referral mechanism (NRM) can fluctuate. In Northern Ireland, where the number of referrals is relatively low, any fluctuation, such as where there are multiple referrals from a single case, can have a disproportionate effect on the figures. In addition, the clandestine nature of human trafficking makes it very difficult to assess with any degree of certainty the real level of the crime. The level in 2012 was lower than in 2011, but there is already an increase in 2013.

One factor in recognising victims is the need to raise awareness of the issue and how to recognise its signs with

both front line professionals and the wider public. The cross-border forum on human trafficking, which my Department co-hosted with the Irish Department of Justice and Equality last month, looked at the challenges of identifying victims of human trafficking. Key messages emerging from that forum reinforced the need for training and awareness; the importance of a multi-agency approach; the role of education; and the need to build victims' trust and confidence in the criminal justice system and the statutory bodies that can help them. My Department is working with partners to address those issues.

Progress includes the launch of an education resource and support for a number of awareness-raising campaigns and events. Training of front line professionals has been prioritised by the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), and my Department has produced a leaflet to inform victims of how and where help can be accessed. The OCTF has commissioned research on referrals from Northern Ireland since the NRM was established so that we are better able to understand and respond to emerging threats and victims' needs.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. How can the public assist in the campaign against human trafficking?

Mr Ford: I think that the key way in which the public can assist is by being informed of the issue and aware of the kinds of signs that apply to trafficking, whether it is the trafficking that we see in forced labour, particularly in agriculture and horticulture, or people living in a house where there are too many people coming and going and unusual activity that may or may not relate to the sex trade. As well as becoming informed, people need to not be frightened to make their concerns known to the relevant agencies, normally the PSNI, to ensure that, if there are concerns about people being trafficked, they are followed up at an early enough stage and not left until people have perhaps moved on or other changes have happened. There is no doubt that the numbers that we are talking about in Northern Ireland are relatively low. However, the scale of the problem is not the real issue. The issue is the horrendous crime that trafficking is, whatever form it takes. It is therefore important that the public are aware, vigilant and respond.

Lord Morrow: There are many issues about which the Minister and I disagree on how to take the matter forward. However, there is, of late, clear evidence that the PSNI is taking measures — perhaps he initiated those — to create awareness of human trafficking, which, unfortunately, goes further than across Northern Ireland. Is this but a first step? Is it the Minister's intention to take further action to create awareness of the awful scourge of human trafficking?

Mr Ford: I certainly appreciate the work that Lord Morrow is doing. While he highlights areas in which we disagree, we can also highlight significant areas in which we agree on the matter.

My intention is that we continue to highlight the issue through, for example, the Department's engagement group working with a number of NGOs. I think that he will have read, if other Members have not, the report of the interdepartmental ministerial group (IDMG), which was

published at the time of the last meeting that I attended in London and on which I reported on at my last Question Time. It shows that a significant amount of work is being done in every region of the UK. I have already highlighted, in my primary answer to Mr Lynch, the work that we do on a North/South basis to cooperate. It is clear that good work is being done, but we require a partnership of the statutory agencies alongside the concerned voluntary groups and individuals to ensure that we get the message out.

Ms Lo: First, I want to commend the Minister for working so closely with his colleagues in other jurisdictions to ensure a joined-up approach. Is he looking at the Home Office modern slavery Bill, which is going through Westminster at the moment, to see if there are elements of that Bill that could be extended to or replicated in Northern Ireland?

Mr Ford: I thank my colleague for that question. She is slightly premature in that the modern slavery Bill has not yet been introduced in Westminster. However, the Home Office is engaging in a number of areas around it. There are provisions in it that, if they apply across the UK, will have relevance for us.

One of the key issues on which there is a slight disagreement — only a slight technical disagreement — between Lord Morrow and me is the rapporteur mechanism and whether there should be a rapporteur for Northern Ireland or we should fit into a UK arrangement. If the Home Office carries through on the promises that it is making in respect of an independent rapporteur for the UK as a whole, the rapporteur may well be able to fulfil a significant function for Northern Ireland in looking at devolved and non-devolved matters, and that would be beneficial to us. However, we really need to see the detail of what the Home Office plans. I will look at that, and my officials will engage with the Home Office, Lord Morrow and others on how we carry it through.

Court Cases: Statutory Time Limits

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Stewart Dickson.

Mr McCarthy: Question 10.

10. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on his plans to introduce statutory time limits in youth cases. (AQO 5038/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am happy to answer Kieran McCarthy as well as Stewart Dickson. [Laughter.] I am pleased to report that plans for introducing statutory time limits (STLs) are well advanced and that I intend to launch a public consultation on our proposals shortly. As developed by the Criminal Justice Board, the proposals are to introduce a single time limit for both charge and summons starting at the commencement of formal proceedings, which is the date on which a young person is formally charged or, for summons cases, the date on which the complaint charging the suspect is made to the court. Once a time limit has been activated, justice agencies will have 120 days to reach the start of trial. That time limit would apply to around 70% of the processes that we measure in the justice system.

When I announced in February 2012 that I planned to introduce STLs, I assured Members that any proposals would include specific safeguards to protect victims and the interests of justice. I, therefore, propose to exclude certain serious offences from the scope of STLs, with a

particular focus on offences involving children or vulnerable adults. In addition, I propose to provide the court with powers to extend a time limit in the interests of justice.

In developing the consultation, my officials have undertaken an extensive programme of pre-consultation with a range of stakeholders representing a broad spectrum of public groups and organisations with a particular interest in young people. That has been extremely useful in giving us a clear understanding of the issues for young people and their families and of how STLs, along with the wider reforms that I am bringing forward, could make a positive difference in their lives.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Dickson for a short supplementary.

Mr Dickson: Minister, you referred to youth engagement clinics in your original announcement: how are those progressing?

Mr Ford: Youth engagement clinics were part of the key work to improve performance prior to the formal introduction of statutory time limits and were piloted in the Belfast area earlier this year. They were seen to have significant benefits in diverting cases away from formal proceedings and speeding up the justice system. We now seek to see how they can roll out across Northern Ireland generally.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for oral questions. We move on to topical questions.

2.30 pm

Victims: Parole Commissioner Consultation

1. **Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is satisfied with the current arrangements used by the Parole Commissioners to consult with the families of murder victims about the release on licence of perpetrators. (AQT 381/11-15)

Mr Ford: A complex set of arrangements is managed through the victim information scheme. I believe that those arrangements normally work extremely well in ensuring that families are made aware as individuals progress through the system, particularly with issues such as temporary release. However, there are always circumstances in which the information is perhaps not supplied in a way that is most helpful. That issue is being addressed within the Department.

Mr Nesbitt: I am afraid that the Minister's words are probably of little comfort to people like Linda Brown, whose daughter Nichola Dickson was murdered in Ballycarry in 2003. Linda only discovered that the perpetrator was out on licence after being told that he had been spotted out and about in the centre of Belfast. Can the Minister expand on what he is doing and, particularly, whether he will catch up with England and Wales as far as the EU directive on the rights of victims is concerned and allow victims to participate in parole hearings?

Mr Ford: The issue of the direct participation of victims in parole hearings is at a different stage. Certainly Mr Nesbitt has highlighted a particular issue where there was a problem in that the way in which information was supplied about somebody in the third phase of the pre-release scheme was, perhaps, not entirely easy to understand. That is the point that I referred to in my principal answer

about ensuring that matters are dealt with differently. Clearly, that kind of issue needs to be kept under review as part of the ongoing work with victims and witnesses to ensure that, for example, the joined-up issues around bringing together the three victim information schemes is done in the best way to assist victims, whether they are direct victims or have been bereaved through murder or manslaughter.

PSNI: Agency Staff

2. **Mr Maskey** asked the Minister of Justice which options he or his Department explored with the PSNI as alternatives to another directly awarded contract to Grafton Recruitment for agency staff at the end of this year. (AQT 382/11-15)

Mr Ford: Unless there is an issue about the Department having a formal role in approving a business case because of the figures involved, the issue of direct award contracts is one for the PSNI. It is not an issue for the Department to directly supervise.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for that answer. Before I ask my supplementary question, I want to note that it is very interesting that the Minister routinely takes that approach to every organisation, with the exception of the so-called National Crime Agency. Notwithstanding that point, given the ongoing controversy about this lucrative yet non-competitive contract, will the Minister assure the House that his permanent secretary will not endorse this contract?

Mr Ford: I assure Mr Maskey and the House that the correct procedures will be followed by the Department, the Minister and the permanent secretary. If there is a role for the Minister, it will be carried out properly; if there is a role for the permanent secretary, it will be carried out properly.

National Crime Agency

3. **Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Justice what progress is being made to ensure that Northern Ireland plays its full part in the National Crime Agency, and rather than continual platitudes in the House about trying to go after people who break the law, when we have the opportunity to deal with lawbreakers and to bring them to a system whereby they are accountable for their deeds and their ill-gotten gains, we make it reality rather than just words. (AQT 383/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have certainly told the House on a number of occasions about the engagement that I have had around the National Crime Agency. I continue to believe that it is vital that we get the full benefits of having the NCA operational in Northern Ireland in the devolved sphere as well as, of course, its current position of being active in the non-devolved sphere without any oversight from our policing architecture.

On 25 October, I wrote to Sinn Féin Members setting out some responses to questions that had been raised. On 22 October, I was given an undertaking by members of the SDLP that they would provide me with a paper setting out some of their concerns. I remain active and keen to engage on those issues, but, at the moment, the ball is in the court of those two parties and not the Department. I assure the House that the Department will respond

speedily to any representations made by any party in the House.

Mr Storey: I thank the Minister for clarifying that. It will be interesting to see the response of those two parties, who talk much about lawbreakers, and whether they are prepared to come up with suggestions on how this vital element of our structures against criminality and criminals should be implemented. Will the Minister assure the House that it will not just be about addressing issues of accountability but about real and meaningful progress to ensure that Northern Ireland plays a central role in ensuring that criminals and their assets are pursued and criminals put out of business?

Mr Ford: It is my intention to ensure that we have the National Crime Agency operating in every respect in Northern Ireland in support of the PSNI and other agencies and playing its part in the Organised Crime Task Force alongside other agencies, whether they be local and devolved or UK-wide agencies operating in Northern Ireland. That should be the ambition for us all. That has to be done in recognition of the specific policing architecture in Northern Ireland. I have said on many occasions in the House and in negotiations with Whitehall Ministers that I remain committed to seeing that happen. I welcome the fact that I have had positive comments on that from all parties in the House. I just hope that we can carry that through and get the details sorted out from those who are asking questions but have not responded to the last points that I put to them. I trust that we can do that as speedily as possible.

Sick Leave: DOJ

4. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the high levels of sick leave in his Department and in the Northern Ireland Prison Service. (AQT 384/11-15)

Mr Ford: Mr Anderson correctly highlights why sick leave is seen as being at a high level in the DOJ: it is because prison officers are classed as departmental employees in the production of the statistics. We can all accept that there are circumstances in which somebody who has a relatively straightforward desk-bound policy job may be able to go to work but, with a similar sickness, would be unable to work as a prison officer. That is almost the total part of the reason why DOJ absentee figures are higher than the Civil Service average. The issue is being addressed in the core Department, as in other Departments, and in the Prison Service. However, we have to recognise the circumstances in which prison officers work and accept that their rate of sickness will always be higher than that of other staff.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for his response. I understand that the Northern Ireland Prison Service predicts a further increase in sick leave in 2013-14. Do you agree that sick leave levels are being made worse by the low staff morale caused by the speed and nature of the prison reform programme?

Mr Ford: I have seen no sign that there is low staff morale because of the prison reform programme. Indeed, what I see is that, with a significant input of over 300 new staff and 200 staff regraded into the new custody officer post, there is significant impetus to see change happen in the Prison Service. Undoubtedly, some members were more accustomed to the difficult duties that they had to

perform some years ago, and for them that is a challenge. However, I see significant improvements being made and a solid management leadership driving forward the change that this society needs to see.

Solicitors: Fees

5. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is aware of the concern that the review of solicitors' fees in the family law remit and their possible reduction might lead to the closure of some law practices and, subsequently, difficulties around access to justice for some people. (AQT 385/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am aware that concerns have been expressed by some people about the potential closure of solicitors' firms. The reality is that I have a duty to ensure that the budget of the Department of Justice is used to provide the justice services that this society needs as a whole. In round figures, on devolution, the justice budget was £75 million and expenditure just over £100 million. Despite the reforms to criminal justice fees, the budget of £75 million is still being exceeded, with expenditure in the region of £100 million. Every penny that is spent in that respect is money that is not being directed to other services by the Department. When we compare fees in this jurisdiction with those in England and Wales, which is the most comparable figure, we see that we spend significantly more. There is no doubt that that position is unsustainable.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the difficulty that law graduates have in finding employment or placements in solicitors' offices, which some people would say is because of some of these cuts, would the Minister advise young people to go into the legal profession?

Mr Ford: It is not for me to advise young people on their career choice, except possibly the four young adults who are my children.

Individuals have to decide for themselves, and there is no doubt that some law graduates have found career opportunities with some of the international legal firms that are establishing back office services in Northern Ireland. Other aspects of life have changed in recent years, and I am not sure that it is my role, as Justice Minister, to guarantee that small solicitors' firms will continue to operate as they have been doing. I see lawyers — solicitors and barristers — looking at different ways to operate, such as developing alternative dispute resolution services. The important thing is that we get the best services for the people of Northern Ireland in an affordable way that meets the needs of this society for the next few years.

Desertcreat Development

6. **Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Justice whether, given the concerns highlighted by the Public Accounts Committee about the contract for the rebuild of the Lyric Theatre, he has any concerns about the Desertcreat proposals, in that the bidder-designate for that contract might be the same company. (AQT 386/11-15)

Mr Ford: As I understand it, there is not, at this stage, a preferred bidder or a preferred bidder-designate. From the work being done by the programme board, my information is that robust checks are being carried out on the bidders who might be involved in the final contract. Indeed, the

COPE in DHSSPS has been carrying out a lot of that work on behalf of the programme board. The key issue is to ensure that we get Desertcreat college built as fast as possible and meeting the needs of the three services.

Mr Copeland: My source of information was the Justice Committee, to which, I believe, some of your departmental officials used the term last week. However, given the significant budget overspends that have dogged Desertcreat thus far, does this have the potential to provide further delay? If so, what steps will you take to prevent that?

Mr Ford: I believe that we have got matters back on track. There certainly was a problem in that the consultants appointed made a significant error in the estimated costs and those who were supervising failed to pick up on that error. A lot of work has been done by the programme team, the two Departments and the three responsible bodies to look at how costs can be taken out without cutting back on the functionality of the college. I believe that we have reached the position where we have a scheme that will represent value for money and can go ahead.

Dissident Republican Threat

7. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the threat posed by dissident republican terrorists, particularly in light of recent events. (AQT 387/11-15)

Mr Ford: The position remains as it has been for some time: the threat from republican terrorists remains severe, which means that attacks are believed to be likely. We have seen a number of significant attacks in recent weeks. The use of parcel bombs put at risk the lives of a number of people. Whomever they were addressed to, they were never going to reach those people, but the lives of postal workers and administrative staff in a variety of government and police offices were put at risk. That shows how desperate some people are. The deliberate attempt to murder police officers in Strabane this weekend was clearly a sign that that threat is being carried through. We should also recognise the extremely good work being done by the PSNI, whether it is in some of the specialist branches or at community level, to counter that threat.

2.45 pm

Social Development

Social Development: Pilot Schemes

1. **Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the pilot schemes his Department has introduced since May 2011. (AQO 5044/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): I understand that the Member has clarified that his question relates to housing and regeneration pilot schemes. In that respect, my Department has introduced the following pilot schemes since May 2011: the boiler replacement scheme, which is finished; phases 1 and 2 of the affordable warmth scheme, of which phase 1 is finished, and phase 2 is ongoing; the pay-as-you-go pilot, which is finished; the empty homes pilot, which is finished; the FirstBuyNI scheme, which is finished; the affordable home loans fund, which is ongoing; six Building Successful Communities pilots, which are ongoing; the

Resurgam social enterprise pilot project, which is ongoing; the Tyrone/Donaghy partnership virtual incubation and software training academy (VISTA), which is ongoing; the Development Trusts Northern Ireland community asset transfer, which is ongoing; and two signature projects through the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) Delivering Social Change programme, namely nurture units and social enterprise incubation units, which are both ongoing.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he outline how many of those schemes have been introduced in his North Belfast constituency? Indeed, in the wider list of total schemes, will he get back to me on the location of each scheme and where they were introduced?

Mr McCausland: If the Member had listened to the fulsome list that I read out, he would be aware that the boiler replacement scheme operated right across the Province; phases 1 and 2 of the affordable warmth scheme are being taken forward in a number of areas; the pay-as-you-go pilot was most certainly not in North Belfast; the empty homes pilot was spread across several constituencies; the FirstBuyNI scheme was Province-wide; and the affordable home loans fund was widespread. None of the pilots was restricted to one constituency, and, in fact, most of them were Province-wide.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. How much funding was allocated to the affordable home loans scheme, and how many homes will it provide for?

Mr McCausland: My Department received £19 million of loan funding from the Treasury over 2012-13 and 2013-14 under the Get Britain Building banner. That money has been allocated to three housing associations. It will provide interest-free loans to the housing associations to develop new affordable housing throughout Northern Ireland between now and 2019-2020. Outline proposals from the associations indicate that funding at that level could provide up to 620 new homes, including bringing up to 150 empty homes back into use as affordable homes.

Those homes will be targeted at first-time buyers and those returning to the market, giving them an all-important step onto the housing ladder and helping to promote economic growth and assisting the construction industry to create and maintain jobs during a period when that sector is under pressure. My Department is working with housing associations to ensure that plans are in place that would allow them to commence 100 new homes in the financial year 2013-14.

Mr Eastwood: How many of those schemes have been subject to a full equality impact assessment (EQIA) or have been screened for an EQIA?

Mr McCausland: The schemes are pilots. We are dealing with issues such as energy efficiency and so on to bring homes back into use, which affect every part of Northern Ireland. Rather than getting bogged down in the technicalities of EQIAs, I am more interested in addressing the real needs of people. The tragedy is that, during the years when the Member's party had charge of this Department, those issues were ignored.

Housing Executive: Maintenance Contracts

2. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the reasons for the significant delays in issuing new maintenance contracts. (AQO 5045/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for his question. In May 2013, the chairman of the Housing Executive advised me that an internal investigation had indicated that an estimated £18 million had been overpaid to planned maintenance contractors. In June 2013, following evidence of substantial overcharging, the board of the Housing Executive commissioned an external independent review of how the organisation had been dealing with planned maintenance contracts over the past five years. It advised that until the issue was satisfactorily resolved, the four planned maintenance contractors would not receive any new contracts from the Housing Executive.

The Housing Executive's board has asked for three things to be in place before moving forward to make appointments: an agreement to repay any overpayments found to have been made; an agreement on what additional sample inspections are to be done; and an agreement on how the sample inspection results will be applied to allow a robust estimate of the financial position to be reached.

The first agreement is in place, and the Housing Executive is waiting for a response from the contractors on the proposals made on points 2 and 3. If agreement is reached over the next two weeks, the Housing Executive's board will be in a position to appoint contractors to the framework at its November meeting.

Mr Elliott: Can the Minister inform the House how much the overpayments that have been paid back amount to?

Mr McCausland: I ask the Member to show a little patience because there is a figure in the report produced by the firm of consultants Campbell Tickell. As I said, that report was commissioned by the Housing Executive. Therefore, the figures will be known to the chair of the Housing Executive and the board. The information will then be given to the Social Development Committee on Thursday, when it will receive copies of the report. It would be premature for me to quote the figure today because that information will be disclosed. There is an embargo on the report until Thursday, and I prefer not to breach that.

It is true to say that it is not a good report — there can be no doubt about that. It is a good report in itself, but its subject is dire. It does not make good reading and mentions a very substantial overpayment figure.

Mr McCrea: Can the Minister explain how any contractors alleged by the Housing Executive to have received overpayments were successful in securing new contracts with the Housing Executive?

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for the question. There is a balancing exercise to be carried out by the executive: it must ensure that it does all that it can to protect the public purse while ensuring a good service to tenants. There is a difficulty there. In June, the Housing Executive board determined that the planned maintenance contractors would not be awarded any new contracts until the overpayment issue had been resolved. Since that time, the Housing Executive has held meetings with the contractors. One outcome of the meetings, and this is

important, is that the contractors have agreed to repay any overpayments.

The next step is to quantify the agreed amount. As a result of the progress made, the Housing Executive has made progress with the contractors. It has been able to let the new double-glazing contracts. However, the Housing Executive board must receive further assurances from officers and contractors before new planned maintenance contracts are awarded. As I said, it is hoped that that will be dealt with — it will certainly be discussed — at the Housing Executive board's meeting later this month.

Mrs D Kelly: Does the Minister continue to stand over his claim of overpayment to the tune of £18 million? If so, does he acknowledge the widespread concern and hardship caused to small firms facing cash flow problems with the bank on the basis of his allegation?

Mr McCausland: The figure quoted was the figure provided by the chair of the Housing Executive. I am sure that the Member is aware of that fact. The Member is also a member of the Social Development Committee, and I assume that she has already received her copy of the Campbell Tickell report ahead of the meeting on Thursday.

If she has not, she will receive it in the next day or so, because although the report will be embargoed until Thursday, there will be an opportunity, I am sure, for members to look at it before the meeting.

On Thursday, the figure as estimated by Campbell Tickell will be disclosed. I have already said, in answer to a previous question, that the report does not make good reading. It identifies, as I indicated, very serious shortcomings in the Housing Executive over a sustained period reaching back more than a decade. It shows that there was a serious shortcoming in how the Egan contracts, introduced back in 2001, were managed. That led to the sort of situation that we saw.

The figure, as estimated by Campbell Tickell, will be disclosed on Thursday, and as I already said, the report does not make good reading because it shows, quite clearly, that a substantial overpayment was made. As far as I am concerned, it would not matter whether it was £5 million, £10 million, £15 million or £20 million. Whatever it was, it was far too much.

Housing: Shared Developments

3. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister for Social Development how the proposals for shared neighbourhood developments, announced as part of the Together: Building a United Community, differ from existing Northern Ireland Housing Executive policies. (AQO 5046/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department provides funding to the Housing Executive to deliver a shared community programme. The objectives of the programme are to reduce housing segregation, to develop, support and sustain current shared communities and to increase community cohesion, bridging and participation. Thirty existing Housing Executive estates, with 60,000 residents, are supported through that programme and a further 20 shared communities are being developed and supported.

For new social housing developments, the Housing Executive identifies developments that are deemed suitable for shared designation and works with the relevant

housing association to promote and develop the scheme, subject to residents' agreement, as shared housing. To date, that approach has delivered 11 shared newbuild schemes. My Department has also been tasked with taking forward proposals to create 10 new shared neighbourhood developments, as set out by OFMDFM in the 'Together: Building a United Community' document.

In taking that work forward, I have asked my officials, when examining the current shared communities programme, to identify what lessons can be learnt from the good work done to date to develop greater levels of sharing within social housing, and we are considering the feasibility of up to 17 potential shared sites. We will also examine whether there is scope, and indeed a need, to encourage similar activity within private housing development.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister. The 'Together: Building a United Community' document has raised more questions than it answers. Will the Minister explain whether a budget has now been decided upon, whether locations have been picked or even suggested for pilots and whether dates have been chosen for when the work will commence?

Mr McCausland: I tried to make it clear but perhaps I was not clear enough. This is still very much a work in progress. We are looking at 17 possible sites, but it will take some time to work through the exact details of those. This is not a question about money. Whether you build houses for what, in effect, turns out to be a segregated community or you build the same number of houses and try to push that as a shared community, the cost of house building is not going to be very much different. So, it is not a cost issue; it is attitude issue and an issue of how you approach it. Essentially, at the core of this, it is about getting the consent, agreement and commitment of the people who want to live in that shared community.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. Is preferential status given to applicants who specifically want to live in a shared housing area?

Mr McCausland: All social housing in Northern Ireland is allocated on the basis of need. That is the legal position, and that is how it is. It ensures that the allocation of housing is compliant with Northern Ireland's equality legislation. We cannot socially engineer mixed housing. It is simply impossible to do that. That is why I have tasked the Housing Executive, when working with the housing associations and local communities, to support and encourage them to see the benefits of shared housing.

3.00 pm

Mr A Maginness: In implementing what I think is a very bold and good approach to integrated housing, how will the Minister guarantee that he gets that mix of integrated residents in a particular area? How is that going to be achieved, particularly given the criteria of need that the Minister has just outlined?

Mr McCausland: The Member will be aware that, as I said earlier, there are already, to date, 11 new shared schemes. It is purely dependent on how you advertise the location. The case in Antrim is an example. There was a widespread call across the Province asking people whether they wanted to come and live in what would be a shared community, and people came from different areas to that. That was their choice. That is really as far as you can go. You can encourage but you cannot coerce. That is

the line that needs to be drawn and recognised. We cannot give extra points or do anything in that regard. I am sure that the Member would be opposed to altering how houses are allocated. The key thing is to encourage people and to spread the net widely. It has worked better in some cases than in others. It is an area in which there are no guarantees.

Bloomfield Estate: Historical Debt

4. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Social Development what plans he has for the historical debt relating to the Bloomfield estate transfer and the upcoming transfer of 2,000 homes. (AQO 5047/11-15)

Mr McCausland: On the Bloomfield bungalows scheme specifically, I am pleased to report that the stock transfer of the properties to Oaklee Housing Association is progressing as planned following the recent tenant ballot, which resulted in an overwhelming majority — 96.7% of respondents who voted — in favour of the transfer proposal. Therefore, it was a pretty overwhelming vote in favour in the case of Bloomfield.

It is not possible to determine separately what portion of the current loan debt balance relates specifically to the properties included in the Bloomfield transfer and other potential transfers. In the past, the Housing Executive raised loans on an annual basis. Loans were not raised for specific newbuild and improvement schemes. Given those circumstances, there is no plan as referred to in your question. The debt, if any, will remain with the Housing Executive. The arrangement for rent arrears for any property in the stock transfer programme is that all arrears due to the Housing Executive from the tenants at the date of transfer will remain with the Housing Executive.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for his answer. Regarding the wider proposal for potential stock transfer when the Housing Executive potentially stops being the landlord of those properties, how will the historical debt be managed? Is that being considered as a factor in any business case for such a proposal?

Mr McCausland: We are very much in the early stages of the process of reconfiguring social housing in Northern Ireland and the role of the Housing Executive. There is a series of work programmes being taken forward looking at different aspects and areas of work. In spring next year, I hope to have some idea of the thinking that is emerging, but at this stage, it would be premature of me to comment. A lot of the issues are complex and will need to be looked at, and I have nothing really to add at this time. It will be a matter that will come forward in due course.

Mr Dunne: What are the benefits of transferring those Housing Executive properties to housing associations? I would also like to put on record our appreciation to the Minister for the time that he has put into the project. It is long awaited and long overdue, and the senior citizens deserve it.

Mr McCausland: The transfer programme will bring forward much-needed improvements to raise the standards of some of our poorest quality housing stock. Overall, the standard of social housing in Northern Ireland is better than it is anywhere else in the United Kingdom, but we do have a significant number of properties that are still of a poor standard and that require work. Those tend to be older, as opposed to newer, properties.

The nature of the works to be carried out on any particular scheme will be dependent on the outcome of a stock condition survey that will be carried out on each scheme and on other maintenance works that might have already been completed on the property. For example, improvements for tenants could include replacement of windows, refurbishment of windows and bathrooms and the upgrading of heating systems and insulation measures. In the end, it will provide tenants with high-quality, decent, modern homes that are fit for purpose. That should, indeed, be our desire. The sad thing is that, for many years, some such issues were overlooked. However, we are really getting to grips with them now.

Mr Cree: Will the Minister advise how the estimated value of the houses that are to be transferred compares with the estimated cost of the refurbishment work that it is proposed that the housing association will undertake?

Mr McCausland: There is no simple answer to that question, because it will depend very much on the amount of work that is to be done to each of the properties. It will vary from case to case, and the work will be more substantial in some cases than in others. That is why, when I listed some of the work, I quoted the range of work that might be considered. However, it will very much depend on each case.

At the end of the day, the real advantage here is that the housing association will have access to private finance and will be able to bring in additional money, and, therefore, work will be done on far more properties than would otherwise be possible. Therefore, tenants will receive a benefit that might not otherwise have been achieved.

Housing: Garden Maintenance

5. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the level of garden maintenance assistance available to tenants of social housing who are older, as well as those with a disability. (AQO 5048/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I think that we all recognise the enjoyment that we can have in our gardens, and the recent good summer made those of us lucky enough to have one realise just that. However, the task of looking after them is not an easy one, as it takes time, energy and money, something that is perhaps not always taken into account when a home with a garden is allocated to a tenant.

The Housing Executive has advised me that it does not routinely provide assistance with garden maintenance for its tenants. That is in line with the tenancy agreement, which advises that the tenant is responsible for the:

“Care and upkeep of gardens and hedges”.

Housing associations have advised me that their tenancy agreement states that it is tenants' responsibility to maintain their own gardens. Therefore, for family dwellings, housing associations do not generally provide any assistance with gardens, nor do they plan to do so.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that response. The Minister mentioned housing associations. Would there be a role for them in providing further assistance for residents in this matter?

Mr McCausland: The Member beside me chided me for being somewhat misleading, in that I am not the person in our house who does the gardening. However, setting that

point aside, most housing associations' older tenants live in sheltered accommodation, where there are communal gardens and grassed areas rather than individual gardens. In sheltered accommodation, housing associations maintain the grass and planted areas, the hedges, kerbs, footpaths and car parks. That is funded through the service charge. In addition, many tenants help to maintain the gardens, and many schemes have tenants groups that fundraise, attract funding grants and provide more plants etc for the grounds. It is true that, in some cases, voluntary organisations are involved. I have met some and actually visited others in the North Down constituency, where a community organisation works to assist older people who might not have access to resources to pay for the gardening.

The opportunity is there for housing associations, and as I have said already in recent days, we want housing associations to be more creative and innovative. It is about building communities rather than just houses, and showing a particular regard for the elderly and vulnerable is part of building a community.

Mrs Dobson: Given their impact on the overall appearance of an area, untidy gardens can cause problems for residents. So, will the Minister explain what powers the Housing Executive has to compel tenants to maintain their gardens to a minimum standard?

Mr McCausland: The problem of unkempt gardens occurs in many different places. I am sure that the Member will be aware that it happens even at privately owned homes, for example, where a vulnerable homeowner is unable to maintain a garden. The tenancy agreement makes it very clear that it is the responsibility of the tenant. As regards exerting some influence on tenants other than speaking to or encouraging them, I would be interested to hear the Member's suggestions if she has any thoughts on how that might be increased. Other than to give encouragement, I do not think that it is particularly possible to exert influence unless a health issue arises. I am not sure. If the issue is simply long grass, it might not fall quite into that category.

Housing: Regeneration Schemes

6. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister for Social Development why the six housing regeneration pilot areas announced on 28 October 2013 have no proposals for shared housing. (AQO 5049/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I want to start by saying that those are not housing regeneration areas, as the question assumes. They are, in fact, Building Successful Communities pilots. The concept for the six Building Successful Communities pilots is that a regeneration forum is to be established in each area, drawing membership from elected representatives, local communities and statutory and voluntary agencies, such as the Housing Executive, housing associations, local councils, the Police Service and the health and education sectors. Those six forums, in consultation with local communities, will develop an action plan for each pilot.

My Department is still in the process of identifying and appointing forum members. However, since the action plans will be specific and individual to each pilot area, there is nothing to prevent proposals for shared housing coming forward as a result of that process.

The main aim of the pilot programme is to drive regeneration through concerted social, economic and physical interventions by a range of Departments, agencies and community interests. The communities themselves will be right there at the heart of the approach.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that central to economic regeneration is the promotion of integration? How will those forums ensure that integration will be promoted rather than segregation maintained?

Mr McCausland: Of course. As I have already pointed out in my answer to a previous question, we are taking forward a number of initiatives in that regard through the Together: Building a United Community strategy. I suggest that the areas where they are more likely to succeed are probably not some of our most difficult inner city communities where there are significant levels of deprivation and so on. Six pilot areas have been selected. We are taking that work forward. There are real challenges. We should not, in any way, seek to be prescriptive or coercive towards those local forums. They should be given the freedom and flexibility to see what can be done to address all the physical, social and environmental issues that I mentioned. They are challenging communities in areas that, having benefited over a number of years from being areas at risk or neighbourhood-renewal areas, as nearly all of them were, still have serious problems that have not been resolved. The challenge and focus has to be primarily and initially on addressing those issues.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Peter Weir for a very quick supplementary question.

Mr Weir: I will be very quick, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. What support is there for a housing-led approach to regeneration?

Mr McCausland: To answer that question, I will make two points. The first is that driving regeneration using housing is a key theme in the new housing strategy. When it was brought forward for consultation, there was widespread support for that approach. Subsequently, having announced pilot areas for Building Successful Communities, I received much positive feedback from those communities. It is a key theme in the housing strategy and has received widespread support and endorsement.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings to an end the period for questions for oral answer. We now move on to topical questions.

3.15 pm

Housing: Repossessions

1. **Ms McCorley** asked the Minister for Social Development to explain the delay in setting up a task force to address the issue of home repossessions, which, according to a survey by the Housing Rights Service, have increased by 20% this year. (AQT 391/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Supporting people whose homes are in danger of being repossessed has been very much on our minds and has been raised in this Chamber on a number of occasions. I believe that the support that we are giving at the moment through the Housing Rights Service and the additional financial support that was given to the service

to enable it to support people in those situations has been particularly important.

There is a clear difference between folk who, effectively, bury their heads in the sand and hope that a terrible situation will go away and those who face up to it, take legal advice and get practical support from the Housing Rights Service. There is a clear difference there between people who arrive at court and who are about to lose their house and there being an intervention at the last minute. The key thing is to get in touch with the Housing Rights Service at a very early stage.

We keep the situation constantly under review as to what additional measures might need to be taken. That is something that we have not forgotten about or neglected in any way, but I would encourage people primarily to approach the situation by using the Housing Rights Service.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. What alternatives from other jurisdictions has he examined in order to seek a remedy to this issue?

Mr McCausland: A number of options were mentioned in the past, and financial interventions were talked about. However, when you look at the scope of the problem and the extent of the financial difficulty of the individual and scale that up, it would be possible, in practical terms, to help only a very small number of people. The problem, as the Member well knows, affects hundreds of people each year and, therefore, although we have looked at other options elsewhere, the primary response has to be the one that we are adopting at the moment. As I said, however, it is something that we keep under review.

Social Development Inquiry

2. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Social Development whether, given the letter dated 24 May 2012 to the Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development, which was submitted last Thursday as evidence to the Committee's inquiry, he believes that he misled the Committee. (AQT 392/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Committee is taking forward a process at the moment. A number of submissions were made last Thursday, and further submissions will be made this Thursday. I am due to come before the Committee later on in December — I think it is 12 December. At that point, I will give a submission to the Committee. It would be wrong and premature to address the matter until I had the courtesy of giving that to the Committee.

Mr Dickson: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, it was a very simple question to the Minister: did he mislead the Committee? I think that we should note that he has not answered the question. Why, Minister, did you give an instruction to a civil servant to change the content of that letter?

Mr McCausland: I do not know whether the Member has a difficulty in understanding plain English. In response to the first point, I simply said that I would make the information available to the Committee on 12 December when I go to the Committee. In response to the second question, I intend to give the answer to that in due course as well. There is a very simple answer, and it will be given on 12 December. I ask the Member to have a little bit of patience.

Energy Costs

3. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister for Social Development whether, in light of comments by the newly appointed Utility Regulator that high energy costs are here to stay, he can assure the House that he is doing all within his power to assist those who are most in need to heat their homes. (AQT 393/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for his question. The fact is that, according to the house condition survey, fuel poverty affects 42% of households — about 295,000 — in Northern Ireland. As the Member is aware, fuel poverty arises from income level, fuel cost and energy efficiency.

Today, we heard the statement from the regulator about the cost of energy in Northern Ireland and the fact that it is set to remain high in the foreseeable future.

We can do something about income, to a limited extent. My Department runs a very extensive benefit uptake programme, which will, this year, as in previous years, make a substantial difference to quite a number of vulnerable people on low incomes. The other main area of work is around energy efficiency in homes. We have the warm homes scheme and the boiler replacement scheme, which really do make a difference. The affordable warmth pilot is being taken forward, and it is important to remember that those aged 60 and over are entitled to a winter fuel payment. The two principal areas that we can work on are delivering some financial support through the benefit uptake programme and winter fuel payments, and the energy efficiency measures. I hope that we will see a reduction in fuel poverty as we see homes in Northern Ireland made more energy efficient.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that response. He will know that I recently raised the issue of energy efficiency of homes with him, especially single-walled dwellings. Can he provide me with an assurance that those types of dwellings will be made a priority in any forward work programme?

Mr McCausland: I have looked at that issue for some time, since I became aware that around 5,000 Housing Executive properties across Northern Ireland were of no-fines construction, most of which are constructed of a single skin of concrete with no cavity. Some work on that is being taken forward at the moment. The Housing Executive has set up a working group to progress a strategic approach to look at the thermal performance of all Housing Executive no-fines stock.

I recently visited Springfarm in Antrim where I met the consortium of the Technology Strategy Board to view the no-fines houses in that estate. We discussed the methods that could be used to provide external insulation to the seven properties in the pilot scheme there. The lessons that will be learned from that pilot over the coming year will not just benefit people in Northern Ireland but people throughout the United Kingdom, because the Technology Strategy Board and the experts that have been brought across from GB to look at this are really operating a pilot for the whole of the United Kingdom.

Early next month, I propose to visit the Leonardo project in Germany to see for myself a successful retrofit scheme that was carried out there. I had the opportunity some months ago to see a retrofit scheme that was carried out in Liverpool. The German scheme is somewhat different.

There are lessons to be learned, and I have made this a priority. I, like the Member, am aware of many homes in my constituency that suffer from that particular problem.

Welfare Reform Bill

4. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has any concerns that delays to the Welfare Reform Bill will put at risk his Department's ability to administer and provide benefits to the most vulnerable. (AQT 394/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Member makes a very important point, one that has been largely overlooked in general comment, and particularly in the media. When we talk about welfare reform and delays, we tend to think about the recent visit by Mike Penning and the point that he made about financial penalties that would impact on the Northern Ireland block grant. However, there is more to it than that. Potentially, it could also have an impact on the viability of a number of jobs in Northern Ireland that provide services to the rest of the United Kingdom in the delivery of welfare.

I am really concerned that delays to the Welfare Reform Bill are already resulting in operational difficulties due to the need to put in place clerical workarounds as the two benefits systems begin to diverge. There are practical difficulties, and that is putting at risk the Social Security Agency's ability to administer and provide benefits. The agency is already incurring additional costs. At the moment, they are modest, but they will quickly rack up.

I have written to ministerial colleagues to advise them of the operational impact of the introduction in GB of the new mandatory reconsideration process, which went live on 28 October. This meant that certain benefit decision notifications issued to claimants in Northern Ireland contained incorrect information on how to dispute the decision. In order to ensure that people get the correct information, an insert has had to be included with the notifications issued to Northern Ireland claimants. The agency has incurred additional costs of some £90,000 at this juncture due to that single issue. So, it is important to keep in mind not just the penalty issue — as the Work and Pensions Minister pointed out, that is a hugely important one — but the practical difficulties, which are detrimental to claimants in Northern Ireland.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his answer. Going back to the issue of divergence, are we reliant on GB IT systems to deliver benefits here in Northern Ireland?

Mr McCausland: I must apologise to the Member; I got slightly distracted there in one sense. The point I should have made is that we in Northern Ireland are totally dependent on the IT system used throughout the rest of the United Kingdom. There is no possibility of Northern Ireland going it alone and devising its own IT system for welfare payments; it would be totally impossible. The cost would be astronomical and totally destructive to the Northern Ireland block grant. I just cannot imagine how we would do it, and anybody who thinks that we can is very much mistaken. The system is spread right across the UK, and we are part of it.

Housing: Repossessions

5. **Mr Dallat** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will set up a task force to mitigate against home repossessions, given that the terms eviction and repossession are very emotive and reminiscent of Ireland a couple of hundred years ago, the worst aspects of which I thought we had left behind, but, unfortunately, between June and September, the number of people who have had their homes repossessed increased by 20% over the same period last year. (AQT 395/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am not sure what the procedure is in the Assembly when you are asked a question that you have already dealt with. I would have thought that, if someone asked a question, the next person who was thinking of asking it would ask a different question. Ms McCorley asked that question earlier, and I refer the Member to the answer that I gave to her.

Mr Dallat: I make no apology whatsoever to the Minister for asking a question that is very close to another one. I am not sure whether the Minister has ever been at an eviction; it is not nice.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Your supplementary question.

Mr Dallat: Here is my supplementary question: the housing strategy action plan for 2012-17 commits you, Minister, to the creation of a working group to mitigate the effects of repossession on individuals and families. Will you now implement that, please?

Mr McCausland: As I indicated previously, or at least I hope I did, we are constantly reviewing and working on that issue. I said earlier that I welcome ideas at any time from any individuals on how we might do things differently or better. If the Member has any proposals that he wants to bring forward, I would be more than happy to receive and listen to them.

Newtownards: Public Realm Funding

6. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister for Social Development to advise whether the bid for public realm funding for Newtownards has been successful. (AQT 396/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am pleased to inform the Member that there will be an announcement very shortly. The public realm scheme in Newtownards, which was delayed in the past for various reasons, has now been brought forward. It is an extensive scheme worth £5.5 million that will bring considerable benefit to Newtownards. So, I am happy to confirm to her that we will be making an announcement very shortly.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Miss McIlveen for a very quick supplementary question.

Miss M McIlveen: I obviously welcome the Minister's announcement and the recent news that Comber has also received £2.4 million worth of funding for public realm works. Does the Minister agree that improvements such as public realm works can be an economic catalyst for small towns?

Mr McCausland: There is very clear evidence that public realm works, as part of a wider package of measures in a town centre, can make a real difference to the town centre.

Revitalisation schemes for shops nearby can often add to that. Generally, a public realm scheme emerges out of a master plan for a town centre. That is a great opportunity for all those involved — the local authority, local traders, businesspeople and my officials — to work together to see what is the best way forward for that town centre.

It is a very challenging time for town centres. Recent figures for empty properties were quoted. We need to boost town centres by making them more attractive and by encouraging greater footfall and more people to shop there and, thereby, provide greater viability for traders.

3.30 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings us to the end of topical questions.

Mr Dickson: On a point of order, Principal Deputy Speaker —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: There are no points of order during Question Time, I am afraid. We will move to questions to the Assembly Commission.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Parliament Buildings: Car Parking

1. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Assembly Commission when additional visitor and staff car parking facilities will be provided to address the current problem of people having to park on Prince of Wales Avenue. (AQO 5059/11-15)

Mr Cree: Assembly security staff currently oversee the management of the upper car parks adjacent to Parliament Buildings in addition to the lower east and overspill car parks. All other car parks throughout the estate come under the direct control and management of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). The Assembly Commission recognises the difficulties experienced in parking in the car parks, particularly on sitting days, and the Commission appreciates that it may still be necessary for some people to park on Prince of Wales Avenue on sitting days.

The Facilities Directorate will continue to consult with colleagues in DFP to explore other potential options for improvement. However, it is unlikely that that will result in additional car parking spaces for the foreseeable future. During business hours, access to the lower car park is restricted to staff, other persons with official business in Parliament Buildings and visitors. Assembly security staff will continue to oversee and manage the spaces in that car park and ensure that they are used as efficiently and effectively as possible and that all vehicles are properly parked and obstructions are not caused. To that end, the cooperation and assistance of all car park users is very much appreciated.

Mrs Dobson: Has the Commission made any representations to the Department of Finance and Personnel to extend the provision on the estate, particularly as parking has been removed on the south side of the link road to Massey Avenue?

Mr Cree: Thank you for that. It certainly is an issue. The placing of traffic cones along Massey Avenue by DFP has

meant that parking outside the designated car parks — the usual ones — can now occur only on Prince of Wales Avenue. The Facilities Directorate will, however, continue to monitor that and will liaise with DFP, as appropriate, should any difficulties arise. Early indications are that difficulties are arising.

Mr Allister: It may be within DFP's control, but can the Member shed any light on why it was thought necessary to introduce cones on the access from Massey Avenue? It seems to me a totally unnecessary requirement, and, indeed, I note that we now have a second member of staff doing some inexplicable role further up the avenue. Is it just change for change's sake?

Mr Cree: It is a very good question, and I share the Member's view. I have watched that, because that is how I access the estate. DFP thinks that it is a more effective security system and, in fact, has asked the Commission to bear with it while it tries it as an experiment. The early indications are that it slows things down, and it certainly takes extra car parking spaces away that were utilised to the full, particularly on sitting days. However, as I said, it will be monitored and kept under review by the Facilities Directorate.

Committees: Paperless Packs

2. **Mr Maskey** asked the Assembly Commission to outline the progress made on its paperless/e-Committee pack project. (AQO 5060/11-15)

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Thosaigh an tionscadal leis an Ríomh-phacáiste Coiste a chur ar fáil do Chomhaltaí ar an 9 Meán Fómhair 2013 nuair a tugadh ríomh-phacáistí i gcéimeanna do gach Coiste Reachtúil agus gach Buanchoiste de chuid an Tionóil. Tá gach Coiste ag baint úsáide as an chóras nua, agus is féidir le gach Comhalta a bpacáiste Coiste a fháil go leictreonach. Go dtí seo, ghlac 105 Comhaltaí an traenáil riachtanach agus tugadh ríomhaire táibléid nua dóibh.

The introduction of the electronic Committee pack project for MLAs began on 9 September 2013 with the phased roll-out of electronic packs to all Assembly Statutory and Standing Committees. All such Committees have now moved over to the new system, and all Members can now receive their packs electronically. To date, 105 MLAs have undertaken the required training and have been allocated a new tablet computer. Our Information Systems Office is working with Members and party support offices to arrange suitable appointments for those remaining MLAs, and it is hoped that all Members will have received their devices before the end of this month.

To date, three Committees have gone fully electronic: the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure; the Committee for Regional Development; and the Committee for Employment and Learning. That means that members of those Committees no longer receive any paper meeting packs. Of the remaining Committees, four produce three printed copies or fewer per meeting, and five Committees produce between four and six printed packs per meeting.

Although that has resulted in savings in staff time and office resources, the main benefit of the project is that it provides a more streamlined and efficient process for creating and distributing Committee documents. Members continue to avail themselves of the technical support

provided by staff from the Information Systems Office. I encourage any other Member to contact that office should they feel that further one-to-one training is required.

Tá glacadh maith ar na Ríomh-phacáistí Coiste, agus tá aiseolas deimhneach ó bhunús na gComhaltaí agus ó bhunús na foirne Coiste. The level of uptake of the electronic Committee packs has been encouraging and feedback from the majority of MLAs and Committee staff very positive.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Member for giving that quite extensive response. Before I ask how secure the Commission feels that the system is, I commend all officials in the Information Systems Office for providing excellent support to Members as the programme is being rolled out.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat as an gceist sin. I appreciate your comments. No doubt the staff will be very pleased to hear that. I had a meeting with them yesterday and they are genuinely very pleased with the uptake and how Members have embraced it.

The tablet devices connect to the Assembly network, so Members must input their usual network username and password to access the device and their electronic Committee packs. I know that, initially, some were critical of the logon process, but it is necessary to provide the required security. It might appear to be slower than access to non-Assembly devices such as iPads, but it is a required process to ensure overall IT security. Only the nominated tablet owner can access the device. The device hard drives are also encrypted using industry standard software tools, which would help to prevent unauthorised access in the event of the tablet being lost or stolen. The devices are set to automatically update the antivirus and operating system files at regular intervals.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta, Caitríona Ruane, as an fhreagra sin a thabhairt dúinn. My thanks to Ms Ruane for responding. Unfortunately, I, along with, I think, six or seven other individuals in the Building, got lumped with a bad device. After returning it three times, I decided to return it permanently because it was not working. Had the device gone belly up while I was trying to chair a Committee, I would have found that an awful position to be in. It was very useful indeed that the helpline was not an 00353 number in some overseas country or other region of the EU, given that I recently discovered that a bar has been placed on Members dialling any other number, so it would be interesting to find out —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We need a question, Mr McGlone.

Mr McGlone: — what the Commission has done about that as well.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat as an gceist sin. Thank you for your question and comments. The Member may consider 00353 to be the code for an overseas country, but, for me, it is all part of the one island called Ireland. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McGlone: There is a bar on the device — this is a partitionist Assembly.

Ms Ruane: Anyway, we will get back to the serious question about the devices freezing and the difficulties at the start. I raised that issue at the meeting yesterday. The Information Systems Office recognises that there were a number of faults and configuration issues with some devices at the outset of the project. That caused some frustration for some Members, and I absolutely accept that the Member was very frustrated. Of the 170 tablets purchased, a total of seven devices experienced hardware faults and have since been replaced by the manufacturer. Four other tablets displayed persistent software problems, and those issues have largely been resolved. The Information Systems Office will continue to monitor the situation. MLAs are encouraged to contact IT staff should any further problems arise or they wish to receive further one-to-one training.

In all seriousness, I strongly recommend to the Chair of the Committee that he liaises with the office again and give it another go. I think that, once we get over the teething problems, this will make a big difference and not just for Committee packs. There are lots of other plans to roll this out. If there is anything that I can do to help the Member, I will be happy to do so.

Mr Kinahan: Unfortunately, my tablet machine got a bad Assembly Member, someone who is not very good at working it. You cannot correct that fault too easily. Have we got all the problems ironed out, particularly over larger documents? Will we always be able to have a written document so that those of us who wish to write on the side of it can carry on that way?

Ms Ruane: I thank the Member for the question. Of course, documents will be provided to Members who ask for them. The Assembly staff do understand the difficulties. The younger generation love electronics. My daughters know how to do stuff that I would not have a clue how to do. Some people like to have documents in their hands and they like to physically write on a document. I have watched Members use the annotation. Hands up, I have not yet got the hang of using it, but, once you do so, it makes life much easier. You are not carrying around as many documents. Of course, Members will be provided with physical documents.

Outreach/Education: Update

3. **Mrs McKevitt** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the outreach and education programmes across constituencies. (AQO 5061/11-15)

Ms Ruane: I am getting all of the questions today. Ar na cláir for-rochtana agus oideachais, tá clár for-rochtana don ghnó tríd an Iontaobhas Tionóil agus Gno, do ghrúpaí pobail tríd an Tionól ag Nascadh leis an bPobal, do dhaoine óga tríd an gClár Oideachais, agus don phobal i gcoitinne tríd ócáidí agus imeachtaí i bhFoirgnimh na Parlaiminte. The outreach and education programmes include outreach to business via the Assembly and Business Trust, community groups via Assembly Community Connect, young people via the Assembly education programme and the general public through functions and events held at Parliament Buildings.

I think that we will all agree that the Assembly's community outreach service is doing a very good job. It has engaged with more than 35,000 people since the start of the mandate. That is a significant number of people. To

increase focus on the community and voluntary sector, Assembly Community Connect was launched in May 2013, providing free training, information and support for community and voluntary organisations. Since its launch, the number of people engaged with each month has increased by 73%, from an average of 108 to 187. More than 1,030 organisations are now registered with Assembly Community Connect. Community and voluntary groups from every constituency are represented. It has visited 11 constituencies through the Get Involved initiative. The Get Involved conference brings the Assembly and its work to local communities. It will visit all constituencies by the end of this mandate.

From the start of the mandate, Assembly Education Service has delivered the education programme to more than 43,000 students across 18 constituencies, including 5,300 students in their own schools. We have organised eight Let's Talk events, involving more than 700 students from seven constituencies. We have done lots more, but my time has just run out.

Mrs McKevitt: What feedback is being collected from those who take part in the outreach and education programmes to help to complement the service?

Ms Ruane: Sin ceist an-suimiúil ar fad. That is a very interesting question. I know that every single MLA has been involved in the Education Service, and they will all know the wonderful work that it is doing. There is ongoing feedback on the Education Service. All comments are noted. Members of the team are constantly updating and reviewing and making changes. In one instance, where I invited an Irish-medium school in, there was very positive feedback, and that positive feedback was fed back to me as an individual MLA. I pay tribute to the Assembly staff, who are doing a very good job in relation to that.

3.45 pm

Mr Beggs: There has been a concerning trend of reduced participation in elections over the past decade. Will the Member assure me that the Commission will continue to support and expand, rather than potentially reduce, the education outreach programmes? Can she update me on when the team plans next to engage with my East Antrim constituency?

Ms Ruane: The Member can be absolutely assured that I have fought, and will continue to fight, very hard to ensure that there are no reductions and, instead, that we increase the work that the Assembly education staff and their programmes do.

In relation to East Antrim, the Assembly team works with every constituency. If you have ideas or events or plans, we would be happy to hear them. Please feel free to contact me or any member of the Commission.

Parliament Buildings: Roof Project

4. **Mr McMullan** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the roof project. (AQO 5062/11-15)

Mr Cree: The Commission granted approval to proceed with the design of the roof project based on the stage D report and presentation in June this year and following subsequent consideration of options to minimise the disruption to Assembly business. The project was progressed on the basis that construction work will not

disrupt Assembly plenary or Committee business from Monday lunchtime through to Thursday lunchtime. In addition to a full replacement roof covering, the project will include the replacement and upgrading of all existing roof-mounted plant installations and the introduction of a mezzanine floor in Room 401. Sustainable design initiatives, including rainwater harvesting and photovoltaic panels, have been incorporated into the project.

The scheme design has now been completed, and invitations to tender were issued on 7 November. It is anticipated that the successful contractor will be appointed in approximately mid-February and that work will commence on site at the end of February, if possible. Work will continue for a period of 12 months.

During the past summer recess, work was carried out to create a contractor's service yard to the rear of Parliament Buildings, with a view to minimising the disruption to access and car parking during the works. To facilitate the construction works, the contractor will be given possession of the fourth floor of the Building throughout the complete works. Around 120 Building users will need to be relocated to facilitate that, and temporary decant accommodation has been secured on the estate for that purpose.

This will be a major construction project but one that is necessary to eradicate ongoing problems of water ingress and to protect the fabric of this listed building. I respectfully ask Members to show a degree of tolerance to any minor issues that might arise during the works.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call Mr McMullan, I remind Members of the Speaker's very specific guidance on the use of telephones in the Chamber.

Mr McMullan: From the initial cost of the project, have we gone over budget on any of the work so far?

Mr Cree: Thank you for that. The very simple answer is no.

Mrs Overend: There has been some talk of offices being evacuated and staff being moved elsewhere. Will the Member detail some of the development plan for that?

Mr Cree: Thank you for that supplementary question. Annexe C will be used for some staff. It can cope with something like 120 people, so it is envisaged that there will not be a major problem in that respect.

Lord Morrow: I listened intently to information about the new roof project for the Building. Has the Commission given any consideration to a stocktaking exercise of the lifts in the Building? One of them has, I think, been out of commission for at least a year. I see that another one is out of commission at the moment. Are our lifts fit for purpose?

Mr Cree: I thank Lord Morrow for his supplementary question. Indeed, I was in the lift this morning where I pushed the button and the doors closed. Before I could turn around, they opened again and I was told that I had arrived, and then they closed again. It was quite humorous, like something you would see in a sketch: me standing there waiting to go and the doors opening and closing, opening and closing. I reported that as another fault.

The lifts are obviously quite old, but the technology is not rocket science. I am advised that major work is being done to the lifts. I see Mr Logue sitting over there in the box, so blame him for that. There has been a problem with one of the lifts for a long time. I think that we have got to the stage where we have to take a bit more positive action.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Commissioner for his very detailed answers. There has been speculation — I will put it no higher than that — that Committees will have to meet outside this Building, either on the estate or elsewhere. Indeed, there has been talk about the Stormont Hotel etc. Will the Commissioner reassure the House that that will not happen and that, in fact, Committees will be accommodated in this Building?

Mr Cree: I thank Mr Maginness for his question. Organising a suitable venue outside was one of the concerns that was considered at length. The current situation is that that is no longer anticipated. The work plans mean that, between Monday and Thursday, Committees and, indeed, full plenary sittings, should be able to operate as normal without any need to relocate or decamp to any other place.

Outreach/Education: Update

5. **Mr Lynch** asked the Assembly Commission to outline its plans to increase the Assembly outreach programme to the education and community sectors. (AQO 5063/11-15)

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat as an gceist sin. Tá clár for-rochtana oideachais an Tionóil ar fáil do gach bunscoil agus gach iarbhunscoil in Éirinn. Faigheann gach scoil eolas faoin gclár for-rochtana ag tús na bliana acadúla, agus tá an tSeirbhís Oideachais ag cur a cuid clár chun cinn ar láithreán gréasáin na Seirbhíse Oideachais.

The Assembly education outreach programme is available to all primary and post-primary schools throughout Ireland. All schools throughout the North receive information about the outreach programme at the start of the academic year. The Education Service is now promoting its programmes on its website.

Since the start of this mandate, education outreach programmes have been delivered in 17 constituencies. The South Antrim constituency has not taken up the Education Service's programmes to date, but schools in that area will be targeted directly. I encourage MLAs from South Antrim to contact their schools to encourage them to take up the opportunities.

The Education Service continues to develop close working relationships with other organisations that work in the education sector, such as the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; C2k, which is responsible for IT in schools; and the Children's Commissioner.

To increase the focus on the community and voluntary sector, Assembly Community Connect was launched in May 2013 to provide free training, information and support for the community and voluntary sector. As I said, the number of people who are engaging with it has increased significantly. The number of organisations that are accessing it is also increasing: 1,030 organisations are now registered with Assembly Community Connect. It has visited 11 constituencies, and it plans to work in all the local communities.

Beidh na comhdhála BÍ Rannpháirteach ar siúl i dTuaisceart Aontroma, i nGleann Lagáin, i bhFear Manach agus Tír Eoghain Theas, agus i dTuaisceart an Dúin i 2014. The Get Involved conferences will take place in North Antrim, Lagan Valley, Fermanagh and South Tyrone, and North Down in 2014. Assembly Community Connect will visit all constituencies by the end of this mandate.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an fhreagra sin. An bhfuil toghlaigh ann a bhfuil níos mó ionadaíocht acu ná toghlaigh eile ar lontaobhas Gnó an Tionóil? Do some constituencies have greater representation than others on the Assembly and Business Trust?

Ms Ruane: I thank the Member for that incisive question. Actually, there is actually a disproportionate difference in representation. It is up to us, as individual MLAs, as well as the Assembly Commission, to make sure that some are not represented disproportionately. For example, East Belfast has 30 representatives, South Belfast has 54, East Antrim has one, Fermanagh and South Tyrone has one, Foyle has one, Newry and Armagh has two and South Down has four. You can see the differences and disparity, and that needs to be looked at. I have raised that issue with officials to see how we can make sure that there is better proportionality across all constituencies.

Mr Storey: There can sometimes be a cost impediment to schools coming to the Assembly. What use has the outreach service made of C2k and modern technology to ensure that, if something happens here, it can be relayed to one school or a group of schools, given the challenges that some schools have with transport? Will it give a commitment to continue to use those resources?

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat as an gceist sin. I thank you for that question. Obviously, the Commission will listen to any ideas that the Member has. At all times, the Commission is trying to digitalise and make sure that we have the best technology and use technology in the best way. One of the first questions that I answered was about the use of technology and the importance of us all challenging ourselves and using it. I know that there are plans to use technology in an interactive and creative way.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Questions 6 and 12 are grouped.

Ormiston House

6. **Ms McGahan** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the disposal of Ormiston House. (AQO 5064/11-15)

12. **Mr Gardiner** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the disposal of Ormiston House. (AQO 5070/11-15)

Mr Weir: The Get Involved campaign was mentioned earlier, and I was beginning to wonder whether I would be getting involved in this Question Time. With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will give two for the price of one and answer questions 6 and 12 together.

This has obviously been a long-standing issue. The Commission placed Ormiston House for sale on the open market in January 2011. Alongside that was an attempt to get planning permission for a limited amount of development on the site. Planning permission was received in 2012, and the site was relaunched in July 2012. Although there has been a considerable level of interest in the property for a variety of development opportunities, few substantive bids have been made, and the Commission has not yet been in a position to agree a sale. The Commission has received one bid for the property, but it was for less than the asking price.

Ms McGahan: I thank the Member for his response. If it is not sold, what alternatives does the Commission have in place for Ormiston House?

Mr Weir: The Commission does not have any alternatives as such. The point is that we believe that it is important that Ormiston House is sold and made use of. We want that to happen. To that end, we are very conscious that we need to obtain value for money for the public purse and the amount that it was bought for will clearly not be realised. We want to maximise its value, although, at the same time, we realise that we are not necessarily in a fire sale and it is not a question of trying to offload Ormiston House at the cheapest possible value. It has to have some degree of commercial worth. From that point of view, I do not think that the Commission has a particular purpose for Ormiston House other than ultimately to sell it with the planning permission that has been granted.

Mr Gardiner: Will the Commission defer any decisions on the sale of Ormiston House until its potential as an international mental health faculty, as suggested by Mike Nesbitt MLA, has been fully explored?

Mr Weir: The Commission is certainly keen to explore any options and to take any offer. However, at the moment, neither the Commission nor its agent has received an approach about an international mental health centre on the Ormiston site. So, any discussion about that as a possibility is purely hypothetical.

As I have indicated, the Commission's aim is to obtain the maximum public value for the site. That is the duty on us. From that point of view, I think that the Commission would be open to any concrete suggestions or offers and would certainly look at those.

Mr Humphrey: What is the annual cost to the Northern Ireland Executive for maintenance, heating, lighting, security and so on for Ormiston House?

4.00 pm

Mr Weir: The running costs have so far been in the region of £130,000 a year. The principal sum within that is for security. However, some recent decisions on security mean that that cost can be reduced. Although the final figure has not been determined, the expectation is that it will be brought down to under £100,000 per year.

Assembly Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I come back to Mr Stewart Dickson for his point of order.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Principal Deputy Speaker. When the Minister for Social Development was responding to my question, clearly he knew the answer but refused to give it to me in the House. Does he not have a duty to answer questions in this House when he has the appropriate knowledge? Is it not that his first responsibility is to this House rather than to the Committee that he indicated that he would be giving the answer to?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: It is not up to the Speaker or Deputy Speaker to judge whether a Minister has answered a question, but the Minister offered an explanation to do with an upcoming occasion. However, I will reflect on the matter when I read Hansard.

(*Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair*)

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly calls on the Executive to take all necessary steps to create an effective delivery pipeline of major infrastructure work to alleviate the current economic and social difficulties being faced across the community. — [Mr McGlone.]

Mr Flanagan: I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important motion. I am glad that there is unity across the Chamber on the merit of it and support for it being agreed.

The construction industry is vital to our local economy. I am sure that somebody has said that it is the backbone of our economy but if they have not, it is the backbone of our economy, along with about 15 other sectors that get plugged every time they are up. The construction industry is vital, particularly when you get into rural places such as Fermanagh and Tyrone, where there really is not a pile else going on apart from people being able to build stuff, which they are very good at. So, we are heavily reliant on it in rural areas such as Fermanagh and Tyrone, and I am sure you will forgive me for plugging that at the start.

However, places such as Fermanagh and Tyrone have been exceptionally hard hit by the downturn in the construction industry, because we see people skilled and well-qualified in many different aspects of the construction sector having to leave their home place because there is no opportunity for work. They have not only had to travel to more urban parts of Ireland that are doing a lot better than rural communities but have had to leave this island altogether and head to places such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand in search of work.

It is unfortunate that that is the case, and we need to do everything that we can to create jobs for people here, to keep people here and to offer people who have left the opportunity to come back. I am hopeful that some of the people who left will want the opportunity to come back to build their lives here, so we need to do all that we can to ensure that that happens.

In what the Assembly can encourage the Executive to do, an awful lot of public schemes have been talked about for years, decades and generations and not brought forward. We need to see that those are brought forward and developed properly. A long list of schools are on the waiting list. We have seen significant progress in recent years on the school waiting list, but an awful lot more could be done if more capital investment was available to put into the schools estate. We have seen that the Department of Education under John O'Dowd can get money spent if it is given to him.

We have seen the same with the construction of hospitals and universities. Unfortunately, we have not seen the same delivery when it comes to roads, which is a sore point for very many people in places like Fermanagh, Tyrone and Derry.

In my constituency, there has been a proposal for a newbuild at Devenish College for years. Unfortunately, due to the absence of agreement in the controlled sector, it has never moved forward. Hopefully, we can reach that agreement and proposals can be put to the Department for that site to be developed.

Mr Elliott: Will the Member give way?

Mr Flanagan: Happily, Tom.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he recognise that it is not just because of a failure to reach agreement within the controlled sector that Devenish has not been built? It is because of delays in the process between the education and library board and the Department of Education. It has been on the cards for some time, and it has not been held up just because of a lack of agreement.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Flanagan: The lack of agreement is one problem. There is another problem with the process, and questions have been asked by people in the industry about why it takes so long for schemes that have widespread support in the local community, political agreement and agreement in the business community to be completed. People cannot understand why it takes three years from the initial scoping of an idea for something to happen. That is a source of serious frustration.

As an Assembly, we need to ensure that, where there are barriers to people who have private finance and are willing to invest, we seek to remove those in a sensible way. If people have money to spend and want to spend it on infrastructure and the project is sensible, we need to do all we can to help them. That does not mean that we need to give them more money; it means that the process needs to reflect that.

The construction industry has welcomed the fact that planning applications for schemes that have money ready to be spent will receive priority in the Planning Service over schemes that will not happen for the next 10 or 15 years. It is only right that schemes that will be developed quickly go to the top of the list. As part of the wider reform of the Planning Service, that is something that we are all agreed on. Planning applications need to be sped up. It takes far too long to get a decision, whether positive or negative. There has been some progress on that, but the sceptic in me says that that is because there is nearly the same number of staff in the Planning Service and far fewer applications. Maybe that is not true and it is over-cynical, but I doubt it. It would be useful for Assembly Members to see a list of projects that each Department and arm's-length body has that are shovel-ready and can be developed. That is an area where there is serious scope for us to put political pressure on Departments to deliver.

As a rural MLA, I know that it is frustrating for rural dwellers who are not involved in farming that they have no opportunity to build a family home. It is not about putting a bungalow in every corner and on every hill in the country — or every valley, which is what the Planning Service would try to get you to do. It is about building in a sustainable manner so that people can live in the countryside and contribute to the local community, even those who are not involved directly in farming.

My final point is about the promised peace dividend that has never really materialised.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Flanagan: We have seen some issues coming through the economic pact, but there is still no sign of the money that was promised by the British Government years ago. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr B McCrea: Colleagues, at first sight, this appears to be a rather strange motion to bring before the Assembly. Obviously, people have sympathy with the idea that we should spend more capital, if it were available. My problem is that Mr McGlone proposed the motion, yet his colleague in the SDLP is the Minister of the Environment, with responsibility for planning. Mr Frew's name is on the list, yet the DUP is responsible for DETI and DFP, including overall energy infrastructure and telecommunications. I heard Mr McElduff speak most eloquently, but he talked about education, as did his colleague Mr Flanagan, and their Minister is the Minister of Education. Finally, Mr Kinahan, whose name is on the list for the UUP, was once, I think, PPS to the Minister for Regional Development. When you put all those things together, you have a group of MLAs imploring their Ministers to work better together and to provide the infrastructure that the community needs. I am surprised that we have had to do it in this way. Surely these matters would be best resolved around the Executive table.

Mr McElduff: Will the Member give way?

Mr B McCrea: I will indeed.

Mr McElduff: Does the Member accept that, when he was a member of the Ulster Unionist Party, he often gave critical advice in the Chamber to then party colleagues?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr B McCrea: That is, of course, true. I find myself, now that I am not in the UUP, being less critical and trying to deal with issues. I notice that it is not always reciprocated, right enough, but it is a perfectly valid point that Mr McElduff raises.

For the record, I agree with the general sense of what people are trying to say here, which is that there seems to be a lot of red tape, bureaucratic obstacles or things that get in the way of trying to do the things that we want to do. I have sympathy with that position, but surely the real argument here is that it is for the Executive to engage in cross-cutting, non-silo-based decision-making, working together to try to release the funds that are necessary to make certain things happen. There is no doubt that the public are looking at us and saying, "What are you actually doing? Is there anything happening up there?"

It also probably brings us to a position where one has to ask whether there is capital available. What I hear quite often from the Finance Minister is that there has been a significant reduction during the comprehensive spending review period in the capital spend that is available. Perhaps that suggests that we need to look at different ways of raising capital, whether that is through PFIs, PPPs or some other local enterprise areas. The simple fact is that cash availability is what really kick-starts most projects. When you get something like the A5, which is not available, or some other major project, suddenly there is a scramble to try to get that money deployed somewhere useful. So there is something that needs to be done to

create the pipeline that we want to see for the construction industry.

I am drawn to the CBI report, which mentions it quite clearly. Other Members quoted from it. The statement that drew my attention was:

"There must therefore be a drive, led by Ministers, to ensure that relevant capital works, and their indicative timescales, are made public as soon as is feasible."

I think that the report compared us with Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, where there are published time frames. Perhaps that is something that we could do to see whether we are ready.

There is one final thing that I want to mention that we have to find a way of dealing with, and that is that Northern Ireland has developed a reputation as the most litigious region when it comes to procurement. We will have to find a way of making quick decisions. By all means, we need to have the proper levels of consultation and appeal, but we need to do it quickly without being challenged. In my constituency, the John Lewis thing has been on the blocks ever since I have been in politics, and it shows no real sign of moving forward. We really cannot afford to turn down investment if it is available, and I am sure that other Members will agree that we want to get a streamlined process.

I will conclude by saying —

Mr McGlone: I thank the Member for giving way. I will give a bit of background. The motion emanated from the all-party working group on construction. There is a meeting that is open to all Members of the Assembly on 3 December, where exactly the type of process that the Member is engaging in and talking about here will happen with at least three Ministers. You are very welcome to attend that meeting, as are other Members.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr B McCrea: I cannot see how long I have got left because I do not have my glasses on, but —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Ten seconds and counting.

Mr B McCrea: I gratefully accept the invitation. It is the right thing, but it should be ministerially led.

4.15 pm

Mr Frew: This has been a very good, measured debate. There has been no real contention, apart from one intervention from, I think, Mr Elliott to Mr Flanagan. That shows that we have full agreement and sympathy with the motion. Mr McCrea raised a point about why the individual Members who signed the motion had tabled it: it is simply because of the all-party working group. I am not a big fan of all-party working groups, but I like being on this one. I believe that it is very productive and a good use of my time because it has made a difference to Ministers' rationale and the way in which they think. It has also made a difference in applying pressure on Departments through not only Ministers but private secretaries and people in positions of power to make decisions more quickly and to keep them focused on what they need to do in order to spend money on infrastructure, which is what we all aspire to.

There is no doubt that some good news stories have come out of late, not least the statement from the Minister of Finance a number of weeks ago regarding the £250 million in public expenditure allocations. That has helped to make great benefits and strides in my constituency of North Antrim along the A26. It has also helped the children's hospital and other worthwhile projects. We should push and strive for that because we need more large projects in our areas.

It is clear that the Executive have an investment strategy, which is assisted by the Strategic Investment Board and its work, and that the Executive's number one priority is the economy. With that, there must be spend on infrastructure. If you speak to any economist today, they talk about periods of austerity and recession, and you will hear them say that there is resistance to spend. People will not spend; businessmen, businesswomen and companies will not spend. There is self-protection: they keep the head down, try to roll with the punches and get through to the other side. There will always be a tendency for government not to spend, especially when you get commitments from the Government about the peace dividend, as was mentioned today, and the Tories and their partners in government, the Lib Dems, reneging on that promise by nearly 40%. It has had and will have an impact on government, infrastructure and the economy. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

What do we do? We need to do things quicker, slicker and better; there is absolutely no doubt about that. We have to focus our minds on doing that because, undoubtedly, while we live in a period of recession and austerity, government must spend because sometimes it is the only organisation or body that is spending. We do not have to take chances, but we have to be able to spend as much as possible to have the greatest effect on our population. That is not to say that we throw money at something for the sake of it or just to create wealth or jobs. There is a bigger and wider remit than that. It will, in fact, make a difference to people's lives, which is why we have to pick and choose our projects carefully and make sure that they have the greatest possible effect.

Patsy McGlone, the chairman of the all-party working group, spends a lot of time on the issue, which is also dear to my heart. He talked about roads, utility links and public buildings and said that long-term planning was needed for the maintenance of the existing infrastructure. Let that not be underestimated. We push all the time for new roads, buildings and infrastructure, but we have to remember that it takes millions of pounds to maintain the current infrastructure. There is absolutely no doubt about that, but it has been neglected of late. In our constituencies, we see it all the time. We go to Roads Service and ask for resurfacing work to be done, and it tells us that it does not have the budget for that but will cater for potholes here and there. That cannot be cost-effective, so something in the maintenance of infrastructure and roads must change.

Mr McGlone also mentioned the slashing by the Tories and Lib Dems of nearly 40% of the peace dividend, despite the earlier commitment. That must, as he rightly said, have an effect. He mentioned the European Investment Bank. He also mentioned the need for greater fiscal powers, and I know that Mr McCrea spoke about that just this weekend at his conference. Would the Member like to take the opportunity to tell us by how much he would raise taxes to

pay for more infrastructure? I make that offer, if he wishes to avail himself of it.

Mr B McCrea: I will take the intervention if you like. The real point was not to raise or lower taxes at this stage; the really important point came from Brian Hayes, the junior Finance Minister in the Republic of Ireland. He said that you can do an awful lot of good with a relatively small amount of money, if you target certain areas.

There might be things that we can do on the fringes of the construction industry. That is not meant to be a provocative statement. It is just that the Member is interested in how we can move forward, and I would be more than happy to share that with him. I want to make clear that it is about how we spend relatively modest sums to encourage the activity that we seek to promote, particularly in the construction industry.

Mr Frew: Thank you for that intervention. I hear what you say, and you say it in a very rational way. However, do we not have the power to tweak, change and target? We have to be careful. We talk about having fiscal powers and the potential to raise taxes — income tax and every other tax — but that can have a destabilising effect on the economy and business, so we have to be mindful of that. We have the power to direct —

Mr Ross: Will the Member give way?

Mr Frew: Yes, I will.

Mr Ross: Does the Member recognise that the more fiscal powers we have, the more uncertainty there will be about future budgets? We want certainty to plan for the next four or five years, and our budgetary certainty helps the Executive plan their spending on infrastructure.

Mr Frew: Certainly, I agree with my colleague and fellow Member that that is indeed the case.

I will move on because I want to include as many contributions as possible in my winding-up speech on what has been a very good debate.

Jimmy Spratt, speaking as Chairman of the Regional Development Committee, referred to the deferred A5 road project and to the A2 and A8 road systems. He welcomed the work of the Department for Regional Development and the structural works that are going ahead. However, he made a very valid point, which I have raised already, about the detrimental effect of the £830 million backlog in road maintenance. Roads that are not fit for purpose have a detrimental effect on haulage and deliveries. Roads are the very veins that flow throughout our country and carry business and trade. It is vital that we get to grips with the funding backlog — £830 million, I think Mr Spratt said. He spoke of the importance of that infrastructure.

Barry McElduff talked about projects being stalled and postponed. I know that we all work for parties, but a lot of Sinn Féin Members mentioned education, which is very healthy and very good. I sensed their frustration about some of the projects in their constituencies. One in my constituency is Castle Tower School: we have waited for ever and a day for that project to take place.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member please bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Frew: I hope that we are getting to the end of it, but it has been years in the making.

Mr McElduff: Will the Member give way?

Mr Frew: Yes, I will.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Frew: I regret that I cannot let the Member in and that I cannot get through everybody's remarks. It was a very good debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly calls on the Executive to take all necessary steps to create an effective delivery pipeline of major infrastructure work to alleviate the current economic and social difficulties being faced across the community.

Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Swann: I beg to move

That this Assembly acknowledges the key role of higher education in growing the local economy and helping to realise the Programme for Government's cross-cutting priorities in health, social development, agrifood, education and skills, and research and innovation; and calls on the Executive to affirm their commitment to supporting and investing in the local higher education sector.

From the outset, I want to make it clear that the debate is not about universities as buildings; like the previous debate, it is about the investment in our whole community. It is about creating a framework for prosperity. It is about securing growth for all, socially and economically. It is about opportunity. All those things are made possible through the work of higher education. That was demonstrated earlier with the Employment and Learning Committee's showcase entitled 'Advancing Knowledge, Changing Lives', which took place earlier today.

Two years ago, a crucial debate took place in the Chamber in difficult circumstances. Higher education was facing a crisis, with a funding gap of crippling proportions that seriously threatened the scope and ambition of the work of our universities. In September 2011, the Executive agreed to meet the funding gap. Through our commitment and with the active involvement of our universities, the tide was turned. That was a crisis in which our whole community, in all its diversity, became engaged. It was a time when we clearly saw the vital role that higher education plays, how much it is valued and how important it is for us to safeguard it now and for generations to come.

Every day, our universities succeed in turning aspiration into reality. They have ambition and purpose. They provide education that is innovative and world-leading, expands the horizons of our young people and equips them to take their place in the wider community. Our universities engage in research of global significance, and they are the stimulus for growth for Northern Ireland. Let me give you some figures just to show what that means. Each year, the higher education sector in Northern Ireland generates more than £1 billion worth of economic activity. For every £1 million of university output, a further £1.38 million is generated in other sectors of the economy. It employs 7,000 people across Northern Ireland and directly generates thousands of additional jobs. It educates 54,000 students each year and, in doing so, refreshes and enriches a range of skills that are vital to the development of our community.

This debate takes place on a day when we have been able to see at first hand the quality of the work carried out by our universities. We saw it in the unique showcase held in the Long Gallery, which the Employment and Learning Committee was delighted to host. I say "unique" because it was the first time that all three of our universities — Queen's, the University of Ulster and the Open University

— have collaborated in an event of that kind. It was truly inspirational. Not only did we see examples of some extraordinary achievement, but it was a delight to meet members of staff and some of the students, all of them deeply committed to the theme of the showcase — advancing knowledge and changing lives.

We depend on our universities for their productivity, their innovation and their creativity. For that we owe them a debt of gratitude. It is up to us to ensure that they receive adequate funding to allow them to continue to play an important role at home and across the world. We must continue to give the support that allows them to aim higher and, in doing so, helps to safeguard the economic future of Northern Ireland.

Our three universities compete at many levels, but in today's showcase we saw evidence of collaborative commitment and delivering public benefit, which may result, even today, in greater collaboration. Earlier today, the Minister of Health, Mr Poots, referred to Professor Frank Pantridge and how his genius contributed to saving lives across the world through his remarkable invention, the mobile heart defibrillator. That life-saving spirit can be seen in the work of his outstanding successors.

4.30 pm

The clinical research facility is focusing on cancer, nutrition and metabolism, vision science and respiratory disease. There is also the Centre of Excellence for Public Health, which is a collaboration involving Queen's, the University of Ulster and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. That is where talented medical academics are tackling more of the challenges that face our society, many of which are caused by the way in which we live.

It seems to be almost every day that we hear about new discoveries and developments at our universities, and that is thanks to the work of some remarkable people who are helping to build Northern Ireland's global reputation for innovation. Such people include Professor Stuart Elborn, who has developed a groundbreaking drug for people suffering from cystic fibrosis; Professor Tracy Robson, who discovered a new drug that will help to combat cancer; and Professor Usha Chakravarthy, who is carrying out clinical trials into eye disease that could result in saving the NHS £84 million a year.

However, it is not just new professors. Professor Gordon Blair, who, unfortunately, passed away on 21 October 2010 after battling cancer, was my wife's great-uncle. By the end of the 1960s, his research work on engines had produced validated computer simulation programmes that helped to design more powerful engines and provided theoretical and design insights that gave the Queen's University team advantages over even the biggest factory motorcycle teams across the world.

I now turn to the University of Ulster, which has 16,000 full-time and almost 8,000 part-time students. Through their spending power, the full-time students alone contribute £160 million a year to the local economy. That is in addition to the £200 million-plus spend of the university itself on salaries, wages, goods and services. Its Belfast city campus is under construction. The campus development will transform the north side of Belfast's central business district and open a new chapter in the life of the city and the university. In the past three months, the University

of Ulster has opened new scientific research centres in stratified medicine, in functional brain mapping and in connected health. Years in the planning, those centres build on essential skills and research and will boost Northern Ireland's growing healthcare technology sector.

In 2012, the university received over 34,000 applications to study, its highest ever number. The Confucius Institute at the university has created a centre of Confucius classroom learning hubs to bring Chinese culture and language to young people across Northern Ireland. The hubs will partner with a network of 111 other schools across the Province to enable every pupil in Northern Ireland to access support for learning about Chinese language and culture.

The third of our universities is the most recent addition — in June this year, when it officially became Northern Ireland's third university — and it is the Open University (OU). Harold Wilson was the first to set out a vision for the "University of the Air" in 1963. His idea was realised in 1969 with the establishment of the Open University. Since Wilson's speech, the university has continued to grow and to innovate. It is now one of the world's foremost distance learning institutes and has significant expertise in harnessing new technologies and teaching techniques to enhance its students' experience of learning at a distance.

As well as its first-class teaching and learning, the Open University carries out world-renowned research that ranks in the top third of UK universities, with 87% of it deemed internationally excellent. To mark and celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Harold Wilson's speech, the Open University commissioned four pieces of public art across the four nations of the UK. In Northern Ireland, Carrie Neely was commissioned after a competitive call to curate a series of artwork called "Luminous, Curious, Journey", and those displays can currently be seen in Belfast.

Part of the Open University's role is to widen participation in part-time study. It offers a route into higher education for anyone with a desire to learn, thus creating a more highly skilled society and workforce, regardless of social background. Part-time study is vital in supporting our economic recovery. The university offers opportunities to upskill and reskill the current workforce in Northern Ireland by offering work-based learning programmes in health, management, education, IT, science and other economically relevant subjects. The university's flexible learning opportunities allow individuals from every constituency in Northern Ireland to study around various commitments such as work, family life and caring responsibilities.

However, the Open University's commitment to research and innovation is also evident. In the last research assessment exercise, the university was ranked in the top third of the UK, as I said. Again as I said, over 80% of all OU research has been assessed as internationally excellent or world leading. In Northern Ireland, Bombardier Aerospace successfully applied for an Open University knowledge exchange voucher, worth £10,000, which was implemented between January and June 2013. Using that seed funding, the materials group in the Open University's faculty of mathematics, computing and technology was able to investigate the residual stresses in mechanically versus chemically milled parts.

Our universities have attracted £684 million in funding for research projects over the past five years. They have more

than 5,000 business connections in each constituency in Northern Ireland. As a result of research innovation, they have created no fewer than 100 spin-out companies with a combined turnover of £260 million and almost 3,000 high-value jobs.

Through the work of the higher education sector, Northern Ireland has become a national and international trailblazer. At Queen's, the Institute for Global Food Security is a hub of research into food safety. It is taking our reputation far beyond these shores, helped by its director, Professor Chris Elliott, who is heading the Westminster Government's independent inquiry into UK food supply. With the agrifood sector —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Swann: Here in Northern Ireland, the value and impact of what our universities do has never been more important. They are crucial to the success of every aspect of the priorities that are identified in the Programme for Government. In conclusion, without commitment to support for the higher education sector and everything that it stands for, Northern Ireland would be a much poorer place.

Mr Ross: In his remarks, the Chairman talked about the collaboration between the three universities that operate in Northern Ireland. I think that "collaboration" is the correct word. What we want to see in our economy is further collaboration not only between the universities but with government and businesses. It is certainly where things are going.

Those of us who took the time to go upstairs to the Long Gallery over lunchtime would have been impressed by the range of things that the universities and institutions are getting up to and the sort of impact that they will have not only for businesses here in Northern Ireland but globally, with some of the 3D design and healthcare elements that the Chairman mentioned. I think that it is very encouraging.

There is no doubt that people in the Assembly will recognise the important role of universities. As mentioned a number of times in a previous debate today, the economy is a central pillar to our Programme for Government. The role and importance of the universities in the economy is mentioned in the Programme for Government and the investment strategy, as well as in the innovation strategy that will come. Of course, the other tool that the Executive are looking for to help to grow our economy is the power to lower corporation tax. If they get that power, it is their view that they will lower it to somewhere between 10% and 12.5%. Independent analysis indicates that that would create up to 4,000 or 5,000 jobs every year. Of course, we need to have the type of graduates who will fill those jobs, and we are very reliant on the universities to produce those graduates.

A large piece of work has already been done to try to identify where those jobs would be. I think that that is where the Executive and universities in particular have a role to play to try to ensure that we create the right type of graduates to fill those places. The role of the Minister and the Executive in encouraging more STEM places is very important. We know that there could be a shortfall in ICT skills unless that is addressed. Last week, I was in Brussels at the European Employment Forum. The Minister was also there and spoke at the event. Delegates talked about the massive shortage that there will be in ICT

skills right across Europe. So, I think that we need to pay attention to that as well.

Back in January, Stewart Watt from Almac, which is one of our companies here in Northern Ireland, talked about the need for good interaction between employers and universities to ensure that the courses that are offered relate directly to career opportunities. That will help to ensure that new graduates hit the employment ground running with the skill sets that are required in an increasingly competitive market. That highlights universities' role in producing graduates who will benefit Northern Ireland.

Upstairs, I listened to the video that was presented to us. In that video, Mark Nodder from the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and, of course, Wrightbus, talked about the many positive reasons that there are for companies to come to Northern Ireland to do business. Of course, we know that those reasons include the government support that is offered from Invest Northern Ireland and the lower cost base for businesses that come here. However, the significant reason is our people and the standard of the graduates and workforce that we have in Northern Ireland. That hugely important point is made whenever our Ministers travel overseas, whether it is the Enterprise Minister on trade missions or the Employment Minister doing similar work overseas. It is a major selling point for Northern Ireland.

Again, I commend the Executive for taking the decision to freeze student fees so that young people in Northern Ireland do not face additional barriers to getting to university. We know that, some time ago, there was a particular focus on the role of universities in the economy when we thought that the Department for Employment and Learning was going to be scrapped and we were looking at where those functions would go. That focused minds, and, at that time, the Committee for Employment and Learning took evidence from industry, the HE and FE sectors and a range of different people. The general consensus, although there was some concern on the opposite Benches, was that we wanted to move towards having a Department for the economy that would encourage the universities to work closer with industry. Hopefully, that is something that we can still move towards in the future.

On a positive note, a lot of the collaboration that I talked about at the beginning is already happening in Northern Ireland. I mentioned the employment forum that met in Brussels last week. One of the interesting things, particularly on the second day of that conference, was listening to people from other European countries talking about the lack of collaboration in their EU jurisdictions. I do not think that the same can be said of Northern Ireland. We are ahead of the game somewhat when it comes to collaboration.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Ross: The Confucius Institute is an example of business and education coming together, as are the cancer centre, the Northern Ireland Science Park and the work that is done in the connected health centre at Jordanstown. We have a positive story to tell, and everybody recognises the important role that universities have.

Mr Rogers: The higher education sector provides almost immeasurable social and economic benefits to this region

and its people, with opportunities for young people to continue their studies and broaden their minds at the University of Ulster, Queen's University and our teaching colleges. I welcome the flexibility of further study that is created by the Open University. Although the motion specifically addresses higher education, I must commend the work of our schools and further education colleges, without which higher education simply would not have the supply of talent. The future of our economy depends on the ready supply of workers who are qualified with the right skills that are demanded by industry. It is more important than ever that there is a strong connection between our employers and our education providers.

We see the benefits in specific sectors, such as health where the C-TRIC hub links up with the university sector to produce a range of innovative answers to questions in our health technology market. I have a particular interest in the early diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Earlier this year, the University of Ulster was awarded £214,000 to fund further research into prostate cancer. The university is researching a new drug combination therapy that aims to control the growth of aggressive tumours. Across the city, at Queen's University, there have been excellent advances in the treatment of ovarian cancer through the collaborative work between Almac Discovery and the university's school of pharmacy. Magee College and our other colleges have had a creative impact on the City of Culture and on the ongoing developments in the creative and expressive arts, including in 'Game of Thrones' or the upcoming filming of the latest 'Dracula' movie.

Throughout this region, 50% of the research that is carried out in our universities is classified as world-leading. We all had the pleasure of seeing a snapshot of this leading-edge research and development in the Long Gallery earlier today, ranging from the work on aircraft design, which is being carried out by Queen's, the University of Ulster and Bombardier, to the Open University's OpenScience Laboratory.

The role of the higher education sector in helping to realise the Programme for Government's cross-cutting priorities, as the motion states, is something that is continually under the microscope. I ask this question: how can we possibly meet our targets for the growth of our agrifood industry if there is no corresponding investment in research and development?

If we are to put our pupils first and address the deficits in our education system, we must invest in ongoing staff development. Everyone knows that to rebuild our economy, we need to invest heavily in the renewable energies because fossil fuels are simply not the answer.

Are we up to speed in availing ourselves of the grants that will become available as part of the European Union's Horizon 2020 project, which has up to €70 billion in the pot for research and innovation? We want that sector to grow, yet the Executive have cut funding to third-level institutions. That is the sad reality that the sector is faced with, but funding is invaluable when it comes to making our services and our institutions more efficient and in providing solutions and products that put us firmly on the map. In my opinion, the skills base that the sector provides across the North is the main reason why so many high-tech companies come here to invest. We have a responsibility to invest and to secure investment in the sector.

That being said, we must look to the institutions to provide leadership and stability from within. I must commend the University of Ulster's business school, which followed up on a comment that I made about the brain drain. It is looking at measures to ensure that more of our students do not have to go abroad for high-quality degree courses. Although I am aware that the provision of veterinary science courses is being considered by our universities, we are still in a position where the nearest course is in Dublin. You do not have to go too far in the English countryside to find a vet from Northern Ireland.

4.45 pm

We have seen the privatisation of jobs, pay freezes and the closure of facilities across the sector in the past two years, which damages confidence across the community in the priorities of the third-level sector. The people locally who sustain and have sustained the universities over many years need to have confidence in the sector. They will seek at all costs to protect jobs and to make progressive decisions on the facilities and services that the sector provides.

I want to turn to the specific cross-cutting theme in the Programme for Government of addressing regional imbalance. We are not addressing regional imbalance, even within the third-level sector, when the relevant Ministers will not commit to implementing a specific pledge in the One Plan for Derry on student numbers at Magee campus of the University of Ulster. The university has work to do in preparing the best business case for the growth in student numbers, and it is imperative that the Executive and the Minister react progressively in the way that they are able to do for other projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Would the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Rogers: Similarly, we must be more proactive at developing better links with our colleges across the border. Our commitment to widening participation and engaging further with business and community groups through the sector is delivering dividends. Those avenues must be developed. The SDLP wholeheartedly backs this motion.

Mr Lyttle: I rise on behalf of the Alliance Party to support the motion and recognise the crucial role that the higher education sector plays in Northern Ireland.

Education is an engine room for personal development and it plays a vital role in the economic development of our society. It provides the high-level skills, invaluable research and commercial knowledge transfer that we need to develop our economy. I am delighted that the Alliance Party commitment to higher education has seen tangible expression in the Alliance Minister for higher education's work across recent years; that our manifesto commitments have been taken forward in that regard; and that government remains the primary funder for higher education. However, it is also essential that we continue our support and that we ensure that that is used wisely.

I welcome, as other Members have, the opposition to any unfair rise in tuition fees and the designation of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects as priority skills areas, as well as the work that has been done to develop strong links between employers and our higher education institutions. I also welcome the expansion of places for STEM-related courses that we have seen

each year, which will hopefully exceed Programme for Government targets by the end of this period. I welcome, too, the additional funding for extra STEM places on masters courses at the University of Ulster and Queen's University. I think that this is absolutely vital to ensure that we are delivering the right skills to support our key aim of rebalancing and growing our economy in Northern Ireland.

I also welcome the increased cooperation that we have seen among our higher education institutes and indeed with our commercial companies, the public sector and community organisations, which is hugely important in helping knowledge exchange throughout our community in order to generate wealth. The higher education business and community interaction survey released earlier this year has shown that this has helped to generate significant money in our economy, and is showing great work in that regard. I also welcome the Connected initiative that has enabled higher education institutes to increase the range and depth of their interaction with the local community and provided employer engagement plans to engage with employers about improving our skills economy.

As has been mentioned today, we have been delighted to have our university and higher education institutes in the Assembly for the Long Gallery event. I have been delighted to see the work of our institutes across Northern Ireland. Most recently, Queen's University was awarded a Northern Ireland Science Park 25k award for a spin-out company that is doing some excellent work in bioscience and health research. I note the University of Ulster's success in widening participation with its Step Ahead scheme, and of course the amazing work of the Open University with the leadership of John D'Arcy in relation to distance learning. It is also important to note the provision of our further education colleges and the efforts that they make to ensure the widening of participation in and access to our higher education institutions.

In closing, I certainly recognise the vital role of the higher education sector in Northern Ireland. I, too, hope that the Executive will, as the motion requests, affirm their commitment to supporting and investing in higher education in order to, as we heard today, advance knowledge, change the lives of people in Northern Ireland and ensure that we remain a hub for world-class higher education.

Mr Buchanan: I, too, support the motion. I commend the universities on their excellent work in Northern Ireland and, indeed, on their excellent showcase in the Long Gallery today, where they presented all the work that they do. For the past 150 years, the higher education sector in Northern Ireland has grown and developed in such a way that, today, it plays a pivotal role in the creation of a sustainable, knowledge-based economy. Today's higher education sector is central to the future development of our economy. It plays a critical role in addressing the skills needs of tomorrow's workforce and in developing our knowledge economy through engagement in research and development. The cultural and economic life of Northern Ireland has greatly benefited from the positive contribution of the higher education sector through its diverse provision, alongside its reputation for excellence in teaching, learning and research.

In the current economic blight, our higher education sector must be recognised for the crucial role that it has to play in the Executive's plan for economic growth, investment and

social inclusion. The Programme for Government's cross-cutting priorities for health, social development, agrifood, education and skills, and research and innovation can only be realised by proper investment in the higher education sector to enable it to respond to rapidly changing skills requirements in order to drive our economy forward. Northern Ireland's economy is demanding a higher level of relevant skills, and economic success is increasingly dependent on knowledge transfer and innovation. With the population becoming more mobile, the higher education sector is more competitive, resulting in the funding environment being distinctly more difficult.

Our higher education sector not only provides a high-quality learning experience but plays a key role in meeting skills needs in the local economy by providing highly qualified graduates and reskilling and upskilling the existing workforce. However, to fully maximise intellectual potential, there must be continued cooperation between the sector, Departments and industry. Flexibility in delivering funding and lifelong learning will also be essential to increase part-time and postgraduate capacity in the sector.

Rebalancing the profile of higher education provision so that the qualifications offered more closely reflect the need of the economy and so that graduates develop the skills required to exploit future employment opportunities is also a key driver. The skills and research base needed for the 21st century economy is highly reliant on our higher education providers. We can see growth opportunities that exist in areas such as financial and business services, technology, telecoms and ICT, advanced materials and engineering, life and health sciences and agrifood. Local companies are increasingly global in their focus. From an inward investment perspective, there is a worldwide shortage of software engineers, so international employers are seeking out the regions where they can recruit the staff that they require now and in the future. It is, therefore, vital that we maximise such opportunities and help local firms to access the skills that they need to remain competitive, while ensuring that inward investors are encouraged to locate here because of the availability of the right people with the right skills at the right time.

Although the Executive will face many challenges in delivering on their priorities, it is imperative that economic growth and wealth creation are achieved. A strong, modern economy can only be built upon a healthy, well-educated population, backed by high-quality public services in a stable society that has the necessary skills to attract investment and promote growth.

The proposer of the motion mentioned the inward investment that is being brought into Northern Ireland by our universities, and we have to be very thankful for that. I therefore call on the Executive to affirm their commitment to supporting and investing in the higher education sector in Northern Ireland for the future of our economy.

Mr Hilditch: As a member of the Employment and Learning Committee, I generally support the motion. I congratulate the Members who secured the debate and acknowledge the overall efforts of the higher education sector today in bringing its message to Stormont as it showcased its work and lobbied for further support and investment. The Long Gallery was the place to be over the lunch period today, and anybody who did not make it up there missed something special.

There is no doubt that higher education is a key driver for the Northern Ireland economy. Even during this difficult period, it is a sector that has continued to grow and, as we heard earlier today, through partnership working with local businesses, it contributes significantly to the local economy. For that economy to continue to grow through high-value jobs and investment, priority must be given to innovation, creativity and research and development.

We have established the target that, by 2025, we want Northern Ireland to be recognised as an innovation hub and to be one of the United Kingdom's leading knowledge-based regions that embraces growth at all levels of society through creativity and innovation.

I acknowledge the Minister's announcement in August this year of additional funding for masters courses at Queen's and the University of Ulster. That is a step in the right direction and has the potential to provide opportunities towards helping to achieve those types of targets.

Today's motion is also timely as the private sector is expressing renewed concern, and with good reason, that there is not sufficient skills in the STEM-related subjects to provide the next generation of scientists, engineers and technicians. We must work towards closing the gap between the available skills and the volume of required skills, not only in the subjects mentioned, but we must address the shortages in health and social development-type subjects. It is not only a challenge to close the gap and work on the hard-to-fill vacancies, there are requirements to replace the people who will retire in the next six years, and that number is estimated to be around 1,350. It is estimated that hard-to-fill vacancies alone could cost our economy £21 million annually in gross value added.

Although the motion calls on the Executive to reaffirm their commitment to supporting and investing in the higher education sector, there are challenges down the line for the Minister, the Department and Members. We regularly hear of the concerns, priorities and issues of many in the employment and learning sector, and we cannot be all things to all people. However, there is a great opportunity for government to approach the issues in a joined-up and cross-departmental way.

From my experience, I am aware of the Employment and Learning Committee's careers inquiry, and we look forward to the forthcoming launch of that report and the potential outworkings of it. Another great piece of work was the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee's inquiry into the creative industries and the recommendations that flowed from that one. There is a good opportunity to pull together a number of good pieces of work that will benefit the sector, build the skills base and encourage the Executive and all other partners to reaffirm their commitment to supporting the local higher education sector. I support the motion.

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion, and I thank all the sponsors for raising the important issue and all the Members who contributed to the debate. I also want to recognise the role that the three universities have played, not just in organising today's showcase in the Long Gallery but through the huge contribution that they make to the local economy. It is important, as the Chair of the Committee stressed, that we now talk of three

local universities, as the Open University has this year completed its devolution to Northern Ireland. We must remind ourselves that we have a wider higher education family, including two teacher training colleges and our further education colleges, providing approaching 20% of the overall offer.

5.00 pm

Our universities support the economy in three different ways. First, they make a very tangible contribution to the regional economy as large employers as well as generating a significant impact through their expenditure and, indeed, that of their staff and students. That amounts to almost £1 billion annually. Secondly, the universities are investing in the higher-level skills that we require for the future economy. Evidence underpinning the Northern Ireland skills strategy shows that the jobs of the future will increasingly demand higher-level qualifications. Around 50% of the jobs in Northern Ireland will require skills at that level compared with around one third at present. The provision of high-quality teaching and learning leads to the development of highly employable graduates and postgraduates. In recent years, my Department has established a number of employer-led groups that aim to drive up the skill levels of the workforce across particular target sectors. Key to the success of those groups is collaboration among industry, education and government in the areas of ICT, hospitality and tourism, manufacturing, engineering and agrifood. All of them are reaping the benefits of that approach. Thirdly, the universities provide high-quality, internationally excellent research, which translates into successful innovation and knowledge transfer and the creation of spin-out companies.

Northern Ireland universities are punching above their weight compared with their counterparts in Great Britain, with income from business and community interaction. Contributory factors to that strong overall performance include income from collaborative research, which is 3.6% of the UK total and about 50% more than you would expect for a region of our size; income from intellectual property, which is 6.9% of the UK total and two and a half times more than you would expect for a region of our size; and the number of spin-off companies still active after three years, which now stands at 48. That is 4.8% of the UK total and double what you would expect. It is also worth highlighting the opportunities that we have through the US-Ireland R&D Partnership. I had the privilege of hosting Dr Kerri-Ann Jones, the Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, in Belfast last week.

The higher education landscape in Northern Ireland has changed radically over this mandate. For the first time, we have a higher education strategy in place: Graduating to Success. The strategy sets out a long-term vision for the sector, with implementation targets spanning 2013 to 2020. Furthermore, to support my aim that any qualified individual should be able to gain access to the higher education that is right for them, irrespective of their personal or social background, Access to Success, which is a regional strategy for widening participation, was published in September 2012. Together, those strategies cover a broad spectrum of higher education activity. Responsiveness to the needs of the economy is the key overarching theme.

We have also delivered the largest increase in undergraduate places in a decade, with 1,350 additional places committed to over the next couple of years, including through the Executive's job and economy initiative. All those additional places are in STEM subjects. I will look to identify opportunities to add further places to our higher education institutions over the coming months. In parallel with that, the universities have submitted proposals outlining their plans for enhancing their focus on the needs of the economy and ensuring that the qualifications offered reflect that.

The Department has also committed to a substantial increase in the number of directly funded PhD places. Under Graduating to Success, we have set a target of doubling the number of postgraduate awards to 1,000 by 2020. We are on target to achieve that, with 71% of it set to be delivered by 2016, relative to last year's baseline. It is worth stressing that, rather than being in retreat, our higher education sector is growing in Northern Ireland.

The Executive have set a challenging target for European Union funding. The universities are central to meeting that target and are on track to increase their drawdown of funds by 2020. The target to draw down €50 million under FP7 by the end of December 2013 has already been surpassed, with €63.5 million having been secured by June this year. My Department has also introduced a new quality research funding model that not only promotes world-leading and internationally excellent research but takes into account the current and future needs of the local economy.

Recurrent funding for knowledge transfer, through the higher education innovation fund (HEIF), has increased by £2.68 million to £11.6 million, which is an increase of 30%. However, we cannot afford to stand still. I believe that the further development of a vibrant, world-class research base is crucial to the continued development of Northern Ireland's economy, with the higher education sector generating commercial opportunities and scientific breakthroughs, and propagating high-value jobs and investment. To meet these needs, continued access to additional funds is essential, and, again, the role of universities is critical in drawing these down. FP7 will be succeeded by Horizon 2020, which will run from 2014 to 2020. The budget is just under €71 billion.

Together with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, my Department has developed a £1.8m higher education EU support fund to support the employment of seven Northern Ireland Horizon 2020 contacts. Those appointed are providing specialist advice and assistance to academics and businesses across areas that are of economic relevance to Northern Ireland and priorities for the European Commission. The areas include energy, advanced materials and transport technologies, ICT and connected health.

As we look to the next comprehensive spending review, Members must understand that, if our higher education institutions are to maintain and, indeed, increase their positive impact on our economy and the wider community, they must be properly resourced. When tuition fees were introduced throughout the UK in 2012-13, the Executive agreed that fees for Northern Ireland-domiciled students enrolled at local institutions would be capped at £3,465, with only inflationary increases. This, however, created a funding gap of £38 million, and it was agreed at the time that my Department would contribute £17 million, with

others providing £21 million. The current level of fees in Northern Ireland offers an attractive package of study for local students who remain in Northern Ireland for their higher education. We must be careful not to unpick that tuition fee settlement.

Fees of £9,000, which were expected to be charged only in exceptional circumstances, are now commonplace in the rest of the UK. It is logical to assume that, if the cap on fees in Northern Ireland were to be lifted, our local universities would align themselves with other UK universities, and fees would increase dramatically. If the financial incentive to remain in Northern Ireland were to be removed, there is the potential that more local students would choose to study in other areas of the UK. We would still be liable for providing such students with financial support, but many might not return to Northern Ireland, and their skills would be lost to the economy. There are also indications in England of a very negative impact on the uptake of part-time study. A similar reaction in Northern Ireland would have a severe impact on our attempts to widen access and upskill the existing workforce.

A long-term commitment to freezing fees cannot be advanced at the expense of passing on the costs to universities. That would simply undermine the quality of their offering. In contrast, we must also recognise that, with access to additional sources of income, other universities have greater flexibility in how they expand. Therefore, if we are to maintain a local economy that is in large part based on the quality of our local universities, government and the higher education institutions themselves will need to work twice as hard to not only maintain but improve the quality of the local product and to remain competitive.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I welcome the opportunity to conclude the debate. I thank the Minister for responding, Committee members for tabling the motion and all Members who participated. It has been a healthy debate and a very informative discussion on an issue that I take a particular interest in. As a product of the higher education route, I understand the benefits for people. I also believe that education can play a key role in the building of self-confidence as well as enhancing employability skills.

Earlier, I attended a showcase event, the theme of which was "advancing knowledge, changing lives", and it was excellent. I am a great advocate of women, particularly mothers and single women availing themselves of educational facilities in their local areas. We have good centres of excellence that provide key skills that will enhance employability. Recently, I visited South West College with MEP Martina Anderson. The college is becoming a key educational centre within local communities. In fact, it announced an increase in full-time higher education courses, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the director, Malachy McAleer.

Higher education plays a pivotal role in creating a vibrant economy and is important to economic growth, investment and an inclusive society. To ensure that the local economy is provided with a skilled workforce, it is important that the Executive invest in higher education on a continuous basis. In any changing society, there are challenges, but there are also opportunities. The economy is demanding a higher level of relevant skills, and economic success is increasingly dependent on knowledge transfer and innovation.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Pat O'Neill, the founder of Powerscreen, wrote a letter to 'The Irish News' last year saying that local engineering firms in mid-Ulster and east Tyrone needed approximately 25 graduate engineers but that very few pupils from local schools were applying to do engineering courses. The connection between employers and our education system needs to be on a continuous basis.

A recent report by Copius highlighted that there is a huge skills gap in practical skills. In fact, there is nowhere in the North that qualifies welders, for example, to the highest levels needed for specialist work. Other organisations that gave evidence to the Employment and Learning Committee pointed to opportunities in the future, given the right investment and the right emphasis on skills. For example, Momentum indicated that it could create 20,000 jobs in the next five years. The Confederation of British Industry's research points to a range of future opportunities as follows: 10,000 jobs in the ICT sector; 7,500 jobs in the agrifood sector; about 6,000 jobs in health technologies; 1,700 jobs in advanced manufacturing; 21,000 jobs in tradable services; 10,000 jobs in tours; 11,700 jobs in the creative industries; 1,600 jobs in green tech; 7,000 jobs in renewables, powers and energy; and circa 49,000 induced direct jobs as a result of consumer spend. That is about 125,000 jobs. As we can see, growth opportunities do exist.

It is important that we develop education and training facilities that bridge the gap, whether it be through more apprenticeships or changes to the way in which our educational colleges react to the skills gaps when they are identified.

Regardless of the economic situation, figures from UCAS show that the demand for higher education remains strong. Obviously I encourage that.

Going to what Members said, Robin Swann, the Chair of the Committee, said that education is about more than just buildings. He said that it is about investment in the community and creating opportunities. It is important that we safeguard that. He talked about how the Open University offers a route into higher education for anyone with a desire to learn. I encourage anyone living in an isolated rural area to consider enrolling in an OU course.

Alastair Ross placed emphasis on collaboration between the universities, employers, industry and government. He talked about how the economy is a central pillar in growing the economy. Lower corporation tax is obviously another important issue, which he flagged up. Like Alastair, I was also in Brussels last week, where they talked about an ICT shortfall across Europe. There are clearly growth opportunities there that we need to focus on. Members of the employment forum in Brussels talked about the lack of collaboration. I agree with the Member that we in the North are actually far ahead, although more work still needs to be done.

Sean Rogers referred to the very important issue of innovation in cancer research. He also talked about the agrifood industry, which I believe is important, especially for rural areas. It is an area where more work needs to be done in promoting skills, especially within the food and drinks industry. Chris Lyttle referred to higher education as an engine room for personal development. He welcomed the Connected initiative, which is important for engaging

with the business community. Tom Buchanan said that higher education is important in the development of a knowledge-based economy. Tom also referred to the challenges in funding, especially with the economic climate that we are in.

5.15 pm

David Hilditch congratulated the universities for showcasing their work here today. He referred to the event as "something special", and I agree. He talked about how the higher education sector continues to grow and acknowledged the additional funding for masters courses. He also referred to the growth opportunities in STEM subjects. As I said, there are still a lot of opportunities out there.

The Minister recognised the huge contribution that the three universities make to supporting the economy. He referred to the investment in higher-level skills and emphasised the importance of collaboration among industry, education and government. That needs to continue to grow. The Minister also referred to the additional places in STEM subjects, and I welcome the good work that he has done on that. We need to put a focus on gender, which is also a big issue. He talked about doubling postgraduate awards by 2020, and, again, I congratulate the Minister on the good work that he has done to put a focus on all of that. He also referred to how the higher education institutions need to be resourced if they are to meet the needs of the economy. On that note, I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly acknowledges the key role of higher education in growing the local economy and helping to realise the Programme for Government's cross-cutting priorities in health, social development, agrifood, education and skills, and research and innovation; and calls on the Executive to affirm their commitment to supporting and investing in the local higher education sector.

Assembly Business

Mr Speaker: Before we move to the next item of business, I want to remind the whole House of what I said at the start of business this morning about offensive remarks against Members and the standards of courtesy, good temper and moderation that are expected in the Chamber. If Members cross that line, they will be told to resume their seat, and they will not be called to make a contribution in the House for some time.

Private Members' Business

The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary

Mr Speaker: I remind Members that they have a general duty to behave responsibly and ensure that nothing is said that may prejudge any future inquiry or legal case. If that is as clear as possible to all Members, we may be able to move on.

The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for this debate. However, as two amendments have been selected, an additional 15 minutes has been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes in which to propose and five minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes. Before we go to the debate, I remind the House that both amendments can be made.

Mr Nesbitt: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the recent BBC/RTÉ documentary on the disappeared, which outlined the harrowing practice of republican terrorists in abducting, killing and secretly burying people; further notes with extreme concern allegations of the involvement of the president of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams TD, in the murder of one of these people, namely Jean McConville; stands firmly with the families of the disappeared who have suffered greatly as a result of the actions of republican terrorists; recognises the work of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) in providing a mechanism whereby information can be obtained; and calls on all those with information to cooperate fully with the latest appeal from the ICLVR in the aftermath of this programme in order to bring some level of comfort to the families.

Mr Speaker, I welcome your advice as to the conduct and tone of the debate. Clearly, this is not the first time that the issue of the disappeared has been debated by the House. The Ulster Unionist Party brings it forward today specifically because of the television programme called 'The Disappeared' that was jointly broadcast by BBC Northern Ireland and RTÉ and the subsequent, renewed call from the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR).

I have to say that, in my view, the television programme was probably the finest piece of television journalism concerning the Troubles that I have ever seen. Darragh MacIntyre's scripting and interview techniques and Alison Millar's production values made for something quite extraordinary. However, it was not the technical brilliance of the programme that made it so compelling. It was compelling, in the first instance, because it gave a voice to victims and survivors to describe to us the human cost of our Troubles. If we ever lose our appetite for listening to victims and survivors detail the human cost of the Troubles, we will lose contact with our own humanity.

Frankly, if we in the Chamber did not debate the programme, I think that we would become even less relevant in the eyes of the public than we are today.

The programme did more than give a voice to victims and survivors. It gave that voice to a particular group of victims

and survivors who suffered and endured a particular form of torture, which was quite vicious and deliberate in its nature.

In a debate on the disappeared in April last year, Mr McLaughlin, the Sinn Féin Member for South Antrim, made it clear that the disappeared were the result of a "policy". It was a long-standing policy that Mr McLaughlin told us went back to the start of the 20th century and that saw republicans abduct members of their community, torture them, kill them, brutally dump their bodies and, most cruelly, deny their families the comfort of a Christian burial. That was a policy from republicans that was not condemned by Sinn Féin, which tells us that it is the party of human rights.

It was also terrorism. I think that it is fitting for Ulster Unionists and, indeed, unionists generally, to remind themselves from time to time that the IRA did not just kill and maim policemen and soldiers and attack pro-union communities; it also terrorised its own community. That community came to realise that, if you crossed the Provisional IRA, at best, you could be tarred and feathered — tied to a lamp post, your hair cut off and hot tar poured over your head, followed by feathers — and, at worst, you would be disappeared — abducted, tortured, killed, your body dumped and your family denied the right to a funeral service. Frankly, republicans consistently colluded to terrorise their community.

Now, of course, they condemn the policy. For example, Martin McGuinness told the House on 4 November that the murders were:

"totally and absolutely wrong ... cruel ... unjustified". — [Official Report, Bound Volume 89, p16, col 2].

Those are fine words. Indeed, they are welcome words. However, those words come from a man who, by his own admission, had a huge influence in the Provisional IRA. He was second in command of the Derry brigade at one point, which coincided with the start of the implementation of the policy of disappearing people during the Troubles. Of course, Mr McGuinness said that he left the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s. However, the two questions that arise from his denunciation of making people disappear are these: what did he do to try to stop that policy when he was a senior member of the Provisional IRA; and, if he did try — if he did try — how come he failed? The list of the disappeared that the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains provided shows that republicans continued to collude and terrorise their own community by disappearing citizens well into the 1980s, which was long after Martin McGuinness claims to have left the Provisional IRA. So, did he do anything to try to stop that policy? If so, why did he fail? If he cannot answer those questions, we must conclude that his opposition to the policy is somewhat new-found and, perhaps, self-serving.

The second element of the motion refers to the programme's allegations about the involvement of the Sinn Féin president in the murder of Jean McConville. The latest finger to be pointed his way comes from beyond the grave in the shape of Brendan Hughes, a man who, at one time, was surely closer to Gerry Adams than any other terrorist. It is the most serious of allegations, but there was more to the programme than an allegation about Gerry Adams's involvement in the abduction, torture and murder of Jean McConville and the disposal of her body without allowing her very large family the comfort of a funeral. There was

also the input of Billy McKee, a 92-year-old man, who, to use horribly mixed language, is republican royalty. Billy McKee has no problem acknowledging that he was a founding member of the Provisional IRA.

What Billy McKee does seem to have a difficulty with, according to the programme, is Gerry Adams, who he challenged to come and say to his face that he was not a member of the IRA. Clearly, the Ulster Unionist Party is not the only organisation that has difficulty believing that Gerry Adams was never in the Provisional IRA. The Provisional IRA does not believe that Gerry Adams was never in the Provisional IRA. Let me be clear: I believe Billy McKee, not Gerry Adams.

The programme, therefore, has implications for the broader issue of dealing with the past. Gerry Adams, if he is to be believed, says that Sinn Féin wants an independent, international truth process. As recently as yesterday, his colleague Pat Sheehan MLA said that they would engage fully if the right process were to be established.

Well, let us look at the only available evidence, which comes from the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains. It is, by definition, independent, but it is also international because it has two commissioners, one appointed by the UK Government and the other by the Government of the Republic of Ireland. It was established in April 1999, fourteen and a half years ago. It offers privilege to anybody providing information. In other words, you cannot be prosecuted for anything that you tell the independent commission, so it is a form of immunity from prosecution. Basically, the British and Irish Governments are bending over backwards to help republicans to come forward with information.

Of the 16 people who are listed as the disappeared, only nine bodies have been found. In the case of Jean McConville, that was not because of information supplied by members of the Provisional IRA. Her remains were discovered by a member of the public. So, after nearly 15 years, only half the disappeared have been recovered because of information supplied by republicans — republicans who enjoy the privilege of immunity from prosecution if they engage in the process, which is independent and international.

Only half the families have had the comfort of a Christian burial because republicans engaged successfully. In dealing with the past, half the truth is simply not enough. Half the truth is not enough to properly deal with the past. Half the remains recovered is not enough for those who lost their loved ones to terrorists who abducted them, tortured them, killed them, disposed of their bodies and denied the families the comfort of a funeral.

I propose the motion. We will not support the Sinn Féin amendment because you cannot disappear the reference to Gerry Adams from the programme, you cannot disappear the words of Brendan Hughes and Billy McKee, and you cannot disappear the stain of promoting a policy that is simply barbaric.

By the same token, neither will we oppose the DUP amendment because, clearly, Lisa Dorrian's family has the same right to the truth and comfort of a burial.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Nesbitt: So, although Lisa Dorrian was not part of the programme, we shall support the DUP amendment.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I wish to move the amendment tabled by my party:

Leave out all after first "disappeared" and insert:

“; acknowledges the pain and anguish of the families whose loved ones were killed and secretly buried during the course of the conflict and offers them our full support; commends the work of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) in providing a mechanism whereby information relating to the location of the remains of the victims can be obtained; notes previous acknowledgments by the members of the commission's forensic team of the cooperation and assistance they received from republicans in their efforts to locate the remains of the victims; calls on all those with information to cooperate fully with the latest appeal from the ICLVR in the aftermath of the documentary, in order to bring some level of comfort to the families; and further calls on anyone who has previously been in touch with the commission to contact them again in order to assist the commission to reassess the information available to it.”

We have, of course, debated this issue on a number of occasions, and what characterised that debate was that, although we may largely repeat points, there has always been an all-party agreement on the requirement for those who have information, no matter how little, to make it available to the commission so that the continued agony of the families of the disappeared can be alleviated.

That is, until today's debate. The motion from the Unionist Party, particularly with its reference to Gerry Adams, is, perhaps, ill-judged and not properly thought through. However, it could equally be deliberately designed to fragment the unanimous support of the Assembly over a long time for the families of the disappeared. If that is the case, it would be very regrettable.

Obviously, Sinn Féin cannot support this motion as presented. Our amendment is designed to redirect us back to the commitment to the families of the disappeared. I appeal to the Unionist Party to accept our amendment in the interest of unanimity on this vital matter.

5.30 pm

Everyone in this Chamber will understand that this Assembly cannot supplant the role and authority of the PSNI, the prosecuting authorities or the courts, or indeed the Garda Síochána, who thankfully, now free from political interference, across that range of the judiciary and the legal and the policing processes — they are the only agencies that can investigate properly the issues that the Unionist Party has unfortunately inserted into this debate on the families and their campaign in relation to the disappeared.

Hopefully, a positive response may emerge from the Unionist Party during this discussion which will allay concern that its professed support for the families will be deprioritised as it seeks to indulge in political point-scoring.

Perhaps other unionist spokespersons across the Chamber will recognise the mistaken thrust of the motion and accept and support our amendment. At this point, I

should make it clear that if our amendment succeeds, we will be prepared to accept the DUP amendment also, as it includes the issue of the disappearance of Lisa Dorrian and restates the fact that these matters remain subject to ongoing investigation.

Unless and until every family has had the remains of their disappeared loved ones restored to them, this Assembly with a united voice should speak to that simple and dignified demand. I commend and support all the families who have suffered a grievous injustice and who have campaigned with dignity for many years to locate the remains of their loved ones.

It may be helpful to remind ourselves of the stated IRA position on this tragic matter. In April 1999, the IRA issued a statement which coincided with the establishment of the commission, accepting responsibility for the deaths of a number of people it had killed and secretly buried. At that time, it outlined its position and commitment to cooperation with the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains. It stated:

“our intention has been to do all within our power to rectify any injustice for which we accept full responsibility and to alleviate the suffering of the families. We are sorry that this has taken so long to resolve and for prolonged anguish caused to the families.”

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: No, if you do not mind.

I thank everyone who has worked to help the families, including the independent commission, the PSNI, an Garda Síochána and the experts and staff who have been brought in to assist in that work. They deserve our full support.

Opinions may differ on this matter, but I accept that the IRA has provided full disclosure of all of the information that was available to it. Obviously, that has resulted in the recovery of some of the missing bodies, but it is equally clear that that has not been sufficient to fulfil the heartfelt desire of all the families. Therefore, the appeal for more information needs to be heard loud and clear from this Assembly — not a clarion noise of disagreement and squabbling amongst the political parties, but a united voice and a clear statement. That is the fault line that runs through the motion that has just been outlined by the leader of the Unionist Party.

A determined commitment to see this issue resolved — a message that is clear, definitive and capable of being heard and understood by anyone who possesses any fragment of information that will lead to further recovery, especially those who may not have responded so far — has to be our singular focus today.

Republicans have worked to address this injustice, and that has been recognised by the commission. I can quote the commission if people require it, but I have already done so in previous debates, and it is a matter of record. The commission has accepted that it has had 100% cooperation and support from republicans in respect of the very difficult issue —

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: No, I am sorry.

Mr Knupfer from the commission acknowledged the incredible difficulties and challenges facing the search teams when he said that, in some of the cases, the people directly involved or with the information may have died. Members will recognise that, when reviewing events that have taken place over a 40-year span, memories will have faded. Locations will have changed and been affected by land erosion, agriculture and afforestation activity. Those sites, in some circumstances, have changed dramatically.

Let me make it clear that none of that minimises the IRA's responsibility for the suffering endured by the families — a responsibility that the IRA has accepted. It is imperative that efforts continue to find the remaining bodies that are missing. That is true in all circumstances, not just those that the IRA were involved in. The IRA was not responsible for all of the missing people that the commission is attempting to find. The suffering of the families has gone on too long and has been too acute and too agonising for politicians to play political games with emotions and expectations. We should return to the consistent position, until today, of this Assembly speaking with one voice, a clear message and a focus on the job that remains to be done.

As I have said, the remains of a number of people have been found, but others, despite some information being made available to the commission, have yet to be recovered. Joe Lynskey disappeared in September 1972; Kevin McKee disappeared on 2 October 1972, along with Seamus Wright; Columba McVeigh disappeared on 1 November 1975; Robert Nairac disappeared in May 1977; Seamus Ruddy disappeared in Paris on 9 May 1985; Brendan McGraw disappeared on 8 April 1978; and Lisa Dorrian went missing on 28 February 2005.

Let there be no doubt that the qualified, limited success so far demonstrates that we have a system, which, with cooperation, continued determination and focus by all political parties, can bring more support and succour to those families. For us to divide or dissipate that unity would be a terrible mistake. In closing, I appeal to the unionist party to reconsider the disastrous trajectory that it is on at the present time. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us not have comments from a sedentary position.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: This will not help. You have to question your own conscience. Will this motion help a single family? Will it help anybody? Of course not. Will it make it more difficult for the commission? We should examine the option that has been identified by the Assembly: unity, unanimity on the issue and standing four-square behind the efforts of the commission for the disappeared.

Mr Weir: I beg to move amendment No 2:

At end insert:

“and anyone with information on the disappearance and whereabouts of Lisa Dorrian to immediately bring that forward to either the PSNI or the ICLVR; and further calls on the Minister of Justice to ensure that the necessary resources are available to the relevant criminal justice agencies to bring to justice those responsible for the murders of the disappeared.”

Before I move into the detail of the amendment that stands in my name and that of my colleague Paul Givan, I want to deal with the motion. At the outset, I state that we support the motion before us. Clearly, we will be disappointing the Member opposite because we will oppose Sinn Féin's amendment. Let me make it absolutely clear that we agree completely with the wording of the motion that has been put in front of us. We seek to add to it through our amendment, and I will come to that later. We agree so completely with the motion that we have taken the unusual step of not seeking to alter a word or a comma through our amendment; we simply seek to add to it. We believe that anyone who is a true democrat in our society should support the motion.

As the proposer indicated, this issue has been refocused and brought to the fore as a result of the recent BBC programme. It was a very moving programme that was very professionally put together. Indeed, anybody who saw it could not help but be affected by it. However, in many ways, it was simply refocusing on a problem that, in some cases, stretches back more than 40 years.

Let us be absolutely clear about this: we talk about the disappeared, but perhaps a clearer term is those who were abducted, brutally tortured and murdered. Among the many evils that were perpetrated during the Troubles, this was one of the greatest that was inflicted on our society. For families, the knock on the door and the abduction of a relative — a son or a daughter, a mother or a father — is an unimaginable horror. Indeed, as has been indicated, sometimes, when violence is talked about, the phrase “mindless thuggery” is almost dismissed. The reality is that this was very well thought through. It was, as has been indicated, a deliberate policy by which principally republicans sought control over areas. It was a policy by which, mistakenly, they sought some form of petty revenge on people in their community, and one through which they wanted to establish terrorist supremacy.

The single act of it happening is bad enough, but that has been multiplied as the families have been deprived of the opportunity to mourn the victims and bury their family members. It was not just one incident in a night. It is something that, for many families, has gone on for decades. One of the saddest elements of this, as generations have passed, is that family members of the disappeared, who are no longer with us, have never had the opportunity to be able to come to terms with what happened and to get a degree of closure.

I take exception to the remarks of the Member who has just spoken. He effectively commended republicans when he said that they had worked to correct this injustice. Let us remember that, in the bulk of cases, it was the same republican terrorists who perpetrated that injustice in the first place. So, at this stage, I give no credit to those who have taken subsequent action.

The Sinn Féin amendment fulfils the honeyed words and certain wall of silence that have come from republicanism. It is an attempted whitewash of the motion. If we have to break consensus to ensure that there is not a whitewash on the disappeared, that is something that we are prepared to do. The amendment highlights all that is wrong about the attitude, particularly of Sinn Féin, towards the past and the disappeared. Its attitude towards the motion was, first, to try to suppress it and to question whether it had the legal authority to come to the Chamber, and secondly,

to distract from it. Am I being cynical? Less than 24 hours ago, Sinn Féin's proposals to the Haass talks on parades and flags were leaked. Was that simply an attempt to distract from this issue? Thirdly, through its amendment, it has tried to ignore realities.

Truth has been talked about, and supposedly truth has been proposed by some of the Members opposite. I am mindful of the instructions from the Speaker, but when we reach the situation in which the president of Sinn Féin is denying the truth of his own involvement with the IRA, something which, as indicated by the proposer, even people within the republican movement, let alone anybody outside, do not believe, how can we have any faith in that form of truth? It also shows its attitude towards the disappeared. It is dodging reality and responsibility, and we get honeyed words instead of practical help. So, we oppose its amendment.

Our amendment deals with two issues. The Minister of Justice is not here to respond, but our amendment calls upon him to ensure that adequate resources are available. I believe that those are being provided, and I hope that the Minister or, at least, some Members from his party can confirm that. It is important to have that level of support.

Our amendment also deals with the experience of Lisa Dorrian. From my experience, in my generation, the Dorrian family is the family that I have had most direct contact with. For those who do not know, Lisa was a young girl who came from my constituency. She grew up in Conlig and latterly lived in Bangor. She got involved with the wrong crowd, but she had realised the difficulties that she was in. At the time of her disappearance, she was intending to leave Northern Ireland and use some compensation money to set up her own business. However, that 25-year-old girl was denied that opportunity, because, on the night of 27/28 February, she was abducted from the caravan park in Ballyhalbert. While no organisation has claimed responsibility, and it has been unclear, it is widely believed that some form of loyalists were involved.

Although the exact circumstances are not known, it is clear that Lisa was abducted, tortured, murdered and buried somewhere. Since then, the family has appealed for information, and there have been a number of false hopes and false trails leading to searches on land. In fact, at one stage, there was a rumour that her body had been dumped at sea. If anybody wants to highlight the ongoing nightmare for her family, they should visit the website that is dedicated to Lisa Dorrian. As part of that, you will see a clock that ticks by every second since her disappearance. Indeed, the ticking clock for Lisa Dorrian is the reality for all the families of the disappeared.

There is a euphemism about a fate worse than death, which has been used in different contexts. The families of the disappeared, whether that is Lisa Dorrian or the others, are left with a fate worse than death. I suspect that most if not all of us in the House have at some stage lost a relative and a loved one, whether a mother, a father, a brother or a sister, and some have been unfortunate enough to lose a child, and we all know the trauma of that. However, at least all of us in the Chamber will have had the opportunity to grieve, to attend a funeral and to go to a graveside. No such privilege has been given to the families of the disappeared, which is why it is a fate worse than death for them.

5.45 pm

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: I will give way briefly. I have only a few seconds left.

Mrs D Kelly: Thank you, I will be very brief. Does the Member agree that it is not only the fact of that particular inhumanity but the fact that their reputation and good name have also been destroyed?

Mr Weir: That is so, which is part of the tragedy.

When the Member who spoke previously was concluding, he complained that, in many ways, the motion was not going to do a great deal of good and that it was only words. Although we support the motion and have tabled an amendment, he is right in one sense, because all that the House can offer today is words: it can give moral support. However, there are those in the community connected with all of the disappeared who can go further and deliver on actions and start to bring the nightmare to a close for all those families — for Lisa's family and for all the families of the disappeared.

In conclusion, I urge the House to support the motion and our amendment. I also urge all those who are outside the Chamber and have information to bring the nightmare to an end and to ensure that we will have no need for debates on the disappeared in the future, because there will at least be some closure for the families.

Mr Attwood: Whatever transpires in the debate and the final votes, and whatever people do or do not say during the next hour, one thing is very clear: the eloquence of the families of the disappeared and other victims and survivors is far greater than anything that we vote on or can say, which is not to diminish what we are doing.

The truth of the matter is that, as with the debate that we had in the days after the summer recess, our politics over the past 40 or 50 years, and especially over the past 20 years, has gone through a number of phases. There was the ceasefire phase, the devolution phase, the devolution of justice phase, and the united stand against terror phase. If our politics is to be defined in any way at this time, it must be that the needs of victims and survivors, including the disappeared, must have primacy and that this must be their time and place. In that regard, given that our party met Haass and O'Sullivan yesterday and that other parties in the Chamber met them this afternoon and may be meeting them as I speak, we need to ensure that the first test of the Haass/O'Sullivan talks in respect of the disappeared or all the other victims and survivors is to deal with the past in a comprehensive and ethical way.

The first judge of all parties, governments, terror groups and other agencies in these negotiations has to be, first and foremost, whether we deal with the past in a comprehensive and ethical way. Our most eloquent response to the programme on the disappeared and all the other memorials, commemorations and events of the past two, three and four weeks is to deal with the legacy of the past, through Haass, in a comprehensive and ethical way. If we do not face up to that responsibility and accept that challenge, and if we do not respond in solidarity and compassion with the victims and survivors through Haass and O'Sullivan, the debate does not add anything to the needs of victims and survivors and those who suffer the pain of the past.

I did not intend to go down this road, but I will. I have to say that the comments made by Sinn Féin today were shocking and appalling in equal measure. Let me explain why: Mr McLaughlin asked the Ulster Unionist Party to appeal to its conscience and accept the Sinn Féin amendment. He deployed the conscience argument, yet it appears that conscience escaped all those who were involved or knew the whereabouts of those who did not disappear, Mr McLaughlin, but were disappeared. Invoking the word "conscience", given that horror, trauma and tragedy, sat very uncomfortably with the Chamber tonight.

More than that, Sinn Féin indicts others for allegedly playing political games. It then says to the Ulster Unionist Party and the other parties in the Chamber who support the motion that, if they accept Sinn Féin's amendment, Sinn Féin will accept the DUP one. That act of party political bartering also sat very uncomfortably with the Chamber. When you analyse that, you find that it means, "Let us delete the words 'Gerry Adams' and trade them for the words 'Lisa Dorrian'." Tonight, Sinn Féin's offer to the Chamber was that it would include a reference to another victim if the House gave up the reference to Gerry Adams.

Furthermore, the reason why it is time for the Chamber —

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: Yes.

Mrs D Kelly: I ask the Member to reflect that the IRA did not give the names of those who were disappeared all at once; it had to be coerced into admitting that others had been disappeared.

Mr Speaker: The Member has another minute.

Mr Attwood: That comment stands on its own strength and authority.

It is time for Members in this Chamber to stand in solidarity with the disappeared and, at this time and in this place, say that there is also a need for the truth about and accountability for the disappeared.

It is also appropriate that the Chamber stands, not just with the Ulster Unionist Party motion but with the DUP amendment, and for this reason: in response to 'The Disappeared' programme, the Sinn Féin leader said that what happened was wrong and despicable. This question is left hanging: was it the secret burials that were wrong and despicable or the killing of all those who were disappeared?

Mr Speaker: The Member's time has almost gone.

Mr Attwood: That is the question that should be faced up to in the Chamber and in the community.

Mr Lyttle: On behalf of the Alliance Party, I offer support for the motion and for all the families of the disappeared. We will oppose amendment No 1 and support amendment No 2.

I welcome the opportunity to pay tribute to the dignity, courage and perseverance of the victims' families in locating the remains of their loved ones. It is difficult to comprehend the sheer suffering experienced by the families, but, as other Members mentioned, this powerful piece of RTÉ/BBC investigative journalism has given voice to their experience and campaign. It is, indeed, one of the most harrowing and darkest aspects of the violence

perpetrated against our community. The forcible removal of people from families, and their torture and burial in unknown locations, has to be among the worst human rights abuses imaginable. It is an indelible evil on the history of our community.

Although there were many stories in the programme, I think of Dympna Kerr, who refuses to visit the bogland where Columba is believed to be buried, and the words that she said:

"I have an image in my head of Columba standing there crying, looking into a hole ... I never done anything to the IRA, neither did my mum, so why are they torturing us — 38 years on and they are still torturing us ... All we want is to put him in the grave in Donaghmore beside my mum and dad."

It is extremely difficult not to be moved by those sentiments, and I hope that anyone with any information connected to that issue is listening to those words and responds.

What also stick out are the malicious and false accounts of loved ones that were given, surely only magnifying the pain and suffering of families further. Indeed, for me, the documentary captured in no uncertain terms the frightening extent to which the IRA was willing to go to control communities. It exposed, more than ever, that the rhetoric of soldiers fighting a war could not be used to cloak acts of such naked sectarian evil. It also exposed a failure to adhere to the universal truth that the means used by any cause must be as pure as the ends sought.

I think that we are reaching a tipping point, as Mr Attwood alluded to, in the search for truth in this community. The victims and survivors have fought long and hard for truth, and they are not going away. The compulsion for people to tell the truth is more powerful than ever when we listen to their testimonies. I think that we have reached a tipping point for people such as Gerry Adams, or anyone with information, if they really believe in uniting this community, or this island, to give full disclosure on all those issues. I contend that, if they do not do so, we have to question their commitment to uniting this community and this island.

It is important that we acknowledge the work done by organisations to support victims and survivors, such as WAVE, for example. I think of the words of Sandra Peake of the WAVE trauma centre, noting the challenges that the families of the disappeared have faced, when she said that one of the biggest issues was in relation to the isolation that many of the families faced and the fact that they were unable to speak. I think they are finding their voices now, and I welcome the opportunity for the Assembly to add support to that voice.

Mr McCarthy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Will the Member also recognise, as has already been mentioned, the pain and hurt experienced by Lisa Dorrian's family, who was disappeared from my constituency?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Lyttle: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Absolutely, and I use today as an opportunity to appeal to anyone with information about the disappearance of Lisa Dorrian to come forward. As has been mentioned, although her disappearance is not covered by the terms of the legislation relating to the disappeared, the Dorrian family

have endured the same torment. They have been unable to give Lisa a decent burial and have many unanswered questions about what happened to their daughter and sister. There are people who will know what happened to Lisa, and I appeal to them to examine their consciences and come forward with any information that they have.

This is a very personal issue for the families of the disappeared, but it is also part of the wider issue of how we deal with the legacy of our past in Northern Ireland. I believe that the approach to it to date has been painfully piecemeal and, as a result, many families in Northern Ireland enjoy little or no truth recovery about the death of their loved ones. My party has consistently held that the legacy of our recent past is far too important and effects far too many people to be dealt with in that way. We have called on numerous occasions for the British and Irish Governments to convene talks to deal with the legacy of the past in an ethical and comprehensive manner. To date they have failed to respond to that duty, but I welcome the Haass process that is before us. It gives us an opportunity as political parties to set our ambition high and to represent the voice of victims and survivors in their quest for answers.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Lyttle: I believe that we owe it to the families of the disappeared and all victims and survivors to give them much better.

Mr Poots: I paid attention to what Mr McLaughlin said and I have searched my conscience. My conscience says that, if you know of evil, it would be wrong to say nothing about it. What has happened has been evil manifested upon us, and both the motion proposed by the Ulster Unionist Party and the amendment from our party adequately reflect that.

6.00 pm

This documentary was shown on television recently. The following day, I was listening to 'The Nolan Show' as Alban Maginness spoke. Alban said that he had watched the documentary with his wife and son in entire silence, and afterwards they felt cold. I watched it with my wife and my son in silence, and afterwards we felt cold. That was its powerful impact. It started in 1972, with the Roman Catholic monk Joseph Lynskey. I do not have time to go through all the names, but we had Jean McConville, a widowed mother of 10. We had Columba McVeigh, a 17-year-old — just out of childhood really. We had Brendan McGraw, who was 23, not long married and whose wife was expecting his first child. We also had Charlie Armstrong. The protectors of the Roman Catholic community did not allow him to go to his Roman Catholic mass; instead, he was disappeared. Then we had Eugene Simons on New Year's Day 1981. That year started off with him being disappeared — murdered and taken away by the IRA.

On Remembrance Sunday, Mr Adams, for whatever reason, was interviewed by the BBC. It was a very unusual decision to interview him on that particular day, but he accused me of making "vicious, obscene and offensive" comments. As we look at this particular issue and this debate, we should consider the words that he used. When you consider the word "vicious", what could be more vicious than taking a widowed mother of 10 children away? And not just taking her away, but then executing her, more than likely after torture. What could be more

vicious? When you have done that act, what could be more offensive than not even allowing the family to have the body returned, and to bury that body some 50 miles away on a beach? What could be more offensive than the republican movement lying through its teeth about it for years by saying that Mrs McConville had not been killed and would be coming back? Mrs McConville — a Protestant woman living in west Belfast and a mother of 10 children raised in the Roman Catholic faith — was disappeared by the IRA in the most "vicious", "offensive" and "obscene" way possible.

The fact is that the republican movement has been wholly offensive about this, because it has lied through its teeth. On the one hand, we have Gerry Adams who said that he was never a member of the IRA and had nothing to do with it. On the other hand, we have the Price sisters, Brendan "Darkie" Hughes, Richard O'Rawe and Billy McKee all saying that he was in the IRA and that he was involved in the disappearance of Jean McConville.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Poots: Yes.

Mr Givan: Does the Member agree with me that the party that calls for the truth from everybody else needs to address the truth of what it did in the past if we are ever going to deal with the legacy of that and move on?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Poots: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The fact is that somebody is lying through their teeth. There is a saying in this country that you speak no ill of the dead, but republicans are speaking ill of their own dead. I am very surprised to hear republicans speaking of Brendan Hughes in the way that they do, given that he was, and would have been seen to be, one of theirs. However, when it suits them, he is cast to one side.

The fact is that, in the Haass talks, we are looking at the past and at issues about the truth, and the fact is that there is no desire in republicanism to tell the truth about these issues. If republicans cannot tell the truth about these issues and about their murky past on these issues, how can we expect them to tell the truth on any other issue? Therefore, any prospect of there being a process of some truth extraction commission is rendered impossible by republicans' engagement and activities in this particular process.

It is hugely offensive that, just a few years ago, they were saying that those actions were not criminal acts. Murder is murder is murder.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Poots: It is criminal. It is vicious. It is obscene. It is offensive. My advice to Mr McLaughlin and his colleagues is that they should search their own consciences.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle, agus beidh mé ag labhairt i bhfabhar leasú Shinn Féin. At the outset, I want to say that I will not take any interventions during my contribution. I will be speaking —
[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us not have remarks from a sedentary position.

Mr McCartney: I will speak in support of the amendment that was tabled on behalf of my party, Sinn Féin. In moving our amendment, Mitchel McLaughlin outlined Sinn Féin's position on the issue. Indeed, he outlined the role that the party and, in particular, the Sinn Féin leadership have played to try to ensure that grieving families are given their right to bury their loved ones. He also outlined the IRA's position and quoted from its statement in April 1999. It said

“our intention has been to do all within our power to rectify an injustice, for which we accept full responsibility”.

The role that the Sinn Féin leadership played in assisting the commission that was set up to assist in the recovery of those bodies is also on public record. The commission has acknowledged that role and how it has assisted in bringing some comfort to a number of those families. However, other families still wait in the hope that similar comfort will be theirs. I place on the record and acknowledge the great dignity that those families have displayed throughout. Again, let me state that the injustice that was visited upon those families should never have happened. I include the Dorrian family in that. An injustice remains an injustice until it is put right. It is unjust in all circumstances to deny families their right to bury a loved one with dignity and, in these circumstances, a Christian burial. Therefore, all of us should do all that we can to ensure that people continue to come forward to assist in any way to end that injustice. It was wrong, and it was unjust. We must do all that we can to bring that injustice to an end and urge all those who can assist in any way to do so.

I also want to bring a word of caution to those who use the issue in an attempt to find some political margin or advantage. Those families deserve better. Their words of compassion in the midst of their undoubted misery is in stark contrast to those who seek political gain. The Ulster Unionist Party motion and the DUP amendment set a poor and worrying precedent in putting forward a named person, who, in this instance, is Gerry Adams. The place and method to test the validity of any allegation is by due process, not an Assembly motion. Many people over many years and in a variety of fora and media have been subject to trial by allegation. The Assembly should not lend itself to that practice. Due process is the means by which we achieve justice, not an Assembly motion.

The Assembly should send out a clear message that we are united in assisting the families and in working together to bring this injustice to an end. The motion is designed to divide. Our amendment ensures that unity will be maintained.

Mr Anderson: I support the amendment from my two party colleagues. Today, we once again debate the dark and disturbing subject of the disappeared. We return to it because of the recent BBC/RTÉ documentary, which was an excellent piece of investigative journalism that not only highlighted the issue so effectively but, again, exposed the moral bankruptcy of Sinn Féin and the IRA on this vital matter. Viewers were struck by the very stark contrast between the genuine tears, trauma and deep sorrow of the bereaved families on the one hand and the crocodile tears and utter hypocrisy of Gerry Adams on the other. Anyone with a heart and an ounce of decency cannot fail to be utterly sickened by his weasel words and assertions that we are all to blame. No, Mr Adams, we are not all to blame: it is the evil perpetrators who abducted,

tortured and murdered their victims and then buried them in unmarked graves who are the guilty party. The Members opposite who place their president on a pedestal must now realise that his past is coming back to haunt him and those who continue to support him. People on both sides of the border, quite frankly, do not believe a word that he says, especially when he denies being a member of the Provisional IRA in west Belfast.

Sinn Féin's amendment is high on rhetoric, but the words are weasel words. It is not only Gerry Adams who needs to take a good look at himself, but one of those who proposed the Sinn Féin amendment, Mitchel McLaughlin. We heard his rhetoric today, but let us remember also that he is on record in 2005 as having said that the killing of Jean McConville was not a criminal act. As far as I am aware, he has not retracted that disgraceful statement.

The facts are well known. For anyone to abduct, interrogate and murder a widow and mother, knowing that her children would be left orphaned, and then lie to those innocent children about the fate of their mother is beyond the comprehension of all right-thinking people. Even their brutality was not enough, for this evil organisation then secretly buried her, tortured one of her sons and failed to give the family any information for decades. Instead, they continued to lie.

I challenge anyone here today to stand up in this House and say that that despicable deed was not a criminal act. Better still, let them go and say it to the McConville family, face to face. It was not only a criminal act but a criminal act of the most depraved and brutal nature. Those who ordered it and carried it out were criminals and murderers and are beneath contempt. The time has come — indeed, it is long past — for Sinn Féin to provide us with answers. We have had enough of the hand-wringing, the finger-pointing and the self-justification.

I am fairly sure that there are Members sitting on the opposite Benches who know something or know someone who might know something. They can provide us with some of the information that they refer to in their amendment. The public needs honest and straight answers to very simple questions. What was Gerry Adams's role in the abduction and murder of Mrs McConville? Sinn Féin is very good at talking about dealing with the past and moving on, but we will never deal with the past unless the republican movement is prepared to open up and own up to its wicked and evil past.

My party's amendment expands the motion to include the case of the young north Down woman Lisa Dorrian, who vanished in February 2005. It is important that this tragic case is not overlooked or forgotten. Those who perpetrated that dreadful crime are also beneath contempt. Lisa's body has never been found, and her grieving family is still left waiting. Her case must be kept in the public domain until there is closure and Lisa is given a Christian burial. Again, I urge anyone with any information in this particular case to report it to the PSNI or the ICLVR.

As I have said, words are not enough. We need action, and the relatives need justice. That is why our amendment calls on the Justice Minister to ensure that resources are made available so that justice can be done and be seen to be done in all the cases of the disappeared.

Finally, I want to say that we will never accept those who carried out those vile deeds as victims. They were the

perpetrators; they were the guilty people. They cannot and must not be equated with those whom they so cruelly made victims. The glorification of terror and terrorism is obscene and wrong and must end. I support my party's amendment.

Dr McDonnell: Like others, I welcome the opportunity to offer support to the families of the disappeared. I support the motion and the second amendment, and I reject all efforts to obfuscate, confuse or divert the focus of blame for the whole horror that is the disappeared.

Sometimes, we guard our words on this subject out of due consideration and sympathy for the bereaved families, who depend on the goodwill of the associates of those who murdered and buried their loved ones and depend on them for information to facilitate the recovery of the loved ones' remains. We know that our reticence can provide a hiding place for the guilty ones. Under the right circumstances, such as in this welcome debate, we should speak fearlessly and tell the truth.

For me, the first truth is that the kidnapping, murder and secret burial in a lonely and desolate place of any of our people is not just some incidental aspect of the conflict that we all came through. It was, in fact, a well-planned horror beyond any rational words. Even in the tortured history of our island, it is an ugly chapter that stands out and stands apart. There are still too many families out there who desperately want the remains of a disappeared loved one returned to them. There are families who have had remains returned and been able to bury their loved ones, but there are almost certainly other families who have yet to learn for sure that their missing members were victims of this evil practice. Beyond the return of remains, what these families want above all else is the truth — the basic, simple truth. The number of people who know where bodies are or were buried is probably small but substantial.

6.15 pm

The second truth is that disappearing people is a very complex business, particularly if it is long-distance and cross-border, so the total number of people involved in these brutal disappearances must run into substantial numbers, and there were dozens more who carefully planted the malicious lies designed to cover the tracks and mislead the distraught families. We had families of the disappeared travelling the country asking questions and looking for answers and getting nothing but lies. We had a whole political machine — hundreds of people — dedicated to frustrating them, lying to them and supplying false leads and false hopes. Many of them probably did not know the truth, but that was no excuse then and it is certainly no excuse now for helping to sow the seeds of confusion. What they did was totally evil, it remains totally evil, and while they still deny or refuse to tell the truth, it will always be evil.

All those hundreds of people are not dead nor have they gone away. They are still out there, they still know a lot and they could still tell a lot. Some of them are still in association with some element of the provisional movement, whether Sinn Féin or otherwise. We can be absolutely certain that some are still in the ranks. They are still there, still staying silent and still staying away from the truth. Some of them are still to this day repeating the lies that set up innocent people for murder in the first place.

They are still there and they are still guilty, as long as they refuse to come forward to help the bereaved families.

We do not need some elaborate international truth machinery in order for them to do the decent thing. We do not need to be able to deal with all our past before we address the absolute worst bits. We will no doubt be told that we should not politicise this issue — indeed, we have already been told that the families do not want that. Nor should we allow anyone to use that argument as a hiding place. Sometimes the truth is very simple. As I look around the Chamber, I ask myself at times who could advance the situation for the families of the disappeared. Who could help? Out there, some of the shooters, some of the grave-diggers and some of the interrogators, some of the scouts and some of the drivers may well have gone off with the dissidents, but a lot of them did not. There are still dozens of people out there who each know a little bit of the truth and the lies about the disappeared.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Dr McDonnell: They are amenable to the influence and leadership of today's provisional movement, including Sinn Féin, and all that is needed is the will to do the decent thing and come clean.

Lord Morrow: I support the motion and the amendment standing in the names of my party colleagues Peter Weir and Paul Givan.

We never debate this matter but a lump comes to our throats. We find that words are not adequate in such a situation. I suspect that whatever I say — indeed, whatever anyone else might say in this House today — it will fall far short of what should be said when we debate an emotive issue such as this.

I want to concentrate my few remarks today on one family. I am not in any way suggesting that that family's pain is greater or lesser than that of other families, but I talk about the McVeigh family because I know the McVeighs. I know Columba McVeigh, and I met Mrs McVeigh at her request. Dr Paisley and I met her on one occasion in Dungannon. I will never forget that meeting. When I met Mrs McVeigh, one thing struck me immediately: this woman did not come seeking revenge nor was she even trying to get equal. She just wanted one thing in life before she left this scene of time, and that was the return of her youngest son, Columba.

Columba McVeigh was a young fella on the threshold of life. His family live in the small town of Donaghmore, which is some two or two and a half miles from Dungannon. They are just like any ordinary working-class family, seeking to get on with their life and to do the best that they can. On that day, I will never forget Mrs McVeigh saying to us, "I only want his body so that we can have it interred in the family plot in Donaghmore", which is where his father, at that stage, was already buried. She said, "Before I die, I want him there." That was never to be. Mrs McVeigh has passed away — an elderly woman who was racked with agony, sorrow and grief over a son who had just disappeared for no apparent reason whatsoever. I suspect that those who took him had their own idea about why they should take him, which can never, ever be justified. Sadly, Mrs McVeigh passed away and was never able to be reunited with the remains of her youngest son.

We in the Assembly owe it to the families to do all that we possibly can to ensure that the bodies of the disappeared

are recovered. I include in that, as the amendment does, the young lady Lisa Dorrian. We, as an Assembly, should unite today. I make this appeal to those who want to divide the House on the issue: you are just increasing the families' pain, sorrow and grief; you are doing nothing to extricate them from their pain. I appeal to those who tabled the amendment on which the House would divide to stop and think about what they are doing. We in the DUP have tabled an amendment that we believe does not in any way dilute or take away from the original motion; rather, we believe that it adds to it by including the name of that young lady who disappeared all those years ago. Is that too much to ask now, in this age when we are supposed to be moving on? We cannot move on until the resolution of this matter is brought about. We owe it to the families to ensure that we, as an Assembly, at least —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Lord Morrow: — do what we can. I challenge Members: if you divide the House, you will add more grief and sorrow to those families. Do not do it.

Mr D Bradley: I begin, on this occasion, by reading a poem to the House:

*"Oh! breathe not his name, let it sleep in the shade,
Where cold and unhonoured his relics are laid;
Sad, silent, and dark, be the tears that we shed,
As the night-dew that falls on the grass o'er his head.
But the night-dew that falls, tho' in silence it weeps,
Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps,
And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls,
Shall long keep his memory green in our souls."*

A family member of one of the disappeared gave me that poem by Thomas Moore. It was, in fact, written in memory of the great Irish patriot Robert Emmet.

It is very appropriate under the circumstances of this debate, because the epitaphs of the remaining disappeared have not been written. They are Kevin McKee, Seamus Wright, Seamus Ruddy, Columba McVeigh, Robert Nairac, Brendan McGraw, Joe Lynskey and Lisa Dorrian.

The recent RTÉ/BBC documentary on the disappeared has brought into sharp focus the awful plight of the families of the disappeared. "Disgraceful" is hardly a strong enough word to describe the horror of the kidnapping, the judging, the sentencing and the execution of the disappeared by those who had the arrogance to claim that they were the rightful Government of Ireland with the power to act in such a way in the name of the people of Ireland and who castigated the rest of us as traitors when we condemned their actions. Not content with murder, they often blackened the names of their victims in an attempt to justify their terrible deeds and, in some cases, did not have the courage to admit what they had done. They said nothing and imposed omertà on the local community.

Those who quite rightly demand justice, equality, human rights and the truth about the past must also ensure that they, too, afford the same rights to others who yearn, and now is the time for those who have said nothing or have not said enough to speak and come forward with that vital information. The families of the disappeared have asked all of us in public life, including the Members of this House, to assist them. The families have told me that we can help by reinforcing, in all that we say about the disappeared, that

any information given to the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains is privileged and can be used only for the recovery of the bodies of the disappeared and cannot be passed on to any other agency or authority or used in a prosecution.

As I have done previously, I once again use the platform that this debate allows me to appeal to anyone, including Members of this House who have any influence over those who were involved in the actions that led to the disappearances, to redouble their efforts, to return to their sources and to help ensure that no effort is spared to bring closure for the families. Likewise, I ask anyone outside this House who may have information to use the mechanisms already outlined or any other channel with which they feel comfortable to convey information to the commission. The families have waited long enough. They deserve closure. Let all of us here do all in our power to help them gain that.

Mr G Robinson: First, I express my support for the families who are still waiting for the return of their loved ones following their barbaric and brutal loss and the inhuman treatment of victims and relatives by the IRA and others. I only hope that, some day, republicans will realise the great hurt and suffering that they have inflicted on this entire community. There can be absolutely no justification for the kidnap and murder of people in the manner that the IRA saw fit to employ. It is at best brutal and vicious, but I would describe it as cold-blooded murder and thuggery.

I also believe that it is impossible that senior people in the IRA, including the Sinn Féin president, were not aware of the vicinity and location of the remains of the disappeared. The president could be more helpful in bringing this sad torture of human beings to a conclusion. It is now only proper and morally correct that the families of the remaining disappeared have the divine right to say a dignified farewell to their relatives and loved ones. The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains has the thankless task of trying to bring closure to families by returning loved ones to their families.

However, that can be done only when those who know where the victims are tell the truth about the locations.

6.30 pm

Remember that we are dealing with human beings: fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. Sadly, some have already passed away without their loved ones being found. When we remember that we are dealing with human beings, I hope that those who can help will divulge their information to an appropriate source, such as the police, local churches and so on. It is my sincere wish that information be passed to the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains or any authority that can properly deal with the information.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does he agree that, when people talk about dealing with the past, the pain of the past and moving forward in a shared future in the context of Northern Ireland, it is very difficult for anybody in the wider community to believe that they are sincere in doing that when they talk about and are involved in the glorification of murder and terror such as Easter, the Maze anniversary, the Shankill bombing, Castlederg and so on? Terror is terror, and murder is murder. The glorification is just as evil —

Mr Speaker: Order. An intervention should be short. The Member has a minute added to his time.

Mr G Robinson: I agree entirely with what my colleague said.

I hope that that shameful part of history can be brought to a conclusion and that families can be put out of their distress and misery. I also commend the recent TV documentary, which highlighted the great suffering and loss experienced by the McConville family and others. I also include the family of Lisa Dorrian, who have also suffered the loss of a loved one. I support the motion and the DUP amendment.

Mr Allister: Anyone with an ounce of humanity who watched the BBC programme a few weeks ago could not have failed but to be moved by the situation that was revealed, particularly pertaining to the McConville family. To see and to think of those 10 children about to be orphaned in a scene in which their mother was torn from the bosom of her family, with her children clinging to her, and then to be told that that act forwarded and advanced some political cause is a truly shocking indictment of that cause and of the inhumanity of those who did that dastardly deed.

The programme did not play to our politics; it played to our humanity. It was a challenge to all to search their conscience, even those whose conscience is seared by years of justifying and supporting terrorism and, in the case of some, perpetrating terrorism. It appealed to whatever ounce of humanity might yet exist to do the right thing. The programme showed us the terrible consequences of that act, but it did not begin to tell the whole story. Anyone who has had the opportunity, as I have had, to meet members of the McConville family knows the dreadful life that many of those children were plunged into. They were separated and farmed out to various institutions. To have heard of some of the things that happened to them there, you begin to get the fuller picture of the horrendous horror of what was visited on that occasion. That is but one snapshot of the consequences of terrorism.

Then, today, hearing Sinn Féin, and Mr McLaughlin in particular, resorting to the mantra of reminding us, in a validation of what the IRA has said about all of this to justify and try to put a gloss on its actions, adds insult to that injury. This is the same Mr McLaughlin, who, as we were reminded, just a few years ago, in January 2005, told RTÉ that the killing of Jean McConville was not a crime. Why? In the words of Mr Bradley, it was done, it seems, by impostors who presented themselves as the lawful Government of Ireland, and, therefore, that which they did was not a crime. That was the distorted, hideous logic that caused that Member to suggest that this was not a crime. To this day, to the best of my knowledge, he has yet to resile from that. That is a shocking indictment of the humanity of anyone in the House.

Of course, the other aspect of the programme was the spotlight that it put upon Gerry Adams. Gerry Adams is the president, the leader, of a party at the top and heart of government in this land. It is not what I say about him that condemns him; it is what his own ilk said about him in that programme. It is what Brendan Hughes said about him, which was that he orchestrated, was responsible for and is knowledgeable of —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Allister: — the murder of Jean McConville. That is the reality that has to be addressed and a reality on which all in the House who sustain that party in government should reflect.

Mr Givan: On 4 November, the deputy First Minister, in response to a question from my colleague Brenda Hale said:

"My full compassion and support are with the families. It has been a terrible ordeal; it has been a despicable ordeal. There is a huge responsibility on everybody, including me as a republican leader, to appeal to anybody who can assist the families out of the nightmare that they face daily." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 89, p16, col 2].

Fine words, Mr Speaker, put in stark contrast to the words of Oliver McVeigh, the brother of Columba McVeigh, about whom Lord Morrow spoke so powerfully. In response to the 'Spotlight' programme, Oliver McVeigh said on 'The Nolan Show', that he asked the deputy First Minister to practise what he preaches about people coming forward with information. He said that he met Martin McGuinness two years ago. He said that it was difficult for him to do so and that he was looking for assistance about things that he had heard locally. He asked Martin McGuinness to go personally to individuals whom he mentioned and ask them to come forward with information that might help to locate Columba. Martin McGuinness promised to come back to him. Later in the interview, Mr McVeigh said that he had met Mr McGuinness in a professional capacity on a number of occasions since. What did the deputy First Minister talk to him about? Sport. Was there any mention of the request that had been made? None.

So, fine words from those who sit opposite. Fine words from Mr McCartney, who appeals to everyone, especially republicans, to come forward. Speak to the deputy First Minister on behalf of the McVeigh family, who sought his help and got none, before you come into the Assembly and preach hollow words that run shallow.

Gerry Adams is, quite rightly, the subject of the motion. It puts the focus where it should be: on those responsible for the injustice caused. His denials leave us incredulous, and one wonders what planet he lives on. Tom Kelly put together an article that sums it up very well. It is the planet of "Gerryville". He said that:

"Mr Adams vehemently denies any and all accusations against him as being personally vindictive, politically motivated, a conspiracy, the meanderings of disturbed minds or his all time favourite chestnut -anti peace process. In Gerryville it's Adams against the Establishment. No wonder the man has taken to hugging trees and tweeting about his favourite teddy bear."

When Gerry Adams hugs his trees or tweets about Tom and Snowie, let him remember that his republican movement denied the children of Jean McConville a mother to hug and denied the families of others a body to bury and a place for them to go and grieve. Let him remember the responsibilities of the republican movement that he led and leads to this day.

We have had contributions from a number of MLAs. Mitchel McLaughlin tells us to search our conscience.

This, from a republican movement that would not know a conscience if it walked up and hit it in the face and said hello; from an organisation that is morally bankrupt and yet has the audacity to come in here and tell us to search our conscience. I trust that Members here have searched their conscience and will ensure that the focus remains where it should. This, from a party that says it is the party for human rights. Chris Lyttle quite rightly made the point that this is one of the gravest violations of human rights that there ever could have been, and yet they tell us to search our conscience.

Raymond McCartney says that we are point scoring by using families and by naming Gerry Adams. Yet only yesterday, 24 hours ago, the Member for South Down Ms Ruane used this Chamber to name a police officer.

Mr Poots: Will the Member give way?

Mr Givan: I will.

Mr Poots: Is the most unconscionable thing not to go out and take the life of someone else and disappear them? Therefore, the call for others to search their conscience is absolutely ironic in the circumstances.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute added to his time.

Mr Givan: I agree entirely.

When Members opposite complain about Gerry Adams being named, let them not be hypocritical and use this Chamber to name individuals who served the RUC with distinction. They tell us that we are playing politics in using families and by naming Gerry Adams: the hypocrisy is rank.

In finishing, Mr Speaker, I say that Alex Attwood made a very powerful contribution. He is exactly correct in what he said: that Sinn Féin is trying to trade the name of Gerry Adams for Lisa Dorrian. I trust that all Members of the Assembly who have always rejected violence, who have never allowed their conscience to be seared by the terrorist activities that many opposite engaged in, will unite —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Givan: — and put the focus where it should be: on those who were responsible for the injustice caused to those who they disappeared.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Sinn Féin will not be supporting the UUP motion for the reasons outlined by my colleagues Mitchel McLaughlin and Raymond McCartney. Mitchel McLaughlin outlined the Sinn Féin position. I support the position that he outlined. Members in this Chamber subsequently distorted what he said — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: I ask people to go back and read what Mitchel McLaughlin said. He acknowledged very clearly the hurt and pain suffered by the families of the disappeared. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. It is quite obvious that the Member has not listened to my warning, either this morning or this afternoon. The Member should not make a contribution from a sedentary position. I mean Mr McCrea. Let me be absolutely clear.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle.

I want to acknowledge the hurt and pain that I saw on that programme. Families deal with hurt and pain in many different ways. We know that we have had a bitter conflict here in the North. We know that over 4,000 people have suffered grievously. We know that a mother's pain at the loss of a loved one is pain, and that no mother should have to go through the pain that the mothers of the disappeared, and Lisa Dorrian's family, are going through. I ask that Members do not try to misrepresent a Sinn Féin position on Lisa Dorrian. Let me quite clear: Sinn Féin supports justice for the Dorrian family. I cannot be any clearer than that.

6.45 pm

What happened to the families of the disappeared is a wrong that can never be righted. I am thankful — I know that other Members are too — that some families have found their remains and have some form of closure. I know that some families are critical of the efforts of republicans.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Ms Ruane: No, I will not give way.

I know that some families are critical of the efforts of republicans. I understand and respect that, because none of us knows how we would react if we were in that situation. I also know that not all families feel like that. Those families have rightly taken the view that what happened to their loved ones should not have happened. However, I am mindful of a letter from one of the families, a letter that is in the public domain. Earlier in the debate, Members from all sides talked about the dignity and eloquence of the families. I will quote the dignity and eloquence of one particular family:

"Only the small number of people involved in the killing and burial of my brother have information that might help. Everything else is speculation and rumour. I am satisfied that information has been passed onto the ICLVR in good faith. I ask those who have genuinely engaged with the ICLVR to continue to do so. I would call on anyone else with genuine information that might help locate the remains of any of those whose bodies have not yet been recovered to pass that information to the ICLVR through whatever conduit they choose. I would like to thank all of those who have been trying to help our family achieve closure: Gerry Adams, Fr Alex Reid, Fr Brendan O'Callaghan, the ICLVR, Geoff Knupfer and his team, and others who have been working quietly over the past 14 years. All we as a family want is to be able to bury our brother's remains beside our father, mother and sister."

Sinn Féin supports that. I can assure the House that Sinn Féin will do everything that it can to help the families whose remains have not yet been recovered.

I will not deal with any of the political point-scoring and jostling. I will deal with that on another day and in other debates, whether the debate is about policing, the past, or whatever. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: Today is for a debate and discussion about the families of the disappeared. I will not detract or be deflected from that in any way.

Mr Elliott: I will say at the outset that, although I normally take interventions and am not afraid to take interventions,

on this occasion, I will reject and refuse anyone who wants to intervene, for the simple reason that I believe that the debate has been, by and large, very solemn and dignified. In fairness, that is how it should be, because it is the families whom we should have in our mind first and foremost at this time.

There have been a lot of positive contributions today. However, I have to say that none of those contributions, no matter whom it came from, was as powerful as what we saw from the families on 'The Disappeared'. I do not think that any of us here, on whatever side of the House that we sit, can reflect the powerful messages that came from those families. Like many others, I watched that programme and was extremely moved. I had read quite a bit about three of the disappeared in particular: Columba McVeigh, Jean McConville and Charlie Armstrong. However, one of the most powerful messages was in the screenshot of the TV interview that was carried out with the McConville family shortly after their mother's disappearance.

We saw those young children sitting on the settee. I do not know whether, at that stage, they knew that they would never see their mother again. I just do not know. Young children like that have expectations, and they probably expected that their mother would come walking back into the house some day.

I think that it was Mr Allister who highlighted the difficulties that the McConville family members went through during that time and in the coming years. In particular, it appears that social services almost neglected them and that they did not have any real support from the community, apart from their family.

Members rightly touched on the part of our motion that put a focus on the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams. The TV programme put a focus on him, family members have put a focus on him, and it is absolutely right that the motion should do the same. There are questions to be answered, help to be given and assistance to come forward. All that I ask is that that assistance is given.

I heard Members from the Benches on my right indicate that they calling for that assistance and information to come forward. However, it is quite clear that there are people still living who have that information and who are not coming forward to the commission. Why? I do not know. However, I will make one suggestion about why that might be the case. When those dastardly acts were carried out, were those bodies ever meant to be found? I think that there is a question there that is left hanging. I believe that the mindset of the people who took those individuals away, murdered them and buried them was that they never wanted them to be found. I do not believe that they had it in their minds that they would ever be found. It was part of the campaign and project that they would never be found and would be gone forever, out of sight and out of mind. Those families have had to live with that for years, and most of them have had to suffer it in the quiet of their homes and their hearts.

I will turn to some of the contributions to the debate. It was opened by my party leader, Mike Nesbitt. He highlighted that Sinn Féin disclosed that there was a "policy" to take people from their homes and families and to torture them, murder them and ensure that their bodies disappeared. He highlighted the input from the late Brendan Hughes

and Billy McKee, and he listed that 16 people were disappeared but that only eight bodies were recovered because of information from the IRA. Jean McConville's body was recovered, but not because of information from the IRA.

I appreciate the DUP amendment. We accept that amendment on the basis that Lisa Dorrian's family is also suffering and needs answers.

Mitchel McLaughlin moved amendment No 1 but said that he would not support the motion. He said that it was a divisive motion by the Ulster Unionist Party, and he called on Members to weigh in behind amendment No 1 to bring unity to the House. One way that we can have unity in the House is if everybody weighs in behind the motion, which lends a factual and truthful aspect to the issue.

I mentioned the DUP's amendment, which Mr Weir moved. If that amendment is agreed, the motion would include Lisa Dorrian, and we are happy to accept that.

Alex Attwood highlighted Sinn Féin's appalling attitude in appealing to unionist consciences. I accept that, and I am sure that the majority in the House also accept it.

Mr Lyttle, from the Alliance Party, paid tribute to the dignity of the families and spoke of how that and their suffering must be recognised. He also, quite rightly, highlighted the malicious and false accounts that were put out by the IRA after the kidnappings, abductions and murders.

I pay tribute to Alasdair McDonnell, who spoke one of the most telling lines in the debate. It was quite simple: what happened was totally evil. I do not think that any of us can describe it in any other form. What has gone on since is equally evil: namely, the withholding of information. Providing that information to the families to give them some hope, comfort and dignity would be hugely helpful and respectful to everyone concerned. If we were to get that information, help and respect, we could move this process forward.

It is about dealing with the past. This is part of the past, but it is also a significant part of the present and a part of the future for those families who suffered and continue to suffer. I do not know whether those who were involved have a conscience at all, but the conscience of unionists was appealed to here today. I am appealing to the conscience of those who know anything to give up that information to help the families who are still grieving.

I listened to the relevant poem read by Dominic Bradley, which gives at least a glimmer of hope to some families and something to cling to. Obviously, it will not end the suffering or despair that most of them feel, but at least it provides a sense of dignity and gives them a fitting thought that they can live with.

It is appropriate that the debate was dignified. I call on all Members to weigh in and support the Ulster Unionist Party's motion with the DUP's amendment. It would not be helpful to divide the House. The House has not been divided on this issue before. It would be appropriate if we all weighed in together. I am calling on Sinn Féin members in particular to look at their conscience, to weigh up what is right and to weigh in behind the motion.

Question, That amendment No 1 be made, put and negatived.

Question, That amendment No 2 be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the recent BBC/RTÉ documentary on the disappeared, which outlined the harrowing practice of republican terrorists in abducting, killing and secretly burying people; further notes with extreme concern allegations of the involvement of the president of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams TD, in the murder of one of these people, namely Jean McConville; stands firmly with the families of the disappeared who have suffered greatly as a result of the actions of republican terrorists; recognises the work of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) in providing a mechanism whereby information can be obtained; and calls on all those with information to cooperate fully with the latest appeal from the ICLVR in the aftermath of this programme in order to bring some level of comfort to the families and anyone with information on the disappearance and whereabouts of Lisa Dorrian to immediately bring that forward to either the PSNI or the ICLVR; and further calls on the Minister of Justice to ensure that the necessary resources are available to the relevant criminal justice agencies to bring to justice those responsible for the murders of the disappeared.

Mr Speaker: Order. Members should leave the Chamber in an orderly fashion.

Assembly Business

Mr Spratt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You gave a number of warnings to the House this morning and did not allow any further points of order. However, I ask you to examine the comments of Caitríona Ruane in relation to the RUC. They were very hurtful to many in this House. Many of us served, and I served for 30 years, impartially and without fear or favour for anyone. Her comments continually, and the comments and the bile that came from her yesterday, are appalling.

Further, Mr Speaker, will you examine the fact that she named a serving or former police officer in the House yesterday? She said that there was an ongoing investigation. Well, no one should be named in this House if there is an ongoing investigation.

7.00 pm

Mr Speaker: Order, order. Let me look at Hansard and come back to the Member. However, I see that very much as being part of the cut and thrust of debate.

Mr Spratt: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order, order. You have raised a point of order, so let me answer it. I said I would read Hansard and come back to the Member directly. I see a lot of these points of order that are the cut and thrust of debate. Members from all parties have, at various times, named people in this Chamber, so let us be — *[Interruption.]* Order. So let us be very careful. Certainly I will look at Hansard and come back to the Member.

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. — [Mr Speaker.]

Adjournment

C S Lewis

Mr Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes in which to speak. All other Members who are called to speak will have approximately six minutes.

Mr Douglas: Thanks to the Minister for attending this Adjournment debate.

On 22 November 1963 — 50 years ago this Friday — the world was stunned to learn of the death of President John F Kennedy, who was assassinated. On the same day that JFK tragically lost his life in Dallas, Texas, Clive Staples Lewis died, one week before his 65th birthday, at the Kilns, Oxford, England. The death of Lewis, a renowned author, theologian and academic, did not make many headlines. Let me mention a few points about the remarkable life of C S Lewis, who was born about two and a half miles from this Building.

Like JFK, C S Lewis was known to his family as Jack. That was a name he chose for himself at the age of three, ignoring anyone who called him Clive. Just as the mystique continues to surround the untimely death of JFK, so too, half a century later, do the writings of C S Lewis keep their enduring hold upon the popular imagination of millions around the world.

C S Lewis was born on 29 November 1898 in Dundela Avenue, Strandtown. He was baptised in St Mark's Church, Dundela by his grandfather Thomas Hamilton, who was rector at the church. In 1905, the family moved to the Little Lea on the Circular Road, a house that his father had built. That house is the location of the wardrobe that plays such an important role in those famous children's stories, 'The Chronicles of Narnia'. The house is privately owned and is not accessible to the public.

C S Lewis attended Campbell College in east Belfast. Earlier tonight, the East Belfast Partnership organised an event at Campbell College called "Lewis by Lamplight", which is part of the C S Lewis Festival. The famous lamp, thought to be the inspiration for the lamp in Narnia where Lucy first met Mr Tumnus, was officially switched on by First Minister, Peter Robinson, and one of the Campbell College pupils.

I pay tribute to the East Belfast Partnership, which has organised the excellent inaugural C S Lewis Festival that is taking place this week. Although the festival will be based in east Belfast, where C S Lewis spent his childhood, it will feature other events across the city, with theatre, exhibitions, art, music, tours and outdoor events running until Saturday 23 November. It will be an opportunity for people in Belfast and beyond to remember and celebrate the life of a literary genius.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Will the Member join me in welcoming the fact that, this coming Friday, on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of C S Lewis, at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, he is to be permanently remembered? That is a fitting tribute to a great poet and ambassador not only for east Belfast but Northern Ireland.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Member for his intervention, and I agree with him. I will mention that later, and maybe add to what he said.

The fantastic programme of events organised by the East Belfast Partnership is a great way to celebrate the life of one of Belfast's greatest sons. Already there has been a great response to the planned events from young and old alike, but, in order to build on the momentum and interest that has been shown, I suggest that we investigate the designation of a C S Lewis celebration day on the date of his birthday, which is 29 November.

After Campbell College, which he left due to respiratory problems, C S Lewis was sent to the health resort town of Malvern in Worcestershire. There, he attended a local preparatory school and went on in his academic career to become the creator of some of the most loved children's stories. Yet he was much more than a children's author. He was also a brilliant scholar, holding prestigious academic positions, first at Oxford, then at Cambridge, as well as becoming one of the world's most influential Christian thinkers. 'The Irish Times' this morning contained an interesting article, including these words:

"Even 50 years after his death, no one can equal this Irish man's gift for presenting the essentials of Christian faith in straightforward language."

Lewis is described as an Irishman and as a child of pre-partitioned Ireland with roots throughout the island. Undoubtedly, Lewis was influenced by the country as a whole, but he was also a proud Ulsterman. His heart was firmly fixed in the northern counties, especially County Down. He once remarked to his Ulster student David Bleakley, who was a lovely man who became an MP for east Belfast:

"Heaven is Oxford lifted and placed in the middle of County Down."

Although he spent his whole career teaching at Oxford and Cambridge, for him, County Down was heaven. A year after marrying the gifted American writer Joy Davidman, they belatedly honeymooned in Crawfordsburn, County Down in July 1958.

C S Lewis grew up in Ulster. He continued to return for his vacation almost every year of his life, except when prevented by war or illness. In fact, he was wounded in the First World War. What an amazing life for one of our east Belfast born and reared sons, who wrote sci-fi novels, Christian books, children's sagas, academic criticism and created the most famous lion and wardrobe in literature.

I am sure that most of us have seen the bronze piece of art at the Holywood Arches. Stood, fittingly, outside Holywood Arches library, the life-size statue is called "The Searcher". It depicts the young man Digory opening a door of the old Victorian wardrobe for those who wish to enter the magical world of Narnia. Renowned Ulster artist and sculptor Ross Wilson, to whom we owe much for spearheading a C S Lewis revival in east Belfast, unveiled the bronze statue in 1998 on the centenary of C S Lewis's birth. Inscribed on that sculpture are these words of Ross Wilson:

"C.S. Lewis did not just hang clothes in a wardrobe, he hung ideas — great ideas of sacrifice, redemption, victory, and freedom for the Sons of Adam and the Daughters of Eve."

He goes on:

“Set within the commonplace, revelation within something that looks ordinary on the outside — revelation through investigation. We should not stop looking, some of the greatest things can be found in the most ordinary of places, like a wardrobe.”

Is it not amazing, Mr Speaker, that ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’ have sold well over 100 million copies? In fact, in 2008, a survey found that most people believed that his book ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’ from ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’ was the best children’s book of all time. ‘Mere Christianity’ and ‘The Screwtape Letters’, two openly Christian books by Lewis, sell about 300,000 copies each year. So, tonight, we celebrate the life and legacy of a literary giant who made, and continues to make, such an impact on the world.

This week, that life and legacy of C S Lewis will be honoured, as the Member said, with a permanent tribute in Westminster Abbey’s Poets’ Corner. A memorial stone inscribed with a quotation highlighting C S Lewis’s Christian faith will be placed among those for playwrights and poets, including such notable people as Robert Burns, William Shakespeare and John Keats, cementing his place among the nation’s greatest writers of all time.

It is fitting that tonight we are honouring one of Belfast’s greatest sons here in our seat of government. I believe that it would be entirely appropriate if we were to mark the life of C S Lewis, whose legacy remains varied and vast, with a permanent tribute in Parliament Buildings. Mr Speaker, I sent you a letter this week requesting that we look at having some sort of art piece permanently in this Building.

To conclude, I thank the staff in the Assembly Library for their help. They have been more than helpful in providing information for the Adjournment debate. I also thank the Linen Hall Library staff for all their help. Congratulations to the Linen Hall Library because it has organised a superb C S Lewis exhibition, Through the Wardrobe, which runs until 24 December. I encourage Members to go along to that if they get a chance.

Finally, 50 years after his death, C S Lewis continues to inspire and fascinate millions, just like the late Seamus Heaney, who was a hero of mine and another great literary figure. Lewis was a towering intellectual figure, a popular fiction author who inspired a global movie franchise around the world of Narnia, and an atheist turned Christian thinker. Lewis’s gift to the world was his stories and his belief in the power of storytelling, which shone through each word that he wrote.

Let me leave you with one of his famous quotes, which I believe is so relevant to all of us in the Chamber. He said:

“There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind.”

Mrs McKevitt: As has been highlighted, this Friday marks 50 years since the death of C S Lewis, one of Belfast’s most famous sons. Lewis is considered by many to be the greatest Christian writer of the second half of the 20th century. Born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1898, C S Lewis was a scholar and author best known for his beloved series of children’s books ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’, including ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’.

Lewis went to Campbell College, a school just one mile from where we sit, before attending Oxford University as a student, where he later became a fellow. He spent most of his adult life in the grounds of Oxford where he taught, wrote and lectured for nearly 30 years. While he continued his work as a scholar, Lewis began a career as a Christian writer and novelist. He wrote 38 books during his lifetime, and not one of them has ever been out of print. Although it is 50 years since his death, I do not think that we will ever see the end of the enjoyment that each of his 38 books brought around the world.

The publisher Harper Collins boasts that Lewis’s ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’ books alone have sold more than 100 million copies. ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’, ‘Prince Caspian’ and ‘The Voyage of the Dawn Treader’, three of the Narnia books, were recently adapted to major motion pictures.

C S Lewis died at the age of 64 in his Oxford home on the same day as the assassination of President John F Kennedy.

If you type C S Lewis into Google, 21,300,000 results will come up in 0.18 seconds. A statue dedicated to Lewis stands in east Belfast, and an inaugural C S Lewis Festival takes place from today until 23 November, which will be funded by Belfast City Council. The new C S Lewis Trail, which will be launched during the festival, will take people through east Belfast and the landmarks that helped to shape the young writer’s life and work.

7.15 pm

The C S Lewis exhibition on display in the Linen Hall Library includes a wonderful work by artist Jonathan Barry. Barry’s work includes scenes from the ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’. Only an Irish artist could capture an Irish author’s imagination as Barry has done.

C S Lewis also has a strong connection with my constituency of South Down and the Carlingford lough region, particularly the beautiful Kilbroney Forest Park in Rostrevor. That forest was the natural environment and cultural setting from which C S Lewis derived inspiration for ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’. To celebrate that occasion, I am pleased to say that Newry and Mourne District Council, in collaboration with the Mourne Mountains Landscape Partnership, plan to implement a Narnia trail in Kilbroney Forest Park. I have read the concept report for the project, and I am confident that it will be an excellent addition to the area. Unfortunately, the trail will not be ready for this anniversary, but a walk along the Narnia trail would certainly be a wonderful way to mark future anniversaries of this most respected author.

Have we done enough here at home in the land where C S Lewis was born to honour a man adored by millions? Are we guilty of neglecting C S Lewis? We have done much to recognise and honour people such as George Best and Van Morrison, but have we done enough for C S Lewis? In support of the Member who spoke previously, I would support any affiliation, whether through art or in some other way. I am happy to discuss a way in which we can celebrate the life of C S Lewis.

Mr Speaker: I call Danny Kinahan.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. You caught me slightly off guard. I thought that I was going to be last, but I am very pleased to be called. I congratulate

Belfast City Council and the East Belfast Partnership on their commemorations for C S Lewis. We are right to celebrate a fine intellectual man who had three Oxford degrees. Even though he was from County Down, as a County Antrim man, I give him all the praise that he deserves.

I also grew up on 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' and all his books. I even played games in other people's houses and got shut in a cupboard for more than an hour and a half on one occasion but, sadly, found no way out to the snow or a Mr Tumnus to help me. I feel that we should look at not only how we can commemorate him but how we can, sadly in a commercial way, make more of our great writers. We have Brian Friel; Brian Moore; the poet Louis MacNeice; Seamus Heaney, of course; Oscar Wilde; and Samuel Beckett. Only last week, I spoke about a sporting hall of fame, and we should look at something such as that as a means of commemoration. C S Lewis is known worldwide, and I read that the film brought in \$750 million alone. Here is someone who would really draw people to Northern Ireland. If that means a trail in the Mourne or something in Belfast, we should look at that in an even wider way. A sculpture has been created, so perhaps we should have a sculpture chase around Ireland whereby people could move from one art object to another and link it to something such as the Titanic, so that it brings people here. I like the idea of a statue or something else to commemorate him here, but let us make it work for Northern Ireland.

As a young child, probably a particularly naughty one, my parents tried to bring me up on 'The Screwtape Letters' and the fact that the devil was sitting on my shoulder tempting me. Little did I know that I would end up here. Lewis was a Christian whom we should all respect. He did not simply accept what he was told. Members referred to the fact that, in line with 'Mere Christianity', he was continually looking at how we could be more human. He was trying to set out a rational basis for Christianity and, with it, build a compassionate morality. He believed:

"Christianity is not a religion of flitting angels and blind faith, but of free will, an innate sense of justice and the grace of God."

Maybe we should all reflect on that because those are the three values that we should use here in the Chamber.

Let us look through the examples from Lewis's life. Having created a pact with Edward Moore, who was later killed in the First World War, he went on to look after Mrs Moore, as he had promised. There is a set of values that all of us must admire. Then, in 'Shadowlands', we see the awful end to his life and that of Joy Davidman. It is a heartbreaking but wonderful example of love. Again, he is setting us examples.

I will end on two further quotations. I was expecting to be called to speak last and to have to cross these off as other Members used them.

"True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less."

Another is:

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

He sets fantastic examples, and we should sit down and work out how we should commemorate him. I welcome tonight's debate. It is extremely good to see.

Mr Lyttle: I thank Mr Douglas for securing the debate. It is a real relief to be able to debate something uniquely positive, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to celebrate the life of C S Lewis in the week of the fiftieth anniversary of his death. He was one of east Belfast's finest sons. I will make sure that we emphasise that tonight, being an east Belfast boy myself.

I grew up on the 'Chronicles of Narnia' and, in particular, 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. The creative writings of C S Lewis have inspired imagination and a love of reading and storytelling among children all over the world.

For me, two quotations from the 'Chronicles of Narnia' capture the symbolism and fun of C S Lewis's children's literature. The first is:

"I am [in your world], said Aslan, 'but there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.'"

Another quotation is:

"Girls aren't very good at keeping maps in their brains', said Edmund, 'That's because we've got something in them', replied Lucy."

That is a small insight into the mischief and fun that he brings to his children's writing, as well as its symbolism.

I have also been guided in my adult faith by the world-renowned Christian writings of C S Lewis, which others mentioned, such as 'Mere Christianity' and the fantastic 'The Screwtape Letters'. In 'Mere Christianity', C S Lewis writes:

"As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you."

We could be here all night reading some of the quotations from 'The Screwtape Letters'. Here are some of the ones that I enjoy most:

"It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out."

He also says:

"When He [God] talks of their losing their selves, He means only abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid, sincerely) that when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever."

He also writes:

"The humans live in time but our Enemy (God) destines them for eternity."

I think that the creative way in which C S Lewis turns 'The Screwtape Letters' on its head is a brilliant direction for us all.

The aspect of the life of C S Lewis that I love most, as an east Belfast boy who went to Belmont Primary School and was christened in the same church, St Mark's, is the fondness and healthy pride that he had for east Belfast. In the 1955 work, 'Surprised By Joy', he writes, with a degree of self-praise, I suppose:

"I think we Strandtown and Belmont people had among us as much kindness, wit, beauty and taste as any circle of the same size that I have ever known."

He really does have a mischievous passion for east Belfast, despite having lived in other areas.

Various literary commentators argue that C S Lewis's frustration with some of the sectarian conflict in Belfast led him to be a passionate ecumenical Christian. I think it is perhaps worth reflecting on what he would have made of some of the events that we have seen in our community over the past year. We can learn a lot from the teachings and writings that he would have applied to those situations.

We are also able to celebrate the statue that has been erected yards from my office at the Hollywood Arches. It is a daily reminder of one of east Belfast's finest sons. Indeed, some of the movies that have been inspired by his writing have been the highest grossing this century, as has been mentioned. He truly has become a worldwide figure, yet still belongs to east Belfast.

I also join in paying tribute to the East Belfast Partnership, Wendy Langham, Sandy Smyth and Belfast City Council for inaugurating the C S Lewis Festival that is taking place this week. There are going to be some fantastic events. Bus tours, readings and trails have all been mentioned. People can visit the Connswater Community Greenway C S Lewis Festival website to find out how they can get involved. It really is a fitting way to celebrate and to bring to life everything that was great about C S Lewis. I agree that, in response to the question of whether we have done enough, many people would say that, until now, perhaps we have not done enough to celebrate and mark the life of C S Lewis.

In response to the suggestion made by Mr Douglas this evening, maybe we could go one further and think about creating a Poets' Corner in the Assembly, where C S Lewis and some of the other great artists that have been mentioned could be celebrated in a united way. Indeed, I am aware of people who are working in relation to a children's literature centre on an Ireland basis. Perhaps those MLAs among us who are passionate about the life of C S Lewis, children's literature and the arts in general could get together to consider some of the suggestions that are coming forward tonight. I support everything that has been said in relation to the amazing life of C S Lewis.

Mr Newton: Like others, I commend my party colleague Sammy Douglas for securing the debate. It is fitting that we have the debate this evening and fitting that we pay tribute to C S Lewis, his life, his values, his achievements and the standards that he set. It would have been remiss if we had allowed the fiftieth anniversary of his passing to go without marking it in some fitting way. It is all the more important that we pay tribute to him as he is honoured in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner. I have to say that the fiftieth anniversary would have passed me by, only that I read an article about him being honoured in Poets' Corner.

I am glad that we have not allowed this landmark to pass without speaking here today.

As others have said, he is one of Belfast's most famous sons. He was proud of his east Belfast roots and his roots in this country. Indeed, as has been said, even though he moved away, he was a regular visitor to the Province. He recalled his life in east Belfast — if you do not mind, Mr Speaker, I am going to read it so that I get it accurate — and, indeed, his life in his childhood home, which, as others have said, is still on the Circular Road and is a private home. I understand that the chap who owns it is sick of people driving up in buses and taking photographs of his house, to the extent that he has had to put private gates on the home. They were knocking the door and wanting to know whether they could come in to have a look around.

C S Lewis recalled his childhood home and said that it was:

"almost a character in my story. I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes and the noise of the wind under the tiles. Also of endless books ... From our front door we looked down over wide fields to Belfast Lough and across it to the long mountain line of the Antrim shore."

Therefore, he was proud of his east Belfast and County Down links but also looked longingly at that County Antrim scene.

7.30 pm

He has a worldwide reputation, as has been said. He is more appreciated, I think, in America. Is it not often case that prophets are not appreciated in their own land and that their value is really appreciated in other lands? His 'Chronicles of Narnia' has sold 100 million copies worldwide, an achievement that is unlikely to be bettered, certainly in our lifetime, and it was converted into blockbuster films, on top of all that has been said about his life.

Much has been said about him, but Mrs McKeivitt and Danny Kinahan questioned whether we have made enough of C S Lewis. Mr Lyttle made the point that he was christened in the same church as C S Lewis, and I will say that just yesterday the minister was looking for everybody who was christened there for their freewill offerings, so you may want to go and make contact with that minister. *[Laughter.]* He said that it has been a long time since you have been to make an offer to the church.

Anyway, the question is whether we have made enough of C S Lewis. Compared with what America has done for him, the answer has to be no, because the fact is that scores of Americans arrive here every year to look at where C S Lewis trod, went to school and enjoyed his playful childhood. I suppose that we have not made enough of that.

I was pleased to play a small part via Belfast City Council in securing funding for the C S Lewis festival, which is a springboard that we can use to go on to even greater things. We remember that, for other reasons, we were neglectful, nearly ashamed of and did not want to speak about the Titanic for such a long time. However, we have neglected C S Lewis. We have neglected the magnitude of the man and the figure that he is worldwide, but we now have a springboard and, in line with what Mrs McKeivitt and Mr Kinahan said, C S Lewis could make a huge contribution to Northern Ireland life in the future. Look at

what is left of C S Lewis around Belfast. Look at where we came from with that great ship Titanic —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is almost gone.

Mr Newton: Let me just finish on this point. C S Lewis offers us an opportunity to use that springboard to move on to even greater things, to celebrate his life and stature, and to honour him in a way that we have never done before. By doing so, we can make a contribution to his life and all his values, and we can honour and embrace those values in the life of Northern Ireland.

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a thabhairt do Sammy Douglas as comóradh 50 bliain de bhás C S Lewis a roghnú mar ábhar díospóireachta.

I thank Sammy Douglas for selecting the fiftieth anniversary of the death of C S Lewis as a topic for the Adjournment debate. As we have heard, there is no doubt that C S Lewis was an intellectual giant of the 20th century and arguably one of the most influential Christian writers of his day. His major contributions were in the forms of literary criticism, children's literature, fantasy literature and popular theology. His work brought him international renown and acclaim.

C S Lewis, as many mentioned, wrote more than 30 books, allowing him to reach a vast audience. It was also mentioned with fondness that his works include 'The Chronicles of Narnia', 'Out of the Silent Planet', 'The Four Loves' and 'Mere Christianity', to name but a few. So, it is fitting that the inaugural C S Lewis Festival will take place from 18 to 23 November to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of that renowned author, theologian and academic. Fair play to Belfast City Council for doing that. He famously wrote 'The Chronicles of Narnia', which many of us hold dear. The new C S Lewis Trail, which will also be launched during the festival to transport us through Lewis's east Belfast and the landmarks that helped to shape his young life and work, will be a lasting tribute for us all to enjoy.

The East Belfast Partnership is organising the festival in conjunction with the council, and the Arts Council has acted as an adviser on aspects of the festival. The Replay Theatre Company, which is a funded client of the Arts Council, is also participating. The Replay Theatre Company will tour an interactive adventure that is inspired by C S Lewis's 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' to P4 classes in Belfast primary schools to excite their imaginations and to inspire them to explore the author's wonderful worlds.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, through the Ulster-Scots Agency, was also involved in a joint project with Tourism Ireland that records Lewis's Ulster-Scots ancestral links and demonstrates a connection with his east Belfast routes. The book reveals that Lewis's maternal line indicates a strong, previously undiscovered, Ulster-Scots lineage that can be traced back to James II of Scotland. As we know, there are many more events to appeal to adults and children alike.

The C S Lewis Festival, which focuses on the full range of the writer's artistic and cultural work and on his writing for children and young people, is a means to recover ownership of the global Narnia brand for the North. It will help us to throw a spotlight on a hidden and wonderful

history of the east of the city and its association with one of the most accomplished and renowned writers and academics of his generation. It is a great way to celebrate the life of one of Belfast's greatest sons. He is recognised as one of the most talented authors in the world, and he has brought our city international acclaim.

To commemorate the anniversary, Libraries NI is running a programme of events, including exhibitions, talks and readings. They will be centred around Holywood Arches Library and Belfast Central Library, both of which are close to the area where C S Lewis was born. As mentioned previously, the Linen Hall Library will also mark the anniversary, with such events as 'Through the Wardrobe', which includes C S Lewis's personal items from the library's archives. That is part of the inaugural C S Lewis Festival, which is run by the East Belfast Partnership and the Connswater Community Greenway Group.

Linen Hall Library is also facilitating an Ulster-Scots Agency event at which local author Sandy Smith will present the findings of his recently published book, 'C.S. Lewis and the Island of his Birth'. As I mentioned, his new book has lifted the lid on C S Lewis's early life in Belfast and reveals his strong links.

As Danny Kinahan, Sammy and others outlined, a memorial plaque to C S Lewis has also been placed at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. It will be unveiled on 22 November, which is the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

In commemoration of Lewis, visitors to the area can visit murals that are dedicated to the man and his Narnia creations, and they can take in 'The Searcher' statue at Holywood Arches, which was created by the great artist Ross Wilson. 'The Searcher' was erected outside the Holywood Arches Library in east Belfast in 1998 on the centenary of Lewis's birth.

I think that the legacy for east Belfast needs to be continued. One way in which we can commemorate C S Lewis's legacy is to support the arts in east Belfast in particular. This year, my Department has provided small funding to scope and develop an arts strategy for east Belfast. That will be important for the future of the area. I look forward to receiving a copy of the draft strategy and discussing it with Sammy, Robin and other East Belfast Members soon. The East Belfast Arts Festival has already achieved a lot of valuable work, and it is important that that momentum is not lost. Much of that new arts activity also tries to reach out beyond east Belfast, with Woodstock using city centre locations such as the Black Box and the Garrick, and the arts festival working closely with Féile an Phobail in west Belfast.

East Belfast has a rich heritage in the arts. It has areas of distinction and character and wonderful stories to tell, as well as social and political issues that could be ameliorated through redevelopment and the arts in this city.

There are no boundaries to the appeal of C S Lewis. His work appeals to those of different generations, religious beliefs and social circumstances. A common bond is created between us all where we can share in the enjoyment of his literature. Literature and the arts can create many opportunities for experiences to be shared and bonds to be developed. I believe, in particular, that the arts and festivals can continue to play a part in helping all areas across the North in an ongoing transition from conflict to peace.

The key is not necessarily just about throwing together people from different backgrounds and environments in the hope that it will magic away the barriers and differences between them and, indeed, even between us. It is about building up self-confidence in individuals and their communities, recognising and valuing those communities, and developing and supporting a strong sense of self-worth. That sense of self-worth is important. It is also about the relations that are less strained by insecurities over identity and difference. That should be our legacy and a C S Lewis legacy.

Achieving that has everything to do with participation and empowerment. Festivals and arts activities, particularly those that are taking place in east Belfast now, can help to do that. I am delighted that this topic is the subject of today's Adjournment debate, and I thank Mr Douglas for securing it. I look forward in helping in any way not only to support the legacy of C S Lewis but to do it through east Belfast and, indeed, across the city and beyond.

Adjourned at 7.41 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 25 November 2013

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Matters of the Day

Father Alec Reid

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Martin McGuinness has been given leave to make a statement, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24, on the death of Father Alec Reid. Other Members who wish to be called should rise continually in their place to indicate that they wish to speak. All Members shall have three minutes to speak on the subject. I remind Members that I will not take any points of order on this or any other matter until the item of business is finished.

Mr M McGuinness: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Speaker's office for the opportunity to say a few words about an extraordinary individual who made an incredible contribution to the peace process — someone who was a friend of all of us in the Chamber.

It is a long way from Tipperary to the disadvantaged streets of west Belfast, but, for over 40 years, Father Alec Reid laboured on behalf of the community that he was so much a part of, providing spiritual support and guidance and pastoral support. In the context of conflict in this country, he rose to make one of the most remarkable contributions to the peace process that we have ever seen. In many ways, he was years ahead of many others. He was, in my opinion, Ireland's greatest peacemaker — someone who recognised the importance of dialogue, discussion and inclusiveness and who understood absolutely the need to bring conflict in this country to an end.

In doing so, I think that he gained the enormous respect of everyone. Through his actions, compassion and courage, he clearly showed that he understood absolutely the nature of the conflict and, more importantly, what was required to bring that conflict to an end. His work with our party leader, Gerry Adams, is now legendary and on the public record. The involvement of a former leader of the SDLP John Hume is also on the public record. Of course, many people have made huge contributions down the years to that process from all the political parties in this Chamber.

We are all indebted to Father Alec Reid Redemptorist priest, who was a man of incredible courage, a visionary and a man who absolutely understood what was required to ensure that the young people of our country lived their lives in a way that allowed them to fulfil their potential. We all need to recognise that we are only here because of him and because of decisions taken by many others. I pay tribute to him today and, on the occasion of his death and his funeral, nothing that we can do to immortalise his

contribution to our peace process can be surpassed by the contribution that he made.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Douglas: On behalf of the Democratic Unionist Party, I extend our sympathy to the family and friends of Father Alec Reid, who died last Friday. I met Father Reid a few times over the years. I did not know him that well but I found him to be a man of deep faith and incredible integrity who really believed that it was good to talk. The image of Father Reid praying over the bodies of army corporals Derek Wood and David Howes will live forever in our memories. It was a real act of grace and compassion, and the images went right across the world. I certainly recognise Father Alec Reid as a key figure in the Northern Ireland peace process and, undoubtedly, as the Member who spoke previously said, he has left behind a powerful legacy. Did he make mistakes? Of course he did. As someone said yesterday on Radio Ulster, he was a bit tetchy and a bit impatient. At one time, he made remarks that angered many in the unionist community, but as a man of integrity, he apologised. As the Bible states, we all make many mistakes in what we say and what we do. That includes every one of us in this Chamber today. In finishing, I pray that the God of all comfort will be with Father Alec Reid's family and friends today.

Mr Attwood: I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, the Speaker's office and Mr McGuinness for bringing this matter to the attention of the Chamber this morning. On behalf of myself and the SDLP, I convey our sympathy to the family of Alec Reid, particularly that family that resides up in Clonard monastery. To his fellow priests and his brothers in the order, I offer our sympathy and condolences on his sad occasion. In particular, I refer to Father Gerry Reynolds who, like Father Alec Reid, was tireless and fearless and is deeply holy. He was a great friend of Alec Reid and was his partner in peace.

I remember about 10 or 15 years ago — probably longer now — being up in St Gerard's at a private event where Alec Reid spoke, as he put it, about the place of Christian witness in a situation of violent conflict. For Alec Reid, that was not an academic issue; it was his lived experience.

Although he came to public attention through the Hume/Adams talks and his compassion on the day of the murder of two soldiers in Andersonstown, throughout his service in west Belfast and in Clonard monastery, he brought Christian witness to situations of violent conflict. That is the measure of the man and the measure of his contribution. He was a man who would not give up on the pursuit of peace. Anyone who met him and talked to him,

especially in the run-up to the ceasefires, knew that he was not going to be derailed from that pursuit and that eventually he and others would prevail.

Over the weekend, I have been thinking not only of Father Alec Reid but of the late Father Matt Wallace, another giant of a priest in west Belfast. They both served the people not only in the most difficult circumstances but in the most disadvantaged areas. For all those things, they are known, respected and loved.

Mr Nesbitt: On behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, I offer condolences to the family of Father Reid and, in particular, to those in the Clonard monastery family. I begin by acknowledging the huge sense of loss in the community, particularly the community that is nationalist/republican west Belfast. Far from being exclusive to that grouping, there is a sense of loss throughout this island, in Great Britain, in the United States and internationally at having lost someone who imparted a very positive sense of direction in all that he did and said, publicly and privately.

As has been acknowledged, of course, there were times when he made comments that were more than difficult for the unionist community. Famously, there was one set of comments for which he felt obliged to apologise, and, in fairness, he did so promptly and fully. Indeed, today, we hear that a documentary might be broadcast tonight that will include comments that I imagine that the unionist community will find utterly unacceptable. I hope that that is not the abiding memory of Father Alec Reid. For me and for everyone, I believe that the abiding memory will be of that fateful day in 1988 and the murders of the two corporals in west Belfast, with Father Reid on his knees in the blood of those two men. It was, no doubt, a life-changing experience that led him to knock heads together for peace.

It is noteworthy that, through the many decades of the Troubles, many people were very critical of organised religion. Many said that the Churches did not do enough to end the Troubles and did not like to get involved in controversial issues, roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty. Father Reid did, getting his hands more than dirty in the cause of peace. It is, of course, ironic that his public intervention that day led to an iconic image of the Troubles, and yet his real work was done in private behind the scenes, encouraging and cajoling those who could bring a change to this country, a change that ultimately led to us all being here in the Chamber today. I hope that history will do justice to Father Alec Reid.

Mr Ford: On behalf of my colleagues, I add our sympathy to Father Reid's family and especially to the community in Clonard. Much has been said about Father Alec Reid in the past few days. Indeed, the coverage of his passing is in great contrast to the fact that he was a man who spent much of life out of the public eye, doing that good work behind the scenes, which others spoke of. The way in which he conducted himself made his life and ministry vital to what has become known as the peace process here. Many in west Belfast remember him as a friend and as a priest with a pastoral care who touched individual lives, but we in this place will remember him for the role that he played in the wider community and the efforts that he made for peace.

12.15 pm

It is so often the politicians who receive the plaudits when things go well, but it is those outside the political limelight, people such as Father Alec Reid and some of his colleagues — Father Gerry Reynolds was mentioned earlier — who deserve much of the praise and whose contribution, by its very nature, might never become fully known. Clearly, Father Reid was one of those people. I remember that, as far back as the early 1990s, he was one of those who took part in confidential talks with political representatives in Germany. Talking with colleagues this morning, I recollected a weekend in November 2001, when some of us were engaged in very high-profile talks in and around this Building to seek the election of a First Minister and deputy First Minister, while others were elsewhere, out of the limelight, involved in quiet conversations about how best to sustain power sharing in the longer term. Sharing in those quiet conversations was Father Alec. We owe a great deal to him for all the work that he did.

Did we all agree on everything that he said? Of course not, but we can agree that he played an absolutely pivotal and courageous role in bringing about the circumstances that allowed politicians to take the steps that led to the peace process and sustained it at critical points.

Father Alec's legacy is probably most evident in the fact that his life and contribution to the community are being marked, not just in Clonard but in so many places, including the Assembly, which his work, and that of others who shared his vision of a peaceful, settled community and put that faith into action, did so much to bring into existence

Mr McCallister: At the outset, I express sympathy on behalf of NI21 to the family and friends of Father Reid, especially, as others quite rightly mentioned, the community at Clonard monastery who knew him best and will definitely miss him most acutely.

We have had tributes to the contribution that Father Reid made from all sides of the House. That tells us that, although some maybe had issues with some of his commentary over the years, today is very much about focusing on the very positive change that he helped to bring about and push people towards. People have talked about the grace and Christian witness that he brought. It is important that we remember the huge contribution that Father Alec Reid made to our peace process over a long number of years and that we continue in that work. The very fact that we are here, discussing this and taking time to reflect on a life of service to so many across our society, marks his incredible achievements and perseverance. He kept the faith, not only in his Christian witness but in politics and there being a different way of bringing real change to Northern Ireland. He kept working with people to make sure that change happened and that we moved away from the horrific images that he became so widely associated with following the murder of two corporals in 1988 to a place where we can now discuss and reflect in a very meaningful way on a life of service to all.

Explosion: Belfast City Centre

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Jonathan Craig has been given leave to make a statement, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24, on the explosion in Belfast city centre. Other Members who wish to be called should rise continually in their place. All Members called will have three minutes to speak on the subject. I again remind Members that I will not take any points of order on this or any other matter until the item of business is finished.

Mr Craig: It is with great sadness and revulsion that I come to the House with this matter. On Sunday, at approximately 9.00 pm, an individual returning to his home was confronted by three masked men. His car was hijacked, a bomb was put in it and he was forced to drive to the entrance of Victoria Square, near Musgrave Street police station. Those are the failed tactics of the past. A bomb with over 60 kg — or, in old English terms, 128 lb — of homemade explosives could have caused death, misery and mayhem in our city centre. Of that, there is no question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with your indulgence, I will give a clear reaction. On listening to the news this morning, my wife turned to me and said: "Surely not. We cannot go back to that." I tell you that because I believe that she, more than most, has the right to say it. Her father was a businessman in Belfast for 30 years. He carried eight bombs out of his premises. He had a gun put to his head and the trigger pulled. We cannot go back to that. Those are the failed miserable tactics of the past that brought misery and mayhem to the Province. Nothing was moved forward by them, and nothing will be moved forward by them.

We listened with pain to the hurt that was brought out by victims last week. I include myself in that list of victims, and I felt the hurt and pain of last week's debate. The one thing that we, as a society, cannot do is allow that hurt and pain to be visited on the present or, indeed, the future of the Province. I do not want to see anyone going through that again. We need to reject the violence of the past. We need to make a strong appeal to those who may know something about this incident: do not let fear rule your life; take that brave step, and give whatever information you have to the PSNI and the forces of law and order. Let us all stand behind the forces of law and order on this issue.

I want to pay tribute to the brave tactics of the PSNI and, especially, the bomb squad. While others were running from this incident, they had to go in and diffuse it.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Jonathan Craig for bringing this issue forward. In complete contrast and contradiction to the life's work of Father Alec Reid, who has passed away, we have had this bomb — thankfully, only a part of it went off — brought into the city centre. That reckless act put into danger the lives not only of local people but the many visitors who come to Belfast around the Christmas period. We could have been dealing this afternoon with a substantial number of casualties, if not deaths. I am very thankful that we are not in that position.

This incident comes almost 20 years after the first ceasefires. These people need to know that they have no support in the community whatsoever and that the vast majority of people throughout Ireland — and I mean the vast, vast majority of people throughout Ireland — voted

for a political way to move the whole process forward. If their belief is in a united Ireland, there is a democratic way in which to pursue that. My message is very simple: they need to stop and they need to stop now. There is no way that we are going back to those days of conflict.

Mr A Maginness: I join others — Mr Jonathan Craig, in particular — in condemning this incident. Mr Craig has rightly described these as the failed tactics of the past, and I agree entirely with him. These are tactics that failed in the past.

Only politics works. Incidentally, this act involved a constituent of mine, a man who has been terrorised by it.

The fact is that we should be saying to those people who carried out this act, "Yes, you have carried out the failed tactics of the past." Politics works, and nothing else will work to bring about change, peace and stability to our community. We want to unite our community, not divide it, and a bomb would have divided our community, killed or injured people and damaged property.

These people have to wake up to the new realities of our politics, which are the politics of the Assembly and the new dispensation. They have to get a very strong message from the Assembly that their actions are to be condemned. They will not be condoned, and they will not see any success as a result of those actions. They have attempted to instil fear not only in one constituent of mine but in the whole community. They also seek to damage our economy, particularly as we are coming up to Christmas. That is something that we, as a community and an Assembly, will not tolerate. That is the message that should go out from this place.

Mr Copeland: It does not take a great deal of expertise or courage to manufacture a car bomb — the charge, the accelerant, the detonator and the power supply. It never took a lot of courage or expertise. It does not take a lot of expertise to murder someone. Yet these words are starting to creep in to our vocabulary once again. There is no point in me using the word "condemn". We use it ad nauseam. We must identify those who are responsible, track them down and make them subject to the rule of law. In the absence of that, the public will conclude that these people are, in essence, free to do what they want. There but for the grace of God go we springs to mind about last night. If the device was fertiliser based, it might have been the case that it was not mixed or ground right. It might not have been manufactured right or there might have been a broken wire or a short in the circuit that was designed to set it off. Nothing that we in this place did and nothing that the police or the intelligence-led security services did prevented it from being delivered.

As I said, it does not take much courage; it never did. What does take courage are the actions of those who deal with the aftermath when such devices have been successful. They are the people who say to mothers and their children, "Your father is not coming home". They also say to fathers and their children, "Your mother is not coming home". They might find themselves scarred for life, some even now, after 40 years, from the effects of dealing with the aftermath of bombs. It is neither pretty nor pleasant and it cannot be justified now. In truth, it could never be justified.

The people who carry out these activities plan beneath the surface, they exist beneath the surface and they go back to homes and communities that will know them. The absence of information coming from the population to the

police will do nothing to ensure that this does not happen again. There but for the grace of God is not enough.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to draw his remarks to a close.

Mr Ford: I thank Jonathan Craig for securing this matter of the day. I join him and others in condemnation not just of those who planted the bomb last night but of those who have engaged in a number of similar activities in recent weeks.

12.30 pm

What happened last night put the lives of people all over Belfast at risk — those in Ardoyne, where the bomb was placed in the vehicle; the driver of the vehicle, who, as Alban Maginness has said, was traumatised by the effects; those who were on the route to the city centre; those who were in and around Victoria Square, whether socialising or living there; and those who had to deal with it, whether police officers or army staff.

I have said before that it appears that some people are more wedded to the struggle than to any possible outcome. They must know that what they are doing can achieve no political outcome. We stand here today as representatives of Northern Ireland and show that democracy is what changes the way that things are managed, not terrorism.

It is clear that a small group of people have carried out a number of activities in recent weeks, including the attempted bombing of Strand Road police station in Derry on Saturday evening, which left another driver traumatised after an attempt to hijack a vehicle in Creggan, as well as other devices, such as pipe bombs and letter bombs, that have been shown. We know that the Police Service stands to defend the community, whether they are those in specialist units, in response units or in neighbourhood units. They are clearly working extremely hard to protect this society. Last week, I had the pleasure of visiting the ordnance engineers and seeing something of the work of the army technical officers (ATOs), some of whom would have been out last night or on Saturday night carrying out their duties to deal with those devices. We owe an awful lot to those army specialists and police officers for what they do.

As a community and as political representatives, we have to ensure that we stand together. We also have to ensure that no unnecessary strain is put on the police and that people are encouraged to give whatever information they have, however little it might be. We have to remember that, unfortunately, there is a difference between information and intelligence and evidence that stands up in court. That is why it is so vital that anyone who can help in any way should provide that information. We all owe a duty to ensure that we do not create additional difficulties for the police at this particularly sensitive time.

Mr Spratt: As a Member for South Belfast, where this incident took place, I utterly condemn the bomb at Musgrave Street police station and Victoria Square. I also condemn the other incidents that took place over the weekend in the south of the city, not least in Stockmans Lane and Ravenhill Avenue, where many ordinary people had their weekends disrupted and were put out of their homes.

As has been said by others — I thank my colleague Jonathan Craig for raising this matter — Chichester Street and Victoria Street were closed off last evening as a result of this incident. It brought chaos to the people who were going about their normal business in restaurants and business in the south of the city. Indeed, as we read this morning, cars belonging to people from other parts of the Province were trapped in the underground car park at Victoria Square. I utterly condemn all of that and reiterate that this 60 kg bomb could have caused massive injury and, indeed, serious loss of life. None of us wants to go back to the dark days of the past. We have all seen enough of that. We need to move on and to stand together.

I want to support the words of Mr Ford, who, just a few seconds ago, said that it is imperative that the Police Service is given every support at this time. There is no greater need than now for the Police Service of Northern Ireland to be fully and absolutely supported. There should be no question about that. There should also be support for the ATOs who deal with those incidents. Whether they turn out to be a hoax or not, when the ATOs arrive at the scene, the devices have the potential to take life.

I appeal to anyone who has information, no matter how little, to pass it to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Let us get these individuals out of our communities. They are the men and women of yesterday and have nothing to offer anyone in Northern Ireland.

Mr McCallister: I join colleagues in utterly condemning this attack. Like other attacks, the sheer recklessness and thoughtlessness of it, the wanton destruction and the potential for loss of life was breathtaking. That anyone would even contemplate that such an attack would achieve anything in our society is also breathtaking. We all have our quarrels in here, but this is where they should be. For all its faults, this is where the politics should be taking place. The very fact that so many in this House stand united today in utter condemnation of such attacks reinforces the point that the people who carry out, plan or take any part in them have absolutely nothing to offer. No one, but no one, wants to go back to the dark days and be revisited by that.

These acts of terror and the sheer trauma that they bring on the individuals who are most acutely affected by them are horrendous. We have to do all in our power to stop them. So I join with others, including Mr Ford, the Justice Minister, in making sure that anyone who knows anything passes that information on to the police immediately without holding back anything. The smallest details or bits of information will help the police. The police cannot solve all these things on their own: they cannot tackle them without community support. There is no support in any community for what is happening, so we must bear down on and bring the people responsible before the courts and our justice system and hope that they are dealt with severely so that we bring to an end something that no one in this House wants to see and that we are all repulsed by.

Mr Agnew: I express my revulsion and that of the Green Party at the odious act that took place in Belfast city centre. I offer our support to the driver who underwent a horrible ordeal and recognise that others in recent weeks in Derry have also suffered in a similar way. A Derry bus driver and takeaway delivery driver also suffered in such a way.

This issue has also been brought to House because of its wider impact on our community. It has brought back some horrific memories for people, and there is a feeling that we have taken a step back towards a past that we thought we had left behind us.

I speak as a worried father of two young children who really had hoped that this type of attack was behind us. I remember when my mum worked in Belfast city centre, and any time she was late home from work, I worried about the reason for that. I do not want my children ever to experience such a worry.

We have to make sure that in this House we do everything in our power to make democracy work and show that democracy is the only way forward. In particular, we have to make it work for the most deprived communities and make sure that we give no grounds for these acts being justified. Although this type of act can never and should never be justified, we have to give no possibility of justification for those who carry out such attacks.

We have to be mindful that we have a leadership role and that when we are discussing the role of the PSNI and the courts, we should do so in a responsible manner. Although it is right that we hold those areas of our judiciary to account, we should not criticise to achieve political ends but only where we have real grounds for doing so. We all appear to be in support of the police and their brave actions. I hope that we ensure that we continue to support the police and do not use them as a political football to serve our own ends.

Finally, I add to the calls for anyone with any information to pass it to the PSNI or, indeed, anonymously through Crimestoppers, to ensure that those who carried out this terrible act are brought to justice.

Mr McNarry: Jonathan Craig's personal insight of a factual episode in his family lends serious and massive weight to the matter that he has brought to the House. I did not know about that; I am sure that most of us did not know about it. It just goes to show that you really do not know who and how widespread the victims are. What I do know is that this House must speak up for the future as well as the present, especially for young people who know little of the past that most of us came through in the form of killings and bombings and the panic, chaos and fear that others have spoken about. We have a duty to prevent them from experiencing what we experienced. Mr Spratt spoke of what happened yesterday, as well as other incidents. As he said, we have a duty to ensure that they do not happen.

Can we show the way? Can we demonstrate our repudiation of violence? I believe that we can. Should we not — not just as a gesture but as a body of all 108 of us — walk from this Building together to the city to make a statement of solidarity by the people's elected representatives against these people? In doing that, we can show those people that there is a better way. It is what we are working to do daily. It is a way that prevents wicked men from penetrating our future. In doing that, we will say to the public that we must live in the present and build a future for our children and their children.

Mr McCausland: The attack in the centre of Belfast on Sunday night was an attack on life, property and the economic life of the city centre. It was clearly an attempt by dissident republicans to replicate the old economic war that was formerly carried out by the Provisional IRA.

Clearly, dissident republicans do not have the capacity to mount a sustained campaign over several decades in the way that the Provisionals did. For that, we must be thankful. Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that they can and do cause significant damage to the commercial life of our cities and towns. They have very limited support and, indeed, they have very little to offer. In fact, they have nothing to offer but death, destruction, poverty, unemployment, mayhem and misery. We are all thankful that no one was injured, although the person whose car was hijacked was severely traumatised and terrorised by the incident. The fact is that such incidents are completely wrong. Terrorism was wrong in the past, just as it is wrong today. Moreover, the manner of this particular incident says much about the fanaticism and depravity of those who designed it and carried it out.

The car was hijacked in Ardoyne in north Belfast, and it is true that there are several small groups of dissident republicans who are active in that part of the city. I appeal to anyone with information to make it available as soon as possible. It is imperative that the perpetrators of such violence are identified, apprehended, brought before the courts and made to feel the full force of the law.

I want to make one final point. The car bomb as a method of attack by terrorists was designed by the Provisional IRA many years ago, and dissident republicans believe that they are keeping faith with their republican past. We must not allow anyone to rewrite history in such a way as to suggest that, when such things happened in the past, they were somehow right. The facts, very clearly, are that it was wrong then, it is wrong now and it needs to be brought to a stop.

12.45 pm

Ms Lo: As an MLA for the area, I utterly condemn this worrying incident. I send my sympathies to the person whose car was hijacked, and who must have been severely traumatised, and to all those who were inconvenienced by the evacuation from the apartments, restaurants and cinema in Victoria Square.

Had the device gone off fully, the damage caused could have been substantial, potentially fatal. The culprits have no regard for human life, and they have no place in our society. None of us wants to go back to the bad old days when people were too scared to go to such public places as restaurants and cinemas, for fear of bombings and shootings. I know what it was like. I came here in 1974, when Belfast city centre was a ghost town after dark.

This incident was a pointless act that succeeded only in causing chaos to the public, damaging our local economy and frightening away our potential foreign investors. We must all send out a strong message today that the perpetrators do not act in our name. They must be stopped and caught. If anyone has any information, I urge them to contact the police. The House is united in its condemnation today of these wicked people, and I call for all of us to work together for a better and shared future for everyone.

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 15 minutes to propose and 15 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Swann (The Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Employment and Learning on its Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland [NIA 141/11-15]; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

It gives me great pleasure, as Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning, to move the motion calling on the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations set out in the Committee's report on its inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance in Northern Ireland. I appreciate the Minister being here today to respond, and I am sure that he and his officials will find the report extremely useful. The Committee is looking forward to working in cooperation with the Minister to progress the recommendations. I thank the Business Committee for allowing two hours to discuss this very important Committee inquiry, because it has an overarching effect on the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Education (DE).

The Committee agreed to carry out the inquiry because it was evident that there were areas where improvements could be made. During briefings to the Committee, a number of organisations highlighted issues about how advice on career options is offered. The Committee had concerns about the place of careers provision in the wider economic development of Northern Ireland and questioned how it can be that, simultaneously, there can be a large number of young people leaving education with little prospect of employment, alongside claims from industry that Northern Ireland is facing a skills shortage that is jeopardising future economic growth.

The Committee agreed the terms of reference for the inquiry just before summer recess in July 2012. Over the summer months, the Committee wrote to 65 key stakeholders requesting written evidence and received submissions from 41 organisations. Over the 2012-13 session, the Committee heard oral evidence from 28 organisations and made study visits to the University of Ulster and to the South Eastern Regional College in Bangor. In addition to the written and oral evidence, the Committee felt it important to give an opportunity to young people and those directly affected by careers advice to have their say. The Committee issued an online survey to pupils in year 12, to students in colleges and universities and to young people who had left school and were not in education or employment. The Committee was overwhelmed by the response. Across all four groups, it

received 8,428 responses, and the Committee is incredibly grateful to those people who took the time to respond.

Given that responsibility for careers lies jointly with the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education, the Committee made all relevant inquiry papers available to the Committee for Education and began its inquiry with a joint briefing from both Departments. Before I go further, on behalf of the Committee, I thank both Departments for their open engagement and thank all the other organisations that provided such a wealth of information and well-reasoned evidence. I pay special tribute to the Employment and Learning Committee staff and the Committee Clerk, whose dedication to the report, from the beginning, ensured the quality of the inquiry.

The Committee was struck by the wide range of organisations involved in the provision of careers education, advice and guidance, from schools, businesses, the Careers Service and other sector skills bodies, many of which are government-funded. Although the Committee did not deal with this as an aspect of the inquiry, it noted that, with such a wide range of organisations providing what can sometimes be conflicting information, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education might wish to consider whether there is duplication of effort or their efforts could be better coordinated.

I must emphasise that there is much to praise about careers education, information, advice and guidance in Northern Ireland. Individual teachers and advisers work tirelessly to advance the horizons, aspirations and prospects of those looking for productive and enriching lives, and schools, colleges and universities have widened out the options and visions for those who come through their doors beyond passing the next exam to moulding individuals who are work-ready. They also have a focus and confidence for where they see themselves in five and 10 years' time.

The Committee, however, considered that much can be done, and it distilled that to 25 recommendations, which I ask you to call on the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to implement.

The Committee found that the evidence points to systemic and specific examples of poor careers provision; inconsistency in careers provision across Northern Ireland; a lack of information, with available information sometimes being difficult to digest; suggestions that schools and colleges, to protect their own enrolments, do not advise students of the full range of options available to them; and a lack of joined-up thinking across the education and employment sectors to have a workforce that is ready for the economy of tomorrow.

The Committee's recommendations fall under a number of main themes that came out of the inquiry. Given the issues raised, the first and most overarching theme is that of a statutory duty. In reviewing the evidence and looking at the experience of other jurisdictions, and having seen that further interventions are needed, the Committee recommends that DEL and DE examine the possible benefits of introducing a statutory mechanism for ensuring a consistency of approach and high standards of careers service across all schools, colleges and universities in Northern Ireland. The Committee feels that if both

Departments choose to explore such an avenue, it must be adequately resourced to ensure that it is successful.

The difficulty of successfully introducing a statutory duty that is not adequately resourced is evidenced by the experience of England, where a statutory duty was introduced in 2012 and, in a recent Ofsted evaluation, implementation was found to be far from complete because many of the issues that led to the statutory duty are still evident. The Committee has noted that one area in which a statutory duty does exist is that of the school entitlement framework, which has been a statutory duty from 1 September this year. As Members are aware, that is the duty that puts pupils' needs first and aims to provide access for pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum base that enables them to reach their full potential, no matter which school they attend or where they live.

The Committee felt that that duty was put at risk as an unintended consequence of the current careers provision, as not all subjects and avenues are always addressed by those offering advice. Some evidence suggests that some schools do not always signpost the range of opportunities available in further education colleges, instead promoting their own subject offering in an effort to retain pupil numbers.

The Committee believes that the Department of Education should make careers provision a compulsory curriculum subject and employ a range of good practice to improve the career chances of students. Schools should widen and raise aspirations. Personal portfolios should be used to help students to assess their range of skills and receive direction on the skills, both social and academic, that they need to work on in order to become more attractive to employers. Schools should also promote integrated working through group projects to help students to work with others to solve problems.

The Committee is also aware of the additional barriers to fulfilling careers that are faced by some groups. It recommends that a number of special measures be put in place to help those individuals. We recommend that DEL includes in its ongoing review of economic inactivity the role that the Careers Service should play in signposting the economically inactive to training, education and, ultimately, employment. For those for whom the costs associated with education are a barrier, DEL should ensure that practical financial advice is provided to ensure that the door to further education and higher education is not closed due to cost. For those with learning difficulties, the Committee recommends that DEL develop an integrated network of support to help them to engage in work, whether through grant schemes for employers or mentoring schemes, and that it should investigate best practice in other jurisdictions. For female students, DEL and DE should develop a strategy to identify and address the barriers facing their progression into STEM-based subjects.

I will move on to STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. All agree that, for the future of the economy, more needs to be done to guide young people to those types of subjects and to make them proficient enough to profit from the Assembly's efforts to steer Northern Ireland to a more technology-based economy. The Committee knows that the promotion of STEM is central to DEL and DE. However, evidence that the work that they are doing has borne fruit is not there. For that

reason, the Committee recommends that DEL look at how it measures its success in that endeavour and that DE consider expanding its current approach to provide more career insights and exposure to the world of business and entrepreneurship. The Committee also recommends that schools, colleges and universities be adequately resourced with the right equipment and skills to teach those cutting-edge technologies.

The Committee saw evidence of a historical bias towards the old professions. As a society, we value the career choices of law, medicine and teaching, among others. To counter that, the Committee recommends that DEL and DE develop an action plan for providing information for parents and engaging with them to ensure that the advice and encouragement that they offer their children is informed. This should be assisted by an inclusive and fit-for-purpose careers website, such as Scotland's My World of Work site. As part of that improvement in the provision of information, the Committee recommends that DEL increase its efforts to make labour market information more accessible and develop a more joined-up approach to information sharing between it and other key stakeholders to enable it to collaborate on, analyse and disseminate quality information.

One of the most gratifying aspects of the inquiry was the input from the business sector, whether it was from businesses themselves or via the sector skills councils. The Committee was left in no doubt that there is not only a willingness but an eagerness to help. The business sector knows that, if education and careers advice can be got right, it will profit and so, too, will Northern Ireland. However, the Committee feels that that is, to a large extent, an untapped resource. To that end, the Committee recommends that DEL and DE develop better engagement between schools and businesses; seek to introduce in schools a more consistent approach to promoting, organising and quality assuring work placements for students; and include in their planned careers strategy how engagement in careers-related learning between schools and businesses can be improved. The Committee recommends that DE, with DEL's assistance, review the resources provided to schools for delivering work experience, explores the feasibility of all post-primary schools delivering work experience for their students and evaluates the quality of those placements.

Another theme that runs through the evidence is the need for those who offer careers advice to be adequately qualified and trained. The Committee noted with concern that there is no longer a qualification for teaching careers in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the Committee recommends that DEL works with haste to develop and introduce more qualifications in careers education, information, advice and guidance to Northern Ireland and that DE puts more emphasis on the delivery of careers education, information, advice and guidance to increase the number of experienced and qualified careers staff.

1.00 pm

The Committee also recommends that DE ensures that the four continuous professional development modules that it is developing respond to criticisms that were raised by those who gave evidence to the inquiry, that those modules are implemented as soon as possible and that subject teachers are provided with specific continuous

professional development to ensure that they are aware of the realistic opportunities that are available to students in their subject area. The Committee believes that that could be facilitated and enhanced by better partnerships with employers.

In my role as an Ulster Unionist member of the Committee for Employment and Learning, bearing in mind those who often query the usefulness of inquiries or who wait until the recommendations come out, I would like to commend the Minister for having already taken two actions in response to concerns that were raised during the inquiry's evidence sessions. One of the criticisms was that the fact sheets that were available on the DEL information page of the NI Direct website were out of date. I am glad that the Minister launched updated fact sheets on 18 November.

We also heard criticism from a number of major employers that there was no investment in support. I welcome the Minister's announcement this morning that he has invested £366,000 for an additional 120 places on the Department's INTRO graduate management programme.

I welcome the fact that work that was done in the inquiry has already borne fruit. I look forward to working with the Committee and the Minister to ensure that all the recommendations that we brought forward as a cross-party Committee are adopted.

In conclusion, this was a substantial piece of work by the Committee. I look forward to a productive and positive debate with the Department on its content. I commend the Committee's inquiry report to the House.

Mr Hilditch: As a member of the Committee for Employment and Learning, I support the report. Although the inquiry's terms of reference were agreed in July 2012, my return to the Committee a few months later allowed me to take part in most of the inquiry.

The inquiry gathered and received a vast amount of evidence and information. I acknowledge the many contributions that we received, including from the various education sectors, the private sector, the business sector, various skills bodies and the voluntary and community sector. From the initiation of the inquiry throughout the evidence and information gathering to bringing the report to its conclusion, I acknowledge the work of the Committee staff under the leadership of the Committee Clerk, Cathie White. I congratulate them because the Committee was overwhelmed with responses from key stakeholders and those who participated in the survey. It was no mean feat to collate and document the information, bring the inquiry to a conclusion and publish the report.

From the outset, we were aware that the inquiry would bridge two Departments and impact on a number of others. That could be problematic in any circumstances, but, hopefully, through this report, the concerns that were raised about the structure and effectiveness of careers education, information, advice and guidance in Northern Ireland can be addressed by all stakeholders.

It was during the inquiry that the Committee's concerns began to be realised. Although it was clear that the Department for Employment and Learning played a supporting role, with advice, guidance and careers information to support the delivery of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) by the Department of Education in schools, and that the further

and higher education institutions were responsible for individual delivery, there is also a wide range, almost a convoluted web, of organisations and agencies involved in CEIAG that, I am concerned, are not always singing from the same hymn sheet. I would draw Members' attention to that section of the report and commend the associated recommendations.

The report contains 25 recommendations. I want first to draw Members' attention to recommendations 3 to 6, which deal primarily with the role of the curriculum and examples of good practice. I believe that those recommendations are sensible and balanced while giving us the flexibility to look to others, particularly the successful Scandinavian countries, in trying to improve our system. Many good examples of great work were given by a number of contributors, including innovative ideas about introducing primary 7 children to an apprentice-type scheme in school, which is at paragraph 89 of the report, and how personal development portfolios for year 8, 9 and 10 pupils could be integrated into the current curriculum.

I will now turn to issues that Members will clearly recognise from their constituency engagement. Recommendations 7 to 10 talk about overcoming barriers. During the past few years, it has become very evident that there needs to be much more advice and guidance for the very vulnerable in our community. Over the past three or four years in particular, due to changes in circumstances in other areas of government, I have seen a significant increase in the number of people coming through the constituency office who suffer from either a learning disability or some form of mental health issue. Hopefully, through recommendation 8 in particular, the correct mentoring and structures can be put in place so that those people are not lost to the benefit trap. From personal experience, I have no doubt that many of them are readily employable.

Another area that I was personally interested in during the inquiry, in particular when questioning witnesses from the private and business sector, was work experience or, as it turns out, the lack of it. Again, many Members will be aware of local schemes and will have participated with schools in assisting with placements. Work experience should be used in a very meaningful way by introducing students to the work environment. There are currently many flaws in the system, ranging from the limited time that is allowed for work experience to the fact that, in most cases, students must find their own placements. If they are unsuccessful, they could, unfortunately, spend the week with a litter pick and a black bin liner tramping the school grounds. That is the downside.

However, the educationalists gave some good examples, but there were many criticisms, and, according to evidence that those in the private sector gave, much more needs to be done. Much more must also be done in this area with appropriate placements and the allocation of time that is given to work experience. I particularly commend this section of the report and its recommendation to the House.

In closing, and as I stated last week during the debate on higher education, the Assembly and Committees are now producing work that, if used properly by the Executive, Ministers and across Departments, could help to keep Northern Ireland moving. That is why I fully endorse paragraph 305, which is the concluding paragraph of the report, as it links careers provision to the recommendations that the Culture, Arts and Leisure

Committee made in its report on maximising the creative industries' potential. I support the motion.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion. I thank the Committee staff and the Committee Clerk for all their hard work in putting the report together. I believe that the report's recommendations are extremely important. Careers advice and information is vital for growing the economy as it allows people to take up jobs that are long term and fulfilling. The report, which contains 25 recommendations, looks at the role of careers guidance and at how it can be improved by examining its policies, procedures and practices for the betterment of all individuals and the economy in the North of Ireland.

During the inquiry, the Committee received a number of briefings from organisations that alluded to the skills gap across a range of different sectors. Not only is there a skills gap in practical skills but it is developing right across all areas of employment, including information communication technology, agriculture, retail, hospitality and construction. It is important that we develop education and training facilities that bridge that skills gap, whether that is through more apprenticeships or a change in the way that our schools and colleagues react to the skills gaps when they are identified. It has been too easy to maintain the same subjects in higher education colleges that are already flooded with trained personnel, rather than to move to change the curriculum to meet the demand of modern economics. For example, there is an increased demand for STEM qualifications, which is a growth area.

The provision of careers advice and information needs to be integrated and embedded during studying. We need to develop a programme where schools and further education facilities are in harmony with developing industries and prospective investors so that training needs can be identified. In any changing society, there are challenges, but there are also great opportunities.

A paper that was provided to the Committee during its inquiry into careers outlined the mismatch between those leaving school and choosing certain careers and the actual number of jobs that are available in those careers. Our young people need to develop skills that are relevant to the job opportunities. It has been stated in research papers that young people are not fully aware of the diversity of jobs that are available in the different sectors. Studies have concluded that an information gap exists and that there is a weak understanding of the labour market. There appears to be little awareness of the different routes to success.

Young people pursue educational journeys where they do not find work that is relevant to their qualifications once they leave school. So, how do we encourage young people to go down routes that are not medicine, law and teaching, given that we simply cannot manufacture jobs for all students in those areas?

In a briefing from the National Union of Students and Union of Students in Ireland, one suggested potential change in the delivery of careers advice was the creation of a one-stop shop in which careers advice would be provided in tandem with benefits, local housing and local government services in the same location.

In the evidence delivered to the Committee, it was clear that there needs to be investment in the staff who offer careers advice and guidance. There is also a need

for standardisation in both the advice that the service providers give and their qualifications. One young person from the National Union of Students said that the person who advised her on her careers options was her religious education teacher. The point was made that the provision of careers advice and information needs to be professionalised and accurate, as a careers teacher is giving advice to students who are making decisions that will essentially affect them for the rest of their lives.

In a report of evidence from the Schools and Colleges Careers Association here in the North, a number of issues were identified on which teachers could benefit from continuous professional development to support the delivery of careers in schools and colleges; for example, labour market information related to here in the North specifically, upskilling all staff on delivering careers through their subject and a certificate diploma for careers. It was also stated that only some schools employ a careers education coordinator and that very few post-primary schools employ a full-time careers adviser. In fact, in Dungannon in my constituency there are five post-primary schools but we only have one full-time careers adviser.

In conclusion, there are many opportunities within industries, but we do not have the people with the correct skills to fill them, as was highlighted in a recent report. I believe that if those recommendations are implemented it will allow us to promote the skills needed in order to marry the needs of the economy with the workforce. I commend the report.

Mr Rogers: I rise on behalf of the SDLP to support this issue and to welcome to the Public Gallery the students of Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry, who are at that time in their careers when career choices are very important. I hope that they find something useful in the debate. I also acknowledge the work carried out by the Employment and Learning Committee and staff on this very important issue.

The recommendations arising from the inquiry seek to strengthen, modernise and future-proof the careers education, information and guidance provision in the North. The core message throughout the recommendations is that both the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education should seek to investigate ways of providing consistent careers education, information, advice and guidance services. Those services must help signpost our young people to employment and information about employment.

The recommendation that seeks to encourage young people to get involved in STEM subjects and associated careers is an issue that I am constantly going on about. That will only happen if we adequately meet the needs of the inquiring minds of our young children, so careers education is very important in our primary schools as well. Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART) targets must accompany that recommendation in any future strategy.

The SDLP strongly believes that careers education services for those with specific learning needs must be broadened, increasing the range of opportunities available to them. Importantly, we must ensure that young people with specific learning needs play as important a role as possible in future employment.

Crucially, the recommendation that careers be added to the curriculum as a compulsory subject future-proofs the spirit of the report. Giving young people a focus on their post-school lives, their opportunities and their ability to plan ahead in terms of required skills for their careers will produce dividends in terms of personal development, business links and, in turn, the economy.

What makes a good careers service? I think it has been alluded to by other people. First, a highly qualified and motivated careers teacher. We need ongoing professional development for careers teachers. The second point is to create better school/business links, where there are opportunities for teachers to experience the work environment and vice versa. Thirdly, good follow-up support when they go to either further education or higher education. Fourthly, good support from the careers service, and good support for parents as well.

There should be a coordinated approach, especially from the Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of trade and industry to ensure that all education providers work closely with the business world to maximise the potential from careers education.

I believe that those recommendations are being brought forward and that work experience must become an integral element of a careers education programme, thus enabling young people to make informed — I emphasise the word “informed” — career choices.

Those best practice models must be used by the Department to successfully integrate those skills and experiences into a wider strategy for careers.

1.15 pm

Equipping young people with access to information and on-line services, such as services in the South of Ireland and Scotland, would enable them to conduct independent research into career paths that they want to follow. It would also provide them with the opportunity to map out any future education at third level.

The branching out of the Department for Employment and Learning, which has a limited input into the provision of services, and its future partnership with the Department of Education in amalgamating services, creating a framework across strategies and ensuring a linked-up service throughout primary and post-primary education for all young people as they leave school and enter the world of work, is a priority. We owe it to young people to provide, via the Careers Service, information, experience and opportunities to grow in a fashion that will be world-leading and beneficial to the wider economy and the individual.

Mr Lyttle: I welcome the opportunity to speak to the report. It was my interaction with young people through work experience opportunities that we provide at the Assembly and with the business sector, as chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust, that led me to believe that careers, education information, advice and guidance in Northern Ireland, although good in parts, was not what it should be. That led me to propose the Committee inquiry in June 2012.

Like other Members, I thank the Committee staff — Cathie, Vincent, Jonathan and Noreen. The inquiry would simply not have been possible without their dedicated work. I

thank the young people, schools, colleges, universities, companies and organisations that contributed to the inquiry. The published report contains a significant amount of material, and I hope that all Members and Ministers will give it their close attention.

I welcome the fact that the Minister for Employment and Learning followed the inquiry, is here today and is scheduled to undertake a review of careers in 2014. I hope that that is in early 2014. It is a shame that the Minister of Education is not in attendance today. There is no precedent for that, but, given the significance of careers to schools and the central role that schools play, I hope that we see a commitment from the Minister of Education to work closely with the Minister for Employment and Learning in this important area. It is vital that we recognise the hard work of careers professionals, individual teachers and advisers who work tirelessly to help young people and all the community to be work-ready, confident and able to link their learning to employment.

I am glad that the inquiry set out issues to be worked on, most notably the inconsistency of approach across Northern Ireland. That was a key area that motivated me to propose the Committee inquiry after finding that there seemed to be a systemic issue in that, although the Department for Employment and Learning provided a good framework for careers options, schools were under no obligation to use those options, and an inconsistency seemed to have developed.

The Education and Training Inspectorate report of April 2010 found that careers provision was good or better in 91% of voluntary schools, in 76% of maintained schools and in only 62% of controlled schools. The Committee's inquiry also found that only 67% of university students considered themselves to have received formal careers advice at school. We need to address that, and I welcome the fact that a recommendation for a statutory mechanism to ensure a consistently high standard of careers provision across all schools, colleges, universities and organisations in Northern Ireland has been put forward here today.

The Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education should also consider the Ofsted report evaluating the legal responsibility for securing access to independent and impartial careers guidance. I also welcome the recommendation to place a requirement on schools to inform students at years 10, 11 and 12 about the variety of opportunities for academic and vocational routes. That is a key recommendation in the report. However, as the Committee Chair mentioned, the provision of adequate resources will be absolutely vital in delivering on that statutory responsibility. The Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association made that absolutely clear in the evidence that it submitted to the inquiry.

Some other key recommendations included greater work at years 8, 9 and 10, use of personal development records and reference to good practice in other regions such as Finland, where guidance is a compulsory subject and there are guidelines on the minimum level of service permissible and a web-based service.

In relation to overcoming barriers and financial guidance —

Mr McCarthy: I am very grateful to the Member for giving way. Does he agree that there is a real need for improved services for people with a learning disability?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Lyttle: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I absolutely agree with the Member. The Committee report states clearly that support for people with learning difficulties through improved access to careers guidance is a key aim.

I highlight the evidence given by Dr Hughes from Warwick University, who made some positive comments. She said that she has been able to point proudly to Northern Ireland, where there is some good practice and innovation. Indeed, she stated that there are not many countries where the Minister for Employment and Learning would sit in on a workshop for careers advisers that looked at labour market intelligence. It should go on record that some strong work has been done in that area.

In its recommendation on enhanced exposure to STEM through business and entrepreneurship, the Committee report recognised the work of Sentinus, the Northern Ireland Science Park and, indeed, Young Enterprise in advancing that area of work.

I welcome the recommendations for a careers website, improved engagement with parents and, indeed, for increased qualifications for and numbers of careers staff.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Lyttle: I think that this is an absolutely essential area for individual and economic development in Northern Ireland. It is also essential that we commend the report to the House and that we work to action its recommendations.

Miss M McIlveen (The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure): I speak as the Chair of the Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) Committee on the motion proposed by the Chair of the Employment and Learning Committee. I congratulate that Committee on its report and urge Members to read it if they have not had the opportunity to do so. I thank the Employment and Learning Committee for its endorsement of my Committee's recommendations on this issue in its creative industries report. It is very flattering that that endorsement comes at the end of the Employment and Learning Committee report. That is a case, perhaps, of leaving the best till last.

On a serious note, it is important that people on the streets of Northern Ireland see that there is joined-up thinking between Committees. It is reassuring that Mr Swann remembers his time on the CAL Committee. Mr Hilditch has sat on both Committees for quite some time. I would like to highlight the common ground between the two Committees with respect to careers advice.

The report's first recommendation is about providing a consistent approach to careers advice and guidance across the education sector. We all know that that is not the case currently. The Careers Service has to be invited into schools. That means that our children are not all receiving the same advice and that we cannot properly measure the standard of the advice that they receive. Consistency is imperative.

The report's third recommendation is that careers should be a compulsory subject. Again, that echoes recommendation 1 in that all our children should receive consistent advice, which should be measurable. Mainstreaming careers advice and guidance into

the curriculum is a very effective way of doing that.

Recommendations 1 and 3 are entirely consistent with the thrust of the recommendations of the CAL Committee's creative industries inquiry.

Recommendation 9 is about providing schemes to ensure that those with learning difficulties are given access to work experience, which is an issue that Mr McCarthy raised. That chimes with the CAL Committee's recommendation that vulnerable young people and adults and those with disabilities and/or special needs be provided with opportunities to develop appropriate skills to engage in, for example, creative enterprises and/or social enterprises.

The Employment and Learning Committee has recommended a number of things around the promotion of careers in the STEM subjects, and I would add the arts to that, turning STEM into STEAM. The CAL Committee believes that arts subjects are inseparable from and underpin the STEM subjects.

Recommendations 15, 16 and 17 discuss the idea of specialist careers advice and guidance portals where information can be easily accessed by young people and their parents. That mirrors the CAL Committee's recommendation for a creative industries portal and its recommendation in its recent child protection investigation for a protection and safeguarding portal. Our young people live their life online these days, and these portals are a good way to provide them with information in a way that they are more likely to engage with. Apart from anything else, it is the easiest way to disseminate and update information as quickly as possible.

The CAL Committee agrees with the idea of engaging with business, as set out in recommendations 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the report, which closely mirror a number of its own recommendations from the creative industries inquiry. It is vital that the careers advice and guidance that we give illustrates vocational and work-based routes to achieving career goals. Professional advice on career pathways should be available to school pupils as early as possible and particularly at points when choosing subjects for GCSEs and A levels and, of course, courses in FE and HE, when those choices are also being made. The further and higher education sectors must build links with industry for student placements and project-based learning to provide the foundation for young people to understand the skills needed for work generally and for specific careers.

I could elaborate at length on the common ground between the CAL Committee's recommendations from its creative industries inquiry report and —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close, please?

Miss M McIlveen: — the Employment and Learning Committee's recommendations in this report. However, I will bring my comments to a close by supporting the motion.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I support the motion. This inquiry was a learning curve for me, and listening to the wide range of representations that we received and reading the many submissions led me to realise that, whilst a great deal of work is being done by many people, there seems to be a lack of a coordinated approach on this most important

issue. We were trying to work out, on the basis of the information supplied, how this fitted into the wider issue of economic development across the North. During the process, we listened to industry, which informed us that it faced serious skills shortages that were jeopardising future growth. We were also concerned that thousands of young people were leaving school with no prospect of employment and were not getting the advice that they needed to make an informed decision on careers. It seemed that, for many, the system did not work.

During the many study visits, the Committee visited universities and colleges to learn at first hand what good careers advice was on offer, and many individuals and organisations came to our Committee. I thank them for their presentations, which gave me an insight into the world of careers advice. I realised that, whilst we focus on the problems in careers education, information, advice and guidance, many teachers and advisers step up to the mark and offer tireless work and advice. However, time and again, we heard from a wide range of organisations involved in the delivery of CEIAG, many of which were being resourced by government, and they offered conflicting information. There were also many concerns raised at Committee about the disjointed approach to careers advice. In many ways, we are failing our young people.

We are continuously informed about the thousands of young people who leave school without qualifications and have little prospect of getting a job. That is an indictment of a system that resources many organisations to deliver a service and has no way of checking the outcomes of their interventions. I also believe that some of the organisations that are resourced to deliver careers advice to schools do it by postcode. Young people in areas of deprivation across our divide are left behind and can be found in the large number of people who fit into the NEETs category. Time and again, people spoke of the need for CEIAG to tie into the labour market intelligence. In fact, the CBI said that there was evidence that suggested that careers advice and guidance was not delivering results. It pointed to an education and skills survey carried out in 2012 that found that only 4% of responding employers thought that the present careers advice was good enough, with 72% saying that the advice must improve. The CBI also advocated a unified approach across DEL's Careers Service and school, FE and HE careers offices to ensure that young people receive high-quality and impartial advice that will ultimately deliver successful job outcomes.

1.30 pm

During one presentation, a scientist said that the best time to encourage people on a career choice is at primary school. He spoke of the enthusiasm of young children when he delivered his presentation in schools but went on to say that, after his visits, teachers would guide young ears to other life choices. The CCEA pointed out that intervention should happen as early as possible. Although it is not specified in the curriculum, it is important that children learn about the world of work. The need to teach STEM subjects at an early age seems to me to be logical, but there seems to be a lack of specialist teachers to deliver those subjects. A number of people went further and said that, in many schools, senior management, head teachers and boards of governors direct schools on the importance or otherwise of careers advice. The GEMS submission stated that CEIAG should be introduced at

primary years 6 and 7, with taster days, field trips and employer visits as a way to introduce primary schools to the world of work.

NISCA spoke about barriers to CEIAG staff accessing training and continuous professional development. It went on to say that experienced and qualified careers teachers have been made redundant and are being replaced with teachers with no qualifications and little or no training in the job. Paragraph 54 states that only some schools employ a CEIAG coordinator and that very few post-primary schools employ a full-time —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr F McCann: — careers adviser. As my colleague said, there are only two full-time careers teachers in Belfast. I support the recommendations, and I believe that a more coordinated and joined-up approach to careers is needed.

Mr Ross: As has been indicated, the report is of great interest not only to the Committee for Employment and Learning and the Education Committee but to the CAL Committee, the ETI Committee and Members from other Committees across the House. Of course, the report is valid and useful only if the recommendations are implemented, which is what we want to happen. We want Ministers to get their heads together and implement the recommendations to make a real difference.

In many ways, today's debate dovetails pretty well with the event that we held at the Assembly last week, when the universities got together in a showcase event in the Long Gallery and highlighted the work that they are involved in and the impact that it has in terms of work with local businesses, which will then compete internationally in an evolving jobs market. Interestingly, we heard last week from the universities and others that the majority of young people currently going through education will be employed in jobs that have not yet been invented. It is hard to get our heads around that, but it highlights the fact that the jobs market is changing and we need to ensure that young people are equipped for that market.

We have heard Members talk about the importance of STEM subjects and ICT, and that was reinforced in Brussels a fortnight ago at the European Employment Forum. There will be a massive shortfall in graduates in ICT skills right across Europe in years to come. We have to pay close attention to that in Northern Ireland to ensure that, if there is an opportunity to get young people trained in those ICT skills, we could capitalise on that in our economy in the future.

Mr McCann talked about the number of NEETs across Northern Ireland, and all of us are concerned about that. However, the juxtaposition is that, for young people, there have never been more opportunities to get jobs in big companies in Northern Ireland. Over the past decade, we have been able to attract multinational companies, including the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, the New York Stock Exchange and Citigroup. Even this morning, BT announced an additional 165 jobs. The graduate opportunities that we did not previously have in Northern Ireland are now coming here. We should be optimistic about that, and, hopefully, young people will be equally optimistic, particularly when our Ministers are working hard overseas to attract —

Mr F McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Ross: I will, of course.

Mr F McCann: In one presentation, a major company said that, although it provides 50 apprenticeships a year, it received 1,300 applications. When it broke the figures down, it found that it could bring through only just over 100, which tells us that there is a serious problem. A lot of it rests with the NEET category.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Ross: Not for one second would I say that there is not a problem; I absolutely acknowledge that. However, I also want to be positive about the fact that we have more opportunities for young people now, and, if we continue to go along our current path of attracting those big companies to Northern Ireland, those opportunities will exist in the future. As I said in the debate last week, if the Executive manage to convince Treasury to devolve corporation tax powers and we are able to lower the rate, those big graduate jobs will come to Northern Ireland. We need to make sure that we are prepared for that.

The careers guidance that young people get has been talked about before. During the inquiry, many of us thought back to our experience — some of us did not have to think back quite as far as others. Many of us made the point that careers guidance, particularly in some grammar schools, tended to be about getting a university prospectus, reading it for half an hour a week and deciding on a university and course. The emphasis was very much on qualifications as opposed to careers. I think that there was universal agreement that the focus needs to shift to making sure that young people think seriously about what they want to do, what qualifications they need and what subjects they need to study to give them the option to do that when older.

Members have talked about the fascination with producing teachers, lawyers and doctors. Many parents in Northern Ireland genuinely believe that, if their children get the qualifications for those positions, they will be fine. Of course, as we have seen and as has been mentioned on the Floor of the House many times, we have an abundance of young, qualified teachers who just cannot get work. It is the same for young lawyers: they are qualified and ready to go, but the jobs are not there. The job market is shifting, and we need to ensure that young people and, indeed, parents get and understand the message that they have to bear that in mind.

I turn now to some of the specific recommendations in the report. I hope that all Members, even if not contributing to the debate today, will take the time to read through at least the recommendations, which I think are useful for some of the work that we do here. The report talks very much about collaboration between Departments. The message of collaboration is so important in all that we do, particularly on the economy.

Recommendation 3 is to make careers a compulsory subject. We heard companies and people from industry talk about the importance of that, not just for getting young people to study for the right qualifications but for developing the soft skills that are often required in our economy. That is very important.

Recommendation 19 fits in with what Mr McCann said about apprenticeships. I think that the Minister deserves some credit for the work that he and his Department are

doing to make apprenticeships more useful to young people. The recommendation is very important and relates to building on the engagement between schools and businesses and getting a more consistent approach to promoting and organising work placements for students.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Ross: That is absolutely key. I hope not only that business welcomes the report but that Ministers will take the actions that are recommended.

Mr Kinahan: I welcome the chance to speak on the report, especially from the point of view of the Education Committee. It is great to see Departments and, particularly, Committees working together. I hope that we will see more of that in the future, particularly if we take the point made earlier that we should avoid duplicating the work of Departments.

I congratulate the Committee. I had not realised that there were 8,400 responses. I know that we saw many, so “Well done” on pulling it all together and coming up with such very good and thorough recommendations. However, as others said, we need to see actions, targets and timelines in the recommendations. It falls on the Ministers to come up with targets and timelines so that we can see that this really will happen and the report does not end up just sitting on the shelf.

We have been through many of the recommendations today, and I will not go into them in great detail. However, on my visits to schools, with my education hat on, I have not seen a great deal of really good, thorough, consistent advice on careers. In my day — someone pointed at me earlier, and I probably am the oldest in here, although there might be one or two older — there were jobs all over the place for everybody, and you did not really have to think about it. However, so much is changing, and I am intrigued by the point that some of the jobs for those who are learning today have not even been created.

The world is global. Technology is global. We must remember that. We do not want to limit the horizons of our students in Northern Ireland. We should look at this from a global point of view. It is not just Northern Ireland. It is not just Scotland and Ireland and the UK. It is Europe. It is the whole world, and we have to find our place there.

In the late 1980s, I worked at Short Brothers. When you went to the Paris air show or the Farnborough air show, you saw that every company had banks of televisions showing how great their company was, what the work was and what they did. Add to that the podcasts that companies do today, and we should take up the idea of a portal. We should be trying to build a large web bank — a portal, if we want to call it that — where you can explore every angle of a skill or a subject to work out what you want to do so that the choice is not just lawyer or doctor. If you are good at art, you should be able to look at all the things that you could decorate. You should look at all the different types of architecture. You should look at all the different types of design and be able to explore, on your computer, the films and podcasts of what companies do. If it is aerospace, you will get down to looking at the design of the inside of an aircraft or the design of the leaflets that are put out to sell the aircraft. A student should be able to explore on the web — at home, or anywhere else — where he wants to go. It could be an enormous database. We

should put resources into that while remembering that it needs to be worldwide.

We must also not forget the soft skills. They have been mentioned once but with none of the detail. Someone leaving school should be well disposed and generous-minded. They should be well rounded as an individual but ready to go out into the world. They should come out of school having learnt the proper morals and values of life. There are a lot of other skills that go with it. They should know how to behave in a crisis, when things go wrong in a business or at home and how to help other people. They should know how to be trustworthy and how to take criticism rationally. They should have a conscience. They should have a sense of humour. They should have moral and physical courage and, of course, good manners. All of that needs to be worked into the skills that we are trying to encourage our children to have.

We must, at all times, ensure that we have a good link with business. There is only one page on the CBI recommendations on what it wants to see in students. They want people to be good at problem solving and self-management and to turn up on time. All that needs to be worked into careers. There is so much that we, as an Assembly, can do, and that is what we should concentrate on. It is a very good report, but there is much to be done. I support the motion.

Mr B McCrea: I rise as an independent, but I started this report as Chair of the Committee. I am really interested to see its conclusions. There is no need to rehash many of the points that have been made — it is probably the way of these things that everybody stands up and says what a very good report it is — so I will offer a number of observations that may form the basis of further work.

The first, which a number of Members have mentioned, is that employers tell us quite often that there are not enough skilled people out there for them. We also have young people saying that they cannot get a job. So, there is obviously some imbalance in the market that needs to be rectified. You could probably split the market into those who have skills that are in short supply and those who have no skills and for whom we need to do more.

When I look at the skills section of the market, what worries me is that we produce an awful lot of graduates with degrees that are not directly applicable to getting a job. It is entirely up to people what degree they take — it is a free world — but there is a mismatch between their skills and those that employers are looking for. Universities and further education colleges have a clear responsibility. They are independent bodies. They say that they respond to demand, but they respond to the demand from students. They need to make sure that they respond to the demand from industry to encourage the right numbers into the right degrees.

1.45 pm

If you look at people such as transmission engineers, who are fairly specialised, you see that we also have a problem. Everybody here talks about the need to spend up to £1 billion on redoing our grid; yet, the truth of the matter is that we have no transmission engineers. Even if we had, they would be headhunted and taken to other parts of Europe where there are also problems with transmission. That shows part of the problem that we, as a society, have

in getting sufficient resources for our industry and ensuring that they stay in Northern Ireland.

I will move to those who are less fortunate in their skills. In another place, we have been hearing that 25% of people in Northern Ireland live on less than a living wage, which is the highest percentage in the United Kingdom. That seems to pose a problem. Part of the decision-making on that is whether young people in those areas are actually work-ready. Many of them do not understand the tribulations of the world of work. It is not enough to give them work experience where they go in and make the tea or sit around and look at things; we need more intensive mentoring. We really need to give help and succour on a more one-to-one basis to the people who need it.

Now that I am on skills, I will say that there seems to be an issue — I think that Mr Ross brought this up — about the propensity to chase qualifications rather than the skills that people are prepared to pay you for. So, people want to get a 2:1; they do not care what that 2:1 is in, it is just about getting a 2:1. It is as though a piece of paper will somehow give them the rationale for being employed. That is not actually the case. We need to get people more interested in obtaining the skills that the labour market will pay them for.

I will come now to parents. I know that this has been talked about in the report and in the recommendations. I think that it is not understood in many sections of our community — I see that the Chair of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure has left; I swapped Committees with Mr Swann, so I have seen both sides as well — that the creative industries are one of our big growth industries, yet nobody actually knows how to get into them. We also have an issue regarding IT professionals. People keep saying that, if we could solve that problem, we could solve everything. So, there is something about how we convince parents that this is where the creative industries are.

Mr Ross: Will the Member give way?

Mr B McCrea: I will give way to Mr Ross.

Mr Ross: I listened to what the Member said about the need for things such as mentoring, and I absolutely agree with him. Does he agree that what we want to see and encourage is people becoming role models for young people in some of the industries that we maybe do not know enough about? A positive role model image will encourage young people to get into those areas.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr B McCrea: I absolutely agree with Mr Ross. In fact, those were some of the points that I was going to close with. I am with him 100% that we need role models and to find ways to get information to people. With regard to areas that we might look at in the future, we did not include in the recommendations, as far as I can see, business and entrepreneurial activity. That will be a factor in the future.

Coming to the point that Mr Ross raised about how to get information across to people and what influences decision-making, you probably have parents, peers, teachers and TV at the moment. We talked about how we can encourage parents to know more. There is an issue, in that our teachers tend not to know about things in IT and can recommend only what they know about. You get to an issue such as television, and I wonder whether maybe we, as a society or as an Executive, need to start to communicate where our growth sectors are. That, at least,

gets the message out. I am struck by the fact that there is an overabundance of lawyers and probably teachers and that we perhaps need to let people know that that is the case.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr B McCrea: I will conclude by congratulating the Committee for all its hard work, and I hope that the Minister will take note of its recommendations.

Mr Douglas: I support the motion. As the Member said, there is an abundance of schoolteachers and others. I am sure that the Member will agree that there is also an overabundance of politicians in Stormont.

I thank the Minister for attending today. I also thank a number of people, including Cathie from the Employment and Learning Committee and her team. For me, this has been a good experience in what has been my first inquiry. It has been good, because it has been a good model. We visited a number of universities and businesses and spoke to a range of people. It is good to see so many young people in the Public Gallery. When I was their age, careers advice for me was about my father saying, "Get a job. Get into the shipyard". I had two ambitions in life: to play for Linfield and to play for Northern Ireland. I still have those ambitions.

I want to quote from the recommendations. The first thing, to start off in a very positive manner, is to say that there is much to praise the careers education, information, advice and guidance project for. There are also individual teachers, advisers and parents who work tirelessly to promote and foster the aspirations and prospects of many of our young people. Many of those young people are looking to their next exams and want that advice or steer in life.

As was said earlier, if you went around the Chamber today, I am sure you would find that most people have probably changed their career along the way. The way that things are changing in the global economy, I think that it will also be like that in the future; you will not just set out in one area. It is important that we get that education and that passport for life.

We can carry out inquiries and reviews and talk about all the things that need to be done. However, as my colleague Alastair Ross said — he did not say it in these terms — doing it is doing it. There is a need for action. For me, that action is about the areas where concerns have been raised by the 8,000 people who came to us: things like poor careers provision, inconsistency in careers provision across Northern Ireland, a lack of information and the information that is available being difficult to digest. Surely in this day and age of communication, when we have so many new models of communication, that should not be at the top of our agenda. Yet it is in some of our recommendations. The suggestion is that schools and colleges, to protect their enrolments, do not advise students of the full range of available options. There certainly is a lack of a coordinated approach.

I attended the recent European Employment Forum. The Minister was also there, and I want to pay tribute to him for an excellent speech and his questions and answers. It showed clearly that careers advice and employment for young people is the biggest problem facing Europe. In Northern Ireland, I think that nearly one in four young

people between 18 and 24 find it hard to get a job. In Spain and Greece, I think that it is over 50%. We need that action. It is not just about talk: doing it is doing it. It was also clear from the forum that Northern Ireland is well ahead of the pack. We have to celebrate what we are doing as an Assembly and in DEL. If we are to alleviate the situation —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Douglas: — we need action. One of the actions is about apprenticeships. The Minister came to the Committee recently and talked about apprenticeships, and I support them. I support the motion.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an díospóireacht thábhachtach seo. I welcome the fact that the debate is taking place and that the Committee undertook such a lengthy and detailed inquiry. I was particularly impressed by the responses that came in from young people who were in the process of going through careers advice or had recently done so. Getting almost 8,500 responses to a survey is testament to the efforts that were put in by the Committee staff, and I thank them sincerely for all their efforts. I would also like to put on record the Committee's thanks to those who provided evidence: the 41 organisations that provided written evidence and the 28 people who gave us oral evidence.

This started on 4 July 2012, when Basil was in the Chair, and I do not think any of us thought that it would have gone on so long and that it would be nearly Christmas 2013 by the time we got a report published, printed and up for debate, but this is where we are.

A lot of useful time was spent hearing what people thought about careers. One of the things that most members did during the inquiry was reflect their or their children's experience of careers advice. My experience of careers advice was very mixed. As many reflected, you were handed a prospectus and told to go into a room for half an hour to find the university course that you wanted to do, as opposed to exploring possible career options and where there were opportunities for employment in the labour market. That is the one thing that needs to change in the provision of careers advice and guidance: it needs to be more tailored than simply saying, "Here is a prospectus. Where are you going to university?"

One of the points that Basil McCrea raised was about the opportunities in the creative industries sector. When he was the Chair of the Committee, he led its members on a visit to the South West College in Enniskillen to see some of the things going on there in terms of the creative industries and media. The opportunities in that sector are immense, but one of the problems that we face is that too many of the programmes that we watch are not made here. There are significant opportunities for improvements there if we can get the right skills into our young people. How regional colleges work with schools, particularly grammar schools, is important. There are students from a grammar school from my constituency in the Gallery, and I welcome them here for this important debate.

I am hopeful that the large number of recommendations in the report for both the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education will be accepted in good faith and that the Departments will see

that there is a logical rationale for each of them and will embrace and deliver them.

Throughout the 18-month inquiry, we were presented with an awful lot of problems that exist in the provision of careers guidance and advice. This report will not solve them all, but, hopefully, it has helped to raise awareness of the problems that exist and presents solutions for them.

Too many people, when they receive careers advice, are not encouraged to follow a path that would lead to employment. My concern is that far too many schools simply worry about getting good A-level or GCSE grades for a student and getting them on to the next place, whether that is university or somewhere that delivers post-16 education. Not enough consideration is given to the potential implications of careers advice to a young person's chance of finding work. That is the change needed in our culture. We need to start from a very young age. That does not just apply within our schools; it applies to wider society.

One of the other opportunities that exists is around greater information for schools and for young people in the North about some of the courses that are provided in the South. Too many issues remain in terms of portability, but there is a fantastic array of courses on offer in the South that many people in the North do not know anything about. The fact that there is such a glaring difference between how UCAS and the Central Applications Office (CAO) operate is very frustrating, and that is an issue that needs to be resolved.

In an around the whole issue of careers advice and getting experience, one of the things that could be sorted out is where young people get work experience. An awful lot of schools offer three days or a week of work experience, but an awful lot more could be done to get young people into sectors that enthuse them and that there are opportunities in. When I was in sixth year, I went to a local accountancy firm. That was useful for me, because it made me realise that I never wanted to be an accountant. If somebody can get something useful like that from work experience, that is very good.

I also put on record to the Minister my disappointment that my last-minute recommendation was not accepted. I am sure he got wind of what my last-minute recommendation was: namely, that his Department should be abolished. Unfortunately, everybody thought I was joking. The Minister knows where I stand on that. The sooner I can come off the Employment and Learning Committee, the better.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, Members. As Question Time is due to commence at 2.00 pm, I suggest that we take our ease for a few moments. This debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be Mervyn Storey.

The debate stood suspended.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Assembly Business

Mr Speaker: Before we move to Question Time, I want to inform the House that a valid petition of concern was presented today in relation to the motion on the transfer of broadcasting powers and the amendment to the motion. Under Standing Order 28, the votes cannot be held until at least one day after the petition has been presented. The votes, therefore, will be scheduled as the first item of business tomorrow morning. I remind Members that both votes will be on a cross-community basis.

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Speaker: Question 11 has been withdrawn.

Lough Neagh Working Group

1. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what are the reasons for the delay in publishing the findings of the Lough Neagh working group. (AQO 5074/11-15)

4. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the inter-departmental working group created to consider the future ownership of Lough Neagh. (AQO 5077/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer questions 1 and 4 together. The interdepartmental working group was tasked with producing a report on the potential for bringing Lough Neagh into public ownership. In December last year, I shared the report with ministerial colleagues whose officials had contributed to it through membership of the working group. Since then, the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure has been considering the value of additional research to complement the findings of the report. Members will recall that, during the Assembly debate, many issues other than public ownership were raised. I intend to meet Minister Ní Chuilín shortly to discuss the findings of that work and assess the next steps, including putting recommendations to the Executive as soon as possible.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will the Minister tell me why she has had this on her lap for a year now? When will she publish the findings of the report? Is it the case that she does not like what is in the report? Is that the reason why it is still on her lap?

Mrs O'Neill: It is fair to say that my sole focus throughout all this work has been on unlocking the potential of Lough Neagh. I did that work on the back of the debate that we had in the House. I established a working group, which got together and looked at all the potential issues. Further to that, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) also started some work, which will enhance my Department's work. It engaged consultants to look at the potential of the lough. The two pieces of work will complement each other.

I have read with interest the Member's comments in the media, and I think that there is a certain wee bit of paranoia there. As I have said, my sole focus is on unlocking the potential of the lough, and many issues are being discussed as part of moving that forward. You will be aware from the debate that we talked about the need for navigation control and an overarching management structure. We have the fisheries; we have the tourism potential. There are so many issues, and it is important that we get it right. I recently received the DCAL report,

and I am working my way through that. I intend to meet Minister Ní Chuilín and then bring our report to the Executive as soon as possible.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for her answer. I am told that, last year, there was a meeting about tourism, looking at fishing at Lough Neagh, which came back with a report that there are no fish. Maybe we should be concentrating on getting the fish back. Will she put all her efforts into using the partnerships that she has built up so that we have the fish, we have fishing, and we can bring money in through tourism?

Mrs O'Neill: There is massive tourism potential for the lough. That is why this is an exciting piece of work and it is a good time to be taking it forward. As I have said, there are many competing interests on the lough, as you will be very aware. Fishing is one of them. We need to continue to support the fishing industry to be able to fish on the lough. We have an amazing natural resource, and I think that there is a need for an overarching management strategy to look at all those competing interests and make sure that we grow the potential of the lough in a very balanced way.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. When does the Minister envisage the report being shared with the Executive?

Mrs O'Neill: Now that I have received the DCAL report and I can marry the two pieces of work, I anticipate that I will bring a finalised report for the Executive to consider in the early part of next year. There are so many competing interests and different Departments with responsibilities for different areas on the lough, so we need to have an Executive discussion on the way forward. It will be early 2014.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. The Minister will be aware of the concerns around the water quality of the lough and a recent report from Queen's University about the deteriorating nature of food for particular migrant birds. So, there is particular pressure to get this right. Can the Minister tell us what action she has taken to improve the water quality? I know that it is a Department of the Environment (DOE) responsibility, but what is she doing on the rivers management side of it, considering what the report is suggesting at this stage?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said earlier, there are so many competing interests on the lough. That is why it is important that we have the management structure in place that can marry all the different responsibilities of the Departments. As you said, DOE has responsibility for the water quality. The piece of work that I have been engaged in has been looking at the whole picture and trying to bring forward recommendations, which, as I said, I will bring to the Executive in the early part of next year. In moving forward and looking at any sort of strategy for the lough, water quality is a key area that we need to be concerned with.

As we move forward and look at plans for the future, I am happy to work with all the Departments. I think that we need to bring all this together, and now is an opportune time to do it with this piece of work. It is important that we do not rush it and that we look at all the factors. That is certainly what I have done over the past number of months.

Farmers: Literacy

2. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline any efforts she is making to tackle the issue of literacy amongst farmers in dealing with her Department. (AQO 5075/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that the level of literacy or learning can cause some members of the rural community to encounter difficulties when completing various departmental forms. Many of my Department's interactions with its customers involve the completion of such forms for the various schemes and grants that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) administers. While staff in local offices can help to explain those requirements and the information needed, they are unable to provide a level of assistance that would amount to filling out a form on a customer's behalf.

A farmer who requests more specific help with completing an application form is advised by staff that they can appoint an agent, for example, a relative, friend or neighbour to fulfil a range of functions on their behalf. That can include the filling out of application forms, provided that the Department has been notified of that arrangement. Staff will also advise that organisations such as the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU), NIAPA and the Agricultural Consultants Association can provide assistance. There is a cost implication for farmers availing themselves of those services, through membership fees or when employing an authorised agent or form filler who charges for that service.

Ms Fearon: I thank the Minister for her answer. She referred to a number of options that are available to farmers. Is there anything else that can be offered if they do not want to go down that route? Do you think there is a role for the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL)?

Mrs O'Neill: I asked my officials to identify an organisation that could provide more direct support for those who decide not to avail themselves of the options that I outlined. Given its remit, the Rural Support charity is well placed to deal with instances where rural dwellers are experiencing anxiety and difficulties when they are completing their forms. That organisation receives annual DARD funding through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation programme. My Department provides literature on its services in the local office network. Should farmers require assistance with form-filling, but do not want to appoint an agent, avail themselves of support from some of the farming unions, or even use a form filler, staff in the local offices will advise that Rural Support can also provide assistance to those with learning or literacy issues. Appropriate guidance for staff will be put in place to ensure that literacy issues are handled with the utmost sensitivity.

Yes, I have contacted DEL, and it has agreed that I will signpost its essential skills programme across the local office network. That will include the provision of leaflets and general promotion at front office reception areas. I have also asked my officials to investigate whether more could be done to address underlying literacy issues and numeracy rates amongst the rural community. That will be taken forward as part of the wider Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation framework.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for her answers so far. What IT training is available for farmers who want to do their application for the single farm payment online? Is there particular help for the farmer union groups or the young farmers' groups?

Mrs O'Neill: Obviously, we want to be in a position where more and more people are submitting their applications online. That is something that I very much encourage. For

those who do not have access to a computer, we have entered into pilot projects with local libraries so that people have access to a computer and the internet. Farmers can also call into DARD Direct offices where staff will take them through the process. A computer is available there also.

There are a number of priorities, particularly in trying to get more people online. We have to make sure that the services are available and that people are trained up. A number of courses are being taken forward, such as the BT Connected Communities project. So, there is a range of areas moving forward. As I said, my priority is to try to encourage as many people as possible to apply online, because it will speed up payments in the whole system. From doing that, there is something to be gained for everybody.

Mrs Overend: My question is quite similar to that asked by my colleague. Will the Minister outline whether literacy is taken into account with online applications, and does that need to be improved on?

Mrs O'Neill: When I was asked to talk to departmental officials, I was concerned about potential problems, and literacy and numeracy issues in rural communities may not be readily identifiable. I asked officials to go away and take a fresh look at the support that we provide, because I want to make sure that we are open, accessible and do not present barriers to anybody being able to apply online or to avail themselves of any of our services. I am very pleased that Rural Support will be getting involved in physically helping people with their applications, which can be stressful. When it comes to filling out a single farm payment application, it is a person's income support. It is essential and can stress you out very much if you feel incapable of dealing with it. So I am delighted that Rural Support will be working with DARD, and I hope that that will enhance the service that we provide.

Mr I McCrea: The Minister referred to her conversation with DEL. Will she outline whether she has had any conversations with the Department of Education to ensure that young farmers do not come out of the system with literacy problems? We talk about joined-up government, so could she use that to ensure that organisations, and information and help in the education sector, are promoted more fully in farming?

Mrs O'Neill: I absolutely and totally agree with that, and I have had discussions with the Education Minister, John O'Dowd, on what we can do. I also visited schools, particularly in rural areas, where there is a lot of focus on farming issues. That work has been great, so I am and always will be happy to work across Departments to make sure that the most effective services are in place. That includes working with the Education Department and the Employment and Learning Department, because I believe that we need to address issues around literacy seriously to give people the confidence and support to avail themselves of the services that they need.

Renewables: Funding

3. **Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the small-scale renewable generation projects that have been successful in qualifying for funding under farm diversification through axis 3 of the rural development programme. (AQO 5076/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: So far, axis 3 of the rural development programme has offered grant assistance to 62 farm businesses to the value of £2.6 million under measure 3.1 of farm diversification to install renewable technologies. Seventy-six farm businesses received just over £274,000 for the completion of feasibility studies. Funding awarded by the joint council committees (JCCs) across the North is for the introduction of small-scale renewable generation projects for farmers to diversify to become energy producers. The projects funded will supplement farm incomes, and, as an added benefit, the energy created in the process is reducing the carbon footprint.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for her response. She knows that I have been in contact with her Department on numerous occasions about this issue. How does she propose to help applicants who have been successful in axis 3 in receiving their money but are unable to get a conditional letter of offer from NIE to get connected to the grid, so a conditional letter of offer is not sufficient for the release of axis 3 money? Will she provide some flexibility to allow that money to be released?

Mrs O'Neill: The Member is right in that he has been corresponding with me on the issue. He is aware that it is the responsibility of individuals to obtain their grid connection. NIE is now providing customers with a connection offer that is conditional on work that is required to provide for the export of the proposed generation into the distribution network. Officials have been informed by NIE that upgrading the line in the areas that are most affected may be some way off at this time. It is a matter for the JCCs as to whether they wish to accept that as a conditional letter of offer.

It is fair to say that JCCs are under pressure as they come to the end of the programme, so when they make a decision on whether to accept an application, they have to take the time frame into account to make sure that they are spending out on that measure. There is no barrier to JCCs accepting it. They can accept a conditional letter of offer if they believe that the project will be completed within the timescale.

Mr Byrne: Does the Minister accept that this is a growing problem for many farmers who have planning permission to build either one turbine or an anaerobic digester? What can she do, in conjunction with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and EirGrid, to try to resolve this situation?

2.15 pm

Mrs O'Neill: The Member will be aware that the Commission specified that a farm business that is diversifying into the sale of renewable energy could be supported only if it sells off 100% of the energy and does not use it to supplement its income or offset its running costs. That is an EU requirement, so there is no room for movement.

Looking towards the new rural development programme, however, I think that there will be the potential to change things, albeit that we still have to work under the Commission's rules. The new programme will be an opportunity to take another, fresh look at that. We are looking at that as we analyse the responses to the rural development programme consultation, which closed recently.

Mr Elliott: I assume that a number of the small-scale renewable energy projects are wind turbines. Does she support their development?

Mrs O'Neill: Projects have to be taken on a case-by-case basis. The Member will be aware that I am exploring the potential for wind farm development on Forest Service land. In moving forward, we need to be very careful that we are always mindful of some very good practical examples of how the wider community can benefit from a wind turbine in the area. I take a case-by-case approach. I am exploring the potential of Forest Service land to provide income for the Executive. As I said, I am very much a supporter of there being added benefits for local communities built into that.

Mr Speaker: Question 4 has already been answered.

Going for Growth

5. **Mr Dallat** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when her Department will outline a timetable for an implementation plan relating to the outcomes of the agrifood strategy report: Going for Growth. (AQO 5078/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Going for Growth was developed by the Agri-Food Strategy Board as part of the Executive's Programme for Government. The report identifies opportunities for sustainable growth and targets increased employment, sales and exports.

The report contains over 100 recommendations, with responsibility falling to many Departments and associated agencies, as well as the industry itself. We are in the final stages of consideration of these wide-ranging recommendations to identify the best way to take them forward. As part of that process, we have been considering actions to deliver the aims and objectives of Going for Growth, timescales for delivery and potential funding sources.

The Agri-Food Strategy Board has continued to meet in recent months and is working with other industry bodies, my officials and those of my Executive colleagues to push forward the industry-led recommendations from the report. We hope to be in a position to announce the way forward in response to the board's report in the very near future.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for her answer. I am sure that she would forgive me for suggesting that, very often, good reports end up as dust collectors. Can she assure me that this report will not become a dust collector? Is she satisfied that she has the finance available to implement it?

Mrs O'Neill: I assure the Member that I am absolutely committed to ensuring that we see the recommendations through. The report is a fantastic piece of work, which was done through Government and industry partnership, and I very much want it to come to fruition. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and I are working our way through it, and we hope to be able to bring a report to the Executive this side of Christmas, which will outline our way forward. Recently, last week or the week before, we had confirmation of our rural development funding from Europe. That is a tool that I will use to help to deliver on a number of the recommendations, and it helps to enable us to put together a better picture of the financial approach. One of the report's asks is for a £400 million investment from the Executive. That will leverage in £1.3 billion from

industry, which is a massive gain, so we do not want to miss out on that opportunity. We will continue to work with the industry. As I have always said, these things are doable.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. The Minister has touched on finances. Will she outline how this will be funded?

Mrs O'Neill: As I have just said, one of the report's asks is for £400 million of investment from the Executive, which will leverage in £1.3 billion from industry. That would be an amazing achievement. Recently, we have had confirmation of the rural development programme funding. We are working our way through the recommendations and how we might take them forward. As I said, the rural development programme will be an essential tool in driving that forward. I have taken the opportunity to shape the rural development programme along the lines of some of the key asks in the report. As I said, that is the tool that we will use. We have some decisions to make on the way forward. I welcome the fact that, in the recent Executive reallocation of capital moneys, we were able to secure some of that funding, which will be used for Going for Growth. We are working our way through all that at the moment and I hope to have a report with the Executive in the next number of weeks.

Mr McCarthy: The Minister will be aware that there is a shortage of food technologists and so on. What is she doing in her Department or with other Departments to ensure that there are more food biologists etc to carry out the agrifood strategy?

Mrs O'Neill: The work of the Agri-Food Strategy Board had 10 subsectors, and workforce planning was one of the key areas that it examined, looking to where there might be a skills gap in the future. We are actively working with DEL to take that forward. The Member will be aware that our agriculture colleges are oversubscribed, for everything from farming and food right through the whole range of courses. That is the beauty of the agrifood industry, because employment in the industry is very wide-ranging. There is everything from on-farm jobs through to food packaging; it is all there. Obviously, we need a workforce that is able to meet the industry's challenges. That is a key part of the strategy moving forward.

Farming: Winter Weather

6. **Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, given the severe weather conditions in two of the past four winters, what preparations have been made to assist farming communities this winter. (AQO 5079/11-15)

Farming: Fodder Supply

7. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline how winter feed planning will ensure that another fodder crisis does not develop over the coming months. (AQO 5080/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will answer questions 6 and 7 together. Following the severe snow and the prolonged period of unfavourable weather in the spring of 2013, I established the fodder task force, comprising representatives of, and stakeholders in, the agrifood industry. The task force identified issues

that could, potentially, face the livestock industry in the forthcoming winter and produced an action plan to mitigate problems that could arise. I met task force representatives for an update recently, and although they do not intend to meet as a group until midwinter they will get together in the interim if a situation develops and new actions are required.

There are many things that farmers can do to prepare for winter, and DARD has been very active in providing support, advice and training. The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) embarked on a comprehensive programme of workshops, advisory events, publications and face-to-face advice during the summer and that work will continue throughout the winter. To date, 2,800 farmers have attended CAFRE open days and 3,900 attendees have received training on livestock management topics including fodder assessment and stocktake, grassland management, increasing production efficiency and soil and sward improvement. CAFRE, along with the main banks, is currently holding a series of meetings with farmers at various locations to provide advice and guidance on farm business cash flow.

I am pleased to report that with the support of CAFRE and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), and with the improved weather in the summer this year, fodder yields have increased significantly. Fodder stocks on most farms have recovered to levels that are in balance with projected requirements, with some showing a surplus. The availability of fodder for purchase, better fodder budgeting and utilisation leaves livestock farmers well prepared going into this winter.

Mr Campbell: Does the Minister not agree that it would be more appropriate if the task force were to meet in preparation for a possible severe winter? In relation to what can be done, would she not agree that farming communities are looking to see decisive action as soon as any weather takes a turn for the worse so that there are no further arguments subsequent to the bad weather about who should pick up the bill?

Mrs O'Neill: I think that I was very proactive last year in responding to the needs of the communities that were badly hit by the severe snow. The task force is content that it has met and addressed some of the key areas that it was looking at, particularly around cash flow for farmers and even farmers' mental health and well-being, because it is a very difficult situation for them all to be in. Thankfully, we are in a better position now, given that there has been a lot of work done in preparation and planning, and in discussions with farmers, for the incoming winter. When I met the representatives of the task force recently, they said that they would come together, if need be, but they believe that all the work that is ongoing and everything that they have done to date is sufficient to prepare for the winter ahead.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ceist uimhir a seacht. Question number 7.

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member's question was grouped with question 6. I am just calling the Member —

Mr McElduff: I am very grateful for the Ceann Comhairle's clarification. When the Minister met the UFU and NIAPA, what were the key issues raised by the unions, variously? I thank the Minister for being proactive, particularly when she met farmers in the Glenelly area.

Mrs O'Neill: Some of the key areas were to do with the severe weather that left farmers in such a bad financial situation. The impact of the snow meant that their livelihoods were decimated.

Mental health was very much a focus of the task force, and I thought that that was great. We had not just the UFU but NIAPA, the grain trade, the Meat Exporters Association, the food and drink association and the banks. All the key players were working together and were looking at all the challenges, particularly those on how we can be better prepared for winter.

Given that we had good weather over the summer, I am delighted to say that we are in a better position with stocks this year. That has done a lot to help growth and recovery. Most farmers will now have a similar stock of fodder to previous years, and we will continue to monitor that at CAFRE. A whole range of issues was discussed, and the group was very wide ranging, which meant that all views were considered.

Mr Swann: Will the Minister join me in condemning the scurrilous accusations and comments that are being made in the north Antrim press that some farmers are actually hoping for another bad winter because the compensation that they received was an easy way to make money?

Mrs O'Neill: I have not seen the report, but I absolutely condemn that. I went out and visited people and saw their distress at first hand. I do not think that anybody would wish that upon themselves just to get a few pounds from the Department.

Mrs McKeivitt: I thank the Minister for her answers thus far. Has she met any other Departments to discuss the weather conditions, given that it is predicted that we are to have the coldest winter since 1947?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said, we have taken forward a whole range of issues. The task force is a very wide-ranging group and includes Rural Support, which is the charity that gives support to people, and departmental officials. It reflects all interests, including those that look at financial issues with the banks. So, all the key players are around the table discussing and planning for the winter ahead. I am very mindful that there are claims of a bad winter ahead, but we are certainly in a better position with the fodder situation. The task force will remain in place and will meet as and when required. A number of key areas of work were put in train, and they are ongoing. However, as I said, the task force is very willing to come together at any stage if it feels that it is necessary.

Mr Speaker: Question 7 has already received an answer.

Poultry Litter

8. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her efforts to identify sustainable alternatives for dealing with poultry litter. (AQO 5081/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I commissioned my officials and researchers from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to conduct a review of options for the management and disposal of poultry litter. That review was published in April 2012. To progress its recommendations, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and I launched a small business research initiative (SBRI) competition. The aim

of the SBRI is to identify sustainable ways to better utilise poultry litter. Thirty-nine applications were received under the competition, and they were assessed by independent assessors contracted by the Technology Strategy Board. In May 2013, contracts were awarded to eight companies covering nine projects for phase 1, which is the proof of concept/feasibility stage. The phase 1 contracts are for six months and conclude this month.

The SBRI project is being managed on behalf of DARD and DETI by a project management team in the Strategic Investment Board. The project team has held regular meetings with the phase 1 project contractors. The team has also engaged positively with the poultry sector to discuss its views on the implementation of the technology options that are developing through the SBRI. The project team will carefully consider the final reports from the nine SBRI contracts that are due to be received at the end of this month. A decision will then be made on whether the most promising projects require further government assistance. My goal and that of the poultry industry is to have long-term sustainable and viable options to deal with poultry litter.

Mr Beggs: Does the Minister accept that Moy Park has been hugely successful in delivering additional jobs directly in the industry and in value-added jobs? Does she also agree that, as such, it seems that the potential that exists for expanding further is being limited by her Department's relatively late involvement in addressing that issue?

Mrs O'Neill: I accept that Moy Park is a major employer and that it provides quite a lot of employment. That is something that we want to grow. I talked earlier about the agrifood strategy board, which looks at growing businesses, increasing our job creation and growing our export market. We do not want any business to be disadvantaged in its ability to grow. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and I have been very mindful of the timetable that we are working towards, given that we have the ruling from Europe. We are very much working through that. It has been a process, and quite a number of technologies have come forward as potential ways of dealing with the poultry litter. I am quite pleased with those. We have now narrowed it down to nine, and we will be narrowing it down even further.

So, I think that the work that we have done has been appropriate and adequate to address the problem. It is an industry problem, but obviously government want to try to work with the industry to resolve the issue, which is why we have brought forward the SBRI project.

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: That concludes oral questions to the Minister. We now move to topical questions.

Agrifood Sector: Young People

1. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many young people have entered the agrifood sector in the past couple of years. (AQT 401/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have those figures on me but I am happy to provide them to the Member. It is safe to say that the fact that our agriculture colleges are oversubscribed is fantastic and shows that young people now see a future

in farming and food, whereas a number of years ago, it was very much seen as a sunset industry. The fact that we have record numbers of young people wanting to get into farming and food is very positive for the future.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for her answer. What work does she do with other Departments, such as DETI and DEL, to provide grant assistance or whatever to encourage people not only to get involved in the business but to have employment after they go to the college?

Mrs O'Neill: There is quite a range of areas of support available, even from my Department. Look at the rural development programme and the amount of businesses that avail themselves of support through that avenue. We also have processing marketing grants to help people expand. There is quite a range of supports that are open to everybody, but, obviously, it is good that we have so many young people who want to stay in the industry and see a future in the industry. I want to encourage that to grow. The agrifood strategy report, which I talked about earlier, is a joint piece of work between me and DETI. Alongside that, in the report, there are a number of recommendations that are applicable to DEL, so we are working together in partnership to promote young people coming forward in the industry and trying to create the conditions, or assist the industry to create the conditions, that allow people to see a future in farming and food.

Rivers Agency: Transfer of Functions

2. **Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why she objected to the transfer of Rivers Agency functions to the Department for Regional Development, which would, particularly in urban areas, have led to a more unified approach to flooding. (AQT 402/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Member will be aware that he is referring to the performance and efficiency delivery unit (PEDU) report. There were quite a number of recommendations, all of which have been taken forward, but I do not believe that you just need to pick things out willy-nilly and transfer them to other Departments without having a proper strategic discussion. The Executive will be looking at all the Departments, and I am very happy for Rivers Agency to be considered as part of that bigger discussion, but I do not think that just picking out the Rivers Agency and putting it into DRD, is the solution to all the problems.

Mr Wells: Does the Minister accept that the bulk of Rivers Agency work is now in the urban situation? If she is convinced that it would lead to a more efficient resolution of flooding problems, will she support the transfer?

Mrs O'Neill: I am absolutely open to taking a look at it in the round, as I said, as part of the wider Executive discussion around all the Departments and where things should comfortably sit. I am very happy to take a look at it, but, as I said, the PEDU report set out a number of recommendations, all of which have been taken forward or are being worked through. I do not believe that this one is a stand-alone issue, but I am very happy to take a look at it in the round.

Renewables: Farm Businesses

3. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what work can be done to assist farm businesses that are experiencing difficulties in connecting renewable energy projects to the grid. (AQT 403/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: We dealt with that issue earlier in Question Time. As I said, one of the biggest problems is that, when it comes to giving grant aid support, Europe has clearly set down that you have to be selling off 100%. You cannot be using it to offset your own costs. There is a particular problem with that, and it is something that I think we seriously need to address. There are opportunities to address it in the new rural development programme and how we take it forward. However, we are still going to be bound by European Commission decisions. It is a clear problem that people cannot get a connection to the grid. They can get the grant support and get everything in place, but they cannot get a connection to the grid. You have to have your own single connection — a separate connection to the grid and your own supply — and that is creating all sorts of problems. There is a range of problems that need to be identified. We have an opportunity possibly to look at that in the new programme.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she give a commitment to farmers today that her Department will help them to look for cheaper energy suppliers?

Mrs O'Neill: Absolutely. I am always happy to assist the farming community in whatever we can do to move forward in the most effective and efficient manner. This is a particular issue around renewable energy. It is something that we all want to see more of, but there are barriers to the farmers being able to take it forward because of European Commission rules. That is something that we need to seriously address and that I am engaged with the Commission on.

Rural White Paper

4. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an assessment of the impact of the rural White Paper, especially on improving the lives of rural people. (AQT 404/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The rural White Paper was a really significant piece of work that was taken forward in the previous term under Michelle Gildernew. A lot of progress has been made in taking forward all the actions that have been identified in that document. However, I want to take a fresh look at it because I do not want it to be just a tick-box exercise for Departments to say that they have delivered what they previously promised. I very much want it to be a living, working document, so I asked officials to look at that again and to explore the opportunities for legislating for rural-proofing. I am also keen to look again at the idea of a rural champion because there will be a key role for a rural champion in moving forward.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for her answers up to now. Could she maybe elaborate a wee bit on what a rural champion would do and what that idea entails?

Mrs O'Neill: There was discussion about this in the previous term. I see it as a body that could be inside or outside government, although preferably on the outside, that would champion rural issues and look to address gaps

in information around statistics and much-needed research on rural communities. The champion could provide research and information that would assist in challenging all Departments in their delivery for rural communities. It is in the early concept stage. It was discussed before but not taken forward at the time. I want to explore the idea of a rural champion again because it could have a key role and be a major win for rural communities.

Crime: Rural Areas

5. **Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she agrees that rural crime is a very worrying and escalating problem and to outline the new initiatives she has taken to tackle this trend. (AQT 405/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I agree with the Member. We saw quite a number of cases highlighted recently, particularly of cattle theft. I regularly engage with the PSNI, the Chief Constable and the Department of Justice on how we can work together. The levels of rural crime, including agriculture-related crime, are concerning. I met the Minister of Justice on 14 October, and we talked about the rural crime unit that has just been established. Danny Gray from the Department's veterinary service enforcement branch has been appointed to sit on that rural crime steering unit, which is progress. We also look at working with the PSNI and the guards. We need a collective approach to this issue.

Good initiatives, such as freeze branding, have been taken forward. Another area that I want to look at is a requirement when providing grant support for small items of farm machinery, for example, for them to be made easily identifiable if stolen. We are looking at a number of initiatives. We need to work closely with the veterinary service enforcement branch, the PSNI, the gardai and the Department of Justice — all those who have a role in tackling rural crime.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Minister for her answer. She said that one initiative that was taken forward was freeze branding. To what extent has that been used in the drive against rural crime?

Mrs O'Neill: We thought that we would see more of an uptake of that initiative. The PSNI is concerned about why that has not been the case and think that it might be due to a number of factors, for example people being busy because of the weather or just managing their farms and getting on with day-to-day business and not having time to focus on that area. The PSNI plans to go out again and get more people involved because it is a positive initiative if we can get more people to take it up, given that cattle theft is quite high. There have been a number of cases in the Member's constituency over the past year.

Crime: Rural Areas

6. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, further to her answer to the previous question in which she said that she had met with the PSNI, whether the PSNI is taking any particular initiatives to ensure that rural crime decreases. (AQT 406/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The PSNI has taken forward quite a few local initiatives, particularly in rural areas. It is also involved with the gardai in combating crime, particularly in border areas.

That is key when it comes to cattle theft. If we are serious about tackling that, we have to have a joined-up approach. I am committed to making sure that our veterinary service enforcement team works with the guards and PSNI and that we roll-out all the schemes that exist for the benefit of rural communities, particularly Farm Watch. A lot of work is ongoing. We need to keep on with that and keep challenging and trying to eradicate the crime that exists out there.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for her answer. She mentioned that her officials, the PSNI and an Garda Síochána meet regularly. Is she confident that that is happening regularly enough and that they have particular initiatives to ensure that we tackle rural crime?

Mrs O'Neill: It is fair to say that there is a significant level of engagement. Quite a number of successful investigations have been taken forward. That shows that it is working. Obviously, we need to do more, but I think that that shows that it is working, particularly in smuggling incidents, where we see people trying to move from one jurisdiction to the other. Very progressive work is ongoing, and we need to keep driving forward with that.

Rural Development Programme

7. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an assessment of how the rural development programme has performed, given that it is in its final stages. (AQT 407/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I think that it has been very successful. When I am out and about, it gives me great pleasure to see the projects that have benefited from the programme, from tourism initiatives to community facilities, right through to business diversification. I do not have the facts and figures with me, but I am very happy to provide them to the Member. In my opinion, it has been very successful. Are there lessons to be learned for the future programme? Absolutely. We are actively doing that now as we work our way through the consultation responses that we received.

There are issues around simplification. There are a number of areas where we can improve things and make sure that applications, particularly those for grant aid, are relevant to the level of funding that is being requested. So, although there are a number of areas where we can improve things, I think that the programme has been successful.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for her answer. I agree with her about the success in getting the money on the ground. However, I am glad that she came to the criticism of her Department. Will she outline what her Department will do in the future, given that it took it almost 18 months to get some of that money on the ground?

Mrs O'Neill: If the Member is referring to what we will do to plan for the new programme, that is what we are working through now. As I said, the consultation is closed, and we are working our way through the responses. We will then decide on the way forward. I hope to do that in the early part of next year. The focus needs to be on animation. We need to work up the areas to make sure that they are good to go when the new programme kicks in. We do not want to see any delays. Officials are working on that as we speak.

to make sure that we can hit the ground running and start spending as soon as the new programme starts.

Rural Cohesion

8. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what work she is doing to break down barriers between people from different backgrounds in rural areas. (AQT 408/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I can write to the Member with more detail, but a number of projects have been given funding through the rural development programme. One of the projects that we funded recently was a church-based forum. I cannot remember the title of the project, but we provided funding for an organisation to bring people from different churches together to discuss rural issues and other issues that are relevant to them. We have been involved in a number of projects like that.

I am very happy to look at all those things, particularly through my tackling poverty and social isolation framework, which looks at the issues in rural communities, how we can bring people together and how we can work effectively for them. One of the successes of that programme was the grant scheme that we brought forward. That allowed groups from local areas to apply for what they thought was needed in their area. It was not that the Department was saying, "This is the pot of money, and this is how it should be spent". It was very much a bottom-up approach, with people coming forward to say what they thought was needed. Quite a range of projects have been funded in that way.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for her response. I am encouraged that work is ongoing. Does she accept that there are often hidden interfaces in rural areas, unlike the more concrete interfaces that we see in urban areas?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, absolutely. I think that we need to tackle that right across the board. You are absolutely right: given the nature of rural areas, it can be very much a hidden issue. I am happy to engage and to try to break down any barriers that exist for anybody.

Farming: DARD Legal Action

9. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to confirm that a recent action taken by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development against a Fermanagh farmer was rejected by the courts. (AQT 409/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I did not hear the question.

Mr Speaker: Will the Member repeat the question?

Mr Elliott: Apologies, Mr Speaker. Will the Minister confirm that a recent action taken by her Department against a Fermanagh farmer was rejected by the courts?

2.45 pm

Mrs O'Neill: I will not confirm it because it is a legal issue and I do not want to get into it in the House. I am happy to talk to the Member outside of Question Time.

Mr Elliott: That maybe restricts my further point, but I will term it this way: if the farmer is cleared, will he receive his single farm payments that have been withheld for the past number of years?

Mrs O'Neill: I will not get into the ins and outs of an individual's situation.

Mr Speaker: Order. That concludes Question Time with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Ballynagross Football Club

1. **Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support her Department can offer to Ballynagross FC to raise funds to develop a recreational pitch. (AQO 5089/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): I thank the Member for his question. Sport NI is the body responsible for the development of sport across the North, and all clubs can contact Sport NI to discuss their plans for the development of a recreational pitch. Sport NI is able to provide advice and guidance on how best to prepare for funding programmes, including Sport NI opportunities, and to help identify other potential funding sources. Ballynagross FC is also able to contact its local council for advice and support given that the responsibility for provision of adequate facilities for recreation, social, physical and cultural activities rests with the district council.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Minister for her response. Minister, I have always found your officials very helpful when dealing with other clubs. Will the officials help the club to identify further funding streams to enable it to move forward?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his comments. Our officials, in conjunction with Sport NI, are there to help clubs develop their facilities and, as I said in the primary answer, to try to guide them to other potential sources of funding. If I am reading the Member right, I am happy to pass that request to officials to liaise with you to set that meeting up.

Mr Speaker: I warn Members that this is a specific question about a specific constituency.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. Will the Minister give us an update on the capital programme from Sport NI? When will it be rolled out and who can apply?

Mr Speaker: Order. I did warn Members. That is well off the original question. We really should move on if there are no further supplementary questions to that particular question.

Mr Elliott: Given the release of information regarding a letter of comfort to offer £10 million to a Belfast club, will she ensure that the IFA facilities strategy —

Mr Speaker: Order. I listened to the Member, but I detect that he is far away from the original question. Is this particular question about a particular subject?

Mr Elliott: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Is the Member going to use his initiative to link it?

Mr Elliott: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Right. Let us listen.

Mr Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I will finish that off. Will the Minister confirm that the IFA facilities strategy will not have a predetermined outcome that would be against Ballynagross Football Club? *[Laughter.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Up until that point, the Member did extremely well. We will move on.

PRONI: Target Market

2. **Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, given that 77% of new visitors use the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) for family history, 5% for local history, 2% for academic research and 1% for legal and business uses, whether PRONI is reaching its target market. *(AQO 5090/11-15)*

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. PRONI's target market is any user seeking to access its archives. In 2012-13, PRONI welcomed almost 17,000 visitors on site and recorded over 10 million page views on the PRONI website. It also provides a free events programme and actively tries to reach new audiences, particularly those who live in areas of social exclusion and poverty. In October this year, Community Change NI brought a group to PRONI that included members of the Footprints Women's Centre in Poleglass and the Regimental Association of the UDR. It also welcomed a cross-community group of adults from the Dungannon area led by Youth Action NI, which visited PRONI to find out more about the decade of centenaries. PRONI has worked closely with the historical institutional abuse inquiry during the past 18 months. That research supports the ongoing work of the inquiry as victims come forward, and inquiry researchers are based in the PRONI building to facilitate direct access to records.

Mr McNarry: I thank the Minister for her answer. The point that I would like her to grasp is that family history is the overwhelming reason why people go there. The figures show that 77% are interested in family history, yet the PRONI website rates it only as the fifth out of six reasons why it keeps archives. That poses the question to the Minister: are we charging enough to some users, such as legal users or government bodies that need to consult these archives?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member has presented statistics that contradict the information that I have. In fairness to his question, I will try to find out the right answer. The question also remains whether enough people are using PRONI for all sorts of reasons. I am happy for people, regardless of their reasons, to use PRONI. I would like more people to use it to look at their family trees, their lineage and so on, but I do not want to be prescriptive. PRONI is an excellent public service, and the more people who use it for the public benefit, the better. That is a good thing.

Mr Campbell: The figures show that local history usage is about 5%. Does the Minister agree that, given the rich history of various groups and communities in Northern Ireland, she should attempt to drive that figure up so that people can utilise PRONI, as they should be doing, and get the maximum use out of it into their local communities?

Ms Ní Chuilín: In short, I totally agree with the Member. I would like that figure to increase. I think that it is incredibly low, and I am surprised. As I said to Mr McNarry, I will certainly query that. If it means having to look at what

additional resources, if any, are needed, or even whether a redeployment of PRONI priorities is required, to try to ensure that that figure increases, I am keen to do that. I recently spoke to a group of older people who, for the first time, are starting to look back into their lineage and their family trees. I do not want them to be prevented or put off from doing so, particularly when they are travelling from the Member's constituency in Derry to Belfast.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. Does PRONI do enough to attract other users who are not family historians?

Ms Ní Chuilín: PRONI would say that it does enough, and, thus far, I have no evidence to say that it has not done enough. Is there something that we could do more of and better? That seems to be the consistent theme from this and previous questions. PRONI has reconstituted its user forum to include stakeholders from a wide range of groups, including representatives from libraries, museums, the Workers' Educational Association, the Education and Training Inspectorate, Tourism Ireland and even some bloggers and people who are involved in social media. I will bring the figures that were presented to me today to PRONI's attention to see what else we can do. It is an excellent public service. It is a beautiful building, which the public should have access to, and we need to find what particular interests they have to make that access greater.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a freagra. Arbh fhéidir leis an Aire a rá ar tháinig méadú ar líon na ndaoine atá ag baint úsáide as áiseanna agus seirbhísí Oifig na dTaifead Poiblí ó bogadh an oifig go dtí an cheathrú Titanic? Has there been an increase in the number of people using the facilities and services of the Public Record Office since it moved to the Titanic Quarter? If so, can the Minister provide figures?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I have anecdotal evidence that the site at the Titanic Quarter is much more accessible than the site at Balmoral Avenue. I do not have the figures, so I commit to writing to the Member with those figures. There was an issue about access to public records in the past. Given that almost £30 million of public money was spent on a new building, the last thing that we need to hear is that it is still hard to reach or out of reach for people. That is not a good use of public money.

Fishing: Lough Neagh

3. **Mr Mitchel McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure if there are any proposals to change fishing by any method on Lough Neagh in the incoming season. *(AQO 5091/11-15)*

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. The main proposed change to fishing on Lough Neagh for the 2014 season is the prohibition of the taking of salmon by means of a draft net. This is one of a suite of salmon conservation measures that I am proposing, and my Department is consulting on the draft legislation to be put before the House.

The proposed amendment would allow those who fulfil the criteria for using a draft net for freshwater fish on Lough Neagh to be issued with such a licence. However, they

would not be permitted to take any salmon, and any caught would have to be returned to the water.

A number of other issues relating to fishing on Lough Neagh were raised by stakeholders and are being considered by DCAL. Any decision will be based on scientific advice and the sustainability of the fishery. If changes are to be implemented, the relevant legislation will require an amendment. To that end, I have asked officials to undertake work to develop a detailed fishery management plan for Lough Neagh that will inform the sustainable management of the fishery.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I thank the Minister for the information that she shared, particularly on the use of draft nets. Will the Minister tell us whether she is considering a specific proposition to amend the rules on bait net use on Lough Neagh?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Lough Neagh commercial fishermen have put forward a proposal to my Department to amend the legislation on the use of bait nets, which are used by fishermen to catch small fish that are then used to bait eel long lines. The alternative is to use worms as bait, but this can result in smaller eels being caught, which has a negative impact on overall eel stocks. The fishermen would like to use trawl bait nets, as this is a more effective way of catching the number of small fish that they require. However, as I said in answer to the primary question, AFBI, which is responsible for the scientific evidence that I spoke about, is researching the use of bait nets and will advise me on that information before I make any decision on the matter.

Miss M McIlveen: What efforts are the Minister and her Department making to assist members of the Lough Neagh Fishermen's Association in obtaining eel fishing permits? Is she aware that members have been threatened for having raised this issue?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I will take the Member's last question first. I am totally unaware that members have been threatened for raising an issue. I do not understand the context, but I appreciate that she has raised a serious issue. I am more than happy to speak to her about that and, indeed, to the people concerned. On the Member's other point, I do not have the details to hand, but I am happy to write to her. I am alarmed at the idea of anybody being threatened, let alone threatened for raising an issue. That is totally unacceptable.

Mr Swann: Has the Minister had any engagement yet with the European Commission about the increase in eel fishing in Lough Neagh and Lough Erne? I speak having recently met Bernhard Friess, the European commissioner for the north Atlantic, along with Jim Nicholson.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Jim Nicholson, your MEP candidate for the European election: OK, I know who that is.

My officials have had discussions with Europe, particularly on the proposed amendment. Discussions between officials and European fisheries experts are still ongoing. To be fair to the Member, there is genuine concern about the preservation of eels, particularly in Lough Neagh, where there is an eel management plan. Those discussions will be ongoing because we need to make sure that, first, stocks in our rivers and waterways increase, are protected and are sustained and that the 300-plus families on the lough continue to have a secure

livelihood of well over £3 million a year. I thank the Member for his question.

Commonwealth Games 2014

4. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on her Department's involvement in the Commonwealth Games 2014. (AQO 5092/11-15)

8. **Mr Ross** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support elite athletes are offered in advance of the Commonwealth Games 2014 in Glasgow. (AQO 5096/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will take questions 4 and 8 together.

The NI Commonwealth Games Council is responsible for all aspects of the North of Ireland team competing in the 2014 Glasgow games. My Department, through Sport NI, continues to work closely with the council as it takes forward its preparations for the games. The council has established two groups: an operational group to take forward the detailed preparations with the local governing bodies and a strategic task and finish group that oversees the work of the operational group and considers opportunities to maximise our team's performance in Glasgow. DCAL officials have attended the meetings of that group to hear at first hand how the preparations are progressing. From April 2013, in the lead-up to the games, my Department, through Sport NI, is providing direct financial assistance totalling £136,000 to the Commonwealth Games Council. That funding will help with the council's costs for staff and administration and other costs associated with attendance at the 2014 games.

3.00 pm

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for her update and welcome the news. I am sure that the Minister and Members will join me in welcoming the news that the Northern Ireland netball team is to take part in next year's Commonwealth Games, given that we have not had a team take part since Kuala Lumpur in 1998. What is the Minister doing to develop greater participation in team sports?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. I join her in congratulating the netball team on their recent successes. I am delighted to see them compete in different forums, and I wish them all the best.

As regards team sports, particularly sports for women and disability sport, it is important that we continue to provide current funding and give additional funding, particularly in respect of the Commonwealth Games, to help those who are performing. We have done that. Sport NI provides £2.5 million to the Sports Institute to help to support athletes who are competing. Additional funding has been brought forward, including packages of £450,000 for governing bodies to help them to prepare. That level of funding needs to be continued. If the athletes who are competing, regardless of where or how they are competing, are not supported, first, by the governing body and then at high levels by the Sports Institute, they will feel that they are not valued, which will have an impact on their performance.

Mr Ross: My question follows on neatly from my colleague's question. The Minister will be aware that, in Northern Ireland, we have a proud history of producing some of the best hockey players competing for both

Ireland and Great Britain. She will also be aware that there is no Northern Ireland hockey team. Although it is too late for next year's games, will she seek a meeting with the Irish Hockey Association to see if she could help to form a Northern Ireland hockey team for the next Commonwealth Games to ensure that our elite athletes playing hockey in Northern Ireland are not prevented from competing?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I think that it was his party colleague Jim Wells who, at a previous Question Time, asked me to do the same thing for rugby sevens. I do not get involved. I do not interfere, and I do not think that people should interfere politically. It is up to the governing bodies to decide what arrangements they will have. Whether we like that outcome or not, we need to support those governing bodies. That is the bottom line. We should not interfere politically in decisions that governing bodies make. We need to support them, regardless of whether we like those decisions.

Mr McKinney: What discussions has the Minister had with the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council on the prospect of bidding to host a future Commonwealth Games?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I have not had any discussions with the Commonwealth Games Council on hosting a future Commonwealth Games. Two or three Question Times ago, I was asked — by Alastair Ross, incidentally — whether I would support the building of a velodrome and bidding to host the games. I am keen to have a look at that, but I have not had any discussions. I have had discussions with officials, and they are aware that we need to have a serious scoping exercise. However, to be honest, that is as far as it has gone.

Mr Cree: Will the Minister confirm that she is prepared to promote the magnificent Aurora swimming centre in Bangor as a training location prior to next year's Commonwealth Games?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I would like to think so: I put millions of pounds of public money into it. It is a facility that athletes across the North, not just people in that constituency, can use. It can be used for that competition and many others. It is important that young people who are interested in swimming now feel that, once they are in that pool or any other pool for that matter — particularly that pool, given the facilities there — they can go from swimming on a Saturday morning to performing. It is really important that we support that journey.

Cultural Bursaries

5. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans she has to initiate cultural bursaries for individuals. (AQO 5093/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. Although I have no plans to announce any cultural bursaries yet, it is my intention to launch another Gaeltacht bursary scheme in December. The Gaeltacht bursary scheme is aimed at broadening the appeal of the Irish language and offers the opportunity, irrespective of tradition and background, for eligible applicants to have a chance of attending an Irish language summer course. The scheme also helps Líofoa participants with financial outlays that may otherwise be a barrier to their accessing a Gaeltacht course.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister. Will she give us her assessment of how DCAL could encourage interest in the Irish language among the unionist community?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The very essence of the Líofoa initiative is to make the language accessible to all, and I firmly believe that the Irish language is. Líofoa continues to implement outreach work for groups and individuals from all walks of life. For example, this week, Líofoa will take part in a cross-community event in Fermanagh organised by the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and the GAA to bring young people from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds together to explore our cultural richness through sharing and learning, music, language and culture. Such events provide a good opportunity to promote Líofoa, and events such as the Líofoa birthday celebration allow everybody across the community to celebrate our rich cultural heritage.

Mr Humphrey: Following the supplementary question from the Member who spoke previously, does the Minister agree that one thing that would perhaps attract the unionist community to take part in Irish language classes would be if the Irish language was not being used as a political tool by politicians?

Ms Ní Chuilín: And you have just done that. *[Laughter.]* You have just done that. Experiences and examples such as that are really unhelpful, and they are not very supportive of people from your constituency who are learning the Irish language. It is not giving good leadership. I totally agree with you: we should not politicise any language.

Creative Industries Innovation Fund

6. **Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the creative industries innovation fund. (AQO 5094/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: DCAL has a Programme for Government target to support 200 projects through the creative industries innovation fund. Some 148 awards have been made thus far, and others are expected to be finalised shortly. A further funding round opens in January 2014 for projects to be delivered by March 2015. I am confident that our Programme for Government target will be achieved, if not exceeded.

The Arts Council recently held a conference to showcase companies that have received support from the fund. The event supported wider industry networking and demonstrated the fund's important contribution and how it makes growing our creative industries a priority.

Social clauses have also been introduced to the fund to provide industry support to schools engagement programmes, particularly schools with young people from deprived backgrounds. The initiative will help to inspire the next generation of creative entrepreneurs.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for her response. Will she outline in further detail work that her Department, either alone or in conjunction with other Departments, has carried out that is dedicated to ensuring that young people in Northern Ireland are adequately skilled to snap up any opportunities that are available in the creative industries sector?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. We had a pilot scheme in a deprived area of west Belfast

where we invested in iPads for schools. Coincidentally, it is an area that suffers perhaps the worst child poverty in western Europe. The evidence that came back — not that we knew that it would, and it would certainly be contested — was that, as soon as those children and young people who had difficulties completing homework were given an iPad, they not only completed their homework but completed it in record time and expanded on it. Their self-confidence and self-esteem were literally raised through using the iPad's graphics, and it has given them an avenue and an opening that they did not have before. We are keen to replicate that work, particularly in the top 10% most deprived wards. Given that it is a wonderful opportunity, I am meeting the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to see what we can do in rural areas.

Other programmes, such as CultureTECH, have been supported as part of the Digital Circle. It is critical that we use every influence in each of our Departments to try to make sure that not only do we meet our Programme for Government commitments and exceed them where possible but we look for opportunities that have arisen outside of what we agreed some two years ago. So, I am happy that, with the support of Executive colleagues, the iPad initiative that DCAL introduced will be rolled out across the board.

Mr Dallat: This is exciting stuff, and obviously the Assembly would, I am sure, want it to be spread across the 26 council areas. Are all 26 councils participating? In other words, are they all culture vultures? If not, what will the Minister do to ensure that there is no disparity across Northern Ireland in this respect?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. He can certainly talk about his council area, but I could not comment on whether they are culture vultures.

There have been criticisms that the applications mainly came from the Belfast City Council and Derry City Council areas. That was a big concern. I would certainly encourage other councils to make sure that they make applications to the creative industries innovative fund. They should certainly work with and talk to organisations such as the Arts Council and NI Screen to make sure that they make use of every available opportunity. I have absolutely no doubt about the example that I gave to Mrs Overend in terms of children and young people and small business incubation and development. Depending on their needs, I would like to see all 26 council areas availing themselves of that fund.

Mr McCarthy: What is the Minister doing to ensure that the funding provided for the arts in Northern Ireland is adhered to, regarding the funding in other regions and jurisdictions? There is a gap in the arts. What is the Minister doing to try to bridge that gap?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I assume that the Member is talking about the creative industries innovation fund, rather than the arts across the board.

Mr McCarthy: In general.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I would prefer to keep it to the creative industries innovation fund. If it is a general question, it is not linked, and, to be frank, I want to give you an answer.

Mr McCarthy: So you do not know.

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member should not interrupt the Minister.

Ms Ní Chuilín: If the Member feels that the councils in his constituency of Strangford have not availed themselves properly of the creative industries innovation fund, he can talk to the Arts Council and NI Screen. If the Member has any other questions on any other aspects of arts funding, I am more than happy to answer them. He can ask a priority question for written answer or a question for written answer, or he can knock my door, write a letter or stop me in the corridor. There is absolutely no bother with that, and he does not have to wait until the next Question Time to ask me a very important question like that.

Mr McCarthy: We are here to ask questions.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. I commend the programme of the Department working with councils. Will the Minister give an update on the CIIF and how it has been beneficial for the Assembly and local councils in taking it forward in the collaborative approach that is being undertaken?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. It is a successful programme, and the fact that we have not only met our target but exceeded it shows that there is a demand. The concern is that the demand seems to be based on creative, digital or cultural hubs, particularly in Belfast City Council and Derry City Council areas. That is not to say that other areas cannot avail themselves of it. They can, and I am willing to help them do that.

The collaborative approach is certainly important, particularly when you are looking at other investments. Belfast City Council has done that. It has tried to marry those pots of money up to get a better return, and that is what it is all about. It is not only about looking at the investment that you can provide through local or city investment funds but how you can do it with entrepreneurs and even showing those who are considering the private sector route how they can avail themselves of opportunities they perhaps did not know they had. Councils are some of the best-placed agencies or bodies to do that.

Draperstown Library

7. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the current status of Draperstown library. (AQO 5095/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member may recall that this particular library had previously been marked for closure. He will be aware that the local community was determined to save its service and worked in partnership with Libraries NI to obtain financial support from the rural development programme and the Big Lottery Fund. That community initiative resulted in the establishment of a modern replacement library and a multipurpose community centre.

The library, which was officially opened by my Executive colleague Michelle O'Neill on 11 September, is now attracting new users and providing an expanded programme of activities and initiatives. That partnership venture has been a success, with active membership of the library as of 1 October having increased by 23% compared to where it was last year. That is exactly what

we need to see. We need to see libraries being used as dynamic community hubs and focal points for local communities.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I thank the Minister for her comments. What has been done to improve library services for users in rural areas generally?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. As I said in my primary answer, I am working with my Executive colleagues on this, particularly around the rural White Paper action plan, which sets out a vision for sustainable rural communities and, indeed, services within those communities. There are 28 library branches in rural areas that play a valuable role in that regard. I am really keen to make sure that libraries are sustained and maintained. They should not be just used in isolation but seen as a wraparound public service, particular in rural areas that face ongoing exclusion and isolation.

3.15 pm

Mr Speaker: Order. That concludes listed questions. We move to topical questions. Michael McGimpsey is not in place, and Stephen Moutray is not in his place.

Sports Hub: UUU

3. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has had any discussions with the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, which the Committee visited recently, and, in particular, the Ulster Sports Academy about their exciting vision for a sports hub at the campus. (AQT 413/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. I have plans to meet the Sports Institute early in the new year. Officials have had meetings with Sport NI in relation to ongoing support. The Member and other members of the CAL Committee will be aware that I made a substantial investment in the Sports Institute, but we need to look at future-proofing sports facilities for long-term usage.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Minister for her answer. Would she be supportive of exploring the creation of centres of sporting excellence at Jordanstown, such as a neutral venue for a boxing academy and an indoor velodrome?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to meet with the Sports Institute to look at future projects. I do not want to commit to anything in particular. The velodrome is one of the issues on the agenda for discussion, particularly as, since the last appraisal was done, the number of people using bicycles and those involved in competitive racing has increased tenfold. So, certainly, I am happy to talk to the institute about the velodrome. I had no plans to talk to the institute about boxing, but there is no reason why I would not do so.

Cycling: DCAL Funding

4. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, given the increased interest in cycling and the importance of the tour of the north international cycle race to the cycling fraternity, would her Department be willing or able to fill the £40,000 funding gap required to run this event in April 2014. (AQT 414/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am meeting representatives of all the governing bodies to look at gaps in certain funds, particularly around events. I do not want to commit to saying, "Yes, I will be funding it", but I am happy to look at it. We all need to play our part in making sure that there are no gaps in events, should they be sporting, cultural or tourist events. First, we need to make sure that there are no gaps that prevent the event happening in the first place. So, I am happy to take details from the Member and bring them forward.

In relation to cycling, competitive cycling and racing, a number of proposals have been brought to my attention recently. I am not too sure whether they are the same ones or are different ones: I need to look at them all in the round. I am certainly happy to look at plugging holes in gaps. Given that the Giro d'Italia is coming here next year, we need to be very proactive in making sure that all communities that will not experience the Giro will get an opportunity to experience something similar.

Ms Lo: I am delighted by the answer from the Minister. I hope that she meets with the group fairly soon, because time is running on.

Does she agree that that would almost be a first step, and that it would particularly help all the organisers and the PSNI, in preparing for the Giro d'Italia coming here?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The PSNI, the Tourist Board and the governing bodies have been meeting regularly to discuss plans for that. It is not a case of we know it is coming but have not done anything about it. Groups have asked to meet me about funding gaps, but I am not sure if they mean funding gaps in their groups, funding gaps around this event or other events or just funding gaps in the sport in general.

I have asked to meet the governing bodies, and I have already agreed to meet a couple of cycling clubs to see what we can do. I am taking a can-do attitude. If I have the money and the support of Executive colleagues, particularly when it comes to events that we are all keen to support, we will certainly be proactive and will do what we can. We are all taking a can-do attitude.

Brighter Hoard: Limavady

5. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a rough estimate of how many people viewed the recent successful Brighter hoard exhibition in Limavady. (AQT 415/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The beautiful Brighter hoard is in the Member's constituency. I have no idea of the number of visitors. I have heard that there are people from Belfast who are going up tomorrow evening; there must be an event. That is good because Belfast people do not travel very well. I have heard about children and young people from schools going to see the Brighter hoard, which is very good. I think that the original expectations will be exceeded, and I am hoping to hear the final figures. People who have not yet been to Limavady to see the Brighter hoard should go. It is a rare treat, and I am glad to see the Brighter hoard back where it belongs.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will the Minister give consideration to supporting a permanent display of the Brighter hoard in Limavady — the borough

in which it was found — even if some of the pieces would have to be replicas?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I certainly will. I am keen to have discussions with the museums and the people who are the curators at the minute. I believe passionately that it should come back to where it was found and where it belongs. There have not been many opportunities presented to that area over the decades, particularly around tourism, so the Brighter gold hoard is one opportunity that we cannot afford not to fight for.

City of Culture 2013

6. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she is satisfied that the various traditions in Londonderry have been properly promoted and represented during the city's year as the UK City of Culture. (AQT 416/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am, but there are always complaints and perhaps concerns at times that areas felt that they were passed by. I have met many groups in the community, not just the ones involved in big-ticket events, who are not only happy that they got involved this year but are looking at how they can strengthen their work as part of the legacy from this year and beyond. That is across the community.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that answer. What has her Department done or what is it doing for the annual Apprentice Boys shutting of the gates pageant in the city of Londonderry on Saturday 7 December, which is a major cultural event?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am not aware of the Department giving any specific support for that, but I have been at events that the Apprentice Boys of Derry have attended. They have been part of the cultural programme. I can check with officials to see whether there were any requests. I am supportive. As a woman who lives in north Belfast, I can see that there are many things that we can look to the Apprentice Boys for as examples of what we need to do. Up and down the road over the past year and even more, it has almost become a tale of two cities.

C S Lewis

7. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how we can ensure that the legacy of a great writer — C S Lewis — can be used to encourage greater involvement in literature and the arts. (AQT 417/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. The Member may be aware that there was an Adjournment debate brought forward by her party colleague Sammy Douglas last week. It was unfortunate that a deadline was missed for an application to the Arts Council for the C S Lewis festival. However, we are working with the East Belfast Partnership to try to make sure that there is a legacy around C S Lewis. The bits of funding that have been used for the festival thus far have not been huge but have been very effective, and I am keen to make sure that C S Lewis is not confined to the dusty books of history. He was a proud Belfast man, and we need to be proud of him and use whatever opportunities we can to celebrate his work and to ensure that the legacy of his work is passed on from one generation to another so that we all know who he is.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for her answer. She mentioned the passing from one generation to the next. Has her Department had any talks with the Department of Education on the legacy of C S Lewis and how we can promote it in our schools to bring young people on in literature and the arts?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have not had any discussions with the Department of Education, but I think that it is a good idea. Given the literature that he produced, and given that a lot of children will be aware of the Narnia stories, it would be a missed opportunity not to try to advance any opportunities that we have across the Executive. I am happy to talk to the Department of Education to see what we are doing around C S Lewis. It might be something that we can do better next year. Rather than waiting for a big significant date, there will be opportunities to do something in between to try to raise the profile of some of our cultural giants.

Eoghan Ruadh Hurling Club

8. **Ms McGahan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she agrees that the Eoghan Ruadh Hurling Club in Dungannon needs to be redeveloped, given the increase in club membership. (AQT 418/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Yes, I do. The Member invited me down, so she is aware that I have visited. Many, many children were crammed into a very, very small space. I am delighted that they are involved in sport and that boys and girls are involved in sport together, but I agree that there is a need to look at the development of facilities. As I indicated to other Members, I am happy to have those meetings with her and officials of Sport NI to take it forward.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. My supplementary question regarding a further invite to the club has been answered. So, I would appreciate it if we could follow up on that.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I confirm that. I am genuine about that, not only to the Member of my party but to other Members. I am happy to facilitate a time that suits her, Sport NI and the club.

Mr Speaker: Dr McDonnell is not in his place, so question 9 cannot be asked.

Sports Facilities

10. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she can give an assessment of the shortage of sports facilities, particularly for football, in Northern Ireland. (AQT 420/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I am aware that some council areas have done a needs analysis of the different levels of sport within each council area. Coleraine, Belfast and Derry, for example, have produced a deficit for not only football but for hockey and track and field. There is certainly a lack of facilities across the board. Some of the council groups are talking to officials in Sport NI and others, such as the Big Lottery, to see about the potential of trying to bring forward a collaborative approach to provision.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for her response. I listened to her response to the previous question about an individual club. In my area in south Antrim, and Antrim in

particular, there is an under-provision for football, as you identified, and for hockey. Can the Minister indicate what her Department could do to address that, given that the people who participate in a sport can go on to bigger and greater things?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to meet the Member and representatives of Antrim and some of the governing bodies in the new year, if that would help the Member. The last thing that I want to see is provision by postcode. I do not want to see that. There will never be enough money to try to meet the need, but there are certainly inventive ways of working towards trying to achieve the same ends, if we look at different potential sources of funding. I appreciate that, for some groups on the ground, it is sometimes a case of who is going to blink first. Do they get it from DCAL and Sport NI? Do they get it from the council? They do not care, so long as they get it. I am happy to have a meeting in the new year to see what we can take forward.

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Employment and Learning on its Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland [NIA 141/11-15]; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report. — [Mr Swann.]

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): As Chair of the Education Committee, I commend the Committee for Employment and Learning for undertaking the inquiry and for producing what I believe is a very evidence-based report. Unfortunately, there is more in the report than we could possibly comment on in the time allotted to us. I will, therefore, confine my comments, in the main, to issues that are relevant to the Department of Education. I trust that I will get to other comments that I want to make as a Member.

The Employment and Learning Committee gathered a considerable amount of evidence on the current arrangements for careers education, information, advice and guidance, and all the evidence is notable, even very worrying in some cases. For example, all of us were concerned to learn of the degree of inconsistency in the careers services provided across the educational sectors.

I also noted the Northern Ireland Schools and Colleges Careers Association's (NISCA) assertion that there is insufficient capacity to give all students access to individual careers guidance prior to making important Key Stages 4 and 5 subject choices. Clearly, that is a crucial juncture for children and young people, and they should be given every support by careers personnel, including advice on work experience and even the completion of UCAS forms, for example. Consequently, the Education Committee is happy to support the relevant recommendations in respect of an adequately resourced statutory mechanism through which a consistently high standard of careers services could be provided to all schools and colleges in Northern Ireland.

The report deals with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, and I thank the Employment and Learning Committee for its work in that area. Like members of that Committee, Education Committee members find it difficult to wade through the plethora of STEM initiatives to determine whether they are having the impact that they should have. Indeed, I attended a launch at Stranmillis College this morning for a report on teaching coding to Key Stages 2 and 3 pupils, which will undoubtedly make its way to the Assembly. One has only to listen to comments by participants at any such event to be convinced that professionals and practitioners — they are not politicians — who, despite all that we want to say about what is being achieved, still believe that the fundamental problem is that there is not a joined-up approach to how we address these programmes.

3.30 pm

Members on the Benches opposite tell us today that they have concerns about STEM subjects, when their Education Minister, in correspondence to the Education Committee just two or three weeks ago, said that he was not going to consider baselining STEM provision in primary schools and that keeping it under review was enough. I have to say that that is not enough and more needs to be done by the Department of Education. I also note some very interesting evidence on whether STEM careers advice should be delivered by careers teachers or by subject specialists. The Department should consider that issue further, and the Education Committee would be happy to do so. We have to add a caveat of concern, but it is a valid point that needs further explanation.

I note with concern the evidence from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), which highlights the apparent failure of schools to understand the vocational, technical career route. That is compounded by the evidence from Belfast Met, which indicated that disadvantaged pupils were less likely to gain informal careers advice from family or friends.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

The report highlights the importance of good careers advice for all our pupils and students and, indeed, for the economy in general. The evidence to which I referred shows something else, which is the crucial nature of careers services for students whose backgrounds are particularly disadvantaged. Many such pupils are in the non-selective controlled and maintained sectors. The report shows the value of their having proper advice, informed by work placements, on the range of career options that are available to them.

Speaking as a Member, I will conclude with a few comments on the report. Unfortunately, it seems that the time allocated is never enough, but all that I will say is this: we need to ensure that a working group is set up between the four Departments and even their Committees. I put the challenge out to the Chairs of the four Committees — Employment and Learning, Education, Enterprise, Trade and Investment, and Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) — to come together with the various reports that have been referred to in the House, such as the CAL Committee report, today's report and work that has been carried out by my Committee on some of the issues.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Storey: Together, the Committees can prove that there is valuable work that we can do, if it is not going to happen through the Ministers who are responsible for those Departments. I support the motion.

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the Assembly on the Employment and Learning Committee's inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance. I commend the substantial work carried out by the Committee. I recognise the depth and breadth of the evidence provided to it, and the inquiry has highlighted many notable issues. Together with my colleague Minister O'Dowd, I welcome the report.

Although we will take time to study the report in detail and respond formally to the Committee on each of its recommendations, I can announce today that the Minister

of Education and I have agreed to begin a formal review of the careers strategy and careers provision. The review will take into account the recommendations of the Employment and Learning Committee inquiry report.

I cannot overstate the importance to the transformation of our economy of effectively investing in our people and developing their skills. Therefore, I believe that good careers policy and delivery structures should be considered a foundation stone of a strong economy, and key to that is ensuring a good match between supply and demand.

Although much has been achieved from the implementation of the existing strategy for careers information and guidance, Preparing for Success, I firmly believe that it is now time for a reinvigoration of careers policy and delivery. The need for change has been, in no small part, highlighted by the work of the Committee.

Before I discuss my vision for the way forward, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight some of the successes and positive changes that have resulted from the existing careers strategy. The all-age strategy for careers education, information, advice and guidance, Preparing for Success, was launched in 2009. Its overall objective was to ensure that young people and adults had access to impartial advice and guidance, had an equal opportunity to reach their full potential and were able to contribute positively to their community and the local economy.

Both Departments have been supported by a cross-sector advisory group, which included representatives from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, business and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). In 2011, membership was extended to include representatives from Queen's University, the University of Ulster, Colleges NI and schools. I would like to thank the group for its efforts in ensuring that actions were delivered and for its helpful contributions to ongoing service improvements. A full evaluation report on Preparing for Success is being produced and will be available at the end of the year.

There are two main actors in the delivery of careers services: careers teachers in schools, who develop employability skills and a general knowledge of the world of work; and careers advisers from my Department, who provide personalised and impartial advice and guidance tailored to suit the needs of the individual. To help schools, the Education and Training Inspectorate developed quality standards to improve how careers education is taught across the curriculum from primary school through to post-primary school. The ETI now routinely reports on the quality of careers education.

Schools continue to engage with the business sector to explore how businesses can play an even greater role in careers education. The recent CBI survey of primary and post-primary schools and business leaders aims to measure and assess the effectiveness of that engagement and point up areas for attention in developing the skills and knowledge needed to grow the economy. The Committee report refers to that issue, and I agree with its recommendation that the planned careers strategy consider how career-related learning between schools and business can be improved.

As a result of the strategy, my Department now has formal partnership agreements with 98% of post-primary schools, all further education colleges and all training

organisations. Those arrangements have delivered results. The Careers Service now provides impartial advice to 92% of pupils in year 12. That figure was below 80% before the implementation of the strategy. In addition, my Department receives a complete list of all pupils in year 10 from all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. That enables us to ensure that no child misses out, even if he or she is not attending school because of ill health or other reasons or has transferred to alternative education provision. We also have formal agreements with the Youth Justice Agency and the health and social care trusts to ensure that young people in danger of becoming socially excluded are supported fully by the Careers Service.

Of course, careers guidance is not just for young people. The service is available to all, irrespective of age or ability. In 2009-2010, over 3,500 adults availed themselves of careers guidance. By March 2013, that figure had risen to over 15,000. Many of those adults were unemployed as a result of the economic downturn.

Preparing for Success recognised that parents have a vital role in supporting young people to make appropriate career decisions. In acknowledgement of that, the Careers Service published a guide for parents in March 2013. It is intended to enable parents to support their children's plans and to understand the range of options and support available at key transition stages. It highlights the importance of parents encouraging their child to research information about current trends and future employment opportunities and to consider those against their child's abilities and aspirations.

Those are just some examples of what has been achieved to date.

Although the Preparing for Success strategy has laid the foundations necessary for continual improvement of careers services, there is still more to be done. As I mentioned at the outset, a review of careers will be initiated that presents a way forward for Northern Ireland. I want to ensure that Northern Ireland has a careers service that reflects the needs of a modern, vibrant and dynamic 21st century economy in which all individuals, regardless of age or aspiration, have access to independent and quality advice and guidance on the full range of opportunities available to them.

The review will concentrate on the role of the careers teacher, the careers adviser, employers, parents and other key influencers and providers of education and training opportunities. In conducting the review, we will also consult key stakeholders in industry, education and experts in the field of careers education and guidance, including those who provided evidence to the inquiry. Consultation with service users, including young people, will also be important in shaping future provision.

Although the terms of reference are still being finalised, I would like to share with Members some of the early thinking on a few of the issues that I would like the review to address, some of which have already been highlighted in the Committee inquiry report. Those include the need to strengthen and embed links between education providers and industry; making sure that work experience is meaningful and well planned; utilising different modes of delivery including improving online support and consistency of approach; ensuring that all young people, irrespective of ability, have access to impartial careers

advice at appropriate stages; improving and promoting access for the wider population, including those who are in work and those who are not; and strengthening the role that up-to-date labour market information plays in informing education, training and careers decisions.

I believe that the changing face of the labour market and the rapidly evolving global economy requires careers policy and delivery to move to a new phase. Job opportunities in the future will tend to be increasingly concentrated in high-skill sectors of the economy, often requiring strong skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We must ensure that everyone receives impartial, timely and focused careers advice and guidance on those opportunities, allowing them to make the right choices to maximise their potential.

I firmly believe that a key feature of careers delivery in the future will be to maximise participation of young people in the labour market. The local labour market has become increasingly complex and difficult to navigate, particularly for those who are entering it for the first time. An estimated 24,000 young people enter the local labour market each year, with differing ages and qualification levels. It will be important for Northern Ireland's future prospects that individuals do not become detached from the labour market. That will be a key focus for the Careers Service as we move forward.

Effectively mobilising our young people will be critical in fully maximising our potential and opportunity for economic growth. In particular, good careers advice is a key aspect of squaring the circle between levels of youth unemployment existing alongside skills pressures in certain sectors. That is a point that was drawn out by a number of contributors to the debate.

Another key avenue lies through apprenticeships. Earlier this year, I announced a review of apprenticeships. I believe that we need to get the message out to our young people, their parents and schools that apprenticeships are a really valuable way of securing an excellent career, enabling the young person to obtain qualifications while gaining experience and progressing in their career through a route that is of equal value and prestige to the more traditional university pathway.

The Careers Service will have a key role to play in facilitating access to a new, innovative apprenticeship model that is consistent with the highest standards of vocational education and training and structured to deliver our future skills needs. To achieve that aspiration, I will explore the possibility of using the skills of the Careers Service to act as a gatekeeper to the options that are provided post-16. We want to ensure that we maximise the return on this investment, not only to the individual but the local economy overall.

Sound and impartial pre-entry advice and guidance, with ongoing mentoring and support that is focused on outcomes, is at the heart of a successful transition from education to work. I feel strongly that our young people must be given the opportunity to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are essential to becoming our future wealth creators, entrepreneurs, employers and employees. That has intensified the need for high-quality careers education and guidance to allow them to respond positively in a fast-changing, increasingly globalised workplace.

3.45 pm

That is why I believe that all young people, regardless of ability or aspiration, should have the right to access independent careers advice and guidance. I will explore how that should be achieved, including, if necessary, a statutory right to access.

For those who are temporarily excluded from the labour market, we will build on the work that is already progressing through Pathways to Success, which is the NEET strategy, to mentor and support young people not in employment, education or training.

Another key area where work is needed, which is also highlighted in the Committee report, is the need to support young people with learning disabilities and their families in the transition from school to education, training or employment. A number of Members highlighted that during the debate, and it touches on other areas that are of deep interest to the Committee and to the Assembly as a whole. I understand that, in the near future, the Committee intends to take forward some more detailed work on the issue at a more general level, not just specifically on careers.

Careers advisers already work in partnership with schools, other professionals and agencies to ensure that young people are aware of post-school opportunity progression routes and lifelong learning to help them to develop and fulfil their potential. I would like to develop that work further, taking account of best practice in other countries.

Currently, one of the biggest challenges facing Northern Ireland businesses is finding the right people to help them to grow. Recruiting and developing young people is a great way to build a dynamic and productive workforce. They have the talent and skills to help businesses to succeed. I believe that work experience is key to bridging the gap between education and the world of work. At its broadest and best, work experience can open young people's eyes to jobs that they have never thought of, help people to understand the market value of STEM subjects and help to inform career decisions. It offers young people a chance to prove themselves to an employer and helps to instil the attitudes and behaviours that are expected at work. We need to invest much further in the soft skills that employers so frequently cite.

A recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report highlighted that the countries in Europe with the lowest rate of youth unemployment provide the best work experience opportunities for their young people. Together with the Department of Education, my Department will develop work experiences for our young people that are much more meaningful and inspiring. We will introduce all our young people, regardless of ability or aspiration, to a range of career opportunities. In particular, I would like to see a focus on the growth in employment sectors such as business and financial services, including ICT, advanced manufacturing and engineering, life and health sciences, agrifood, and the creative industries. We will challenge assumptions and preconceptions about some areas of work that are not attracting the right calibre of talent in sufficient numbers but that offer excellent career opportunities both at home and internationally.

One key aspect of that is combating gender stereotypes. I made a statement to the Assembly in June this year setting out the gender imbalances that exist across our training

and education system and in the labour market. I also set out the consequences that flow from that. Put simply, we cannot expect to compete in the global marketplace if we are not making the most effective use of our local marketplace of talent. I believe that there is a need for the key influencers of young people, including parents, to participate in that process, and I will work with groups such as Parenting NI to see how we could better achieve that result. Working with employers, as well as engagement by the business community, will be key. I encourage employers to work with us to help to build the workforce that they need for the future. It is important to ensure that education and skills outcomes are more closely aligned with the economy's current and future needs.

Moving on to developing the Careers Service for adults, in this dynamic economy, many people expect to change jobs or working patterns several times over their working life. For some, that event is forced on them through illness, caring responsibilities, redundancy or through otherwise being unemployed. Making the right, informed decision at those key transition points about further training or education is vital to future success. That is why I am committed to the principle of an all-age Careers Service that supports the individual to make the right choices for them and their families.

The Careers Service already works closely with the employment service, but I will strengthen and extend the support that careers advisers can provide to people so that they maximise the opportunities available. I also see a significant role for the Careers Service in supporting those in work who want to progress up the career ladder. Therefore, I will explore the possibility of underpinning the support provided through initiatives like Assured Skills and Skills Solutions with tailored careers guidance.

Economic globalisation and digital technology have changed the way that people see and access things. I agree with the Committee's recommendation that we should establish an inclusive and fit-for-purpose careers website. However, I do not believe that a website provision should be the end of our aspirations. Already, the Careers Service pages on NI Direct feature consistently in the top five most viewed pages within the education, learning and skills theme. Since April 2013, over 113,000 people have viewed careers information on NI Direct. We will continue to develop our online offering through the NI Direct portal to allow more people to get the help they need in the way they wish to access it.

However, there are a range of additional modes of delivery that could also be examined. Some of those could focus on specific client groups, for example, working with the community and voluntary sector to reach young people who are NEET, or working with employers and industry bodies to support people in work. We will look at examples of best practice elsewhere and consult with key stakeholders to ensure that we achieve the best possible outcomes, irrespective of the mode of delivery.

Those are just some of the issues that I would like to explore through the review of the careers strategy, many of which have been highlighted in the Committee report. The Committee can take some reassurance from the systematic manner in which we went through the recommendations it made in its inquiry into those who are not in employment, education or training, which were integrated into the final 'Pathways to Success' document.

The key driver for me is making sure that every person in Northern Ireland, irrespective of their age or ability, has the right to access the impartial careers guidance that he or she needs to help them fulfil their ambitions and contribute to the economy and the wider community. I hope that that has given some sense of what is emerging in terms of careers education, information, advice and guidance, and I look forward to working with the Committee — indeed, several Committees — during the course of the review. I am sure that that goes for my colleague Minister O'Dowd as well.

We are currently finalising the terms of reference for the review, and hope to progress that in the very near future. It will be an issue of priority for both Departments, because we appreciate and understand the importance of getting it right and ensuring not just that we address the skills offering in Northern Ireland but that we play our part in the wider transformation that the Assembly and wider society want to see.

In conclusion, I again commend the Committee for its detailed work on the issue and congratulate my party colleague for his initiative in bringing the issue forward. I also commend the two Chairs of the Committee over the life of the inquiry for their work in taking it forward, and, indeed, all of the members of the Committee for their attention to the issue, alongside the Committee staff. I concur that it is a tremendous and very detailed piece of work. We will study it in great depth and ensure that it is given proper and due consideration in our ongoing work across both my Department and the Department of Education.

Mr Buchanan: As Deputy Chair of the Committee, I rise to wind up the debate. I thank everyone who took part in this important debate around the Chamber. In rising to support the motion, I thank the Members for all of the contributions that they have made. I think it is perhaps one of the better reports to have been brought before the House. I also join the Chairman in thanking the Minister for Employment and Learning for responding to the issues raised. It is clear that the Committee's inquiry has proved to be a very valuable piece of work that has provided useful information and recommendations to the Minister and his officials which they can now take forward to improve careers provision in Northern Ireland.

I echo the Chairman's thanks to the Committee and Committee staff for their work on the inquiry. The Committee staff have done an excellent amount of work on the inquiry.

It was a heavy workload, but the inquiry provided good evidence, so our best thanks goes to them.

The terms of reference for the inquiry covered a broad area, and, although it is as thorough as it could be, the report asks the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to give more detailed consideration to specific concerns. The Committee has only limited resources, and there is work that we must leave to the Ministers to undertake. I hope that, following this debate, the Ministers will take on board the recommendations in the report and do what has to be done to move the careers strategy forward.

As has already been outlined, the Committee's primary purpose in undertaking the inquiry was to look closely at concerns that were raised about careers provision and to provide the Department with a direction of travel ahead of

its review of the careers strategy Preparing for Success. The debate reflected how important good careers advice is and how important it is to the economy. Most Members who spoke mentioned the importance of a good Careers Service to the economy.

The business sector's interest in the inquiry was testimony to how important it viewed careers advice to be. If one thing is taken from the inquiry, it should be that there is a willingness from the business sector to help with future careers provision. The Department needs to harness that willingness much more strategically. Submissions to the inquiry from the business community pointed to a lack of trained and qualified careers staff in post-primary schools. The report states:

"The CBI believes that it is imperative that all careers staff within DEL, Schools and Colleges and Universities commit to continuous professional development and remain up to date with qualification types, progression routes and future employment opportunities."

If we want to make a difference, that must be incorporated into the new careers strategy. The report adds:

"The CBI argues that to help careers staff to advise pupils on pursuing careers in business and the skills and qualifications that employers value they should be encouraged to undertake industry experience as part of their CPD to gain a fuller appreciation of business."

Perhaps one of the gaps has been that careers teachers do not have a knowledge of what happens in the business sector. When they do not have a hands-on, full knowledge and grasp of business, it creates a difficulty in providing advice to young people who are looking to go into the sector. That needs to be fully considered by the Departments.

I thank Robin Swann, Chair of the Committee, for his contribution and for setting the scene for the inquiry report. He raised the Committee's concerns about the poor advice given to students and pupils and explained why it launched an inquiry into the issue. Although I heard some people seeking to take some credit for bringing this issue forward for an inquiry, all parties on the Committee were concerned about this matter and felt that we needed an inquiry if we wanted to see change in the careers sector in order to make an improvement and ensure that young people got the correct advice that they needed to move into employment.

4.00 pm

The Chair pointed to the fact that it is our duty and responsibility to ensure that we put the needs of our pupils first. I think that that is one of the most important things to come out of the debate.

I thank my colleague Mr Hilditch for highlighting the need for better collaboration between the various organisations that offer advice on careers and for pointing to some of the barriers noted in the report that some people face in gaining careers support. Mr Hilditch referred to those with disabilities. Such barriers need to be broken down and overcome in order to help those people get into a place of employment.

Ms McGahan emphasised the skills gap facing Northern Ireland and the major role that the Careers Service plays

in signposting individuals to the range of available jobs and the routes into them. There is no doubt that the Careers Service provides signposting. However, if that signposting service is not operating or is not pointing in the right direction, our young people will be pointed in completely the wrong direction. If we look back over the past number of years, we can see that that is what has happened. Young people have been pointed in the wrong direction and have not been given the advice that they should have been given. That needs to change.

Mr Rogers, speaking on behalf of the SDLP, drew Members' attention to the importance of beginning careers advice at a young age in primary schools and widening the horizons of what jobs are available before children make subject choices that close off future opportunities. I think that it is very important that we get careers advice into our primary schools. Again, that is an area where the current system is lacking. That must be taken on board if we want to see a change in the sector.

Mr Lyttle highlighted the issue that led to the inquiry, which is the inconsistency of approach across schools in offering careers advice and guidance. Mr Lyttle also drew Members' attention to the Committee's recommendation on dealing with the barriers that people with learning difficulties face in accessing good careers advice.

I was particularly glad to hear from my colleague Miss Michelle McIlveen, Chair of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure, who supported the Committee's recommendations. She drew attention to the fact that the Committee highlighted the CAL Committee's report on the creative industries and noted how the reports complement each other. The fact that the two reports complement each other represents important progress that will, hopefully, help us to move forward.

Mr McCann highlighted the lack of a coordinated approach to career guidance provision and pointed to the fact that many of the businesses that provided evidence to the Committee had registered concerns about that. He also pointed to the many good things that the Careers Service in Northern Ireland has to offer, but he said that there seems to be conflicting and confusing advice. The conflicting messages being given to our young people was one of the concerns that the Committee had when considering whether to bring forward this inquiry.

Mr Alastair Ross noted that we live in a changing and increasingly technological economy, and that our higher and further education sectors need to better reflect that. On a positive note, he pointed out that, in Northern Ireland today, there exists the opportunity for individuals to work for world-leading global companies. I think that we have to focus on and capture that. He also said that young people coming through schools today will be training for jobs that have not been created yet, perhaps in a different sector. That is forward-thinking; it is a strategic vision that needs to be captured and brought into the report if we want to make it meaningful, purposeful and deliverable.

Danny Kinahan helpfully pointed out that, in response to the report, the Minister must bring forward not just platitudes but action plans, targets and timelines for how he will respond to the recommendations. Of course, the Committee waits for that level of response. It is important that we have the action plan, the targets and the timelines so that this is not another report that is left sitting on the

shelf. We must ensure that action is taken, targets are put in place, timelines are set and delivery is forthcoming.

When Basil McCrea got up to speak, he said that he was speaking as an independent. I was wondering whether he had now left or resigned from NI21 and was going to start another party. I see that he is not in his seat to respond. He reminded Members that our universities need to react to the needs of businesses as much as to the request of students. His point that the Department should work harder to convince parents to persuade their children to choose technology subjects and careers is well founded.

Sammy Douglas praised individual teachers, careers advisers and parents who do so much, and he said that there needs to be action to improve the poor careers provision, inconsistency and lack of information. He also said that what information is available is hard to digest.

Mr Flanagan pointed out that there are significant skills for young people to learn at FE colleges and that young people need to gain good work experience. In pointing to that, he noted the good work that colleges are doing in the creative industries and in the media.

My colleague and Chair of the Education Committee, Mervyn Storey, commended the report as excellent and said that it was being supported by the Education Committee. He referred to the STEM recommendations and to recent correspondence from the Education Minister that pointed to his unwillingness to move forward with STEM, especially in the primary sector. Again, we will have to work on that. He also proposed that there should be a working group between DEL, DETI, the Department of Education and DCAL, and he challenged the four Chairs of the four Committees to come together to seek to put that in place so that we can move forward with this inquiry.

The Minister referred to a number of issues and the need for change, as has been highlighted by the Committee. I accept from the Minister the range of organisations that he works with. I wonder how well that is coordinated and whether they are all giving similar advice. That is the problem and the difficulty. The Minister is right that more needs to be done, and the Committee will wait with interest to see how the terms of reference for the review reflect the report.

I see that my time is almost gone. I am sure that everyone in here today will agree that it has been a useful and very positive debate on a very important issue. The Committee looks forward to the Minister's written responses to the recommendations and to working with him to take them forward so that, together, we can ensure that Northern Ireland has a structure for careers education, information, advice and guidance that is fit for purpose for the people using it and for our economic future. Once again, I thank all Members for their contributions and thank the Minister for sitting in on the entire debate and for his contribution. I support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Employment and Learning on its Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland [NIA 141/11-15]; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes to move the amendment and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Ms McCorley: I beg to move

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed.

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom tacaíocht a thabhairt don rún seo. Tá an rún seo an-tábhacht. Today's debate is very important. Its focus is on broadcasting powers, with a view to exploring the potential for the transfer of those powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in Britain to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) in the North of Ireland. I wish to make the case that the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure should be seeking to discuss the potential for such a move with the British Secretary of State without delay. Further to that, I wish to argue that funding for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund be transferred and put onto a secure footing by having them both mainstreamed.

There are a host of practical and operational reasons why it would be a good thing to have powers over broadcasting devolved to the North, an idea that is also being promoted in Scotland and Wales. The main argument, in my view, for such a move is to create an environment in which decisions on what is broadcast are the result of a local decision-making process. Currently, a small number of programmes are made in the North, utilising local talent and resources and reflecting life and culture as we know it. Ach níl go leor ann. However, there are not enough of them. So we need the Minister to begin the conversation whereby those matters can be discussed and, hopefully, arrive at the conclusion that the powers will be transferred.

Cad chuige ar chóir dúinn amharc ar an chuid is mó de chlár a rinneadh do phobal eile ach nach bhfuil baint acu le saol áirithe s'againne? Why should we have to watch a majority of programmes that have been designed for other communities but which do not reflect our way of life? Why should we not have a greater say in what we watch? That leads me to my next point. The Irish language community makes up a sizeable section of our society. Those Irish speakers and Ulster-Scots communities have the right to have their experience of life reflected in what they see on a TV screen. Although there is no doubt that there have been improvements in recent years — níl dabht ar bith faoi sin — it has happened in quite a haphazard way and still does not have secure funding. Surely that cannot be the most appropriate way to make provision for what is a significant section of the population.

I will give some further information — le tuilleadh eolais a thabhairt: the Irish Language Broadcast Fund, just like the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund, is covered by a number of pieces of legislation, which ought to have resulted in many more positive outcomes than has been achieved thus far. The purpose of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund is to fund the Irish language television and film industry in the North. I wish to lay out the case for the Irish language in the understanding that the case for Ulster Scots follows but, as is acknowledged, is at a different stage of development. The broadcast fund is a fairly recent phenomenon, taking its origins from a commitment in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which states that the British Government will:

“seek more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production”.

Following the Good Friday Agreement, the UK Government signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in March 2000, which took effect from July 2001. Among its commitments to Irish were the following:

“to the extent that radio and television carry out a public service mission ... to make adequate provision so that broadcasters offer programmes in the regional or minority languages”.

Further to that, the committee of experts for the charter visited the North over the years and reported extensively on how the implementation of the charter has been achieved. It noted that the undertaking to make adequate provision for Irish language broadcasting was not currently fulfilled for television. It was also recommended by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which oversees the charter, that the authorities, as a matter of priority, improve public service television provision in Irish.

Between the visit of the committee of experts and the publication of its report, the joint declaration of the British and Irish Governments of April 2003, another international agreement, included the following commitment:

“the British Government will take all the necessary steps to secure the establishment as soon as possible, following receipt of the final business case in April, of a fund for financial support for Irish language film and television production.”

Finally, finally, in 2005, seven years after the original commitment was made, the Irish Language Broadcast Fund was eventually set up. So, clearly, there are legal commitments and requirements in relation to the Irish language and Ulster Scots that have yet to be adequately fulfilled and for which the funds are still not secured.

4.15 pm

The reality is that we have a thriving and growing Irish language community in the North whose needs must be met. Included in that community is a vibrant education sector, in which thousands of pupils are being educated entirely through the medium of Irish, and they wish to live their life through that medium.

Agus san earnáil sin tá na mílte dalta scoile ag dul fríd scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge, agus ba mhaith leo saol s'acu a bheith go hiomlán fríd mheán na Gaeilge. It is very welcome that, nowadays, the Irish language is seen and

heard much more often on television than has ever been the case. That is largely due to the influence of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund. In surveys of the effects of the fund, respondents have been extremely positive about the difference that it has made. Their comments are enlightening and give a real insight into the benefits that can accrue as a result of making positive interventions such as this. Respondents spoke about the significance of the fund in providing quality, diversity and richness and how it has made an important contribution to the survival of the language. One contributor commented on the fund:

"It is crucial as such programmes would not happen without this Fund. Without it there would be minimal development of Irish language especially in the TV sector ... For the process of learning to be a worthwhile project, Irish has to have social side to it. In the past 20 years there have been significant developments for example Gaeltacht housing developments, development in newspapers arts and theatre. However the biggest development is the ILBF which provides the biggest amount of financial aid to encourage training in a very important part of our social life, TV. Such developments are crucial and you need them all amalgamated to succeed."

Clearly, the Irish Language Broadcast Fund has made a huge difference. Tá sé soiléir le feiceáil go bhfuil difir an-mhór deánta mar gheall ar an chiste craoltóireachta Gaeilge. That is great, but it must be built on. Is rud iontach é sin, ach caithfidimid tógáil air. It is high time that it was given a secure funding basis and allowed to grow and flourish. It is no longer acceptable for short-term funding to be the basis on which to build the broadcasting industry here in the North. It is wrong that those depending on this funding should go staggering from one funding process period to another, sitting in crisis waiting for continuation to come about. Furthermore, it is an affront that the amount of financial investment for the Irish language is minimal compared with that given to minority languages in Scotland and Wales. In 2011-12, for instance, a total of £119.3 million was spent on Welsh broadcast funding; in Scotland, £19.8 million was spent; for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund, £3.53 million was spent. There is a huge disparity in the figures, particularly when you look at the fact that 93,000 people in Scotland have knowledge of the Scots Gaelic language, whereas almost 185,000 people in the North of Ireland have knowledge of Irish. There needs to be greater equality when those funds are being given out. Per person, £19 was spent on Irish and £213 on Scots Gaelic. I call for equality of treatment for the Irish language. Iarraim ar chomhionannas don Ghaeilge.

On that note, I call on the Minister to take whatever action possible to ensure that the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund are transferred to the North and put on a mainstream funding footing as soon as possible. I call on her to explore the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department here in the North. Molaim an rún.

Mrs McKevitt: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after the second "Department" and insert:

"through the establishment of an independent advisory panel in order to assess the viability of any potential transfer and of the transfer and mainstreaming of the

Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund."

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure must discuss with her counterpart at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport the potential for transferring broadcasting powers to this region and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed. The SDLP believes that such progress would be greatly enhanced by the establishment of an open and transparent independent advisory panel.

The panel would consider which powers should be transferred, the implications that any transfer of powers would have, what would be a realistic timescale for such a transfer and what procedures must be in place to allow for the transfer to be carried out smoothly and without interruption to existing broadcasters. It would also help to cast an objective eye over any potential transfer of broadcasting powers and mainstreaming of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund to this region.

Like other parties in the Chamber, the SDLP has taken a keen interest in the Commission on Devolution in Wales, known to many as the Silk Commission. It was established to review the present financial and constitutional arrangements in Wales, including devolving powers, such as fiscal taxing and broadcasting, from London to Cardiff. We can learn lessons from that commission as it has taken evidence from lots of organisations, including some in the political arena. Its report is due to be published in the spring of 2014. The commission is made up of eight unpaid members drawn from Welsh business, academia, the four main political parties and civic society. If the House agrees to the establishment of an independent advisory panel, it is my hope it would have similar demographic and political representation and be of little or no cost to the public taxpayer.

Fifteen years after the Good Friday Agreement, we still have no real movement on promoting the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots dialect. Although the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has paid lip service to actively promoting languages, it has failed to deliver the kind of changes that we have seen in Scotland and Wales, for example. The agreement stipulates:

"the British Government will in particular in relation to the Irish language, where appropriate and where people so desire it: take resolute action to promote the language; facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand; seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language ... explore urgently with the relevant British authorities, and in co-operation with the Irish broadcasting authorities, the scope for achieving more widespread availability of Teilifis na Gaeilge in Northern Ireland ... encourage the parties to secure agreement that this commitment will be sustained by a new Assembly in a way which takes account of the desires and sensitivities of the community."

The Department must fulfil its obligations under the Good Friday Agreement and actively promote the use of the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots dialect. In reality, we have

failed to match the successes of other jurisdictions and, in particular, Wales and Scotland. We must look to other jurisdictions for examples of best practice. Setting up an independent advisory panel that assesses the viability of any potential transfer of broadcasting powers would help to inform us how we could best promote the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots dialect. A panel of experts could advise on the best way forward.

I hope that the Assembly can reach some sort of consensus today regarding the need to do a lot more to promote our culture and, in particular, the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots dialect. There is a real potential to do that and to fulfil the pledge that was made 15 years ago in the Good Friday Agreement to facilitate and encourage the use of language.

I am very concerned that a petition of concern might be used. I think that that is a bit heavy-handed. The proposal that we make in our amendment is for an independent panel; it does not commit the Assembly to go beyond that.

Miss M McIlveen (The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure): I speak initially as the Chairperson of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee. The Committee has not discussed this issue in any depth or at any length and has no agreed view. The transfer of broadcasting powers to DCAL is a significant issue that requires lengthy debate and scoping. Although the Committee would be supportive of more local programming, I am aware that it is a huge step for us to move to transferring the broadcasting function to DCAL. To date, the Committee has not received representations, that I am aware of, to advocate such a transfer.

The motion specifically mentions the Irish and Ulster-Scots language broadcast funds. Those funds come directly from DCMS to Northern Ireland Screen for management. The Committee is not aware of any substantive issues around that. It has not received any approaches around a transfer of the funds to DCAL or for them to be mainstreamed. Without a Committee position on the issue, I am not able to support the motion or otherwise on the Committee's behalf.

However, from a personal perspective, I will say that the DUP, as a devolutionist party, supports maximum devolution to Stormont. However, devolution must make sense and must be beneficial to Northern Ireland.

The matter is too important to be discussed in a 90-minute debate. The Executive should consider further devolution issues carefully before any proposals are agreed. In fact, I am not aware that this has ever even been mentioned at the Executive. So, in the light of that, it would be wholly inappropriate for a decision such as this to be made on the hoof or on the basis of a short Assembly debate. Certainly, we would be prepared to consider the issue in the longer term and to take all the arguments into account. In any event, further devolution issues should be for the First and deputy First Minister to negotiate with the UK Government. I believe that this debate is premature and is driven by a relatively small political agenda on language funding.

With limited information about the implications or otherwise of this proposal, my argument and that of others will be mainly academic. We must also ask whether Westminster is disposed to giving this power away. Even if that is the case, many risks are associated with this that are not immediately apparent. If broadcasting is to

be devolved, who will pay for it? How will non-partisan protection of the BBC, for example, be enshrined?

Does the BBC, or whatever might replace it, become subject to whoever happens to hold the culture, arts and leisure portfolio? That needs to be carefully considered. Broadcasters need to be responsive to their audience, but they also need journalistic and creative freedom.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does she agree with me that, whatever the views of the parties around this Chamber on the BBC, it can be a unifying factor for the United Kingdom where devolution is concerned?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Miss M McIlveen: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I agree with the Member; furthermore, I think that we also need to be aware that there may be implications for Ofcom as a UK body. That will undoubtedly cause difficulties for commercial companies.

Were the language broadcast funds to be transferred, where would the money come from? It is unrealistic to believe that London will simply hand this over, so who will pay for it? Will it come out of an already small DCAL budget, or will the BBC have to fund it out of the licence fee? Has consideration been given to the impact on local programming? In the future, will English-language programmes be competing against minority-language programmes?

I am aware that, from an Ulster-Scots perspective, the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund has struggled to live up to its potential. A concern about the amount of Ulster-Scots content has been raised with Northern Ireland Screen, and certainly a substantial improvement in the project-proposal process is required. Perhaps the Minister might look instead to how she could improve what we have in place. An appropriate way forward could be to develop the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund so that it has the ability to commission programmes. No doubt, there are issues for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund that have actually prompted this debate. That is why we are here today.

Call me cynical, but I do not believe that the rationale for the motion is the benefit of Northern Ireland at this time. I believe that the party on the opposite Benches is at risk of politicising both languages in a way that they have not been before, and I suggest that the Minister look at other ways to address the issue rather than the one that she is pursuing. My party will not be supporting either the motion or the amendment, and a petition of concern has been tabled to ensure longer-term consideration of this matter.

Ms Lo: The Alliance Party firmly believes that culture should be a source of enrichment to all. We recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in linguistic diversity. As laid out in the Good Friday Agreement, we must do what we can to promote that.

It is no secret that my party wants to see a fully comprehensive languages Act. That Act would include not only indigenous minority languages but minority ethnic languages and sign languages. The motion calls for the transfer of broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to DCAL, no doubt with the view that a Northern Ireland Minister is better qualified to address issues facing broadcasting here than a Minister in Westminster.

4.30 pm

There are obvious arguments on both sides, so it makes sense to look at the findings from Wales and Scotland, which have explored the possibility of devolving broadcasting powers. The Calman Commission, which looked at devolution in Scotland, did not recommend the further devolution of broadcasting to the Scottish Government, except that the Scottish member of the BBC Trust should be appointed by Scottish Ministers. The Richard Commission, which looked at Welsh devolution after the first Assembly, also did not recommend that broadcasting be devolved. The general consensus from across the devolved Administrations is that greater influence can be sought over broadcasting by examining other proposals, such as devolved Administrations making appointments to the BBC Trust and Ofcom or devolving community radio licensing decisions. There is room for improvement.

The Ofcom review of broadcasting in the regions in 2009 led the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee to write a report on television broadcasting in Northern Ireland. The Ofcom review highlighted that there was an absence of the portrayal of everyday life in Northern Ireland that did not focus on the Troubles and that we felt left behind in broadcasting terms. Although there is a need to cater more for indigenous minority viewers, perhaps, rather than focusing too much on the devolution of broadcasting, it makes sense to make improvements under the current structures.

I wonder whether Members in the Chamber are aware that there is a five-minute programme on Radio Ulster that is broadcast in Cantonese. It is called 'Wah Yan Jee Sing', and it is broadcast every Wednesday evening. Although short, that programme is an example of adapting to local needs.

The Northern Ireland Executive does not have the best track record of agreeing on public policy challenges that relate to the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots dialect. For example, the Irish language strategy has not appeared, despite the Good Friday Agreement stipulating that there should be one. The Irish language strategy consultation finished in November 2012, and responses were published in April 2013. I am not aware of any further developments. Perhaps the Minister could update us on that. Likewise, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) was recently unable to agree a report to the EU on language issues. My point is that, if broadcasting and funding were devolved, would they really improve the quality of locally relevant programmes, or are we just attempting to politicise languages?

The SDLP amendment seems to be the more sensible suggestion. An independent panel would need to thoroughly scrutinise the viability of this proposal, specifically on the issue of costings. Would we be able to fund this ourselves without the subsidies from the rest of the UK's licence fee payers? At the risk of sounding blunt, it strikes me that there is little point in devolving broadcasting into a situation in which decision-making can be slow or, indeed, characterised by total deadlock. That has particularly been the case —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Ms Lo: — on matters that relate to languages and other cultural issues.

Mr Irwin: On the surface, the motion appears to be a request for an undertaking of considerable magnitude. As the vice-Chair of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, I can say that this issue has not been on the table for discussion in any great detail in the Committee. It seems, therefore, to be an issue that should be subject to an in-depth discussion in the Committee as a first step. That would allow Members from all parties to fully debate and discuss the ramifications of such a proposal based on research and, indeed, an informed foundation.

I do not believe that the motion that is before the House is the appropriate method of reaching any sort of consensus, especially when Members are really only getting a short time to give their views in the House without the formal intervention of the Committee, based on its usual methods of investigation and evidence gathering. I am therefore very reluctant to endorse the motion, and I would value the input of our Committee's resources to explore this issue to really get a firm grip on issues such as pricing and any appetite for such a transfer.

I hasten to add that I do not get the remotest sense that there is an appetite for this type of devolved function, and with the current arrangements in place until 2016 with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Northern Ireland Screen, and with no issues previously raised with that arrangement, I am at a loss as to why the motion has been brought to the Floor.

Further to that, I am concerned that this has not been raised at the Executive, which is where such an issue should be discussed. On the basis of those facts alone, I do not intend to say any more on the issue until a proper investigation of the situation has been carried out.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Beidh mé ag labhairt i bhfabhar an rúin seo agus ba mhaith liom cúpla focal a rá faoin leasú fosta.

I support the motion, which calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for the transfer of broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed. That would be very much in line with the organic and considerable development of the language and culture indigenous to this region. It is work that will consolidate and strengthen local film and television production and secure jobs in the sector.

I declare an interest as in 2002 I trained on the first Irish Language Broadcast Fund sponsored training course on film and television production, which was held at Springvale. That opened many doors for all who participated, then and since. Indeed, when I look at the individuals and companies still producing for broadcast on BBC, TG4 and RTÉ, as well as in film production, I realise the economic potential in this. More than half of those who trained on the first course are still actively involved in the industry. Many more have been involved since.

People like Pilib MacCathmhaoil from Tobar Productions have been prolific at supplying fascinating programmes that have been broadcast locally and exported, adding value to the tourism potential for the region. Likewise, Meadh Uí hÍr from Stirling Film and Television Productions, Helen Bergin, Martin Campbell, Sinéad Ingoldsby and many others, have contributed positively to

the image of the North and promotion of the languages. The economic benefits of that cannot be quantified, but they are undoubtedly of great economic importance and job potential.

There is a call in the other devolved regions for powers and responsibilities to be transferred, and there is also a desire that broadcasting become more localised and relevant to the areas where TV and film is produced. Other countries across Europe have already devolved a greater level of responsibility for broadcasting than there is in Britain or here. That has meant a more balanced product in places such as Catalonia, Germany and Spain. Greater autonomy in broadcasting policy will undoubtedly result in a better local product.

The commitment under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which has been signed up to by the British Government, states that resolute action should be taken to promote the minority languages. What better way to do that than encourage broadcasting in those languages? Article 11 of the European Charter is clear in the responsibilities of Governments towards the development of TV channels in minority languages. Likewise, the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement have committed the British Government to protect and enhance both Irish and Ulster Scots. Again, what better way to do that than through the most popular medium of film and television? The significant and increasing numbers of people who speak Irish and have an interest in Ulster Scots need to adequately catered for.

I am not 100% convinced that what the amendment proposes is critical to the transfer and mainstreaming of the language funds, but I remain open to the idea and can support the amendment. However, I am at a loss as to why a petition of concern has been brought forward and can only make assumptions on that matter. I support the motion and the amendment.

Mr Hilditch: This is a rather complex and confusing issue. Like others, I am somewhat surprised to see this motion before the House. Most motions that come before the House are of a topical nature or have a background of the relevant Committee having undertaken some investigatory work. However, even the research papers that have been made available appear to struggle to put any meat on the bones. It is like a proposal that has been plucked from the sky — not Sky TV — perhaps in more ways than one.

I do not believe that there is a lobby out there to have the current arrangements changed, other than a willingness to enhance the resources for existing local programming, which sits nicely with inclusion on the national network. One of the main concerns is around the infrastructure and capabilities of such a small area, with a population really equivalent to a large city. Where would the additional finance and resources come from? I would hazard a guess that that would be substantial. What would the governance arrangements entail, and how would protection be afforded on a number of fronts? Ms Lo spoke about a few of those issues.

Those are not just my questions. Last week, having seen the topic on the agenda for debate, I sought some views and opinions from people in my community. I did not get particularly positive feedback. Most people felt that a small Department such as DCAL could do a lot more to make additional resources available for local

programming, which has been mentioned. That would be a realistic step for the Department to take initially. Many will remember in the area of sport, particularly Irish League football, that when budgets were tight and resources were being prioritised, that was the type of programming that suffered. The reality is that, when many of the priorities of the current Government are assessed, this issue will not register on the radar for a vast majority of our people, particularly with the choice of broadcasting options available, of which there are a number already clearly catering for cultural diversity. Why reinvent the wheel? It cannot just be a case of devolution for devolution's sake. We must see clear benefits.

It is true that my party has put down a petition of concern on the matter, and, I believe, rightly so, because there is a distinct lack of information and clarity at this time. Questions also arise as to the responsibility for decision-making in this process. One would have thought that this would be a clear matter for the Northern Ireland Executive and not just an opportunity today — hopefully, not an opportunity for a party, group or Department — to go off on a solo run or act outside the Executive. That said, I have listened to the debate, and I look forward to further answers and information being made available.

Mr Swann: The motion talks about broadcasting but, having listened to some of the debate, it seems to be more about extensive additional funding for languages. To make things clear, our overarching policy is to support a minority languages strategy. However, the motion continues to judge the subject in an old measurement of orange or green. Ms McCorley referred to that in her opening statement when she talked about the disparity between the Irish language body and the ability of the Ulster-Scots language body. There is simply no point in this motion, other than it being simply another one of Sinn Féin's cheap power games and an attempt to detach Northern Ireland from the UK as much as possible.

It amazes me that such an important issue as this has not come before the Committee or the Executive. I remember my time on the CAL Committee when the BBC in Northern Ireland was talking about reducing jobs and the cutbacks that it was facing because of financial restrictions being placed by the BBC centrally. The party that is bringing this motion was one of the most vociferous that the BBC should retain its funding, its licence fees and as many BBC jobs as possible in Northern Ireland. If this power were devolved to Northern Ireland, it confuses me how we would somehow have enough funding to maintain the jobs, the quality of broadcasting and everything else that was fought for at that time.

We already have local-content broadcasting in Northern Ireland. The BBC has a division called BBC Northern Ireland with headquarters in Belfast. As well as broadcasting standard UK-wide programmes, BBC Northern Ireland produces local content, including a news breakout called 'BBC Newline'.

4.45 pm

I refer to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's third report of the 2009-2010 session. Recommendation 4 of the report was:

"We welcome the BBC's commitment to raise its level of production in Northern Ireland to a level broadly

proportionate to Northern Ireland's population share of the UK. We note that it intends to do so by 2016, but strongly urge the BBC to make every effort to reach 3% of production from Northern Ireland more rapidly than that and to treat the 3% target not as a 'ceiling', but as a minimum."

I think that that is where the Minister's efforts would be better placed. Rather than looking for devolution of the BBC powers, she should be working to make sure that those targets are being met and that we in Northern Ireland are getting as much out of the BBC as we can.

That report also recommended:

"the Minister for Creative Industries visits Northern Ireland as soon as possible, and thereafter, at least once a year subsequently to become fully acquainted with the broadcast environment there."

I ask this question to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and to the party that has proposed the motion: have you engaged with the relevant UK Minister, rather than simply making calls on the Secretary of State, as you are now, to bring about the devolution of the matter?

Mr Ó hOisín referred to the Irish language and how important it is, as did Ms Lo. In the 2011 census, 11% of the population of Northern Ireland claimed some knowledge of Irish, and 3.7% reported being able to speak, read, write and understand Irish. In another survey from 1991, 1% of respondents said that they spoke it as their main language, as do only 25% of people in the Republic of Ireland. We must accept the fact that society has moved on and that we are now a multicultural and multilingual society. Since 1998, we have seen an influx of people from a number of European countries including Portugal, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. We also have a significant number of Chinese speakers in the Province. Those are minority languages, and I would argue that all of them are used in everyday speech by more people in the Province than speak Irish.

Given how little we do with the powers that Stormont currently has in a variety of fields, I am not persuaded that now is the time to consider devolving yet more powers in an area as influential and central to public thinking as broadcasting. I oppose the motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. While we are discussing broadcasting, it is ironic that someone has a mobile phone that is playing havoc with the recording system. I am sure that it is causing great difficulties for Hansard. Members, please check your mobile phones.

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a thabhairt daoibh as an rún a mholadh, agus ba mhaith liom tacaíocht a thabhairt dó. *[Interruption.]* That is my Irish teacher telling me that I am doing well. *[Interruption.]* I do not know what that is about.

I thank the Members for bringing the motion to the House. It is important to have this debate on broadcasting, the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund. Even though broadcast responsibilities and powers are a reserved matter, as Members pointed out, I am committed, where possible, to ensuring that the specific characteristics and needs of the North are fully considered in the development of a broadcasting policy.

I fully support the motion to explore the potential for transferring broadcasting powers to the Assembly.

There has been various correspondence, and, indeed, a meeting as recently as a few days ago. I have written to Jeremy Hunt and met and written to Ed Vaizey since taking up office. I recognised the significant impact that film and television production has had on our local creative industries and our economy. I wrote to encourage and support the introduction of a television drama tax incentive similar to the incentive provided for film. I continue to want to ensure that there is full, authentic, accurate and more up-to-date portrayals of the North on the networks, which will show us a fuller picture of a modern and evolving society. I also want to make sure that the role that diverse groups play in our society is reflected and that people are not portrayed by a single or singular aspect of their identity, such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religious or political opinion.

In the past, I believe that British broadcasters have neglected their obligation to here, leaving it relatively invisible on some of their networks. We were the least well served region with regard to the network production that reflected and portrayed our culture and way of life, and in the amount of network programming produced here.

The situation has improved slightly, but there is still some way to go. In order to explore how best this can be achieved, I have had a series of productive meetings with relevant stakeholders to explore how the commissioning of locally made programmes can be increased and how opportunities for local companies improved.

Broadcasting is of enormous democratic, economic and cultural importance. The content broadcast on the BBC, RTÉ, Channel 4, TG4 and UTV touches all our lives here and shapes our opinions on local and international subjects, yet broadcasting policies and funding remain the responsibility of Westminster. TV is an extremely powerful medium of cultural expression in the modern world, and what is or is not broadcast on television massively influences almost every facet of life. That applies to whether local GAA, rugby or soccer matches are available on our televisions; the way that news is reported and presented; what regions appear most often on our screens; arts coverage; whether the North is portrayed in television drama on any of the channels; and, equally importantly, what image of the North is portrayed to the rest of these islands and beyond.

Broadcasting is also of huge economic value, with higher-than-average-value jobs. We have, through the Programme for Government, prioritised the importance of the creative industries. Broadcasting is the anchor for all development within the creative industries. Broadcasting is incredibly important, but if the Assembly has no real power or direct influence over broadcasting, whether on the BBC, RTÉ, Channel 4, TG4 or UTV — we can work only around the margins with stakeholders to ensure that citizens of the North are well served by the broadcasting services for which they pay.

With government responsibility for broadcasting being held at Westminster, there is a huge accountability gap. The Assembly should have a say on the future of broadcasting here and the licensing of broadcasters — in the case of the BBC, a charter — must at the very least include a mechanism that makes the broadcasting companies

accountable and answerable to the Assembly. Minister Foster and I wrote to Ofcom stressing that there should be a guaranteed quota of programming produced here. That was in response to Channel 4 having a poor track record in commissioning programmes from the North. Rather than making that point through a consultation, in which it may or may not be taken seriously, I believe that we should have the statutory right to influence that decision by Channel 4, which has had a massive impact here.

The BBC charter will be renewed soon. The last time that it was renewed, no one here had any say over the commitments that the BBC made to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It all took place behind closed doors, yet the consequences of that charter included many job losses in the local BBC and its services. It also, once again, failed to ensure that we received full cultural and economic value from the BBC network production that our population size and devolved status demand.

So, the BBC in particular, but not on its own, should not be able to short-change any of us. If we have a role in the regulation and accountability of the BBC and other broadcast networks, we could ensure that the North is properly represented and valued across the whole networks. It is clear to me that audiences here are not getting the broadcast service that they deserve. Broadcasting power and production have seldom moved beyond the south-east of England, and our production facilities have remained largely dependent on network commissioning.

Broadcasting and television production are at the heart of our creative industries. They are increasingly becoming a powerhouse industry, a significant employer, a sizeable generator of wealth and one of the keys to the future prosperity of all economies. We have produced and will continue to produce talented writers, directors and producers, but many of them have had to leave our shores to find success, and that is not acceptable. I want our creative talent to have the opportunity to be successful while living and working here. Devolving broadcasting powers would bring that possibility closer.

The Irish Language Broadcast Fund has been extremely successful from the outset, delivering high-quality Irish language programming and, equally importantly, a steady stream of trainees every year since 2006. The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund has been successful in producing high-quality Ulster-Scots content. The Irish Language Broadcast Fund supports a range of great programming, including recent local dramas 'Seacht' and 'Scúip'. Outside the BBC's small in-house budget, the fund provides all support for Irish language programming in the North and supports many training schemes and apprenticeships.

The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund has also supported programming of cultural importance in the North, such as a documentary on the Ulster covenant and recent documentaries on forgotten people, such as Amy Carmichael and Lord Kelvin. Those critical language and cultural funds are controlled exclusively by DCMS, and their future is unclear. However, there are very positive indications from Westminster that the funding may be secured beyond 2015-16. It is wrong that we have no control over the funds and cannot ensure that they have a future funding mechanism, like the 10-year renewing commitments made to the BBC, that is appropriate to their importance.

I want to touch on comments made by Members during the debate. It is any Member's prerogative to table a motion. Members do not need Committee consent to do so, and I do not think that the Committee was saying that. Rosaleen McCorley, in moving the motion, outlined the importance of legislation and said that commitments were made in legislation to broadcasting and, certainly, to the Irish language and Ulster-Scots broadcast funds.

On the amendment proposed by Karen McKeivitt, I have nothing to fear from an independent advisory panel. Anything that provides more accountability is better. However, it is rich of the SDLP to lecture my party on its commitment to the Irish language given that it has never raised the issue. It certainly did not raise it at any negotiations on the Programme for Government's commitments. I am happy to support the amendment because it is about greater transparency.

On the contribution from the Chair and others, this debate, like any other, is really about scoping out where there is need. It is disappointing that the motion and amendment were not supported and were on the receiving end of a DUP blocking mechanism. It is important that we scope out what is good for devolution and, particularly, for people in the creative industries. At that stage, you have to go in front of the Executive and through the whole process for an Order in Council and Executive consent. It was never going to be the case that this would be done as a solo run. I find it strange that people have taken defensive positions, particularly on broadcasting funds that provide opportunities in areas that have not received the attention that they deserve.

I am very happy that the debate has happened. We need debates, particularly when we do not agree, because that is how we ascertain people's opinion.

In conclusion, I support the motion unreservedly. I have already raised some broadcasting issues with Theresa Villiers and intend to do so again at further meetings. I welcome the opportunity to explore the potential to transfer broadcasting powers and the mainstreaming of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund. I will continue to take that forward.

I accept that the devolution of broadcasting requires complex policy discussions comprising of constitutional, economic, cultural and other elements that will require considerable expert analysis. I am not naive to that at all, and I do not think that the Members who proposed the motion are either. However, that should not prevent us from doing what is right and fair to people here. If the Executive had responsibility for broadcasting, we would be in a much better place to take action to realise the potential of the broadcasting industry. It is an industry that needs our support.

I support the motion and the amendment. Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Éirím an babhta seo le tacaíocht a thabhairt don leasú agus le hachóimriú a dhéanamh ar an díospóireacht inniu.

My party supports the principle that we should investigate seriously the transfer of broadcasting powers. However, we believe that it would be important to establish an independent advisory panel to assess the viability of that

transfer and that of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund.

I realise that a valid petition of concern has been laid down. I think that that it is rather heavy-handed, as Mrs McKeivitt said, because, as far as I know, there is nothing to stop the Minister establishing an advisory panel and scoping out the issue whether the Assembly votes the motion through or not. So it is a little over the top to have a petition of concern on this one.

5.00 pm

Let us start off with the first part of the motion, which is to do with the transfer of broadcasting powers. What should an independent advisory panel do to help assess the advantages of such a transfer? To my mind, widespread and informed consultation is needed with the major stakeholders about the powers that could be usefully and effectively transferred. How would that be done? Would it be done through Westminster legislation? Would we have our own communications Act here? Would we be asking for all powers or just some powers?

If all powers were to be transferred, what would the implications be for existing broadcasters and broadcasting? Would we still have a regional BBC, for example, or would we have to set up our own regional public service broadcasting company here? If so, how would we finance that? Would we collect the licence fee here ourselves? If we did, would there be enough resources in that to fund a regional public broadcasting company? What would the future relationship be with the BBC under such circumstances? Would we have to buy in BBC network productions and could we afford to do that? Would local production companies lose the facility to bid for BBC network productions, which take in larger resources and are a major element in sustaining the film industry here?

Those are all important and relevant questions that we need to examine closely and consult on. We believe that an independent panel is the best way to do that. The panel should also look at ways of ensuring that international agreements such as the Good Friday Agreement are enshrined in the broadcast and production structure as appropriate in any future legislation. We believe that, as part of its terms of reference, the panel should look at ways of guaranteeing that sufficient funds are made available to the Irish language and Ulster-Scots broadcasting funds. It should help to ensure that the level of such funding reflects the growing interest in both languages.

We note that the Deloitte report on the Irish Language Broadcast Fund gave it a very clear endorsement. There is a necessity for the index-linking of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund to be within the remit of an independent panel. I believe that such a panel should examine whether funding is best mainstreamed in the block grant or in the DCMS budget. The panel should also look at the need to establish a long-term broadcasting framework for Northern Ireland that would ensure a stable and well-funded television landscape to serve the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots communities.

Such a framework should have the potential to create sufficient opportunity for the continuing —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr D Bradley: — and wider distribution of programming in the Irish language and Ulster Scots, and —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr D Bradley: — the potential to use programmes in Scotland and the rest of Ireland.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I support the motion and I do not have any problem with the amendment.

The motion asks the Assembly to support a call for the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to meet the Secretary of State to explore:

“the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed.”

The recent investigation by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster showed that programmes about everyday life in Northern Ireland were, in the Committee report's own terms, almost invisible, the reason being that major television companies, which are mostly centred around London, had failed to commission such programmes.

The director of the BBC in Northern Ireland, Peter Johnston, said that he:

“accepted that Northern Ireland had not received sufficient attention in the past”.

The Chairman of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee said that it found serious neglect of its public service broadcast responsibilities, and the Committee further called on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to take its responsibility for broadcasting in Northern Ireland more seriously and for the Minister with responsibility for broadcasting to visit the Province to find out more about local broadcasting difficulties. At present, Northern Ireland is the least served of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in network product and also in the amount of network that is produced here. It also fares worst in the provision of minority-language broadcasting.

The St Andrews Agreement of October 2006 committed the UK Government to working with the incoming Executive to protect and enhance the development of the Irish and Ulster-Scots languages. It is interesting that Wales and Scotland are in the same frame of mind. There is no better time for the Minister to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for transferring the broadcasting process. Any discussion should also include the funding that has been set aside for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund.

We are told that one of the reasons for keeping broadcasting here as a reserved matter is so that finances can be pooled to allow major investment to be made in a range of programmes. However, that is in stark contrast to the findings of the Westminster Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. So, let us have the discussion between the Minister and the Secretary of State. What is there to fear? Why, today, do we have a petition of concern? Does the

party on the opposite Benches not trust the Westminster Government, or has paranoia taken over? There are so many checks and balances to go through that nobody should be scared of any discussions. That is what this is all about: pure discussion.

I will comment on some of the things that were said. It was interesting to hear what Michelle McIlveen, the Chairman of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure, had to say. She said that the Committee is in support of more programmes but that it needs more time to debate the issue. That is fine. However, she also said that the DUP supports devolution. I wonder, then, why we have a petition of concern. She said that broadcasting needs to be responsive to its customers, and that is what we are asking it to do: be responsive to their customers. That is what part of the discussion will be about. Those discussions will then come back to us.

Rosie McCorley talked about creating an environment for programmes that are based locally. There has been movement on that in recent years but very little, and it has been done in a very haphazard way.

Karen McKeivitt talked about an independent advisory panel. There may be merit in that, and, again, it could be worthy of discussion. Such a body would have the same remit and spread as the Welsh model. Again, we looked into that a wee bit, and we are not far away from the Welsh model. It is having the same problem.

William Irwin stated that the subject should be discussed at the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee. That is something that the Committee can bring forward.

Robin Swann called the matter a "cheap" Sinn Féin power game. The only people in here today who talked about power games, cheap political games or anything to do with politics or power were from the party on the opposite Benches. Nobody from the Sinn Féin Benches mentioned that at all. We put the programme in front of you. However, as soon as we talk about the Irish language or languages at all, the wagons circle and the shutters go up, and we are talking about cheap power games. You talk about how we fought to retain jobs at the BBC. We did, and we are quite proud of that. However, what we are talking about today, which is having discussions to get broadcasting brought back here, could also create jobs. We do not know that, and you cannot guess what is going to happen until you discuss it. It may be that it will not come about, but, until we know better, it should at least be discussed to see whether it could create jobs. To go down the road of cheap politics like that, to use your pun, takes away from your own argument and actually adds to our argument.

David Hilditch did not believe that there is a lobby out there, but there is a very strong lobby out there. People kept talking about finance, where all that was coming from and who was going to pay etc. They are quite legitimate questions to ask, but those are the sorts of questions that can be brought back after negotiations, talks or meetings between the Minister here and the Secretary of State. Those are the kinds of things that we can find out and bring back to the relevant Committee and the Assembly. I do think they are relevant questions, and those are the kinds of questions that I would expect people to ask, but they are the kinds of things that you would find out through any meetings like that.

I support the motion and the amendment. I ask the Assembly to think about it overnight and, if you vote on it tomorrow morning, vote positively and support the Minister to have those tentative talks. We have a long way to go on that if talks take place. It is not a power game or cheap politics. It is something that a sizeable number of members of the community would like.

Mr Deputy Speaker: As petitions of concern have been tabled on both the motion and the amendment, the votes will be taken as the first item of business tomorrow morning.

Adjourned at 5.11 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 26 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers: Petition of Concern

Mr Speaker: The first item of business will be the deferred votes on the motion and the related amendment on the transfer of broadcasting powers. I remind Members that both votes require cross-community support.

Motion proposed [25 November 2013]:

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed. — [Ms McCorley.]

Amendment proposed [25 November 2013]:

Leave out all after the second "Department" and insert

"through the establishment of an independent advisory panel in order to assess the viability of any potential transfer and of the transfer and mainstreaming of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund." — [Mrs McKeivitt.]

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 44; Noes 47.

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Unionist:

Mr B McCrea.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mrs McKeivitt and Mr McKinney.

NOES

Unionist

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Anderson and Mr Clarke.

<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>Total Ayes</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>[48.4%]</i>
<i>Nationalist Votes</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>Nationalist Ayes</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>
<i>Unionist Votes</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>Unionist Ayes</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>[2.1%]</i>
<i>Other Votes</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Other Ayes</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>

Question accordingly negatived (cross-community vote).

Main Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 36; Noes 56.

AYES

Nationalist:

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Ms McCorley and Mr Ó hOisín.

NOES

Unionist:

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton,

Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Anderson and Mr Clarke.

<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>Total Ayes</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>[39.1%]</i>
<i>Nationalist Votes</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>Nationalist Ayes</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>
<i>Unionist Votes</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>Unionist Ayes</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>[0.0%]</i>
<i>Other Votes</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Other Ayes</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>[0.0%]</i>

Main Question accordingly negated (cross-community vote).

Ministerial Statement

North/South Ministerial Council: Education

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. A Cheann Comhairle, le do chead, ba mhaith liom ráiteas a dhéanamh i gcomhlíonadh alt 50 de Acht Thuaisceart Éireann 1998 faoin chruinniú den Chomhairle Aireachta Thuaidh/Theas i bhformáid oideachais. Tionóladh an cruinniú in Ard Mhacha 8 Samhain 2013. Mr Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make a statement in compliance with section 52 of the NI Act 1998 regarding a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in education format.

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair)

The meeting was held in Armagh on 8 November 2013. I, as Minister for Education, represented the Executive along with the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland MLA. The Irish Government were represented by Ruairí Quinn TD, Minister for Education and Skills. Tá an ráiteas seo aontaithe leis an Aire McCausland agus tá sé a dhéanamh thar ceann na beirte againn. The statement has been agreed with Minister McCausland and is made on behalf of both of us. I will summarise the main points from the meeting, which range across all the agreed areas of education cooperation.

11.00 am

Since the previous NSMC meeting in February, there has been very successful engagement between both Departments on a collaborative work programme. I commend the successful high-level engagement between both Departments to agree the future education work programme, which includes joint inspection reports on literacy and numeracy, initiatives to address educational underachievement and disadvantage, and work to promote good school leadership. Further progress in that area will be reported at the next meeting, which is scheduled for April 2014.

At the meeting, we noted the report of the two education inspectorates on the structured cooperation between them, which includes participation in professional development programmes, inspector exchanges, joint inspections of specialised projects, and regular meetings of the senior management teams of both inspectorates. I look forward to a further update on that at April's meeting.

I remain committed to the expansion of services at the Middletown Centre for Autism. I am delighted that the centre has commenced its expansion of services and is already delivering support to an additional number of children referred to it by the education and library boards. I am also pleased to report that the refurbishment works to provide accommodation for newly recruited staff has been completed, as have two model classrooms to support the training of professionals. A number of the additional staff appointed to deliver the expansion of services have taken up post, with others due to start in the coming weeks. The expansion of services in the North will enable a larger number of children to receive direct support from the centre. That will be invaluable to some of our most vulnerable children with complex autism.

Other ministerial colleagues and I were pleased to hear about the continuing work to progress implementation of the recommendations made in the joint inspectorate report on the Dissolving Boundaries North/South programme. It was particularly pleasing to note the increased focus on self-evaluation of the projects being taken forward. Minister Quinn and I welcome the continuing support given by the Education Departments to all-island initiatives promoting literacy and numeracy through Maths Week Ireland and Children's Books Ireland.

We noted that the work of the educational underachievement working group has been reviewed and that the group will now have a greater focus on social-based policies with an intended educational outcome. The group will focus initially on three strands of work linked to those social-based policies: international benchmarking studies; school-based and social interventions to address educational underachievement; and the impact of preschool placements on primary-level performance. I welcome that change of focus, which complements my own priorities for improving educational outcomes for our most disadvantaged young people.

We also noted that work is ongoing between the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate on the production of two North/South joint inspectorate reports on best practice guidelines in literacy provision at post-primary level and numeracy provision at post-primary level. That continuing cooperation between the two inspectorates is to be welcomed. I am very pleased to be informed about the continued success of the collaboration of our inspectorates, North and South, and look forward to receiving, early in 2014, a copy of the joint report relating to literacy in both jurisdictions and, later in 2014, a joint report on numeracy in the North and the South. I note the desire of the inspectors in both jurisdictions to build on the high-quality joint work that they have undertaken to date. I look forward to hearing more of their specific plans for extending the scope of the work that they do together.

On teacher qualifications, both Departments are progressing the implementation of recommendations for improving mobility contained in a joint report produced by the two teaching councils. A decision taken by the Teaching Council Ireland in December 2012 to waive the fee for the assessment of qualifications for teachers from the North who are accredited by the General Teaching Council here has now been implemented. Both teaching councils continue to work together to simplify assessment of teacher qualifications for the purposes of their registration with the Teaching Council Ireland. Although I recognise the constraints posed by the legislative frameworks within which both councils work and the differences in the policy frameworks in both jurisdictions, I have been encouraging officials from both Departments and councils to continue to pursue vigorously the removal, where possible, of all barriers to teacher mobility on the island.

The Marino Institute of Education and the University of Ulster have reached agreement on the provision of assistance and support to students from the North and border regions of Ireland wishing to undertake the An Scrúdu le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge and Oiriúnú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge. Under the agreement, candidates can avail themselves of a preparatory course for the Irish language requirement through the University

of Ulster's diploma in Irish language. St Mary's University College, Belfast, has indicated that it intends to apply to the Teaching Council Ireland (TCI) to deliver the Irish language qualification in the North of Ireland, possibly in an online format.

Work on the implementation of an extension of the North/South collaborative programme of work in the Irish-medium sector for the 2013-14 academic year has recently commenced. The extended programme, which has been approved by both Departments, includes the following activities and events: Gaelscoileanna Teo in Enfield, County Meath and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in Belfast conferences, which are two two-day events to provide 12 school leaders opportunities to reflect on leadership, school evaluation, good practice, planning and monitoring; and a blended learning project on numeracy and the development of mathematical language in Irish. This element, which will further develop work started by a working group of practitioners in earlier years of the programme, will involve three Irish-medium schools with support from Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) officers piloting resources developed to date.

At its last meeting in Dublin on 19 September 2013, the North/South teacher qualifications working group agreed to commission an independent evaluation of the programme to date. The working group is currently drafting the terms of reference for the evaluation. The working group is also giving consideration to widening the focus of the collaborative programme and taking a more strategic approach to its delivery.

Mar fhocal scoir, d'aontaigh na hAíri gur chóir go mbualfadh an Chomhairle Aireachta Thuaidh/Theas i bhformáid oideachais arís ar 2 Aibreán 2014. In closing, Ministers agreed that the North/South Ministerial Council in education sectoral format should meet again on 2 April 2014.

Mr Kinahan (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I thank the Minister for his statement to the House this morning. Members of the Education Committee will welcome what he has said about increasing provision for special educational needs and await with interest the outworking of further cooperation between the inspectorates in both jurisdictions, including the best practice guidelines on literacy and numeracy. We also welcome the measures that will enhance employment prospects for teachers qualifying in the Republic of Ireland.

The Minister has previously indicated on a number of occasions that the findings of his cross-border planning survey would be brought to a North/South Ministerial Council meeting. Can the Minister advise what has happened to his cross-border planning survey? Are people still studying the paperwork, or has he given the survey up as a bad job?

Mr O'Dowd: There has been no agreement to date to bring the survey forward to the North/South Ministerial Council in educational format, but that has not hindered its work. As the Member is aware — he welcomed the significant amount of work that is currently going on between both Departments — there is a significant programme of work being developed and implemented by both Departments. I await agreement on the survey being brought forward to the next meeting or perhaps the meeting after that, but it certainly does not hinder the work of the educational sectoral format working group.

Mr Craig: Minister, I note with interest what you said about educational underachievement and the three points that you have agreed to work around. They are all very good points that need further investigation, and I am glad to see that there is now a focus on school-based assessments on underachievement, as well. However, what I do not see on the list is a clear and consistent academic standard of assessment in primary schools. Maybe that group could look at that with regard to the entire island, because I have come across a problem that occurs when people move up into Northern Ireland and their secondary schools struggle to understand their achievement levels when they get there. I have no doubt that that works in reverse as well. Maybe that is something that this group could actually look at.

Mr O'Dowd: I note the Member's comments, which I am more than happy to pass on to the working group and ask it to investigate further. We want a situation in which teacher or student qualifications at primary, post-primary or university level enable students to travel across this group of islands, and schools are able to understand each other's qualifications.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I also welcome the ongoing work between the inspectorates and the fact that they appear to value that collaboration. In light of that, will the Minister outline what opportunities such collaboration might present to pupils across this island?

Mr O'Dowd: That question follows on from Mr Craig's question. Across this group of islands and, indeed, across this island, our educationalists have to understand each other's systems. That is particularly the case as far as the inspectorates are concerned. The inspectorates in both jurisdictions have valued and do value such cooperation. There is an ongoing learning experience and a sharing of resources when needed. That benefits our young people and ensures that educational standards are assessed and matched across this island and this group of islands so that our young people benefit from best practice, regardless of where it exists.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for his statement. I also welcome the collaborative work between the North and the South, particularly in dealing with educational underachievement. Minister, will you elaborate a wee bit more on the collaborative work to improve school leadership?

Mr O'Dowd: Again, that programme of work has been undertaken by the educational working group. It is a case of learning from each other's experiences: where strong leadership has worked, what practices and policies allowed strong leadership to develop and, indeed, what we can learn from strong leaders. We are fortunate to have many good school leaders across this island, and it is only right and proper that they have a facility to come together and learn from each other so that their best practice is shared across all school leaders, whether on this island or across this group of islands.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for his statement. I particularly welcome the section on the Middletown Centre for Autism, although the Minister's statement was necessarily in general terms. Will he give us any more detail on the number of children, North and South, who benefit from that centre and a bit more detail on its activities?

Mr O'Dowd: I have reported the number of children previously. I do not have the details in front of me, but I am happy to ensure that the Member receives them.

As far as the expansion of services that are delivered by the centre are concerned, the recruitment of 14 additional staff to deliver expanded services in both jurisdictions is progressing well. Refurbishment work for the previously mothballed and dilapidated residential block at Middletown is also now complete. The refurbishment provided modern office accommodation for staff and two model classrooms to assist with the training of professionals.

The cost of the expansion is being met on a 50:50 basis with the Department of Education and Skills in Dublin. The estimated cost to the Department of Education in year 1 of the expansion of services, on the basis of a full year's costs, will be £950,000, which is an increase of some £300,000 on current totals. That will rise to just over £1 million in year 2. It is estimated that the minor accommodation works to facilitate increased service provision will cost each Department around £90,000.

Although I do not have the exact numbers of young people in front of me, they are quite significant. I will share those with the Member after today's sitting.

Mr Newton: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, as an aside to my question, I wonder whether you will confirm something for me. In the statement, in the fifth paragraph under the heading "Teacher Qualifications", what I believe to be two qualifications or courses of study are mentioned only in Irish, without a translation into English. Many of us in the Chamber will have no idea what they mean. Perhaps the Minister will explain what they are when he answers my question.

My question to the Minister is very much along the same lines as my colleague's. On the issue of educational underachievement, the Minister indicated that he will focus on "social-based policies" — whatever that means. Let us hope that he will not follow social-based policies such as the free school meals criteria that have caused such a furore in our schools.

11.15 am

Mr O'Dowd: An Scrúdú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge and Oiriúnú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge are the titles of the examinations. They are qualifications in the proficiency of the Irish language. Those are not translations from English into Irish; they are the formal titles of the qualifications. I will send more information to the Member about both qualifications after the sitting.

It is without doubt or argument that social policy affects our young people's educational outcomes, as it will affect their health and other outcomes in life. I am on record — I re-emphasise it — as saying that I will continue to use free school meals until someone comes up with a better formula. To date, no one has.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I, too, thank the Minister for bringing the statement to the House. Following on from Mr Lunn's question, I, too, welcome the progress report on Middletown and the expansion of services into the North. Will the Minister assure the House that the good work by his Department and the boards will continue with Middletown, particularly the funding stream from his

Department, so that, across the board, more children and families will be able to continue to avail themselves of the services there?

Mr O'Dowd: I confirm that I will continue to support the work at Middletown, which, through no fault of its own, was, for a period, caught up in a political wrangle, but that has largely now been removed. After a very successful visit by the Education Committee to the centre, there is a greater understanding and promotion of its work. Any concerns that it was a political project rather than an educational and autism project have now been removed. I think that the vast majority of people are now fully behind, as am I, the work that is continuing in the centre.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a ráiteas. The Minister mentioned that St Mary's University College Belfast has indicated that it intends to apply to the Teaching Council Ireland to deliver an Irish language qualification, possibly in online form in the North of Ireland. Will the Minister say when that might happen?

Mr O'Dowd: There has been some delay in the project. When I was at the North/South Ministerial Council meeting, I asked for further clarification on why there has been delay. It is a programme of work to assist student teachers to achieve the proficiency in Irish that they require to teach in certain subjects or in certain formats in the South of Ireland. I have no reason to doubt that St Mary's is keen to follow through on that qualification. I am waiting for clarification on the delay.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a ráitis. Ba mhaith liom an cheist seo a chur ar an Aire: an raibh aon phlé ag an chruinniú faoi dhíluachú an ghráid A ag ard leibhéal i dtaca le hiarratais a sheoltar chuig an lár-oifig iontrála? I thank the Minister for his statement. I am pleased about the progress made on An Scrúdú le hAghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge. Was there any discussion at the meeting about the devaluing of the A-level grade in applications made to Irish third-level colleges through the Central Applications Office?

Mr O'Dowd: There were no discussions at that meeting about the A-level issue, but I assure the Member that it has been raised at several of the North/South Ministerial Council sectoral meetings that I have attended and at several of the meetings that my colleague attended when she was Minister. I am confident of Minister Quinn's support. He wants the matter to be resolved, as do I. The issue rests with the admissions authorities and universities in the South of Ireland, which, to date, have refused to give full points to the A-level qualification and the A* qualification. They have not recognised how the points systems for qualifications in the South of Ireland pose a disadvantage to some of our students. Somewhere in the region of 600 points is required to get into some of the universities, but they award only 150 points to an A level here. Most of our students study only three A levels; therefore, they are at an automatic disadvantage. That issue has been raised time and time again, and I believe that Minister Quinn is very supportive of our position and also wants to see the matter resolved. Continuing discussions and influence need to be brought to bear on the university bodies to ensure that they recognise our young people's qualifications and abilities.

It is also worth noting that, during the plenary session of the North/South Ministerial Council, Minister Quinn reported that he and Minister Farry are having a worthwhile engagement about students under their responsibility who are travelling back and forth across the border to further and higher education institutes. So, I think that the work on that issue will also prove to be productive, as will work on continuing to influence decision-makers about the A-level issue.

Mr Allister: So, under educational underachievement, we are to have even greater focus on social-based policies and more social intervention. There is no mention in the terms of reference of any focus on traditional teaching methods. Will the Minister spell out his understanding of the social interventions that he anticipates? Is his colleague who accompanied him, Mr Nelson McCausland, signed up to those social interventions?

Mr O'Dowd: International and local research points to the fact that 80% of a child's learning takes place outside the school and the classroom. It is not a case of having social interventions instead of educational interventions; to have a successful education system, you require both. Although we are fortunate to have many fine school leaders and teachers in our classrooms, we are asking them to operate with one hand tied behind their back if we do not also deal with the social issues affecting a child's educational outcomes.

That is not my research, and, as I said before, it is not Sinn Féin research; it is international best practice. If the Member, who is a very learned gentleman, refuses to accept the evidence, he will continue repeating the mistakes of the past. It is almost like asking our health system to run solely on the basis of acute hospitals. You will not have a successful health system solely on the basis of acute hospitals; you have to have all the other elements in place to secure good health. You cannot ask our education system to succeed only with good schools. We have to get the social issues and the social impact on young people right as well. We have to identify it and challenge it and assist schools, communities and families through those barriers.

Mr Dallat: I welcome the Minister's statement, particularly, the work that is being done on literacy and numeracy. The Minister will be aware that some of the people who are most affected by illiteracy and innumeracy are in our jails. Although the education of our young people in jail is not the Minister's direct responsibility, will he take it in hand to ensure that that group of people who would benefit most from these all-Ireland initiatives will benefit from them?

Mr O'Dowd: Yes, and, in fairness to the Member, he has raised that with me on several occasions. I can report back to him that I have had meetings with the Justice Minister about educational provision for young people in our justice system. Our discussions are continuing between my officials and the Justice Minister's officials about how that is transferred over to the Department of Education or how we can ensure that our young people in jails who would qualify for Department of Education courses and support on the outside are receiving that support so that they can have a chance in life and ensure that they can become valuable members of society when they get out of jail.

Mrs Dobson: I also thank the Minister for his statement. Minister, you welcome a change of focus in the educational underachievement working group's work.

In 2008, your predecessor said that tackling educational underachievement is a key priority for the North/South Ministerial Council. Why, then, have you and your predecessor, in your own words, allowed it to be out of "focus" for the past five years?

Mr O'Dowd: We have not. A programme of work in any body, institution, committee or organisation that is running for five years should surely be open to review, particularly in an area such as education, where research and findings are continually updated.

I welcome the fact that there is a change of focus now, because the work programme that the group was involved in has been completed or come to an end. It is now focusing on educational underachievement through social policies, which I welcome, because, as I said to Mr Allister, 80% of a child's learning takes place outside school and is impacted on by influences outside a school on that child. Therefore, that is an important area of work but one that in no way means that the previous work that the body was involved in was flawed or faulted. Rather, it means that the work has come to its natural conclusion.

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Accelerated Passage

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):
I beg to move

That the Road Races (Amendment) Bill proceed under the accelerated passage procedure.

I welcome the opportunity to address the Assembly on the motion. I am sure that Members will recall the terrible weather that led to the cancellation of this year's North West 200 in May, and subsequently the Dundrod 150 in August. That was the second time in three years that the North West 200 had been cancelled owing to rain, and that created the impetus for the Bill.

In accordance with Standing Order 42(3) of the Northern Ireland Assembly, I appeared before the Regional Development Committee on 9 October to explain the need for accelerated passage for the Bill and to outline the consequences of it not being granted. I thank the Chairman and members of the Committee for their recognition of the need to expedite the Bill and for their unanimous cross-party support in seeking Assembly approval for accelerated passage.

Use of accelerated passage is not something to be sought routinely, nor do I take it lightly. My preference when taking forward legislation is to have a full Committee procedure enabling clause-by-clause scrutiny and the resolution of any issue there and then to the satisfaction of the Committee. I will now explain to the Assembly, as is required under Standing Order 42(4), why I am seeking accelerated passage, the consequences of it not being granted and how I will minimise future use of the mechanism.

I believe that there are compelling grounds for the use of the accelerated passage procedure in this case. We have, I think, been presented with exceptional circumstances, because existing legislation requires applications for motor races on roads to be received and granted by my Department by 31 March annually. Once dates have been approved, they are cast in stone, as the existing legislation does not provide any flexibility to alter them. Consequently, where there is torrential rain that renders racing treacherous, such as was experienced at this year's North West 200, race promoters have only one option, which is to cancel the event.

If new, more flexible arrangements are to be introduced, they will need to be clearly understood by race promoters well in advance of applications being submitted so that potential contingency days can be identified and included in the applications. If the arrangements are to be in place for 2014, use of the accelerated passage procedure is imperative.

I will now deal with the consequences of accelerated passage not being granted. This is an important point. If accelerated passage is not granted, no flexibility can be introduced into race arrangements for the 2014 racing season. Consequently, in the event of further race cancellations occurring as a result of bad weather, major sporting events such as the North West 200 and the Ulster Grand Prix could be placed in jeopardy. I understand from one of the race promoters that a major sponsor may

reconsider its support if more cannot be done to ensure that racing takes place.

Road racing events have real value and are an asset that contributes not only to local economies but to Northern Ireland as a whole, through direct spend and the positive international media coverage arising from them. It would be a very poor reflection on the functioning of both the Executive and the Assembly if we did not move quickly to address the potential risk to these truly unique sporting events.

11.30 am

With regard to minimising the use of the accelerated passage procedure in the future, I have already mentioned my full commitment to clause-by-clause scrutiny at Committee Stage. I will take any necessary steps to ensure that the accelerated passage procedure is not unnecessarily sought.

Members will have an opportunity to raise issues on the detail of the Bill during its Second Stage debate. In the interim, I seek the support of the House for use of the accelerated passage procedure and look forward to hearing Members' comments.

Mr Spratt (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): I welcome the Minister's comments to the House this morning.

The Minister attended a meeting of the Committee for Regional Development on 9 October 2013. At that meeting, he outlined his reasons for seeking accelerated passage, which he has repeated to the House this morning. Following questions from members, I put the question that the Committee was content to grant accelerated passage. I note from the Official Report of the meeting that I indicated that the Committee was unanimous in approving accelerated passage.

Again, I confirm that the Committee for Regional Development is content that the Road Races (Amendment) Bill be granted accelerated passage.

Mr Allister: I oppose the provision of accelerated passage. The rules of the House require that that measure be taken only in exceptional circumstances. The circumstances here render it unnecessary and, indeed, prejudicial to the proper consideration of important issues that arise in the Bill.

As I understand it, the Regional Development Committee is one with no backlog of legislative work whatsoever — indeed, perhaps, no legislation whatsoever in front of it. So why it cannot complete its functions within 30 working days to bring the Bill back to the House in January and meet easily the deadline of 31 March is quite simply unexplained. Those are the sorts of issues that need to be explained if the House is properly to be persuaded that this is an exceptional situation. One could well understand it if the Regional Development Committee was snowed under with work on legislation. I do not think that there is any Committee in the House that is snowed under with work on Executive legislation. Certainly, the Regional Development Committee is not.

Accelerated passage prejudices the proper consideration, which hitherto has not been given to an important issue under the Bill. Under the Bill, we are to see a provision introduced whereby, on contingency days, for the first time,

we may well see Sunday racing on the public roads in the north-west and elsewhere. If that is to happen, surely there is one critical group of stakeholders. They were never even consulted by the Department in that regard. They are the churches, who actually operate on the very route.

There are four churches on the North West 200 route who, naturally, meet on Sundays, whom the Department never even contacted. Indeed, those churches learned of the legislation only when this MLA advised them of it. Why was there no attempt to consult the churches on the route? It is not enough to say, "We consulted generically with the nominations; we put them on our list". If four churches operate on the route, why were their views, conveniences and needs never even taken into account in the drafting of the Bill? Indeed, the Minister went to the Committee before he ever met the churches. He met the churches on the same afternoon after he had been to the Committee and persuaded it — it does not seem to have been too hard to do — to assent to accelerated passage. However, it is not just about churches; it is about the rights of the entire churchgoing community that lives on the North West 200 circuit. Many churchgoers do not attend those four churches, but, to get to their church of choice, they must travel the public roads, which means that, if Sunday is a contingency day, they are also placed at a disadvantage.

I wonder whether the Minister told the Committee that the local council — Coleraine Borough Council — carried out quite an extensive consultation and thought to meet the churches and take on board the views of the churchgoing community. I wonder whether he told the Committee that the council is opposed to that aspect of the Bill. Did he convey that to the Committee? If he did not, he left the Committee somewhat in the dark. I do not know whether he did or not: I am asking the question. Local representatives, channelled through the local council, have a view about the inappropriateness of Sunday being a contingency day because of the prejudice it brings to the churchgoing community, whose rights are to be trumped at the stroke of a pen. If the local council has reason to be opposed to that, why does the Committee want to rush its fences? If there has been no proper consultation with the affected churches, and the local council is opposed, why would the Committee not want to hold hearings? Why would it not want to hear from the local churches? Why would it not want to hear from the local council? I respectfully suggest that there is time to do all that within the 30 working days that are normally allocated, but all that is to be shut down by rushing the legislation.

Let me make it very plain: I am wholly supportive of the North West 200, the marvellous job that it does and the marvellous tourist operation that it runs, and I regularly attend the event. It is right that the leaders of the organisation should have had ministerial access, which they had. They met the First Minister and the roads Minister, but no one ever thought about the four churches that sit on the route. No one ever thought about speaking to them to find out how it would affect their Sunday functioning if Sunday were to be a contingency day or to discuss options. Those churches gladly facilitate the North West 200 operation every year by adjusting their week-night meetings to accommodate practice nights.

However, something is far more singularly important to churches than their week-night services. At the very heart of Christian worship and of the right of religious exercise

lies Sunday worship. Some might dismiss it and say, "What about it? It is one Sunday in a year. It might be only one Sunday in 10 years". To churchgoers, that is a relevant, important consideration. We should not rush to a situation in the House in which we say that the rights of road racing trump the rights of churchgoers. That is what the Bill does. The motion to subvert and avoid a Committee Stage means that the Bill will never be properly scrutinised. I think that the House has got ahead of itself on that issue.

I will say more in the Second Stage debate about the merits and demerits of the arguments, but it is a matter of surprise and regret to me that we want to shut off the issues from proper scrutiny and proper debate. For those reasons, I think that it is an ill-advised course of action.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Chair for outlining the Regional Development Committee's support for the request for accelerated passage. I have dealt with the need for accelerated passage to progress the Bill so that next year's road racing calendar can accommodate the change. It is a single-issue Bill designed for the purpose of giving contingency. I hear the comments of Mr Allister. However, because it is such a straightforward Bill and contains only one desire — to give that flexibility for contingency — I think that it is fair and reasonable in these circumstances to seek and obtain accelerated passage.

The Member will know and, I hope, acknowledge, that the Bill is not exclusive to the North West 200 but covers road races all over Northern Ireland. It is important that that is borne in mind. It is also important to confirm and highlight — again, the Member knows this — the fact that the present legislation does not preclude the prospect of Sunday racing, but it has never happened at the North West 200. It has happened in road racing and car racing in certain places in Northern Ireland, but the organisers of the North West 200 have never sought any facility to race on a Sunday.

The Member raised concern about the consultation that was undertaken. We will deal with that in the next stage of the Bill, subject to it gaining accelerated passage. I want simply to satisfy the House on the matter. I launched a Province-wide consultation on 10 July, which concluded on 7 October 2013. The launch was covered by radio and television, and I gave an interview to the BBC at the home of the North West 200. A press representative from 'The Coleraine Chronicle' was present, and the consultation was widely covered.

Mr Allister raised a point about consultation with Church organisations. My Department consulted the Belfast Hebrew Congregation, the Belfast Islamic Centre, Church of Ireland House, the Methodist Church in Ireland, the office of the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland — all of the Churches in my Department's equality scheme. Given the areas from which responses were received, I am content that adequate consultation took place. For the benefit of Members, of the almost 900 responses received, 92% were in favour of the Bill's proposals. Only 6% were opposed to the potential for Sunday racing, although that 6% otherwise supported the Bill.

11.45 am

The Member also raised a point about the consultation that Coleraine Borough Council organised separately. On 16 August, Coleraine Borough Council commenced a local consultation by issuing some 2,500 letters to residents and property owners within the North West 200 road racing circuit. Again, I stress that this legislation is not designed simply for the North West 200 but for road racing generally. The closing date for the council's consultation was 27 August 2013, so it ran from 16 August to 27 August, but recipients were advised that written comments could be forwarded to my Department by 7 October. So, in one way, that facility linked to the departmental consultation and clearly encouraged people to participate in it.

The council organised a public meeting in Portstewart town hall for Friday 20 August 2013. It is my Department's understanding that approximately 25 people were in attendance. We further understand that there were some 196 responses to the council's consultation, and the breakdown of those is as follows: 149 were in support of the Bill's proposals; four were in support but were opposed to the potential for Sunday racing; and 43 were opposed to the Bill. The Department is not aware of whether the council consulted the churches that are on the North West 200 course individually.

I reaffirm my belief that accelerated passage should not be used lightly, but I believe that, in this case, it is appropriate. I appreciate the Committee's indulgence in this case, and I ask for the Assembly's support for the position that all the parties on the Committee have adopted.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed to the Question, I remind Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That the Road Races (Amendment) Bill proceed under the accelerated passage procedure.

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Road Races (Amendment) Bill [NIA Bill 29/11-15] be agreed.

Although my Department has no responsibility for sporting policy, it facilitates motor races that are held on public roads by making the necessary road closing orders under the Road Races (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The 1986 order requires applications for motor races on roads to be submitted to and approved by my Department by 31 March annually. There is no provision in the existing legislation to enable race dates to be changed after the deadline of 31 March. That means that, where torrential rain would place the safety of competitors in jeopardy, race promoters cannot postpone races or bring them forward. They really have only one option, which is to cancel them.

Members may recall the case of the North West 200 this year. On Friday 17 May, which was the day immediately preceding the main race day, it was gloriously sunny. The race organisers were aware that the weather forecast for Saturday 18 was for heavy and continuous rain, yet they were powerless to bring the races forward to the Friday. A similar situation arose during the Ulster Grand Prix week in August, when the Dundrod 150 also had to be cancelled due to heavy rain because there was no flexibility available to change the date of the race.

Road racing events have value and contribute not only to the local economies but to Northern Ireland as a whole through direct spend and the positive international media coverage that arises from them. Road racing has become hugely popular, with major international events such as the Ulster Grand Prix and the North West 200 attracting thousands of spectators. They also attract considerable sponsorship from major international companies, often within the automotive and related industries. That sponsorship and the events that they support would be put in doubt if more cannot be done to ensure that races that are scheduled to take place here can be rescheduled, as they are in the Isle of Man whenever bad weather prevents them from taking place.

The Road Races (Amendment) Bill is straightforward. It has a single clause and a single purpose; namely, to introduce flexibility into existing road racing arrangements. My Department received almost 900 responses to the public consultation on the Bill, and 92% of respondents were fully in support of its aims.

The single clause in the Bill aims to provide some flexibility to enable race promoters to use a contingency day when racing would otherwise have to be cancelled. A "contingency day" must be one of the two days immediately preceding or following a day specified in a road closing order. In order for a race promoter to bring a contingency day into operation, he or she must apply to my Department not later than 24 hours before the contingency day or the day specified in the road closing order for the event. Such application and my Department's direction approving the contingency day may be dealt with electronically in the interests of time. For example, where approval is being sought for a race to be brought forward from a Saturday to a Friday, notice must be given by midnight on the Wednesday. Those new arrangements

will strike the right balance between providing adequate notice to property owners and businesses in any race area and securing accurate weather forecasts. The Bill does not propose to change any other aspect of existing road racing legislation.

Mr Spratt (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): I declare an interest as an individual who occasionally attends road racing events throughout the Province.

The Bill takes a sensible, pragmatic approach to the problems faced by the North West 200 earlier this year and the Dundrod 150 motor cycle race in August, as well as the 2008 Ulster Grand Prix, all of which were cancelled in similar circumstances. Those races have a significant impact on the Northern Ireland economy. The North West 200 generates £4.5 million a year for the local economy and is estimated that for every £1 of public money spent there is a return of £30.21. That is significant investment and needs to be protected.

There is, as the Minister said, significant public support for the amendment and what the Bill seeks to bring about. Among the in excess of 860 responses to the departmental consultation on the Bill were a number of objectors, mainly the ministers and congregations of churches on the routes of race meetings. The views of those congregations and parishes are important, and I take comfort from the assurances that we received from the Minister and race organisers that all efforts will be made to ensure that there is continued dialogue and that all arrangements are appropriate for residents, churches and businesses affected in the areas.

May I just take up on a point, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, that Mr Allister made about the work of my Committee? Mr Allister is inaccurate when he says that the Committee has had no legislation in front of it. In fact, my Committee recently took the Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) Bill through Committee Stage. We have completed a report on transport, which was presented to the House just last week. I cannot remember Mr Allister taking part in that debate, so obviously it was of no interest to him.

In the not too distant future, the Committee will commence a fourth inquiry. That is a very strong indication of the substantial and important work that we undertake. Indeed, the forward work programme is full, even for members of the Committee to get additional briefings in, even during the next session. So, I take no lectures from Mr Allister on the work of the Regional Development Committee.

In relation to the point that he made about Coleraine Borough Council, I confirm that the Minister was questioned and answered questions about the council's survey. So, again, Mr Allister's information is not fully up to speed.

I indicated earlier that the Committee supports accelerated passage and the principles of the Bill. It is good for the economy, good for sport in Northern Ireland and good for tourism. The Committee supports the Bill.

I turn now to some party remarks, leaving my Chair's hat behind. While we welcome the introduction of the Bill, it is important to balance the rights of the local community, including those of churches. That is something that

everyone on the Committee and in this House would want to do in relation to any Bill.

Some have expressed genuine concerns and fears about racing on a Sunday and the impact that that could have on people being able to attend places of worship. It is important that we address those concerns. There has not been racing on a Sunday, and there is no evidence that the organisers have any plans to change that. However, it is important that the legislation takes a long view. The existing legislation does not prohibit applications for road racing on a Sunday, but, by its nature, this piece of legislation would make that a greater possibility in the event of inclement weather on a Saturday.

We will return to this issue at the Consideration Stage, but I hope that we can agree arrangements that will give confidence, not only to the local community but to the race organisers and the sponsors of the event. I hope that I can count on the support of Members from across the Chamber on how we reach a best balance in relation to this matter. I support the Bill.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I am not a fan of road racing, nor am I against it. I have many family members who are fans of road racing and who attend it. I know its importance to the economy and tourism, which the Chair outlined.

From what the Minister outlined, I understand that there are sufficient safeguards in place. On behalf of Sinn Féin and as Deputy Chair of the Committee, I support the Bill. It makes sense that we have flexibilities for road racing similar to those that exist in the Isle of Man. I agree with other Members that there are compelling reasons for this Bill to have accelerated passage. We cannot afford to allow another year to pass before action is taken. I hope that the legislation does not have to be used too often, particularly for Sundays, because a number of people objected to that. I support the Bill.

12.00 noon

Mr Dallat: I declare an interest as a member of the Regional Development Committee. I wish to tell the House that I am suitably offended by the suggestion made about the Committee. As a member of that Committee, I am honoured to have Jimmy Spratt as the Chairperson. The Committee is very busy. It debated this subject at length, and the Chairperson gave us every opportunity to debate the pros and cons robustly. That is the truth of the matter.

I am not a motorbike fanatic either. I prefer to use my time travelling in my Morris Minor Traveller, which does not require fair weather, because the wipers actually work.

When I joined Coleraine Borough Council as a young person many years ago, I was against the race, because I did not like the idea of people risking their lives. I then had the privilege and honour of meeting Joey Dunlop and his brother Robert and became convinced that I needed to moderate my views and show respect for other people's sports.

Over time, I realised that Coleraine is not the affluent place that people think that it is. It has a very short tourist season, and, during the years of the Troubles, it was very difficult to fill beds. Today, I think that we are privileged to have that event, along with a few others, because it sustains the tourist industry not only in Coleraine, Portrush and Portstewart but in areas far beyond that. The fishing

lodge in Kilrea is filled to capacity not for a day or two but for a whole week. I frequently travel over to Donegal where I meet people who are visitors, so everybody benefits.

If the Bill were introducing Sunday racing, I could understand some of the criticism levelled by Mr Allister. However, that is not the reason for it. I listened to the organiser, Mervyn Whyte, last week, and the only other person I can think of who was as devastated as him was the captain of the Ireland team last Saturday. It was the second time that the race could not be finished.

If you travel up and down the M2 or the M1 a week or 10 days before the race, you really would not be very observant if you did not notice that there are hundreds if not thousands of motorbikes coming off the ferries. All those people are carrying well-filled wallets, and they spend the money in them.

Mr Spratt: I thank the Member for giving way. I know that he has an interest in the north-west area, but does he accept that this also applies, as I mentioned, to the Dundrod 150 and the Ulster Grand Prix, which is also a week-long event that provides considerable money for the economy, tourism and all the rest of it? Indeed, in recent years, the organisers of that event have been devastated on a number of occasions. They could have moved some of the races to the Friday or perhaps even the Wednesday, when the practice sessions take place.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Chairman for encouraging me to be less parochial about the Bill. I think that that is very important. I neglected that aspect, because I was getting carried away with the scenes back home, as I have very happy memories of the race. I have met people from Stornoway to Swansea and from Malin Head to the cove of Cork. Over the years, those people have built up astonishing relationships with local people whom they would never have met otherwise. It is not easy to evaluate that, but it is an important part of the road that we are on towards normality.

I am sure that Mr Allister will forgive me for saying this, but he is very privileged in that he has a holiday home in a prime spot that overlooks the pits. He must have noticed that this is a critical event that is fundamental to our tourist industry.

I also want to pay tribute to the officers of Coleraine Borough Council for their partnership approach and to the private sponsors down through the years, such as the Kennedy Group, Coca-Cola and other companies, which put their money where their mouth was and supported this. However, we all know that it had come to a stage when, if the finals of the race could not be run, it was over, and drastic steps had to be taken to ensure that that would not happen.

We all have our Christian views, and I do not wish in any way to interfere with the views of others, but, as a public representative, I am confident that the Bill will not be used in the north-west or anywhere else in Northern Ireland to promote a Sunday event if people do not want that. I am happy to support the Bill, and I pay tribute to those who have been involved in motorbike racing, some of whom lost their life. In the meantime, I will probably not attend the event because I will probably want to continue driving my Morris Minor, but I absolutely support that event and other events that help to create jobs for people who otherwise might be on the dole.

Mr Cree: I do not know whether I need to declare an interest, but I used to ride a motorbike. Mind you, coming from the Grand Prix, I never could get anywhere near the speed that they do nowadays. It is obviously a different ball game. However, I appreciate the merits of motor racing and motorcycle racing. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill this afternoon.

The consequences of the cancellation of the North West 200 twice in three years because of rain were significant to the local community and to the broader reputation of the race. We have to keep that in mind. This would be a great country if it had a roof. Although the cancellation of the North West 200 made the headlines, we must remember that there are many other races in many other parts of Northern Ireland that are equally at the mercy of the weather. Therefore, I believe that the Regional Development Minister — I think, Minister, that this is what you asked me to say — should be congratulated for recognising that the situation needed to be resolved and for acting so swiftly to do that.

The Ulster Unionist Party generally is not keen on the use of accelerated passage, but we accept that, in certain circumstances, it is necessary. If this Bill were to go through its usual legislative processes, there would be little chance of everything being in place by the deadline of 31 March 2014, when the licences have to be granted. The whole point of the Bill is to get flexibility as soon as possible, and, although it is crucial that we spend time today and next Monday carefully deliberating it, were it not to process it as soon as possible, the House would find it difficult to try to convince race organisers, participants and spectators that they must run the gauntlet of being dependent on the weather for yet another year.

The consultation on the Bill demonstrated overwhelming support for it. However, I ask that the concerns of those who took time to oppose it are not disregarded. I am aware that greater flexibility will be welcomed by many, especially those living along the routes. Understandably, they will require assurances about possible disruption. As other Members said, that applies not just to the North West 200 but to the other races in Northern Ireland.

I listened to the discussion about Sunday racing. Although I understand why many people have some concerns — indeed, I share those — I do not believe that the Bill should be seen as a threat. I expect race organisers to work hand in hand with local churches. Therefore, alongside the fact that no pre-existing prohibition will be broken, I am confident that the Bill should hold the broad support of people and organisations along the routes. So, in conclusion, I welcome the Bill, not least for the North West 200 but for all the races in Northern Ireland.

Mr McCarthy: Before I start, I encourage my colleague to my right to keep motoring in the Morris Minor. From one Morris Minor owner to another, John, keep going. We do not need accelerated passage for our Morris Minors.

Mr Spratt: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCarthy: I will give way, sir. Yes.

Mr Spratt: Does that mean that both of you could be classified as the 'Last of the Summer Wine'?

Mr McCarthy: No. Thanks for your comment, Mr Chairman.

As a new member of the Committee for Regional Development, I am happy and content at this point to agree with and support my Committee Chair on the Road Races (Amendment) Bill. The Minister said that this is a single-clause Bill that gives flexibility to the days on which, because of circumstances, road racing can take place. Who can disagree? There probably will be people who disagree, but, as I understand it, that will be in exceptional circumstances.

The Alliance Party has no problems at all with flexibility and, therefore, agrees with the Bill. I can equate the North West road races with Exploris in Portaferry. Both can and do attract many visitors and tourists to their areas, and, as has been said, they contribute enormously to the region's local economy. I fully support the Bill to ensure the continuance of this very popular sport, and I sincerely hope that Members can and will support my efforts to see Exploris in my constituency continue to provide the excellent service of an aquarium for Northern Ireland as a whole. I support the motion.

Mr Easton: In Northern Ireland, racing on roads is a popular sport, attracting thousands of spectators to events such as the Circuit of Ireland Rally, the Ulster Grand Prix and the North West 200. They provide much-needed income, tourism and entertainment. Such events are arranged by promoting local motor clubs and are managed under the rules of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) in the case of car events and the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) in the case of motorcycles. Both organisations set out stringent safety standards that organisers and competitors must meet.

The 1986 order requires applications for road closure orders for road races to be received and granted by the Department no later than 31 March annually. The days on which roads may be closed for motor racing or practice sessions must be specified in the road closure order relating to that event. Such road closure orders are normally made at least three weeks before the event to enable race promoters to arrange appropriate notifications of the roads that are involved and the publications of notices in newspapers etc. The Bill seeks to provide promoters with the flexibility either to bring forward up to two of their practice or race days or to defer them to days that the promoter has identified for the contingency. The number of days on which roads are closed would remain at three, and no additional racing days would be approved. Although the proposed flexibility would apply to all motor races on the roads, the rallying sector has indicated that it is unlikely to seek to utilise an arrangement. I support the Bill.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Beidh mé iontach sásta tacaíocht a thabhairt don Bhille seo.

I declare an interest as a motorcycle fan, and, indeed, I am a regular attender, particularly at the North West 200. I realise its importance not only for the Coleraine Borough Council area but, indeed, for the entire north-west. Indeed, sometimes during the North West 200, I have to step over people on my landing. That has happened in the past.

I support the principle of the Bill. There has to be a flexibility because of the economic benefit that the event has for the entire region. Indeed, if we had a repeat of what has happened in the past three years, it is my contention that a lot of people would not come back. A lot of our

visitors, particularly those from England, Scotland and the continent have come over and invested hugely.

For many of those people, it is their only holiday of the year. They are relatively affluent people, and they part with their money while they are here. As I say, they spend a week or 10 days here, across the board.

It is important that the Bill be brought forward in the manner in which it is so that it can be delivered for the 2014 races. I accept that races also are elsewhere, including Dundrod, but the Bill has my support.

12.15 pm

Mrs Hale: I welcome the opportunity to pledge my support for the Second Stage of the Road Races (Amendment) Bill. I am happy for it to proceed.

Having seen many of the consultation responses to the issue, I know that it is clear that the overwhelming majority of people want to ensure that road racing in Northern Ireland has the added flexibility that many other sporting events already have in place. As a road racing fan — indeed, Dundrod is in my constituency — I was incredibly disheartened to see all the work that went into the North West races lost owing to poor weather conditions. The same can be said for the Ulster Grand Prix, which has also fallen victim in recent years to the weather. The then clerk of the course, Mr Noel Johnston, estimated that, in 2008, the event lost a whole year's planning at a cost of a staggering £600,000. We cannot allow that to happen to one of our most prized and, indeed, indigenous sporting events. The flexibility to have a contingency day has been warmly welcomed by households, providing that the 48-hour notice is adequate to make different arrangements. I can see no reason why the Bill should not be granted accelerated passage at this stage. Spectators, competitors, sponsors and race organisers want to see a safe and competitive spectacle. We need to ensure that that can be delivered. The swift delivery of the Bill will have huge benefits for all. I welcome the Second Stage of the Bill.

Mr Dunne: I welcome and appreciate the opportunity to speak as a non-member of the Committee. As one who has a keen interest in motor sport, I think that it is important that we support the Bill today.

It is vital that the right flexibility be put in place to ensure that first-class motorsport events such as the North West 200 continue to run with success. By the way, the North West 200 is scheduled for the week of 10 May to 17 May. I take this opportunity to announce that, God willing and weather permitting, the main race day will be Saturday 17 May 2014. It is one of the premier events that Northern Ireland has to offer and is a fantastic spectacle every year for so many who come from across the world to see such motor racing. The issue is that very few countries can run such races on open roads, so it is a unique event that attracts many spectators.

The professionalism and excitement of the race festival is second to none. It is imperative that we do all that we can to ensure that this magnificent event continues to go from strength to strength. It is important to recognise that, nowadays, the organisers do everything that they can to manage the risk in racing. I fully support the actions of the organisers, who make difficult decisions in managing that risk, including cancelling races when the weather is unsuitable. Years ago, such events would have gone

ahead, taking the risk, and the results could have been very serious indeed, even causing death. As an Assembly, we must do all that we can to support the organisers in their assessment and management of risk. That is one reason that they need flexibility. It would be remiss of us not to pay tribute to the work of Mervyn Whyte MBE. He and his organising team have done so much to keep the event going. They work as a small team, all year long. I spoke to him yesterday. He is just back from a number of world bike events, where he was making contacts and building relationships to bring teams, organisers and sponsors here. That is the success of it.

Given the complexity and scale of the event now, it is imperative that the organisers be given the flexibility that they deserve to ensure that the event is a success. The weather has unfortunately severely impacted on the race programme. It is understood that the organisers have now linked up with the Met Office — I am sure that the Minister is aware of that — to ensure that they have more accurate weather forecasting for the race week. Having spoken to Mervyn and having been a regular attendee at the North West for many years, I know that the amendment, which will allow for contingency days for racing, will open up new avenues of flexibility for the event organisers. The smooth and complete running of the event, as well as ensuring that the event has a future, is critical for fans, competitors, sponsors and teams alike.

I understand that the plan for 2014 — this is important — is to run the practice on Tuesday, with a flexible race programme on Thursday. They had that flexibility this year, and they used it on the Thursday. Mervyn was saying that, had he not run those three races on Thursday this year, the whole thing would have been a disaster. However, they used that flexibility this year. They will have the flexibility to run races on the Friday next year, if needs be. The main races, all being well and God willing, will be on the Saturday.

As has been said, there are genuine concerns about Sunday racing. Those concerns have to be considered. I understand that the organisers have already been involved in discussions with the three race chaplains. They have already had meetings with the chaplains, and they also intend to have meetings very shortly with the churches on the circuit.

An event of this magnitude, which is growing, involves having over 800 people out on the course. Mervyn made the point that it takes 800 people out on the course to run the event. It is a huge logistical operation to have 800 people out there. We all recognise that you cannot just switch a race from one day to another at short notice. It has to be organised, as it involves marshals and first aid personnel, and that is the intention. It needs and deserves flexibility.

It is important that any changes are worked through and managed with local residents. Local residents are key. If the local residents are not on board, the event cannot run. You have to have the cooperation of local residents, as is the case with any motorsport event. I know from my interest in rallying that it is getting more and more difficult —

Mr Spratt: I thank my friend for giving way. Does he agree with me that, up to this point, there has been absolutely brilliant cooperation between the organisers and the local residents not only in the Coleraine and north-west area but

in the Dundrod area? Does he also accept that the present legislation allows for Sunday racing? It has never been applied for, and, as he rightly points out, there would need to be very close consultations. However, you have already stated that the organisers' idea is to be able to move to the Thursday or the Wednesday, given that both of the events that we are talking about today are run over a festival period of a week.

Mr Dunne: I thank the honourable Member for his comments. As I was saying, it is important that we have cooperation between local residents, businesses, councils and churches. Jimmy has made that point. From speaking to Mervyn, I know that the intention is not to run it on Sunday. Running it on Sunday would be a very last resort following clear consultation with all those involved. If it were to be run on Sunday, it would be Sunday afternoon before a wheel was turned; that is my understanding.

The points have been well made. I welcome the flexibility for organisers of all motorsport events. We are very fortunate in Northern Ireland and, in fact, throughout the island of Ireland that we have the ability to close roads and, therefore, get rallying, racing and other sports on public roads. In the main, that cannot happen on the mainland. One of the reasons why we have such a strong interest in rallying and motorbikes is that we can close the roads. It is part of our culture and background. There is a great interest in it. Contrary to that, the media seem to miss out on the fans and the support that there is for motorsport and especially the bikes, which have a huge following. We can look at the North West and hundreds of other events. People get out their bikes, clean them down for the spring and off they go to these races and become part of the whole event.

I think that I have said enough. I support the amendment.

Mr Allister: I make it absolutely clear that I am a friend and not an opponent of the North West 200. I have attended it for many years, and, as was pointed out, I own a house on the circuit and have seen at first hand, not just on race week but for many months in the lead-up, the sheer unparalleled dedication of the hundreds of volunteers who put so much effort into the build-up to race week. No one could gainsay their dedication and enthusiasm. Likewise, no one could doubt the very deep-seated disappointment if and when the weather is inclement and all that they have worked so hard for during those months, indeed virtually for the previous 12 months, comes to naught on the day. It is devastating and heartbreaking for them. I understand and see that entirely.

I also know, because naturally I have had the opportunity to speak to the organisers over the years, that they are led by a management team that is considerate of the concerns and needs of local residents. It is a two-way process. You could not live on the circuit during that week in May without a lot of give and take between the organisers and the residents. In the main, the residents give back very generously through their cooperation, which is how it should be. Everyone recognises that it is not only a momentous and great event in its own right but a huge contributor to the economy of the north-west and the tourism potential of the north-west. You could not find a circuit in the world that looks better on television than the one around the north coast, which has to be an unrivalled prime circuit. So nothing that I say in any way dissipates the appeal and role of the North West.

In consequence, I recognise that there is a need for flexibility in the operation of that particular week. Historically, there have been practices on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, racing on the Saturday and, more recently, practice on the Tuesday and Thursday during the day and racing on the Thursday night and Saturday. I well understand the need for the flexibility to shift from Tuesday night to a Wednesday night or from Thursday night to a Friday night and all of that, and I think that the residents understand that and would be happy to work with it. There is an issue when there is a possibility — that possibility is unrestrained in the Bill — of that flexibility switching the racing from the Saturday forward to the Sunday. This is not a “Never on a Sunday” issue; it is an issue of religious freedom. It is one thing for people to say that they object to all Sunday sport, including that conducted in a private stadium when there is a choice about whether to go or not to go. That is one issue. There is a huge difference between that and saying that the public road shall become the sporting forum and the venue. If that is the case, the ratepayers and taxpayers who fund that facility are entitled to ask, “What about my rights?”. They are also entitled to ask that when it comes to their right to religious freedom, which is enshrined and protected in law. The right to exercise one's religious freedom is emboldened in our law. Therefore, you cannot easily and at a stroke say to churchgoers who live on the circuit, “Your rights are to be trumped by road racing rights”.

12.30 pm

Mr Dallat: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes, I will give way.

Mr Dallat: Does the Member agree that there are not and never will be any plans to organise races at a time when church services are taking place? Does he further agree with me that Mervyn Whyte and his team are the last people who would want to deny anyone their religious freedom?

Mr Allister: I am sure that what you say about Mr Whyte is right, but the Bill imposes no restraint on the time of day on a Sunday. I put the question back to the Member: will he, therefore, support an amendment that would put it beyond doubt that there will be no racing during churchgoing times on a Sunday? Let that be the test of the Member's intervention. Will he take that stance? Indeed, I look forward to hearing from the Minister what his attitude will be to such an amendment.

Churchgoers have rights, too. Yes, I have a house on that circuit. Yes, unashamedly, I am a churchgoer. Yes, I feel that I have an entitlement to exercise my right to go to church. Why should I or anyone else who feels entitled to exercise that right be suddenly told, with 24 hours' notice, “Sorry, your right has just been trumped. The public road that you use to travel to church will not be available to you. If you choose to go to a church on the circuit, it will not be possible for it to open, and, if you choose to go to another church, you will not get there because the roads will be closed”. I do not think that the House or any legislation has the right, rationally and reasonably, to say that. If the House agrees that it does not have that right, the natural follow-through is to shape the Bill by amendment in such a way as that threat is removed. There is no great assurance in being told that that is not the intention. It may never be the intention of anyone, although sponsors might

sometimes have different intentions. However, if you put it boldly and clearly in the legislation, the temptation and the threat will be removed. Mr Dallat made his intervention on me, and I say back to him that, if that is his belief and his contention, I am sure that he will have no difficulty backing an amendment that puts that beyond doubt.

Whether we like it or not, there are four churches on the circuit: Ballywillan Presbyterian Church, Portrush Baptist Church, Portrush Reformed Presbyterian church and the Portrush Brethren assembly. Indeed, three of those are located at a famous part of the course: church corner. Are we to say not only to the people who wish to go to those churches but to any churchgoer who lives anywhere on the circuit, "Your rights are trumped by racegoers, because you will not be able to exercise your religious freedom to worship according to your conscience on the day that is so precious to you in that regard". I do not think that the House should be party to doing anything that is capable of having that outcome. Therefore, a Bill that, without distinction, makes that a possibility is unworthy of support in that form.

Matters can be done in such a way as to marry together the need for flexibility and the protection of local residents' rights. Never forget that, although many local residents hugely enjoy the week, it is also an imposition on many, because it brings restraints and restrictions when the roads are closed. If you are now to add to that an overbearing restriction on something as fundamental as their freedom to worship, I have to say that that is a step too far. The Bill, in its present form, would permit that step and in that, I believe, falls into error. It requires alteration in that regard. I trust that the Minister will be supportive of such change. Indeed, I am disappointed that he has brought the Bill without that change. However, he is the Minister who is piloting the Bill through the House, and, no doubt, the attitude that he takes on that issue will be crucial to the outcome. I trust that the Minister will —

Mr McNarry: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Mr McNarry: Mr Allister has cleverly introduced an element of intrigue in response to Mr Dallat's point. If it can be indulged, the logic of what he said seemed to be about a timescale. I wonder whether, in his proposal, which will lead to an amendment at some stage, he has had time to think about the logistics involved in closing a road, reopening a road and organising a race in the time that he envisages could facilitate churchgoers. I think that he is talking specifically about churchgoers. It seems that the merits of that are not beyond discussion, but at what stage will Mr Allister wish to elaborate on the course along which his amendment might take the House?

Mr Allister: I cannot say —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that interventions are meant to be brief and to the point.

Is the Member coming towards the conclusion of his remarks? In no circumstances do I wish to curtail his comments. Will he give some indication to the Speaker's Chair of whether it would be more appropriate to resume after Question Time?

Mr Allister: I think that I can conclude relatively quickly, subject to interventions and the length thereof.

In response to the intervention, I will say that there now arises an opportunity — assuming that the Second Reading is agreed — between now and next Monday for the tabling of amendments. I will take an interest in what amendments are tabled and may well avail myself of the opportunity to table amendments. In due course, it would be a matter of measuring the appropriate window, but I am quite clear that we have to protect the rights of churchgoers. For some, churchgoing is not just something that happens on a Sunday morning; it happens for some on a Sunday evening. Therefore, the closure of the public roads has to fit with those exercises of religious freedoms. You cannot say to a church, "Oh, well. Sure, you can move your Sunday services to a Monday". Sunday is a critical, inherent and intrinsic part of the exercise of Christian worship. Therefore, you have to respect the fact that there must be an adequate window on a Sunday to do that.

That is why the borough council, as local representatives in touch with local feeling, felt constrained to arrive at an official position. It was not entirely clear to me from Mr Spratt's speech whether it was conveyed to the Committee that the council had officially taken a position of opposition to a contingency day on a Sunday, which would interfere with religious exercises. It may well have been conveyed that the council conducted its own consultation, but whether it was conveyed that it had, in consequence, arrived at a position that was opposed to a contingency day on a Sunday that influenced or adversely affected churchgoers rights was less clear to me. There is a very good reason why the council, being in touch with local opinion, would have taken that view.

There is a strong onus on the Minister to give leadership on the issue and to indicate the Department's attitude to restricting the option of contingency days in so far as they apply to Sundays. The Minister could help the House if, in his reply to the debate, he were to give something of an indication in that regard. I noticed with interest other Members in the House speak in an unspecified way about amendments. I am sure that the Minister has been thinking about those matters and might be able to give the benefit of some leadership to the House on them.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension today. I propose therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. When we return, the first item of business will be Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.43 pm.

2.00 pm

On resuming (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair) —

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Deputy Speaker: We will start with 30 minutes of listed questions. Before I call Mr Kieran McCarthy, I should tell Members that question 2 has been withdrawn and will receive a written answer.

Together: Building a United Community

1. **Mr McCarthy** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the implementation of the proposals in Together: Building a United Community over the past six months. (AQO 5102/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will ask junior Minister Jennifer McCann to answer this question.

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): Together: Building a United Community sets out a clear vision of how society here can move forward through greater interaction, mutual respect and social cohesion. The vision centres around four main themes of children and young people, safety, sharing and cultural celebration. Within those themes, strategic projects focus on education, young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), regeneration and deprivation, housing and learning from the past. Significant progress has been made across all these areas, and we expect to see projects being delivered on the ground early in the new year. The United Youth programme is being progressed through an intensive, co-designed engagement with statutory, community and voluntary organisations, and that will result in an event in January to finalise the design, which will then be passed to us for approval.

We have approved a year-round intervention pilot that will see United Community summer schools and camps being held in summer 2014, well ahead of the 2015 target. Building on existing good practice, officials are working with community representatives, the Department of Justice and statutory agencies to design a process to create the conditions that will allow interface barriers to be removed. The most recent workshop with community representatives was held on 15 November, and we expect to receive firm implementation proposals before Christmas, with work getting under way on the ground shortly afterwards.

This is an Executive strategy that will be delivered by a number of Departments. We are working with the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department for Social Development to progress the 10 shared education campuses, the cross-community sports programme and the 10 shared neighbourhoods and urban villages, respectively. The relevant Ministers will bring forward details of their progress on those three commitments to the ministerial panel, which meets in December.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the junior Minister for her response. Is her Department not grossly disappointed, if not entirely ashamed, to say that, out of the number of combined places that were identified, only one — at Lisanelly — has been talked about, and that, out of the 10 shared neighbourhood developments, very little has been done? How soon and how quickly can that be rectified?

Ms J McCann: The Member has to appreciate that this is a large project that we are embarking on. I think that some progress has been made. I mentioned the seven key actions, and substantive progress has been made on some of those. We hope to announce the urban villages soon. We have taken forward the United Youth programme and it has already approved summer camps and schools, so quite a lot of work has been done. The design groups have also been collaborating with the community and voluntary sector to take that forward. So, I have to say that I disagree with the Member: good work has been done and is still in progress.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the junior Minister for her answers. Six months into Together: Building a United Community, as the question says, will the junior Minister tell us whether there is a defined budget and, if so, what is it?

Ms J McCann: As I said, the design groups are working on what way the progress will be rolled out. There is no definitive budget as such that would allow me to give you a ballpark figure. I will say that the design groups are working out what budget will be attached to each programme that will be implemented, and we are working to get that rolled out. With a project as vast as this, we will look at existing budgets. A substantive good relations budget has already been rolled out by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). There will be other strategies, depending on which lead Department rolls it out. Therefore, I cannot give you a ballpark figure. There is a substantive budget, to which we will add.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister update the House on the United Youth programme?

Ms J McCann: It is essential that the United Youth programme delivers the best possible outcomes for our young people. There are many good examples throughout society of programmes being delivered, and we want to learn from what works best. It is important to reiterate that. We are trying to look at existing models of good practice for the implementation of other programmes. Key stakeholders have been written to with a series of questions to help them to inform the programme's design. That has been followed up with one-to-one meetings. There have been a number of meetings with organisations and stakeholders that work in the field. There will be another meeting with the design group in January, after which we will roll out the United Youth programme. It is a work in progress.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the junior Minister for her answers thus far. How many businesses and organisations have signed up so far to the apprenticeship element of the projects?

Ms J McCann: I am sorry: is the Member talking about the United Youth programme? As I said, it is a fairly substantive programme. We are looking to develop it as a work in progress. We will obviously work with the

Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) on the apprenticeships programme, particularly when we target the NEETs category. We need to be at the stage at which that is ready to be rolled out before we contact those employers whom the Member mentioned. That is being done through Departments, in particular, DEL. We are working closely with the Minister and have met him about apprenticeships. It is all a work in progress.

Mr Deputy Speaker: As indicated, question 2 has been withdrawn.

Welfare Reform

3. **Mr Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the warning that £5 million a month will be cut from the block grant from January 2014 as a result of failure to implement welfare reforms. (AQO 5104/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: We have, of course, made a careful assessment of what is being said. We are conscious of any funding that might be withdrawn from the block grant. That said, let me be very clear: we have a clear responsibility to the many thousands of people who will be affected by the welfare reform/cuts agenda. A ministerial subgroup was set up to look at the outworking of the welfare reform programme. The First Minister and I have had a number of discussions on which mitigating measures the Executive might take to offset some of the worst aspects of what is likely to be imposed on us.

Mr Gardiner: I thank the deputy First Minister for answering my question. Will he tell us what outstanding points of dispute there are in OFMDFM that prevent agreements being reached with the Treasury? Is there a danger that it could be only the first of many disputes of a similar nature, when indecision here will lead to financial penalties?

Mr M McGuinness: There have been discussions with the Minister for Social Development and Ministers and representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about what is being proposed with regard to welfare reform. We have pushed for changes and flexibilities, and have proposed mitigating measures. All that has been done for one clear, simple reason: we have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of society. We continue to explore the changes and flexibilities that can be brought about and the further mitigating measures that we as an Executive might be able to take. Our approach is governed by our Programme for Government commitment, which is to tackle disadvantage and protect the most vulnerable members of society. As the Member and many other Members know, we have had a number of contributions to the debate in recent times, not least of which came from NICVA.

I know that there are question marks about the amount that people believe will be withdrawn from our economy as a result of the decisions taken by a Government that the Ulster Unionist Party supported in the first place. Therefore, that places a major responsibility on us in government to continue to explore what more can be done to ensure that we can offset the worst effects on some of the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answers so far. What is his assessment of how welfare reform is rolling out in Britain?

Mr M McGuinness: I am sure that people are well aware of the interview that Mike Penning gave to the BBC here just a short time ago. Instead of threatening cuts of £5 million a month from our block grant, it would be better if Mike Penning spent his time working out why DWP has already written off £34 million on an IT system that is not fit for purpose, and departmental estimates suggest that the total figure for write-offs could reach at least £140 million. The outworking of welfare reform in England is being constantly challenged and tested in the courts. DWP has not got it right, so I am not sure why people are in such a rush for us to get it wrong as well. On 6 November, for example, the Appeal Court in London unanimously quashed the Government's decision to close the independent living fund on the grounds that it breached the public sector equality duty. There are also shortcomings in the work capability assessment, and about 1,000 people have died shortly after being deemed fit for work. We have to ensure that there is no repeat of private contractors assessing people as fit for work only for them to die a short time later. In particular, we need to ensure that that does not happen during the transition from the disability living allowance to the personal independence payment.

Mr Agnew: Has an assessment been made of how much extra is coming in each month to the Northern Ireland economy as a result of us not having implemented welfare cuts?

Mr M McGuinness: Obviously, welfare reform is one of the biggest issues that we face. Look, for example, at the negotiation of the economic pact that the First Minister and other Ministers were involved in with the British Government. Then, consider the good work done there and the very clear damage that could be done to our economy by a welfare cuts agenda decided by people, many of whom are millionaires in the British Government, who have no comprehension whatsoever of life in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the country. In assessing how we move forward, we have a clear responsibility to do everything in our power as an Executive — I am sure that every Member would agree — to ensure that the funding streams available to us are able to deal with the challenges that we face in the time ahead.

We cannot take lightly the opinions that are being expressed about the level of funding that will be withdrawn from our economy as a result of these decisions. This is big stuff: this is about real people, and it is about some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged. Therefore, we all have a duty and a responsibility to do everything in our power and examine every option to see how we can take this forward.

Mrs D Kelly: Although I support the deputy First Minister not being bounced by threats from Mike Penning, will he tell us whether there is a plan B if the threats to cut our Budget become real, and how that will be managed through the Executive?

Mr M McGuinness: It is too soon to go into that. From our perspective, we are dealing with the reality of the here and now, and the fact is that useful discussions have taken place between members of the Executive. Quite clearly, people are very focused on the challenges that welfare reform poses for us. Mike Penning's interview was one of the worst I have ever heard from a direct rule Minister. Not only did he attempt to deal with that issue in a very clumsy way, he ventured into areas of responsibility for the

Assembly and the Executive — areas that he had no right to venture into.

2.15 pm

Executive Office: China

4. **Mr Newton** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the expected benefits to the local economy as a result of opening an Executive office in China. (AQO 5105/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: During our meetings with senior Chinese Government Ministers earlier this year, we discussed the potential economic, social and cultural opportunities that could result from a closer relationship with China. We were asked to consider opening an office in Beijing to represent the Government and to promote our interests in China. We are advised that the Chinese Government will view that positively. We anticipate that the development of a closer relationship with China will assist us in accessing markets for our products, particularly agrifood, in lobbying for government support, in encouraging investors to work with Invest NI and in attracting greater numbers of students and tourists here.

There is already tangible evidence of the benefit of that growing relationship, with more local companies than ever securing orders in China, attendance of Chinese companies at the recent investment conference and an invitation from the Chinese Government to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to discuss agrifood trade and technology. The Chinese Government have also invested in the expansion of the Confucius network here, and we expect more strategically important announcements in the coming months.

Mr Newton: As I understand it, the culture of China demands that there are long-term relationships before business is done. Will the deputy First Minister outline exactly what our strategy is and how long he thinks that strategy will be in operation before it delivers tangible business results?

Mr M McGuinness: Everybody that we speak to in Administrations such as the Irish Government and British Government tells us that building relationships with the Chinese comes before anything else. That is why the First Minister and I have put such an emphasis on building those relationships. It all began with a very important visit by deputy premier Liu Yandong to the North, after which she invited the First Minister and me to China. We have been there twice. As a result of our contacts with the authorities in China, we have taken the decision that we are going to open a bureau in China. I think that that is a sensible thing to do; it will assist us in building those relationships. Quite clearly, the complex nature of Chinese society, particularly Chinese business society, means that, in all probability, this is a longer-term project than, for example, the work that we do in North America with the United States and Canada.

We are very satisfied with the progress that has been made. We think that there are clear opportunities for us to exploit in the time ahead. During our time in China, we had very useful conversations with Madam Liu Yandong. She clearly pointed us in the direction of specific areas in China that will benefit from huge financial investment by the Chinese Government. She suggested that we consider

striking up partnerships with some of those areas. It is an ongoing work in progress, and the Member is absolutely right that building relationships is crucial whenever you are dealing with the Chinese.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, agus gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire go dtí seo. Will the Minister outline our current trade activity with China?

Mr M McGuinness: China is an important and growing export market for our local companies, many of which visit China each year with trade delegations that Invest NI organises. In 2010-11, we exported almost £112 million worth of goods to China, and that increased to £116 million in 2011-12. Invest NI has had an office in China for many years and is now firmly established in Shanghai. Shanghai was chosen because it has become China's business capital. Invest NI has contracted three full-time advisers, who are based in Shanghai and Taiwan.

Their role is to provide bespoke research and advice for our companies and to identify market opportunities.

Our commitment to China is evidenced by Invest's strategy, which includes two trade missions annually to key business centres such as Shanghai, Hong Kong and other developing cities across China. Over the past six years, a total of 350-plus local companies have participated in the trade visits. As a result of the strategy, that market is worth in excess of £110 million in exports from local companies and sustains valuable employment here.

Invest NI recently recruited a territory manager for the Asia-Pacific region to place greater emphasis on trade and foreign direct investment opportunities. Our local companies recognise the huge business potential and emerging opportunities that exist through China's dynamic marketplace.

Mrs Overend: Further to Mr Newton's question about building relationships with China, will the deputy First Minister inform the House how we in Northern Ireland have been working with UK Trade and Investment in building that relationship, how that has benefited Northern Ireland and of the plans to continue with that?

Mr M McGuinness: It is hugely important that we work with everybody, including the body that you mentioned. We consistently seek advice and support from those who have had experience of working at first hand with the Chinese. During our visits to China, we have been very ably supported by the Irish and British ambassadors. A lot of lessons have been learnt by our officials. It is important that we work with everybody, and we know that there are great opportunities. In September, our Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development paid a very important visit to China that opened up prospects for further exports of an agricultural nature from here to China. Again, it is about relationship building and recognising the importance of going there, and I think that we all have learnt from our experiences, particularly in North America, that, if you do not go, you do not count. It is vital that our Ministers travel the length and breadth of the planet to seek whatever investment we can get to provide jobs for people here. That is why our Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has been travelling probably more than most. I think that benefits are now being seen, because, over the past three or four years, we have clearly managed to attract more foreign direct investment than at any other time in the history of the state. To do that against the

backdrop of a world economic crisis is, I have to say, some achievement.

Mr McNarry: Are there any positive signs of students from China coming to Northern Ireland to study?

Mr M McGuinness: The short answer is that they are already here. They are here in huge numbers at Queen's University and the University of Ulster. We built up important relationships with the Confucius Institute during our previous visit to China. Madam Liu Yandong attended an event at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown that the First Minister and I also participated in. Clearly, attracting students from China is very important. Language is also important, because people increasingly recognise that English is an absolute prerequisite for people involved in foreign direct investment and trade.

Given the level of contact that we now have with the authorities in China — in fact, when the First Minister and I were there, we met the Chinese Minister with responsibility for education as well as many other influential figures — it is undoubtedly something that can be built on. The Member is absolutely right: it is crucial that we continue to attract foreign students, not just from China. However, China obviously has a huge population, which presents huge opportunities for us.

Investment: USA Visit

5. **Mr Hilditch** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on their recent trade visit to the United States. (AQO 5106/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The First Minister and I travelled to Boston and Chicago between 21 and 25 October to undertake a number of engagements to promote the local business message and build on the success of the economic conference that took place on 10 and 11 October. Our five-day visit was a great opportunity to reinforce our bonds with existing and potential investors in the United States, to promote our region as an attractive investment location and to promote connected healthcare and university collaboration.

Our attendance at a major EU/US connected health conference in Boston attended by an international audience from over 20 countries provided a platform to showcase our growing expertise in the connected health arena. We were pleased to have the support of our colleague, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, who also spoke at the conference. We also pushed the wider research and development agenda by supporting the work of the two local universities in collaborative clinical research by meeting US universities that have established links with Queen's and the University of Ulster.

In Boston, we addressed an audience of 170 senior business executives on the benefits of doing business here. In Chicago and Peoria, we visited Chicago Mercantile Exchange and Caterpillar, two of our most important American investors. We played an instrumental role in helping Chicago Mercantile Exchange to make its decision to invest during an earlier visit to the city. The visit to Caterpillar allowed us to meet the company's top management team and reiterate the Executive's support for consolidating relationships with existing investors. While there, we were particularly pleased to announce a

further £7 million investment by Caterpillar to expand its manufacturing business here. That reinforces our position as an investment location for global companies.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Minister's time is up.

Mr M McGuinness: Caterpillar is an important investor, not just in terms of jobs and wealth creation but also in the credibility that its presence lends to doing business here.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. In a constituency that has benefited from the recent trade visit we are thankful for that and the confidence that Caterpillar has shown in that workforce. Can the deputy First Minister assure the House that we are at the top of our game and the right and best structures are in place to maximise our trade links with the United States in between those visits?

Mr M McGuinness: There is no question or doubt whatsoever that we are performing well in excess of any other region in these islands. A lot of work has been done by our representatives in the United States and Invest NI, coupled with the important investment conferences that we have all participated in. When you get senior executives from prominent world brands coming to the investment conference and making the argument for us with other potential investors, it is then that you clearly know that you are going places.

It is one thing the First Minister and I going to the United States and making grandiose speeches and statements about what we have to offer, but the best way to promote what we do here in terms of FDI and the success of companies that have invested here is to get the companies that have invested and reinvested to articulate to a wider audience the benefits of doing business here. That is principally why we see such an increase in foreign direct investment in recent times, particularly from the United States and North America.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an LeasChéad-Aire. Can the Minister tell us of any future investment trips?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Very briefly, Minister.

Mr M McGuinness: This has been a very busy year for the First Minister and me, because we place great importance on our position to promote the economy by engaging face to face with existing and potential investors. We think that the level of contact has paid huge dividends, so we are committed to taking that forward.

The evidence is there to prove it. HBO decided to use the Paint Hall as far back as 2009 and is still here, with something like 800 people employed. There have been meetings with financial giants such as the New York Stock Exchange, Chicago Mercantile and others, bringing them over the line. There was bringing about the devolution of air passenger duty to the Assembly after engaging with the CEO of United Airlines. All of those outcomes only happened because we went. They could not have happened if we had been behind a desk in Belfast. In the past couple of years, we have travelled to Brazil, India and the Middle East and made successful visits to the US and China. We have been invited to visit Japan by the Japanese Prime Minister, whom we met at the G8. That visit will happen in the next short while. I reiterate that the visits present a significant time commitment from the

First Minister and me, but we know their value, and the evidence is there to prove it.

2.30 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. That ends listed questions. We move on to topical questions. I call Mr Sam Gardiner.

Mr Gardiner: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Question 1. *[Interruption.]* Oh sorry, my apologies —

Haass Talks

1. **Mr Gardiner** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to confirm that Dr Haass is dealing with strand one issues. (AQT 421/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The issues being dealt with by Dr Haass are clearly on the public record: they are parades, flags and the past. Whatever strand people want to put them in is of no relevance to me, nor should it be of any relevance to anybody else. These issues affect us in the here and now, and they have come about as a result of a very damaging year in which we have clearly seen elements such as the Ulster Volunteer Force and elements of the Orange Order in north Belfast and other parts of Belfast fomenting conflict on the streets. That conflict has to be unreservedly condemned, alongside the activities of so-called republican groups that have no support in the community and have, over this week, been trying to create mayhem on the streets. The answer to all of them is that it is not going to work.

We need solutions to parades, flags and the past. It is incumbent on all of us to do everything in our power to find solutions to those problems, because, if we do not find solutions, all we do is leave openings for those who wish to exploit their agenda, which is clearly anti-Assembly, anti-Executive and anti-peace process. So we have to do our job as politicians and come up with results while giving our wholehearted support to the police as they combat the lawbreakers.

Mr Gardiner: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. Will he confirm that the Dublin Government will not be involved in the Haass process?

Mr M McGuinness: Richard Haass was charged with the responsibility to do this job by the five major parties in the Assembly. We collectively agreed, against all odds, on who the independent chair would be. As a result of the responsibilities that he has been given, he finds that he has to speak, obviously, to the panel that was established here, which represents the five main parties, and also to the British Government and the Irish Government. Very few people in the House would expect that he would move forward with such an onerous task against a backdrop of not speaking to both the Irish Government and the British Government.

We are all also conscious that the White House has taken a keen interest in this. Richard Haass has met people at the highest level of the Administration. He has met Joe Biden. The First Minister and I took phone calls from the vice president, and they are retaining a keen interest in the process. There is a lot of interest in what is happening, and it is appropriate that the US Administration, the Irish Government and the British Government have their say. At the end of the day, the decision-making process will be a huge responsibility for the parties in the Assembly.

Terrorist/Criminal Activity

2. **Mr Buchanan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they agree that it is now time for all those involved in terrorist and criminal activity to come clean about their past. (AQT 422/11-15)

I declare an interest as a proud member of the Orange Order.

Mr M McGuinness: The past is being dealt with in the context of the Haass talks. It is an element that obviously creates a lot of pain for people who were victims during the conflict. Of course, we have seen from recent television programmes, not least the latest 'Panorama' programme, that there is no moral high ground for anybody in all of this. There are many in the House who supported these activities. Many Members on the Benches opposite supported these groups and activities. We have to recognise that we are in this situation today because of the conflict on the streets over the past year. There has been an agenda headed up by a paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Volunteer Force, which I have challenged publicly and privately about its activities. *[Interruption.]* We need to get a resolution to the challenges posed not just by the UVF but by the so-called republican groups living in cloud cuckoo land. They are living in a little cocoon, totally detached from the reality of people's lives. *[Interruption.]* How we deal with the past or, as John Dunlop, rightly, put it on 'Sunday Sequence' last Sunday, how we "cope" with the past represents a real challenge. However, it does not just represent a challenge for republicans, folks; it represents a challenge for everybody, including the British Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Before calling Mr Buchanan for a supplementary, I remind Members not to shout from a sedentary position. I will not tolerate it.

Mr Buchanan: Does the deputy First Minister believe that his party leader, Gerry Adams, was not a member of the IRA, despite all the evidence to the contrary from witnesses?

Mr M McGuinness: I am on public record as saying that I was a member of the IRA. It did not do me any harm when standing for election in Mid Ulster. When the people of south Derry and east Tyrone decided to make me their MP in 1997, they did so because they believed that I was absolutely committed to building the peace process. They wanted peace and saw my contribution to that as important. I hope that I have made an important contribution. I think that people who make the argument that you cannot further contribute to society in a meaningful way because you were a member of the IRA in the past are making a huge mistake. *[Interruption.]* They are making a huge mistake.

Mr McNarry: Answer the question.

Mr M McGuinness: It is irrelevant, totally irrelevant. In my opinion, Father Alec Reid, who died recently, made a massive contribution to peace in this country. Gerry Adams made a massive contribution to peace in this country. John Hume made a massive contribution to peace in this country. Sometimes, it is probably worth asking some of the most negative elements, who try to use these situations against the peace process, what contribution they have made.

Shackleton Barracks

4. **Mr Mitchel McLaughlin** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the soft market testing of Shackleton Barracks. (AQT 424/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The soft market testing exercise commenced on 18 November — this will be of great interest to the Deputy Speaker — and will be completed by the end of January 2014. After the level of interest is determined, a decision will be taken on the suitability of going forward with development plans. Officials have, on an ongoing basis, met local landowners, the local council and community groups to inform them of the position with the site and listen to their views. The intention is to continue with that dialogue as we move forward. All interested parties have expressed an interest in the Shackleton Barracks site to OFMDFM or B T W Shiells, including local farmers and residents' groups. They were sent details of the expression-of-interest process on Thursday 14 November.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I thank the deputy First Minister for that update. Given what some might perceive as a conflict of interest between local entrepreneurial interests and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development's stated intention to decentralise her Department, will the deputy First Minister indicate whether he believes that both sets of ambitions can be accommodated on the site?

Mr M McGuinness: The simple answer to the Member's question is absolutely yes. We recognise that the value of the site is not just monetary but economic and social. Although we continue to explore the sale of the site, we have not lost sight of the other local needs. Let me also point out that one of the greatest needs in the north-west is employment, and the decentralisation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development headquarters has the potential not just to create employment but to be part of the economic regeneration of the area. Given those two positions, I believe that the further development of the Shackleton site offers great potential for all concerned.

I am increasingly excited about the site, and I think that DARD's decision, supported by the Executive, to relocate to Shackleton Barracks has created a focus for other interests. We are now getting serious expressions of interest. This is an absolutely massive site that can cater not just for the needs of DARD but for other interests, including those of the local community.

Economic Powers

5. **Mr B McCrea** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they support the devolution of more economic powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly, given that Westminster is considering such devolution to other regional Administrations. (AQT 425/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: One of the most important powers that we seek, which the Member and other Members will be well aware of, is the power to devolve corporation tax. We estimate that, if we can get that, particularly against the background of the very positive answers that I gave on foreign direct investment during this question-and-answer session, it could lead to the creation of something like a further 58,000 new jobs. That is crucial for us, and we think that we are making progress. Obviously, the British Prime Minister has decided that he will not make a

decision on this until the Scottish referendum is out of the way.

There will be various opinions in the Assembly about further powers. Some parties here are for a lot of new powers to be given to the Assembly, and others have concerns, some of which might be political and not just financial. I think that all this can be resolved through a process of dialogue, discussion and agreement between us. The key job of work that is to be done in the next very short while is on corporation tax, and, if we can achieve that, it will be a massive step forward for our Administration.

Mr B McCrea: Further to that answer, Minister, would you support the creation of a commission on devolution similar to the Silk commission to investigate the possibility of devolving more powers to see what would be advantageous, what would not be advantageous and what could command support?

Mr M McGuinness: The Member knows, as do all Members, that, during Question Time to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, I answer as best I can, as I know the First Minister does when he is asked questions. We try to answer for both of us. From my perspective, that can certainly be considered. I would not be opposed to it, but I would like to come to a position on that in the aftermath of a discussion with the First Minister and, ultimately, if we were to proceed along that route, with other members of the Executive to get their agreement.

Flag Protests: Belfast City Centre

6. **Mr A Maginness** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they agree, given the march on Saturday in the centre of Belfast, which will, once again, disrupt business etc, that these people have made their point about flags and should therefore desist from future demonstrations and, if possible, enter into the Haass process where they could make their points more effectively. (AQT 426/11-15)

2.45 pm

Mr M McGuinness: I absolutely agree that it is a responsibility of everyone who is involved in this to recognise the importance of discussion and dialogue. I do think that people have made their point, and I note with interest that the media are now exercised about who is actually organising Saturday's parade. I do not have any doubt as to who is organising this parade. The parade is being organised by the UVF and is being supported by elements in the Orange Order. I think that there clearly is a responsibility on the Progressive Unionist Party, as it calls itself, to recognise the damage that can be done if these protests continue.

Yes, I think that people have made their point, but the main point to be made is that they have a duty to face up to the concerns that are being expressed consistently by the business community in Belfast about how damaging these protests can be. I come from a society that believes that people have the right to protest, but, in protesting, people have to take decisions about whether that protest will contribute to a resolution or an exacerbation of the problem. I think that ongoing protests of this nature, particularly if the main people behind them are the likes of the UVF, are very worrying indeed.

Employment and Learning

Higher Education: Update

1. **Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the higher education strategy and the review of the maximum student number formula. (AQO 5116/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

I thank the Member for the question. Work is proceeding well on the implementation of projects flowing from the higher education strategy, Graduating to Success, and the widening participation strategy, Access to Success. Good overall progress is being made on those projects requiring early action, with a number of outcomes having already been achieved. The vast majority of other outcomes are on schedule to be achieved within the target timescales. For those projects that have longer-term time frames, project teams are in place, and preliminary implementation work has commenced. Given the long period over which the outcomes flowing from the strategies span, from 2013 to 2020, I am satisfied with the solid progress that has been made to date.

My Department will be commencing the review of the maximum student number (MaSN) formula in early 2014. As Members are aware, MaSN is currently used as a means of controlling student support costs and the block grant allocation to the higher education institutions. Therefore, my Department will be reviewing the MaSN formula as an integral aspect of the higher education funding review. As outlined in Graduating to Success, I wish to ensure more flexibility for learners, an increase in part-time provision and a focus on economically relevant activity through the funding of higher education.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. What measures does he intend to put in place to ensure a more regional spread of student places across the sector?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. I highlight the role that our further education (FE) colleges play. They are also providers of higher education, and, in particular, we are keen to see an expansion of foundation degrees. Already we have managed to facilitate some increases in the full-time places that are available across the FE campuses in Northern Ireland, and we have ambitious plans to do more. Often it is that type of learning that is much more flexible and responsive to the needs of the economy, and of business in particular.

Mrs Overend: How does the strategy now complement, or does it duplicate, the Success through Skills — Transforming Futures strategy, which was launched last year, and the Further Education Means Business strategy in demonstrating the Department's integrated approach to providing skills, supporting people and contributing to the creation of jobs?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her question. Further Education Means Business goes back to 2004 and I intend to commence a review of it during 2014. Success through Skills should be seen as the overarching document when it comes to the activity of my Department. As such, it falls under the Programme for Government and the economic

strategy as a cross-cutting economic document at Executive level.

Within the skills strategy, we have very clear targets for upskilling the workforce in Northern Ireland — the current workforce and indeed the future workforce — with a focus on higher level skills and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Around that, a number of different strategies will support the skills strategy. The higher education strategy is a clear example of that and relates to, for example, the promotion of a much more economically relevant offering and increased investment in research, alongside a greater number of PhDs. All the other strategies and actions that my Department takes have the skills strategy targets very much in mind. I will also make reference to the forthcoming announcements on apprenticeships, which will provide an alternative pathway to the more traditional higher education route. Once again, this will be something that has very much in mind meeting the overarching objectives within the skills strategy.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagraí. Will the Minister give us an update on his plans for a rural university as part of the higher education strategy and widening participation?

Dr Farry: The Member is referring to what is, essentially, project 10 in the higher education strategy. We are in discussion with a number of providers in that regard. I am sure that the Member could guess which ones those would be, given the rural aspect of the project. Essentially, it is about opening up access to higher education provision and having particularly in mind those who may experience barriers and those who are studying part time and trying to balance work; they are the people who would maybe be best placed to take advantage of this. Discussions are ongoing and I hope to make some announcements on the way forward within the next number of months.

Mr Lyttle: Does the Minister agree that higher education is essential to building a knowledge-based economy in Northern Ireland, where jobs have 25% higher than the average wage income? Does he welcome the news that the knowledge economy in Northern Ireland is growing faster than in the rest of the UK?

Dr Farry: It is very clear that the investments being made, not just by my Department but by the Executive as a whole, are making real headway in transforming our economy. We have had a clear focus on building our footprint in the knowledge-based aspects of the economy, and I am glad to see that progress is being made in that regard.

We still have significant scope for further development. Northern Ireland remains very much open for business. That said, we have to continue to invest in the supporting drivers that will make that a reality. That includes investing in skills for those who come in through university as graduates and those who will, potentially, come through higher level apprenticeships in the future.

We also need to continue to invest in high-quality research of international standard. Our three local universities are already well recognised for their research contributions. Over the past number of years, we have made a number of investments to grow the basic research grant to the universities and the higher education innovation fund. All that will put our universities on a stronger footing. We

need to take much greater advantage of international networks. I am pleased that we are part of the US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership. We also have huge opportunities flowing from Horizon 2020, which has just been confirmed over the past weeks and for which we have over €70 billion available through to 2020. We are determined to increase Northern Ireland's drawdown from that fund significantly.

Employment Law: Proposals

2. **Mr Ross** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when he will bring forward proposals on the reform of employment law. (AQO 5117/11-15)

Dr Farry: In July, my Department launched a 16-week consultation on a review of employment law to fulfil a commitment in the Executive's economic strategy. The consultation, which closed on 5 November, elicited 41 responses. In the interest of obtaining as much evidence as possible, extensions have been given to a small number of stakeholders who did not meet the deadline.

The responses received provide a significant amount of information and comment on the Department's initial proposals. My officials are analysing the responses and drafting the Department's response. That will outline the firm proposals for reform that I intend to bring forward. I plan to publish the response early in the new year. However, many of the policy proposals will require primary or secondary legislation. I will, therefore, arrange for the Committee to be briefed on the outcomes of the public consultation early in the new year. I plan to present final policy proposals to the Executive as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr Ross: I thank the Minister for his answer. He knows that this is something that I am very keen to see. It is very important for Northern Ireland that we ensure that we maintain our economic competitiveness against others regions in the UK and that we follow suit and reform our employment law. I am glad that the Minister now has a date on which he thinks that he will be able to bring forward proposals. From his discussions with the business sector and the unions, does he believe that he will be able to bring forward proposals that will meet with approval both from unions and business organisations?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. I echo his comments about the importance of this review. However, I view this as a Northern Ireland solution to fit our own particular circumstances that has to take into account what is happening elsewhere and the need for Northern Ireland to be competitive in the local economy. Good progress is being made in discussions with the business sector and trade unions. I am particularly grateful to the Labour Relations Agency for sponsoring a round-table forum at which those discussions are occurring.

I imagine that there will be a number of issues on which a high degree of consensus will emerge. As the Member will know, there will be other issues on which finding consensus will be more difficult. However, we still give that process a fair wind. The more that we have a consensus among the key stakeholders in society, the easier it will be, in turn, for both the Executive and the Assembly to take forward the outcome of the review. In the event that that is not forthcoming, we will still need to address the issues and find an agreed way forward.

Mr A Maginness: In considering reforms to employment law, will the Minister avoid a recommendation made by Mr Beecroft in his report to give the power to employers to sack underperforming staff? Does he agree with me that Vince Cable got it right when he said that that is utter nonsense?

Dr Farry: I can assure the Member that we have already ruled out that Beecroft reform. It did not form part of the employment law review that we took forward in Northern Ireland. It did not meet our shortlist of things to be considered further, not least for some of the reasons that the Member outlined. We did not think that it is appropriate or something that would find favour locally.

Mr Beggs: Has the Minister received specific examples from trade unions and employers of how many jobs may be lost or, indeed, gained if the changes that have been implemented elsewhere were to be implemented in full in Northern Ireland?

Dr Farry: The Member stresses the importance of an evidence base for reforms that we take forward. We are in continued discussion with both the business sector and trade unions. I encourage them to back up a lot of the assertions that they make with solid evidence. We also have the ability to take into account how similar reforms have had an impact in other jurisdictions.

I want to stress the importance of trying to find a consensus on this. A lot of public attention can be directed towards some of the more headline or controversial reforms. However, where I believe the real difference can be made in Northern Ireland is through some of the real nuts and bolts of how the system works in practice. Things like greater use of alternative dispute resolution, early neutral evaluation of cases and reform of the rules of tribunals are really where the heart of how we will change the system will lie. We are in a good place to not just follow what happens elsewhere but put in place Northern Ireland solutions that put us in the lead.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Before calling Mr Pat Sheehan, I will say that I should have told you that questions 5, 9 and 10 have been withdrawn.

Apprenticeships

3. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how people undertaking an apprenticeship are encouraged to start their own business. (AQO 5118/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides a comprehensive range of support for anyone unemployed or economically inactive who wishes to establish their own business. My Department offers a number of practical routes to self-employment that include the European social fund (ESF) and Steps to Work programmes. Current ESF projects that promote self-employment include the Exploring Enterprise and Women into Business programmes, and the Journey to Success project. Steps to Work provides support ranging from basic awareness of self-employment and participation in Invest Northern Ireland's Regional Start programme, through to the opportunity for people to avail themselves of up to 26 weeks of supported self-employment, during which participants may retain their benefit entitlement while testing their business idea.

3.00 pm

My officials also work closely with Invest NI, which has a suite of programmes and advisory services available to potential and existing entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland. Those include the Regional Start initiative and programmes aimed at under-represented groups such as female or young entrepreneurs, individuals not in education, employment and training (NEET), and those who live in neighbourhood renewal areas. The Apprenticeships NI programme is employer led. The employers create apprenticeship positions and recruit suitable individuals as apprentices, in line with future business needs. Apprentices are paid from day one as they work towards achieving an industry-approved level 2 or level 3 apprenticeship framework qualification.

Traditionally, apprentices in occupational areas such as construction have gone on to become self-employed or to establish their own business. In that way, apprentices have become employers and, in turn, employ apprentices. As the Member will be aware, we announced in February a review of my Department's apprenticeship policy. That all-encompassing review is progressing well, and I will be reporting on its findings shortly.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Will the Minister update us on any discussions he has had with the Minister of Education on encouraging and cultivating entrepreneurship in schools?

Dr Farry: John O'Dowd and I are acutely aware of that issue. The Member will note that we confirmed yesterday our intention to take forward jointly a major review of careers in 2014. One key theme of that review will be to expose young people to a wide range of opportunities that are much more in line with the needs of the Northern Ireland economy. That includes more and more people starting their own business. Despite a number of strengths in our economy, we still do not have enough young people considering the option of running a business. The more we can spread the message about those opportunities, the better we will stand. The Member can be assured that both Departments are seized of that requirement.

Mr Campbell: The Minister outlined a number of ongoing projects, but can he assure the House that, particularly where young people not in education, employment or training have gone into apprenticeships, his Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) are actively targeting people who excel as apprentices so that they can start their own business? It should not just be the case that that is available; they must actively promote that.

Dr Farry: The real opportunity for that individual and tailored approach lies in the new Steps 2 Success programme, the successor to Steps to Work. We will be taking people who are, in a sense, unemployed, as opposed to those who are in an apprenticeship, on an employment pathway. Already, Steps to Work can provide support to people who are setting up their own business, and some very good results have become apparent.

We are hoping to move to an even more flexible system under the new contracting arrangements. It is up to the new contractors and subcontractors to work closely with those who are showing a flair for business and to invest particular resources in them to make sure that we are getting a productive result. We are trying to move away

from treating everyone the same; rather, we are working with people's particular needs, aspirations and aptitudes.

Mr Rogers: What percentage of young people who have completed an apprenticeship have gone on to start their own business?

Dr Farry: I am happy to try to provide those figures for the Member, but I think it is worth stressing that apprenticeships are not, per se, a pathway to self-employment. In many cases, apprentices will go on to set up their own business in due course, and, as I mentioned earlier, employ other young people as apprentices in the future. An apprenticeship is a way of providing employers with the quality staff that they require for their businesses to grow and prosper. We are very keen to reform the system that we have to make sure that we have a much more demand-sensitive system that meets the needs of employers in that regard. There is no doubt that self-employment can be a spin-off from the system that we are putting in place. Those who have good training will have the drive and ambition to go on to be successes in their own rights.

Unemployment: Young People

4. **Mr Givan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what measures have been taken to reduce youth unemployment. (AQO 5119/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have introduced a comprehensive range of measures to address youth unemployment in Northern Ireland. The youth employment scheme provides help to unemployed young people aged 18 to 24 to obtain work experience, develop additional skills and gain employment. To date, 1,038 young people have started the work experience programme, 898 have started the skills development programme and 689 have started employment under the enhanced employer subsidy.

The Steps to Work programme also assists people to find and sustain employment. It is available to any person aged 18 years or over — or 16 in the case of lone parents who are not in work. In November 2012, First Start, a 26-week waged initiative for young people aged 18 to 24 who are unemployed for six months or more, was introduced. First Start will provide supported employment for 1,700 young people before the start of the 2014-15 financial year. Almost 18,000 young people have entered employment following participation on the Steps to Work, First Start and youth employment scheme programmes.

Through its Training for Success programme, my Department also offers a guaranteed training place for all unemployed 16- to 17-year-olds who do not wish to remain in, or are unable to benefit from, mainstream education or further education. The guarantee is extended for young people with a disability or those from an in-care background, up to the ages of 22 and 24 respectively.

Mr Givan: I welcome the efforts that are being made by the Minister and this Executive to tackle this problem. What measures are being put in place to ensure that university degrees and courses at our higher and further education colleges are tailored to the needs of the economy, so that people, once they are qualified, can get jobs based on the qualifications they have?

Dr Farry: The Member has touched on a broad strategic issue that is faced by not just our economy but a lot of

modern economies around the world. Undoubtedly, we all have a challenge to invest much more in higher-level skills. Those who invest in higher-level skills are, in the main, much more likely to be in employment, to sustain employment and to have higher levels of wages or salaries. However, we do have issues regarding skills shortages and skills mismatches in our economy and, often, a general higher education or further education qualification is not enough to find and sustain employment, particularly in the absence of work experience. That is why, in the short run, we are putting such an emphasis on work experience, including for recent graduates, and also some of our graduate programmes, GAP, to address the needs of unemployed graduates.

I come back to the point about apprenticeships, which should not be seen as a secondary alternative to someone going to university. In particular, a higher-level apprenticeship could be seen as a viable alternative for someone with good A levels. They will have the advantage of moving straight into a job, but will reach essentially the same point as a graduate through learning on the job while earning a salary or wage in the process.

We are hoping to broaden the range of pathways to higher-level skills that are available. In that way, we will see a reduction in youth unemployment. It is worth noting that, around Europe, those societies that invest most in their apprenticeship and vocational training systems have the lowest levels of youth unemployment. The same goes for those societies that place the greatest emphasis on work experience. They also have the lowest levels of youth unemployment.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his answers. A recent DETI report showed that 63,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 24 have never had a job and that we are the worst region in the UK. When does the Minister think that his schemes and initiatives will start to result in jobs for those young people?

Dr Farry: We are making good headway with what we are taking forward. It is worth stressing that our Pathways to Success strategy is emerging as an exemplar in the European Union, particularly because we have placed such a heavy emphasis on the community and voluntary sector and on looking for localised solutions to tackling the issue of those who are, perhaps, furthest from the labour market.

Our claimant count in youth unemployment is falling, notwithstanding the fact that the labour force survey, given the small samples, can bounce up and down.

The performance of our youth unemployment scheme in Northern Ireland, even though we started a little later, is significantly better than the performance of the youth contract in the rest of the UK. That shows the advantage of devolution in action; we can shape the nature of schemes to suit local circumstances. Although it is still early days, we are making a real difference, and the emerging statistics tend to back up that supposition.

Mr McCarthy: The Minister has partly answered my question. How do our local schemes compare with what is going on for young people across the water?

Dr Farry: If we look at some of the published figures for the youth contract, at the end of May 2013, against a target of 53,000 subsidised jobs a year over a three-year

period, payments were made to employers for just under 5,000 wage incentive scheme jobs, which represents a 9% uptake against the target. In comparison, the youth employment scheme, against a target of 2,500 subsidised jobs, secured 812 employment opportunities, and 563 young people have started. That represents a 22.5% uptake against the target. In the early days of the programmes, we can see a marked difference between the figures in Great Britain and those in Northern Ireland.

Mrs D Kelly: The Minister will be aware that young people today are called the lost generation because of the high levels of youth unemployment in the North. Will he comment any further on the news today about labour having to be flown in from elsewhere for the apprenticeships at Harland and Wolff? Minister, you talked about Northern Ireland's solutions to problems as they emerge around the £500 that seems to be the main stumbling block for our young people to be able to continue in their apprenticeships.

Dr Farry: The £500 issue is a red herring and is not a stumbling block. With the Harland and Wolff jobs, a very short-term contract was achieved at relatively short notice. We are talking about 50 days for the contract to be fulfilled, so the positions are not long-term. Of the 600 opportunities, about 200 are being filled locally. For sure, I would like more of those to be filled locally. The difficulty is that we can invest well in general skills, but some specialist skills are required for some of this work. We need to work closely with employers so that they approach my Department's skills solutions service as early as they can for us to consider whether we can put bespoke training in place to turn people's good general skills into the specific skills required for that type of work. For us to train people speculatively would put public funds at risk, so we need to be responsive to demand in the market and get as much lead-in time as possible. In that case, the transformation time was not long enough for Harland and Wolff to approach my Department for assistance.

We are not talking about apprentices; we are talking about contractors doing a short piece of work. We need to make better longer-term investments in engineering skills. The Department and I chair a working group comprising the colleges, universities and the business sector to make sure that we are planning effectively for that sector of our economy, which is dynamic and will create major opportunities.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Ms Megan Fearon is not in her place.

Student Numbers: One Plan

7. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he has had with the University of Ulster with regard to achieving the One Plan target of 9,400 students by 2020. (AQO 5122/11-15)

Dr Farry: My officials and I have discussed the expansion of the University of Ulster's Magee campus on various occasions in the past few years. The focus of those discussions was the One Plan's interim target for an additional 1,000 undergraduate places by 2015. Within the resources available to me for higher education, I have been able to allocate an additional 652 undergraduate places to the University of Ulster, which it has undertaken to locate at Magee. Those will be in place by 2015. I will continue to bid for resources for additional higher

education places in Northern Ireland, and I hope to move the university close to achieving, if not achieving, the interim target by 2015.

3.15 pm

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for his answer. I understand what he says about the interim target, but I want to ask him about the main target of 9,400 by 2020, which was in the One Plan and was accepted and supported by the Executive. Is he convinced that the Executive support the One Plan and that target? Does the university support them?

Dr Farry: I am very clear that I would like the university to expand significantly in Derry and the north-west. I believe that there is a huge opportunity, and it would have a major impact on the economy. Against that, we have to bear in mind that for the Executive to resource that degree of expansion would require a recurring investment of tens of millions of pounds every year. That has to be taken in the round against other aspects of higher education: for example, I remind the House that Northern Ireland already has to fund the tuition fee freeze, which is not covered in the block grant. Of course, the university has the ability to move places around Northern Ireland if it chooses to do so. The university's position is that it is happy to put the additional places that may well be allocated to it into the Magee campus.

I also highlight the potential for attracting many more international students to the north-west and to Northern Ireland as a whole, and no doubt, building on the success of the City of Culture, Derry will be well placed to do that. We do not necessarily need that expansion to occur purely in full-time places. International students and part-time students are not counted as part of MaSN. That is another route through which, in part, the 9,400 target could be met.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for questions for oral answer to the Minister for Employment and Learning. We now move on to topical questions.

Open University

1. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how valuable the Open University is to the Northern Ireland economy through upskilling. (AQT 431/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her question. First, we should formally welcome the Open University to the local higher education family. It is a very welcome addition. I believe that it will bring variety in its offering. It has a good research footprint and one of the highest, if not the highest, student satisfaction ratings in the United Kingdom. As we move towards promoting different types of learning in higher education, and as we try to link higher education with a revised form of apprenticeships, I believe that the Open University in particular will be well placed to take advantage of the changing policy environment and to provide a lot of solutions for the local economy.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given that upskilling is of immense importance to the growth of our economy, how is your Department engaging with the sector skills council to attract and retain talent and skills to facilitate growth in our key industries?

Dr Farry: There is a range of sector skills councils in Northern Ireland, such as e-skills and Semta. This morning, I was with Creative and Cultural Skills at the Lyric Theatre for the launch of its ambitious plans to increase the number of jobs in that sector in Northern Ireland. Ongoing work and discussions with the sector skills councils are critical to the future of policy development. The more we can hear a collective voice from industry on training and skills requirements, the more efficient and effective government will be.

Higher Education

2. **Mr Spratt** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he will ensure that the higher education sector, which is vital to the Northern Ireland economy, will continue to thrive, especially in light of last week's joint university showcase in the Long Gallery, which was attended by many Members. (AQT 432/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. He is right to highlight the success of the showcase last week, and I congratulate the Committee for facilitating that. The university sector will be critical to the future of the economy, and, in particular, cutting-edge international research will give us a real boost and impetus as we further develop the knowledge-based economy.

Over the past number of years, we have sought to make strategic investments in the universities, so we have increased the number of undergraduate places and postgraduate awards. We are now, essentially, facilitating a doubling of state-supported PhD opportunities over this decade. We have also increased research funding across different programmes. However, it is worth stressing to the Member and the House that, with the decision to freeze tuition fees — I note that across parties, people are keen to follow through with that, including, notably his party — we are diverging from what is happening with funding arrangements in the rest of the UK. So, we have to fund that locally.

To date, the Executive have a financial package that has allowed us to maintain funding for the universities while freezing tuition fees. As we move to the future and, no doubt, continue to freeze tuition fees, it is important that we, at the very least, continue to resource our universities at the current level or, if we do not do that, increase their funding strategically to allow them to expand. I am sure that everyone agrees with me in saying that there is no point in freezing tuition fees but ending up in the situation where people can pay less but end up with a lesser product. We want people to pay less to stay at home to go to university but have the best possible education.

Mr Spratt: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. What specific measures or actions will he recommend to his Executive colleagues to ensure that the commitments that were enshrined in last week's all-party motion calling for continued support and investment in higher education are met?

Dr Farry: Again, that is very much a partnership. It falls to my Department to deliver the higher education strategy that we have set out, which, I believe, gives us a good foundation from which to move forward. We have also made different bids for resources. In turn, it is for the Executive, particularly the Finance Minister, to look at the overall funding package that is available to my Department

and, in due course, to the universities. Members will be aware that we need to start considering what will happen in the next Budget round beyond March 2015. Discussions are already under way between Departments on how that will look. Certainly, from my perspective, higher education funding issues are perhaps key in those discussions.

Confucius Institute

3. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what representations, if any, he has received from the Confucius Institute or local colleges, including the University of Ulster, on implementing its work programme or facilitating exchanges with teachers and students, given that he will be aware of the work and linkage with the institute — I realise that some of it crosses with the Department of Education — and that, if this region is to do business with China, there needs to be better promotion of the culture, ideas and relationships. (AQT 433/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her question, in which she indicated a major area of potential expansion for our local higher education institutions. The University of Ulster has been proactive in the establishment of the Confucius Institute in Coleraine. Opportunities for teachers and pupils in schools will flow from that, and it also reflects that universities are an issue not simply for my Department but a resource that is available across all aspects of life in Northern Ireland, never mind just in government. There will be a showcase event on that in Parliament Buildings on Friday that will provide another opportunity to discuss how exactly we can assist in this regard. Overall, I am keen to promote internationalisation as one of the key themes in the higher education strategy.

That works in two ways. We want to attract more students from overseas to our institutions. Compared with other regions, we have a comparatively small footprint, which, again, is a legacy of the Troubles. However, equally, we want to ensure that, as part of their studies, as many as possible of our students have the opportunity to experience other societies. We run almost a parallel programme to Study USA, which is Study China, that allows our students to access opportunities in what is still a very different culture but a radically transforming and successful economy.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Minister for his answer. He mentioned foreign students in particular. What is his assessment and analysis of the provision of accommodation to meet their needs?

Dr Farry: Both, shall we say, campus-based universities have fairly reasonable accommodation footprints. In some ways, they are better placed than other universities on these islands. Obviously, there are issues with accommodation provision in the Holylands in South Belfast, which is an issue for Queen's University, the University of Ulster and the further education colleges. It is also an issue for society as a whole, not simply for the institutions.

One of the other key accommodation issues relates to the relocation of the University of Ulster campus from Jordanstown into Belfast and what housing implications will flow from that, including those for international students. Discussions are ongoing under the aegis of Belfast City Council to ensure that we plan effectively for that.

Careers System

5. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, following yesterday's debate on the Committee for Employment and Learning's report and his announcement of a review of the careers system, to ensure that careers advisers are fully skilled in the CAO system as well as the UCAS system. (AQT 435/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. I have to say that we missed his contribution to the debate yesterday. It was much poorer for that.

The Member touches on a key issue, which is more than just about careers. It is about ensuring that there is a natural flow of students on the island. It is not about our directing students either to Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland but ensuring that they are fully informed of the choices. At present, we do not send as many students southwards as are coming from the South to the North. Therefore, there is scope for expansion of student flows in both directions on the island of Ireland. For that to happen, there needs to be proper information on university admissions. It is more than simply a case of knowledge of how of the Central Applications Office CAO system works; there is also the issue of recognition of qualifications, which is an ongoing source of tension between the two jurisdictions.

Mr McElduff: Perhaps the Minister will elaborate on those tensions. The issue of equivalence and how A levels are regarded by some universities down South presents a major obstacle to students who wish to go to university or third-level institutions there. Can the Minister elaborate on those tensions and, more importantly, how they might be resolved?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. John O'Dowd is leading on that issue on behalf of his Department and mine. I am more than happy to support his efforts in that regard. My understanding of the issue is that, at a political level, there is no real resistance. Our counterpart, Ruairí Quinn, accepts the arguments that have been made. It is essentially an issue of the independence of the universities and their admissions policies. That is where the blockage lies and efforts are ongoing to try to remove it.

Youth Employment Scheme

6. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an assessment of the youth employment scheme. (AQT 436/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am more than happy to give that assessment. It is something that has been discussed already during questions.

The scheme is very much designed to try to break the vicious circle whereby young people cannot get a job without experience and cannot get experience without a job. Essentially, they are caught in that vicious circle. If we do not intervene, there is a real risk of a lost generation emerging. We have invested in people's skills to a certain point at a general level. However, unless they are able to apply them, their skills will go rusty. Not only will individuals have a longer period on benefits but society will lose the benefit of their contribution and particular skills. Therefore, the scheme has three different strands: subsidised employment, work experience and a skills-

development piece. Uptake of all three is encouraging. I am particularly pleased with the level of support that we have had from employers who have offered places. They really appreciate the importance of investing not only in the future of their companies but the economy as a whole.

3.30 pm

Mr I McCrea: Given the level of youth unemployment, does the Minister agree that, now more than ever, such programmes are important? Does he also accept, if there are flaws in the scheme, that he would be willing to address those flaws to deal with the youth unemployment issue?

Dr Farry: The Member makes a very valid point. It was for that reason that we had a post-implementation review of the youth employment scheme over the summer to make sure that it was meeting the purposes set out for it. We made a number of adjustments to it on the back of that review. I am happy that performance has increased significantly on the back of the changes that we have made. That is something that we have undertaken already, and we are more than happy to do it again as we continue to monitor the scheme as it rolls out.

Theatre: SERC

7. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the financing of the proposed theatre at the South Eastern Regional College in Bangor. (AQT 437/11-15)

Dr Farry: The issue is contained in my Department's capital allocations, so we have the headroom to take it forward. A business case has been approved by me and the Department of Finance and Personnel. The moneys contained are within my capital allocations, so we do not need to bid to the Executive for any additional resources. Therefore, subject to everything else being in place with the final stages of procurement, everything should be set to go early in the new year.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up. I am sorry, Peter.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage

Debate resumed on motion:

That the Second Stage of the Road Races (Amendment) Bill [NIA Bill 29/11-15] be agreed. — [Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development).]

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):

I thank all Members who contributed this morning and this afternoon during the Second Stage debate. Some general issues and several specific points were raised. I will attempt to deal with the points raised by Members. If anything significant is missed, I will endeavour to come back in writing once we have examined the official report.

I was greatly heartened by the tone and the constructive nature of the debate. It was opened in that fashion by the Chairman of the Regional Development Committee, Mr Spratt. He, very sensibly, indicated that we should adopt a sensible and pragmatic approach to the issue. He spoke about the considerable economic benefits generated by events such as the North West 200, the Ulster Grand Prix and road races generally and, of course, that investment needs to be protected. I very much agree with him when he said that events such as the North West 200 are good for sport, good for tourism and, ultimately, good for Northern Ireland.

Mr Spratt then made some remarks wearing his party political hat and indicated that he would seek to agree arrangements and reach the best balance. I will return to the theme of amendments, or possible amendments, at the end of my winding-up speech.

Mr Seán Lynch then told us that, although he is not a fan, he is certainly not against the Bill, and he indicated that Sinn Féin will support the Bill. I think he took a constructive approach on the need for accelerated passage, and I welcome that.

Mr Dallat, in turn, confirmed that, in his view, the Committee had given the Bill the appropriate and proper scrutiny. He confessed that he had moderated and changed his own view on road racing over the years because of various engagements with legendary figures from motorcycling sport, the Dunlop brothers, Joey and Robert, who were tragically killed. Mr Dallat also recognised the international reputation that events such as the North West 200 achieve for the north-west and, importantly, that there was a need for certainty with the sponsors and everyone involved.

Mr Leslie Cree my party colleague told us that he used to ride a motorbike. I think there is a difference between riding a motorbike and racing a motorbike, but we thank him for that confession. He reminded us that we are always at the mercy of the weather in Northern Ireland, and it is therefore important to get the necessary flexibility. It is also important that organisers work with churches, residents and people who operate businesses on any of the routes.

Kieran McCarthy appears to be part of a fairly exclusive Assembly club, along with John Dallat — the Morris Minor

club. I think that I reflect the concern of the entire House if either of them was to attempt accelerated passage when driving their cars. *[Laughter.]* Mr McCarthy welcomed and supported the legislation. He talked about something called Alliance Party flexibility. I could spend much time on that but I do not think that I will. He wheeled into his contribution another plea for the aquarium.

Alex Easton highlighted the need for flexibility given the current restrictions. Cathal Ó hOisín is apparently an enthusiastic aficionado of motorcycle racing and was able to indicate that he is supportive of the flexibility and alluded to the benefits to the local economy. Brenda Hale, a Member for Lagan Valley, is a very strong supporter of the Bill, and I thank her for that. She mentioned the racing that takes place at Dundrod. It reminds us all that the Bill is not simply a quick fix, or any kind of fix, for one particular event such as the North West 200. There has been a lot of focus on that in particular, but we would do well to remember that it is about all the road races that take place in Northern Ireland.

Gordon Dunne expressed his keen interest in motor sport, which was very evident from his contribution, and he gave strong support. I join him in his tribute to Mervyn Whyte, the organiser of the North West 200, and, indeed, to all the race organisers, male and female, across Northern Ireland. It is very much a labour of love for a great many of them. It means a lot of voluntary work, and it clearly is to the benefit of the wider community, so I am happy to endorse his warm tribute to race organisers in general. He also spoke about the important role that race chaplains play in the motorcycle sporting fraternity. I know that the race organisers of the North West 200 have been engaged in conversation with the race chaplains and are, I think, soon to meet the representatives of local churches, so it was a positive contribution.

Mr Allister is, by his own admission, a proclaimed supporter of the North West 200. He recognises the need for give and take. I think that he also recognised the need for flexibility. He raised the issue of religious freedom but said that, with flexibility, there would have to be protections.

All in all, I thought it was a very useful debate, and I welcome all the contributions. There was some discussion during the debate of potential amendments to the Bill. I understand completely the concerns expressed about what was rightly categorised as, at best, a possibility rather than a probability. I make it absolutely clear that I am more than happy to consider any amendment that Members may seek to table for discussion.

The Road Races (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, as it stands, affords me and my Department very wide discretion in considering what requirements need to be in place before a road closing order is made for a Sunday or, indeed, any other day of the week. I am comfortable with that current protecting discretion, but, given the general area of the discussion on amendments, I respectfully draw attention to one point that may be of assistance to Mr Allister and possibly others. Given the wide discretion that is currently available, care would need to be taken not to put in legislation narrower discretion that would lessen my ability, in approving a race day or in approving a contingency day, to properly take into account local concerns, whether they be the concerns of residents, retailers or churchgoers, and to reflect those concerns

in any decision to approve or not to approve. Seeking to put that in the Bill may create a position in which local concerns, in their fullest sense, are not able to be reflected in any decision taken.

I look forward to continued engagement with Members as the Bill progresses through its various stages.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Road Races (Amendment) Bill [NIA Bill 29/11-15] be agreed.

Private Members' Business

Single Farm Payments

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak shall have five minutes.

Mr Frew: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes, with concern, the rising number of reviews of decisions regarding single farm payments; further notes, with concern, the time it takes to process these reviews; and calls on the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that her Department adequately resources the processing of the reviews to ensure expeditious outcomes.

I very much welcome the opportunity to bring this important issue to the House. It would be remiss of me if I did not say that my colleague David McIlveen had to go home early today because he was feeling ill, so I am proposing the motion and will be making the winding-up speech. I wish David a speedy recovery, and I hope that he has not smitten me.

Members will be aware that David and I have the pleasure of representing the beautiful area and rural constituency of North Antrim. As a consequence, a huge amount of our constituency work involves the farming community, which we have been fortunate in being able to assist in times of crisis. From last year's horrendous snow scenes to the worries around the Schmallenberg virus, to issues around bovine TB, low profit margins, high fuel costs, high feed costs, fodder shortages, banks closing in on people and confusion around maps, we have fostered very close links with farmers and the farming community, not just in North Antrim but beyond, especially in my role as Chairperson of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee.

3.45 pm

More recently, our office staff have found an increasing body of work coming to us by way of review of decisions of single farm payments. If a farm business is found to have breached cross-compliance, made an over- or under-declaration of land or failed in some other way regarding its single farm payments, it is fined.

In one case that we have been dealing with, a young man who took over the farm business immediately after the sudden death of his father faces losing well over £15,000 of this year's single farm payment, all because of confusion over three cattle tags. In this case, on-farm inspection took place a matter of days after his father passed away. Of course, that is an extreme and sad example, yet I have a number of these reviews ongoing in my office. For each farmer involved, the worry and stress over the potential loss of thousands and thousands of pounds is horrendous.

I am grateful to be in a position to assist them. My office works hard to prepare appeals and guide them through the process. However, the fact of the matter is that they are facing huge penalties and the loss of an income that, for many, is vital to sustain them through quieter months.

I have tried to set out the context of what the review of the single farm payments procedure means to those affected by it and highlight how much of an effect it can have on those going through the process. How long do those farmers living hand to mouth, under pressure to keep their businesses going and wondering whether they will survive this year, as well as those farmers who are efficient, have massive capacity and farm intensively, relying on cash flow and money coming in and flowing out, have to wait to hear whether their single farm payment has been successful?

We have done many of these appeals for farmers and are becoming increasingly frustrated at having to telephone Orchard House every number of weeks for an update on what is happening with an appeal. In February of this year, for example, we issued a straightforward appeal regarding over-declaration of land. The stage one decision was not issued until October, so David McIlveen asked questions of the Minister. I brought it up at the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development, asking how long it took to process stage one and stage two reviews of single farm payment decisions in each of the past three years. I am going to read out the answer from the Minister:

"In 2011, the time taken to process a Stage 1 application from receipt to decision issued averaged at 263 calendar days. In 2012, the average was 186 calendar days and in 2013 (to date) the average is 205 calendar days ... In 2011, the time taken to process a Stage 2 application from receipt to decision issued averaged at 975 calendar days. In 2012, the average was 1,383 calendar days and in 2013 (to date) the average is 612 calendar days."

To complete a stage one review, at best, on the average, took 186 calendar days in 2012, which is around six months. At worst, it took 263 days in 2011, which is around nine months. Moving to stage two reviews, things get much worse. This is bearing in mind that you have to pay a fee of £100 if you want to progress to stage two review. This year to date has been the quickest turnaround of stage two reviews in the past three years at 612 days. While we have and can see improvements that we must congratulate, that is over 20 months, or nearly one and three quarter years.

In 2012, the worst of the past three years, the average time to process an application was 1,383 calendar days — almost four years. I will put that in context: from January 2008 to December 2012, over 264 stage 2 reviews were received, which is approximately 50 a year. That is not acceptable. The Minister needs to ensure that her Department has the resources to deal with these reviews. If it is not a question of resource, she needs to do whatever it takes to ensure that the reviews are dealt with quickly and in a manner befitting the businesses that they affect.

The DUP has been applying massive pressure on the Department and the Minister to improve performance on single farm payments and everything associated with them. We have scrutinised and interrogated the figures and stats in a wide spectrum of single farm payment processes. We have had countless debates in the House on advance payments, remote sensing and inspection processes. All have worked to apply massive pressure on the Department and the Minister. We now turn our attention to the specific issue of the review process, when a farmer has experienced an inspection and goes through

a horrendous time to get to the other side of that appeal, whether it is article 1 or article 2.

The Committee recently visited Orchard House and saw at first hand the work that goes into processing single farm payments. As an ordinary Member for North Antrim, a member of the DUP and Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, I appreciate the hard work that goes on in Orchard House. I appreciate and value the staff who work in that office, who are pressurised and work in front of computer screens — most of them work in front of two computer screens — and go across all the fine detail of a single farm payment application process. I would not want to do that work, so I appreciate what is involved. I also appreciate the systems that are in play.

I ask the Minister to look at these results and put pressure on the Department to shorten the time that it takes to review decisions. That is vital, because when farmers find themselves in the middle of an inspection and realise that there has been an error somewhere in the system or in their application process, they go into a horrendous system, and it takes months — in some cases, years — to process applications and get a conclusion.

This is very similar to our planning system. We need a planning system to come up with decisions quickly so that people can move on and businesses can react. We need decisions quickly so that farm businesses can move into the future.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Single farm payments are vital to the farming industry. In a lot of cases, they form the bulk of a farm's income. They are worth around £300 million a year and are claimed by some 38,000 farmers on 25,000 farms and around 750,000 fields. It is vital that the whole process works.

As with every system, there will be faults, and we need to work on the faults in the single farm payment process to improve the figures. We cannot be looking back at what happened in years past; we must be forward thinking and look at what is going on today and at what will happen in the future.

The Member quoted figures, but he failed to say that, in stage 1 for 2012, there was a reduction of 30 days a case; in stage 2 for 2013, so far there has been a reduction of 24 days a case. As of June this year, two additional case officers have been seconded to the stage 1 team to assist with clearing the backlog. So things are being done.

We all need to work to improve the present figures. On 4 February this year, 90% of payment claims were finalised, leaving around 7.5% unpaid for a variety of reasons. The 90% included some 900 inspection cases, which is four times more than last year. So there is proof that the system is starting to work for the Department and farmers.

Important changes for farmers, such as the new maps, will cut the time spent processing claims. Each map now has a maximum eligibility area for each field. That tells the Department the exact area of a field for which it should make payments.

We need more applications to be made online. Farmers still have the option of a paper application, but making an application online will speed up the process and cut the time spent by the Department processing and checking claims. Chairperson, you saw that on your visit

to Orchard House. In a way, you answered your question when you talked about the time that it takes to look at the applications. It is because of the European directives, which we are compelled by.

I agree that some farmers have been left waiting for up to and, in some cases, beyond six months. That, I wholeheartedly agree, is wrong. In my area of east Antrim, the majority of the farmland is in less favoured areas (LFAs). It is a fact that the bulk of LFA income on those farms is from the single farm payment. So getting payments to the farmers in time is paramount.

We have to keep the pressure on not only the Department but the banks, because they are sometimes not that lenient on farmers when they are waiting to get their money. Indeed, in one of the many cases that I have dealt with through our east Antrim office, a farmer had to sell part of his machinery to pay the bank because it would not wait an extra fortnight for him to pay the money in.

Tomorrow, I will visit the new Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) offices in Ballymena to see how everything is going there. The discussions there will be about the payments, and I am looking forward to that.

All the signs are that the new system is starting to work, but we must keep working on the problems that arise. The target is to get payments to farmers on time and, as I said previously, we must also keep pressure on the banks.

Finally, I congratulate the Minister — this has not been mentioned — on the rural broadband programme that she funded. More broadband in rural areas will allow more farmers to go online and more applications to be made online. That will speed up the application process and payments.

All in all, I think that we must all work together and look to the future, not the past, to see how we can improve the system. If there is one thing that we all agree on in the House, it is that we have to make sure that farmers get their payments on time, because it affects not only the farmers but their families and, indeed, the whole community. I agree with everybody here that we are all working towards the faster processing of applications.

Mr Rogers: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate, which highlights farmers' legitimate concerns about how the single farm payment scheme is implemented by the Department. Whether you live in north Antrim or south Down, the issues are the same. I am particularly concerned about the rising number of farmers seeking reviews of decisions taken by the Department on their applications. The time that it takes to process those reviews is unacceptable. Farmers eligible for the single farm payment are often faced with a bureaucratic nightmare when they apply to the Department for a review of their application.

The review of the decisions procedure was aimed at addressing farmers' concerns. The procedure is meant to ensure that the Department has acted in accordance with the relevant EU regulation and policy. The previous Minister said that the review process was designed:

“to ensure that the outcome ... will provide farmers and rural dwellers with access to an appeals system that is fair, objective, transparent and independent.”

The review process is falling well below that standard. More is expected of it. It is failing farmers and impacting on their ability to sustain a living. The Department must expedite the processing of any reviews of decisions on single farm payments, particularly in light of the difficult years that farmers have had recently. Farmers face an unnecessary delay when availing themselves of that crucial payment. I, too, am very complimentary of the work that is carried out in Orchard House and in the other DARD offices, but farmers need to see results on the ground.

4.00 pm

A further concern relates to the Minister's failure to get an advanced payment for single farm payments. There was an opportunity to avail ourselves of a 50% upfront payment on the single farm payment in October. Farmers in the South availed themselves of that advanced payment, but, unfortunately, DARD did not deliver for our farmers here. Compared with their neighbours in the South, the North's farmers have again been placed at a distinct disadvantage, and that is unacceptable. What a difference an advanced payment makes to cash flow. It seems that DARD is not yet able to properly administer the single farm payment or, indeed, the review procedure. Quite simply, there is a need for a radical reform of DARD. That is essential if the agriculture and food processing industry is to develop and maximise its potential. We continue to miss the big prize.

I farmed maybe 20 years ago, and when the agriculture advisers came out, yes, they could be critical, but they were the critical friend. Today, after visiting DARD officials have come, farmers say to me that the officials are acting as enforcement officers rather than as farm advisory officers. That leads, in some cases, to fractured relationships between DARD and the farming community.

I have no issue penalising non-compliance, but, very often, the farmer gets penalised over a bureaucratic and administrative issue or a negligible non-compliance. Given that DARD employs over 3,000 public servants, it would make sense to have 10% of those people deployed as farm advisory officers with clearly defined operational areas to build a consistent and productive relationship with farmers to ensure that DARD becomes an enabling instrument of government so that the economic contribution of the agrifood sector can be maximised going forward. It will cost at least £400 million to implement the agrifood strategy over the next three to seven years. The comprehensive shake-up of DARD is essential, and it is timely and necessary if we are to realise our economic potential from the land.

The Minister and senior DARD officials must grasp those issues and deal comprehensively with single farm payments as evidence of their commitment to the North's farming community. Given that the agrifood strategy report is earmarked as the way ahead over the next 10 years, surely it is sensible to review the operation and effectiveness of DARD, the vehicle that is responsible for delivery, to ensure that the goods are delivered and that we really kick-start our economy.

Mrs Dobson: At the outset, I declare that my husband receives the single farm payment.

On behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, I welcome the motion. As has been said, the single farm payment forms one of the most important elements on the balance sheet

of every single farm business here in Northern Ireland. However, DARD's track record in handling the payments has been nothing short of shambolic. On its website, the Department describes the review-of-decisions process as "fair". I challenge the Minister to repeat that assertion in this debate, because it is far from fair. It is not fair on those farming families that are faced with repaying thousands of pounds and, as a result, are faced with hardship and uncertainty. Far from helping the industry to grow, DARD's review-of-decisions process is putting the business and livelihood of our local farmers in danger.

The Minister will be aware that I have written to her on a considerable number of occasions regarding individual farmers and their single farm payments. The farmers who have contacted me have been from my constituency, as well as from across Northern Ireland. In many cases, those turn into lengthy appeals that, as Mr Frew outlined, can stretch from month to month.

For instance, a farmer's wife called into my office last Wednesday to explain the extreme distress and worry that she has for her husband because of a request from DARD that he repay 100% of his 2012 single farm payment. In their case, that is just under £14,000. She is deeply worried for her husband's mental health as a result of that request. That is a huge weight hanging over that young farming family. They have 150 cattle on their farm, and they have told me that they will soon be unable to receive meal deliveries because of the debts that they owe. Those debts are compounded by the fear and worry that has been caused by the Department's retrospective request to pay back those thousands of pounds.

Minister, sadly this is not an unusual situation for farming families to be placed in. It is an undeniable fact that there is a link between farming finance and poor mental health. The Department has a huge responsibility here — a responsibility to ensure that it is not just policing farm families but helping them to stay in farming.

Farmers have told me of the cold attitude that they receive from DARD officials. That needs to change. The primary function of the Department must be to help, not police, our farmers. The Department must understand the extreme pressure that posting a letter to a farming family requesting the repayment of thousands of pounds puts on that family. Currently, there is no recognition whatsoever of the impact of those letters. A Department official presses "Print", posts a letter, and that is it. There is no thought whatsoever for the impact on the family who open the letter at the other end. The Minister must urgently look again at how her officials handle their communication with farmers. I would welcome an assurance from her today that she will do so. To ignore the consequences of such letters landing on the mats in farm homes across Northern Ireland is at best cold and bureaucratic and at worst potentially life-threatening.

However, a review of this whole process has already been conducted and recommendations made. The Minister will be aware that, in 2011, her predecessor commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake an independent review of the decision process. In its conclusion, the report highlighted:

"the inordinate length of time required to complete the Review process".

The report did not stop there. It went on to describe:

"the sense of faceless process including a lack of personal communication by Departmental Officials with applicants."

That is a 2011 report, yet two years later we are debating the same issue. Recommendations were made, but nothing has changed. Farmers are still facing the same faceless and impersonal snail's-paced progress.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw her remarks to a close?

Mrs Dobson: Sensible suggestions were rejected, and those that were accepted were not carried out. I support the motion and urge the Minister to act urgently. Continued failure to reform and modernise the system can damage the industry —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mrs Dobson: — and the confidence of farmers.

Mr McCarthy: I could have given my comrade a few minutes of my time, because I do not have that much to say. I support the motion and register an interest in the single farm payment, in that I am a recipient. The service that has been given to me by the Department has been first class, but I am not the recipient of payment for thousands or even hundreds of acres. That may justify the good service that I get.

I can sympathise with farmers and landowners who have experienced problems associated with the single farm payment. Human nature being what it is means that people do not like to see officials, be they from DARD or any other Department, hanging around their property. Unfortunately, that is something that has to be done, and, on occasions, the visits are necessary. It is in everyone's interests to cooperate, furnish any information that is required and get agreement as soon as possible.

We are all too aware of what happened as a result of the mapping errors, and the consequences that flowed from them, that occurred a few years ago. Hopefully, that episode is behind us, and that, with cooperation all round, everyone knows exactly what his or her entitlement is and receives it on time. That is the important factor. This review is expected to examine all aspects of the single farm payment, and we all hope that the contents of the review will bring answers to all the questions.

From listening to the Chair of the Agriculture Committee, Paul Frew, I have enormous sympathy for any farmers or landowners who have had to wait such a lengthy period for the completion of their application.

I am sure that the Minister is equally disappointed at these lengthy waits and will do all in her power to ensure that vast improvements are carried out in the near future.

On behalf of the Alliance Party, I fully support the motion.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Members, my colleagues, for tabling the motion. As a farmer and someone who is in receipt of a single farm payment, I must declare an interest at the outset of the debate.

As on previous occasions when issues surrounding the single farm payment system have been debated in the House, I can relate in some way to the problems associated with administering the scheme. Indeed, as

someone who sits on the Agriculture Committee and serves a largely rural constituency, I am in regular contact with farmers who are, in many cases, at their wits' end with the bureaucracy and endless waiting for payments. Single farm payments remain a vital and valuable part of our farming industry at the present time, and many producers rely on the payment to help cover the rapidly mounting costs associated with food production, such as fuel, energy, fodder and machinery costs.

There have been many motions before the House on the general processing of payments. On those motions, I have made my views clear. Having spoken to staff in the Department who have voiced their concerns about the infrastructure in the Department, it is clear to me that further resources are required to further speed up the payments and, indeed, the review procedures.

I note that, back in January 2012, the ARD Minister responded to a report by an independent panel on the reviews of decisions processed. In that statement the Minister said that areas were highlighted in which important improvements could be made. With two years having passed since the report was published, I am interested to enquire whether, having viewed the report and the departmental response to its many points, the Minister is happy that the agreed recommendations have been implemented. What has been the result of any implementations?

I am sure that all Members will be concerned at the lengthy periods quoted for carrying out reviews of decisions, with most taking many, many months to complete, indeed years in some cases. One major issue that farmers raise with me is the fact that, when farms are inspected, any obvious oversights are corrected and DARD has cleared the inspection, farmers are still waiting and waiting for their payment to be processed. I would like the Minister to explain why it takes so long to make the payment when all outstanding issues have been dealt with. It is extremely frustrating and exasperating for farmers and is a further drain on their already under-pressure finances.

I come to the debate from quite a straightforward perspective: I want to see what is due to the farmer actually given to the farmer in the shortest possible time and with the least avoidable delay. In my opinion, the farmer is being asked to take on more and more red tape. Instead of the Department investing more in its processing resources, DARD is forcing more of a burden on the farmer. The mapping fiasco is a solid case in point. Instead of taking full ownership of their mistakes, DARD and the Minister lumped a further burden on the already under-pressure industry.

I welcome the debate today and await with interest the views of the Minister on what extra resources she intends to invest to ensure speedier resolutions to the reviews. I support the motion.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I support the motion.

As has already been said, the single farm payment is vital, not only to farmers but to the rural economy as a whole. Recent debates in the House have highlighted the negative impact that delays can have on individual farm businesses and families. It is therefore imperative that DARD works as efficiently and effectively as possible to ensure that the payment is issued in a timely manner. To that end, I

welcome the announcement by Minister Michelle O'Neill that over 85% of the single farm payment will be paid before Christmas, with a projected rise to 95% by February. The December payments will amount to approximately £213 million, which will be a tremendous boost.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Member for giving way. Although I and many others will appreciate that 85% rising to 95% in February, does he accept that it is extremely frustrating for the 15% who will not get it in December and the 5% who will be waiting through to June or beyond?

4.15 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Milne: I accept what you say. I appreciate that it is rough on people who have to wait that length of time.

Given the fact that there were substantial changes to the applications process this year and adding the technical difficulties with the final batch of maps issued, it is encouraging that the percentage has increased since last year. That, in itself, gives a sense of confidence that the new system, when fully bedded in, will make a significant difference. Every effort must be made to lift the percentage year on year to ensure that the maximum number of farmers get their entitlements as early as possible. That means the Department and farmers working in partnership.

Small changes can make a big difference. Things that could be done include the early submission of applications and the increased use of online systems, which would lead to reductions in small errors before submission and speed up the administration process; getting the maps as accurate as possible; increased use of remote sensing to speed up inspections; and, of course — the issue before us today — ensuring that, where disputes arise, they are dealt with as quickly as possible.

The delays faced by those engaging in the process, particularly at stage 2, appear unreasonably long. The report commissioned by the Minister on the review process found that, while it is largely fit for purpose, there are areas that need improvement. Unsurprisingly, the time taken to get a decision was highlighted as one of those areas. Despite the time lapse since the findings of that report, the problem of delays continues. This can cause farmers untold and, in some cases, unnecessary hardship in real terms. Often, by the time the payment has been issued, a considerable amount has disappeared in overdraft fees.

There is no question that some disputes can be detailed and complicated, but the onus is on the Department to bring even those to a swift conclusion. The Department needs to revise its procedures and set targets that it can be held accountable for. Farmers need to know where they stand on their single farm entitlement so that they can plan for the year ahead and avoid further penalties. While they have a responsibility to do what they can to speed up the process, so does the Department.

Mr Buchanan: The motion is of the utmost importance to the Democratic Unionist Party and the farming community, which is concerned by the rising number of reviews of decisions regarding single farm payments and the time that it takes to process those reviews. That is why we call on the Minister to ensure that her Department adequately

resources the processing of reviews to ensure expeditious outcomes.

Single farm payments are made to approximately 38,000 farming businesses in Northern Ireland and are worth around £300 million to our economy. They are a vital aspect of our overall economy and an essential element of farming life. Therefore, ensuring that the payments are made on time and with the minimum delay and administration is crucial to the agriculture industry.

The single farm payment review of decisions procedure was established to ensure that farmers who felt that they had been short-changed by the Department in their single farm payment could appeal that decision and receive a fair, impartial and independent hearing. While that procedure is right and proper, the serious difficulty facing those who are compelled to go down that route is the time that it takes for stage 1 and stage 2 of their appeal to get a hearing and for a decision to be forthcoming. The proposer of the motion outlined the number of days that it takes for stage 1 and stage 2 of an appeal to be heard and a decision to be forthcoming. Everyone around the House today will agree that that is far, far too long a time frame.

Rather than having a system that is effective and efficient, we appear to have an appeal system that is so bogged down in bureaucracy that, in some cases, it takes years for a decision on an appeal to be forthcoming. Again, I see that as totally unacceptable. Through the work of my constituency office, I could give countless examples of farm businesses stretched to breaking point because the single farm payment has been withheld. The lack of information and the uncertainty and stress caused by the restriction of cash flow for a minority of farmers is a total nightmare.

Folks, I have one file here that contains details of a case for one field. You can see how thick that file is and the amount of work that has gone into it. That is for one field. This one query has been going on now for four and a half years, since June 2009. It is still not completed, and it is worth around £4,000 to that farmer. I challenge anyone in the House today to say that that is an acceptable time for our farmers to wait. That is only one case that is being dealt with in my office. We appreciate that the vast majority of farmers receive their single farm payment in December each year. The Minister has said that that represents 85% of them, but 15% are still suffering. The banks are closing in on them, and we must seek to help them. The problem lies not with the 85% but with the 15%.

There is a real problem with the selection of farmers for inspection. Some farmers have told me that they feel totally victimised by the Department when it comes to farm inspection. I know that farmers are selected at random and some are targeted, but farmers need more honesty from the Department. What exactly constitutes an at-risk farm? In an area where there may be an application with errors, some of them very minor, why should farmers be forced to go through endless delays before getting any payment? Something must be done, even along the lines of upfront payments, to assist those farmers.

The weaknesses of the current review of decisions process are the time required to complete the review process; the lack of targets against which to measure the performance of the Department in managing the process; and a lack of personal communication between

departmental officials and applicants. Those are serious problems. Significant opportunities exist to revise the operation in order to improve its efficiency, transparency and, therefore, its accessibility and ease of use for applicants.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Buchanan: I appeal to the Minister today because something more has to be done than what is in place. I urge the Minister to put in place more finances or some system to ensure —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Buchanan: — that the farming community gets the money in a quicker and more efficient way.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I, too, support the motion. Indeed, as an MLA from a rural constituency, I share the concerns about the time taken for reviews and, importantly, the impact that that has on farming families.

I want to pick up on something that Paul Frew referred to. He spoke of the visit that the Committee made to Orchard House on 3 October. In my time as an MLA, that was probably one of the better learning experiences that I have had, and I know that fellow Committee members felt the same way. It gave us a sense of the sheer scale of the operation of processing single farm payments. I was reflecting on some of my notes from that visit, and some figures jumped out at me and are worth mentioning.

In the 2013 single farm payment year, there were 37,633 applications, 65% of which were submitted in the first two weeks of May. The first two weeks of May are the last two weeks of the application period. That equates to 24,461 applications landing in Orchard House in those two weeks. Of those, 20.4% were completed online, which means that 80% of farmers still do not complete them online. That needs to be addressed. Interestingly, 35.9% of the 20.4% completed online are completed by the farmer, not the agent. In real terms, only 7.3% of farmers complete applications online, as agents do the others of the ones who do them online. A total of 29,763 came into Orchard House in paper form, 7,685 were completed online and, obviously, some were invalid.

As far as the scale of the work involved for the Department is concerned, they come in from when the window opens in March. It takes 10 weeks to scan and key in the data from all the applications, and over 50,000 errors were identified in the first validation. That gives a sense of the scale of the operation. I am very conscious that, when we talk about cases, we are talking about individuals and their families. In previous debates, we have been told that it is extremely important to get as many applications as possible online to make the payments more efficient and get them out more quickly.

The other mechanism for speeding things up is remote sensing. Last year, there were 250 remote sensing cases. This year, that has more than quadrupled to 1,100 remote sensing inspections, with 940 still of the classic on-field method. That represents a huge advance in adopting that methodology.

In conclusion, I want to send the message that I support the motion. That view is shared by my party colleagues

and colleagues across the House. We want to see a reduction in the time taken for the review of single farm payments. I commend the Minister for the fact that she has set a target for 85% to be paid out before Christmas. That represents an increase of in and around 3% on last year. The message needs to go out to the farming community that it is important to get the application forms in as soon as possible after the application window opens in mid-March and not to leave it until the last two weeks of the application window, as two thirds of farmers did this year. I welcome the progress on the remote sensing. Once again, I advise farmers that the online version of doing this is quicker, easier, avoids standing in long queues and makes correcting mistakes easier. There is also a challenge for the Department to raise the online application percentage and make the process a bit more efficient.

Mr G Robinson: I would like to briefly raise two issues regarding single farm payments. First, there is the time taken after an appeal is lodged regarding a decision on a single farm payment. Those delays are costly for farmers, who need the payments to keep them solvent in difficult trading conditions. The delays are unduly long and should be minimised. They can cause untold stress to our farming community and their families. As profit margins are down and markets are difficult, the delays in payments can mean the difference between the viability and the closure of a farm business. Therefore, it is essential that the delay between appeals and their outcomes is addressed as a matter of urgency. A delay may not seem much to us, but it can prove disastrous for others. As Northern Ireland produces a top-quality farm product, we must all support our farmers where possible.

Secondly, I want to raise the issue of fines that farmers may accidentally incur and the proportionality of fines to infringements. In some cases, a very minor issue involving a few hundred pounds at most can lead to farmers being penalised by thousands of pounds. Not only is this unjust, it is plainly ridiculous. There can be no argument for deliberate infringement of the rules, but any punishment imposed must be in proportion to the offence. Many of those infringements will also be accidental. Whether the issues have to be addressed locally or via Europe is, in some ways, irrelevant. It is important that they are addressed as a matter of urgency. Perhaps the Minister will give the House the figures for farm businesses that have been forced out of business by disproportionate fines.

I welcome the motion and see it as a vital tool in resolving these difficult problems, which have severe outcomes for many from the farming community in Northern Ireland. I support the motion and hope that the Minister will ensure a satisfactory resolution as a matter of priority, either here or in Europe.

4.30 pm

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I very much welcome the debate on the review of the decisions process. It gives me the opportunity to provide an update on the current position with stage 1 and stage 2. I hope to reassure Members that we have already made some strides to improve the situation with the processing of reviews of decisions and that that will continue in the run-up to the 2015 CAP reform.

The review of the decisions process, which predates single farm payments, was introduced to provide subsidy applicants with an impartial and transparent assessment of the Department's decision against the framework of EU and national legislation. The process is not a formal appeals process, but applicants can have further recourse to the ombudsman or to judicial review if they remain unhappy with the Department's decisions. It aims to ensure that the decision made is correct and in line with legislation. As you will appreciate, regardless of the circumstances that apply in individual cases, the Department does not have scope to make decisions that do not comply with the scheme rules. It is in the Department's interest, therefore, to get those decisions right and to correct them if they are incorrect.

Farmers who consider that DARD did not reach the correct decision on their SFP, LFACA or agrienvironment claim should, in the first instance, contact the relevant scheme staff to discuss their case. In many cases, that resolves the issue without the need for a more formal review. In cases in which that option does not resolve the issue, a farmer has access to the two-stage process. That gives farmers the opportunity to explain why the Department's decision should be changed.

Some reviews affect a single claim year but many go back a number of years. Cases are processed in order of the date that they are received. As Members would expect, the cases are often very complex. If legal advice or other information is required from a farmer or third party, they can take longer to process. The stage 2 review, because of the preparation and the setting up of a panel, also takes additional time.

In looking at the numbers of SFP cases received and finalised under the process, I can advise that, from 2005 to date, 3,399 stage 1 and 735 stage 2 applications have been received. Although, in overall terms, that is a relatively small number of cases, given the hundreds of thousands of decisions on payments, with around 350,500 being made in each of those years, and that around 99% of all payments related to decisions are accepted without challenge, I do not underestimate the importance of reassessing the situation if a farmer has a concern, especially if payments have been reduced through the application of penalties.

In looking at the 3,273 cases finalised to date, I advise that, in 166 stage 1 cases, the Department's decision has been changed; 345 were changed in part; and, in 2,762 cases, which is about 84%, the original decision remains unchanged. Of the 571 stage 2 decisions issued, the decision has been changed in full in 93 cases; 46 were changed in part; and, in 432 cases, the original decision remains unchanged.

As Members said, there was an external review of the process in 2011, which resulted in some changes. The head of the paying agency, for example, assumed the role of final decision-maker, and there was a review of guidance issued to applicants about the review process. Other changes will be introduced as part of the CAP reform process. Over the past year, a key focus has been on reducing the backlog of cases at stage 1 and stage 2. At stage 1, additional staff were seconded to the team in June of this year to assist with clearing the backlog. Since then, 272 cases have been cleared, and the current

caseload has been more than halved to 117 over the past five months.

In 2012, I secured additional resources for the stage 2 team. Although additional staff were brought onto the team because of the number of duplicate field cases that were on hold since 2006-07, the impact of those staff has not yet been fully realised as work was mainly focused on clearing the long-standing cases. This year, we have finalised 63 cases and hope to have a further 17 cleared before the end of the year. That is in line with the target that was given to the Committee in October.

Some progress has been made, but there have certainly been ups and downs depending on circumstances. In 2011, the time taken to process a stage 1 application still averaged 263 calendar days. In 2012, the average was 186 calendar days, and, in 2013, the average is 206 days. For stage 2, the average timing in 2011 was 975 calendar days. In 2012, it was 1,383, and, in 2013, it was 561. These averages include the time taken to process the duplicate field cases mentioned earlier. If we exclude those cases, the performance at stage 1 for 2012 reduces to 156 days, which is a much better position than we were in previously, and those cases are largely through the system.

Stage 2 comparative figures, if we exclude the duplicate field cases, show that, so far in 2013, the average was 537 days, so that is a reduction of 24 days per case. Although I fully recognise that some cases will always take a long time to clear, I would, ideally, by 2016, like 90% of stage 1 cases and at least 60% of stage 2 cases to be cleared within 12 months of receipt. I recognise that that is a challenge and will, in part, be dependent on successfully clearing the backlog. As well as dealing with an unknown number of new cases and the outworkings of CAP reform, these targets are dependent on my Department having all the information that it needs to complete the casework, but these, I believe, give us a way to measure the throughput of cases and plan for the future workload.

In addition, I have asked that all the component parts of the process, especially those that are in DARD's control, be reviewed to identify what factors contribute to delays in finalising cases and that those factors be addressed to reduce the timescales. I have also asked that, where possible, technology should be introduced to speed up the process and give the farmer as much transparency as possible in what can be technically complicated cases.

I will monitor the situation over the coming months. It is important that we finalise as many of these cases as possible before the end of 2014 to avoid carrying a significant body of casework into CAP reform and to ensure that we are in a better position to deal with any reviews arising from decisions made under CAP reform. For example, the possible fresh establishment of entitlements.

In closing, I reiterate that I welcome the opportunity to update Members on the review of the decisions process and to assure them that the number of reviews is small compared with the number of subsidy applications dealt with yearly. That said, I absolutely recognise the pressure that that puts individuals under, particularly with income support. I accept that the review of decision cases need to be dealt with in a more timely manner, and I have asked my officials to put in place performance indicators to consider other ways, including using technology, to speed

up the processing at stage 1 and stage 2. We are making progress and we will continue to make progress in the time ahead.

Mr Frew: I welcome today's debate on the very specific issue of reviews of the single farm payment process. Some Members took the opportunity to widen the debate to the whole single farm payment process. That is very important and, in the whole, it is all part of the same process. We are making progress on the single farm payment process. We acknowledge the work done on remote sensing and the fact that 1,100 cases have been clocked off this year, which will make a difference in the overall speed of the process and enable the Department to go forward with more applications and make more payments.

About 700 more farmers will be paid this December compared with other years. That is progress, and it is good news. However, although I acknowledge the work that the Minister and the Department have put in, the debate was specifically on the speed and time taken to process reviews of the single farm payment inspection process and any subsequent appeals. How complicated is it? Stage 1 is an internal review in the Department and is split into three areas. For a simple single farm payment, the stage 1 review is completed in Orchard House; for LFACA, the stage 1 review is completed in a different branch in Orchard House; for agrienvironment schemes, the stage 1 review is completed by the countryside management development branch, which is based at the Loughry campus. There again you have the complications in and details of where the actual process goes. However, on that point, once you receive your decision on your single farm payment and your inspection results, the Department asks that your completed application form be received no later than 42 calendar days after the date of its decision letter.

Although it is good to be prompt and you have to put a date on something, black and bold print tells the farmer and the applicant that their submission must be received no later than 42 calendar days later. I am saying that just to illustrate the point that, although we time bind and time limit farmers and applicants in any reviews of the Department's decision that they might seek, once they have made their decision quickly, it can take weeks, months, and, in a lot of cases, years to process.

If you are not happy with the stage 1 review, you go to a stage 2 review. That is a review by an external panel with the head of DARD, which is the paying agency, making the final decision. You can apply for a stage 2 review only after the stage 1 review has been completely exhausted. At stage 2, you have a choice of going for either a written or an oral review. Again, that costs money, albeit that the cost is £100 or £50, which is small fry considering the amount that you might stand to lose because of the first decision. However, you are again asked to return that application within 42 days of the date of the letter on the stage 1 decision. So, again, farmers and applicants are time bound. That is proper order, but you would expect to see a wee bit of reciprocation by the other side, even though some appeal reviews are highly complicated.

Why do we need these reviews? Is it important? It is important. To date, there have been 3,229 applications for stage 1 reviews. Of those, 362 were changed in full, and 134 were changed in part. Also, 2,534 were not changed, and 199 were not processed, as they were either out of time for review or were withdrawn. I will not go into the

stage 2 figures because I will not have time, but that, in itself, shows you the reason, rationale and need for reviews of decisions on single farm payment inspections. So, they are very important.

Tom Elliott intervened to say that 15% or 10% were left behind. However, this is an even smaller number who are left behind. Nonetheless, we are talking about thousands of pounds for businesses in our Province. When you look at 362 of the Department's decisions being changed in full, you see that that goes some way towards illustrating how important it is to review decisions in such situations.

I will now discuss some Members' contributions. Oliver McMullan acknowledged the issues and the problems. I realise that the Members on the opposite Benches are looking at this realistically. I heard and acknowledge what the Minister said in her response. I also acknowledge her commitment to make things better, speedier and more expedient. The Member talked about the European directives that are bearing down on us. We all know rightly the pressures that Europe applies and the infraction fines that it has imposed on us so far. The importance of the single farm payment to the community was also discussed, and banks have a role to play where cash flow is concerned.

The Member also spoke about visiting the DARD office in Ballymena tomorrow. I wish him all the best there. He is no stranger to North Antrim, of course. It would be very much appreciated if he would stop to get his tea there and spend a wee bit of money in the town. He made a very important point about broadband, and I want to congratulate him for that. If rural areas can get more efficient and speedier broadband, farmers there might be able to use the internet to apply for their single farm payments, which will speed up the process.

Sean Rogers was complimentary of Orchard House. I think that we were all complimentary about the personnel who work there. It is very important to recognise the work that goes into this highly complicated process.

I ask the officials in the Officials' Box to take the wishes of the House back to the staff for all their hard work. This issue is more about the system than it is about any personnel or one person involved in the process.

4.45 pm

Mr Rogers mentioned advanced payments and how the lack of them hurt and disadvantage our farming community, especially when it competes with neighbouring jurisdictions. He said that, years ago, DARD was a critical friend but that it was now more like a police force. He said that people are scared to invite officials in or see them on their grounds for fear of fines or other complications. He also talked about the Agri-Food Strategy Board. He called for a comprehensive review of how DARD does things in future, and we should always be mindful of how to do things better.

Jo-Anne Dobson supported the motion. She talked about the real fear that is associated with the inspection process and gave examples from her constituency.

Kieran McCarthy sympathised with the farming community. He illustrated that by talking about the process and how he appreciates the pressure that the farming community is under.

William Irwin knows only too well the issues with the single farm payment inspection process. He works in a constituency where it is an issue day and daily.

Ian Milne talked about the changes to the system so far and the pressure on it caused by the maps. He spoke about how that impacted on the Department and had an effect on overall outcomes. Of course, we acknowledge the work done by DARD and the changes that it has had to implement that have been bearing down from Europe. That should also be acknowledged. He talked about the review of the review of decisions, information on which was in our packs.

Tom Elliott, in an intervention, mentioned the people who are left behind. As I said before, it is all well and good to say that we can pay the farmers on time in December — that is good and should be supported — but it will always be the people who are left behind and placed in the inspection process, sometimes through no fault of their own or because they have made a mistake, who are the ones who are burdened and have to wait months and months for their payments.

Tom Buchanan used the example of a substantial case, worth thousands of pounds, that he has been working on for four years. He illustrated what that looked like.

Declan McAleer talked about the trip to Orchard House.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must draw his remarks to a close.

Mr Frew: That was a very useful trip. I enjoyed it, too. I learned from that trip. I believe that it educated the Committee about the scale of the operation at Orchard House. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes, with concern, the rising number of reviews of decisions regarding single farm payments; further notes, with concern, the time it takes to process these reviews; and calls on the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that her Department adequately resources the processing of the reviews to ensure expeditious outcomes.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Ards Peninsula: Economic Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the Adjournment topic will have 15 minutes in which to speak. On this occasion, all other Members who are called to speak will have seven minutes.

Mr McCarthy: I am very grateful to have the chance to debate and discuss the low level of economic activity — in other words, jobs — and the lack of employment or future prosperity for everyone living on the Ards peninsula. This Adjournment debate has come about with the proposed closure of Exploris — based in Portaferry, at the very tip of the peninsula — with the possible loss of up to 40 or more jobs. The area simply cannot afford to lose one job, let alone over 40. The debate may give us, as an Assembly and as local representatives, the impetus to do something about that.

I am delighted to see the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment present with us this evening. Hopefully, together we can improve employment opportunities in the peninsula and give young people the chance to stay in their localities and contribute to the local community.

As it is at present, there is very little manufacturing or call-centre work. The main areas of work are farming, fishing, small shops, tourism and hospitality, all of which have suffered over recent years. A huge number of people were engaged in the construction industry. They were all highly skilled craftspeople and tradesmen and tradeswomen. Now, with construction and development totally in the doldrums, they are finding it extremely difficult to get work of any description. They simply either sign on the dole or, unfortunately, emigrate to find work in far-off fields. By having this Adjournment debate, we may find a direction to travel to create more local employment.

Apart from the few operating companies in the Ards peninsula, we are extremely lucky to have such a fantastic environment, which includes Strangford lough and the potential tourism opportunities that go with this exceptional attraction. The Minister has acknowledged this superb natural asset with its unspoilt landscapes, coastlines and stunning scenery. Those product areas will be the key to developing the tourism experience across Northern Ireland and will, in particular, drive investment and development in regional areas such as the Strangford constituency. These are all very fine words and sentiments, but we really must see more investment and, indeed, promotion of the region to capitalise on what we have.

I mentioned Exploris and how its very existence is under threat. I appeal to the Minister to ensure that Exploris continues and expands so that it can be the catalyst to draw tourists and visitors down into the Ards peninsula and across the lough on the ferry into Strangford and beyond. In her answer to Chris Hazzard and me a few weeks ago, the Minister was prepared to help Exploris — and we were delighted to have had that response — provided that a reasonable and viable business case was put forward by

Ards Borough Council. At the council's recent development meeting, senior officials were tasked to do precisely that during the next two months. With help and assistance from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and other Departments, Exploris will, and must, survive and continue to play its part in attracting visitors to the Ards peninsula, thereby saving the existing 40-plus jobs. I ask the Minister to respond positively to Ards Borough Council's chief executive, and for her officials and others, including Friends of Exploris, to acknowledge the business case with funding so that Exploris can continue and be the catalyst for attracting visitors and tourists.

The Minister will, of course, be aware that, unfortunately, we have pockets of social exclusion, isolation and deprivation in the Ards peninsula. The Assembly has a duty to put measures in place, if at all possible, to help all our people to achieve a better standard of living, which, in turn, will help with their general health and mental well-being, thus allowing them to contribute fully to the economic life of Northern Ireland.

I pay tribute to the local entrepreneurs who have small businesses along the peninsula, perhaps employing one, two, three or up to a dozen people. Those employers must be supported by the Executive and the banks — and we all know the problems associated with the banks in recent years — to ensure continuing business and employment. I am aware that spare capacity is available in the buildings in the fishing village of Portavogie, and if we could see improvements and opportunities opening up to the fishing fleet to bring products for processing into those buildings, it would give further opportunities for local employment.

I also pay tribute to the local volunteers throughout the peninsula who organise and run regeneration groups, community groups and partnerships, and to all the others who work to provide employment for local communities.

Yesterday's debate on the Committee for Employment and Learning's report on its inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance was interesting. It was an excellent report and it received full backing from the Assembly. It is vital that there is interdepartmental studying and working together to further prosperity and enterprise in distant regions such as the Ards peninsula.

Many in the peninsula still do not enjoy full broadband provision. That is something that the Minister, or her companions in the Executive, might wish to upgrade. It is something that modern employers and entrepreneurs will see as an essential part of running a successful business. Until we have that essential improvement of provision in the Ards peninsula, we will be at a disadvantage.

We in the peninsula want to see road infrastructure greatly improved. The Department for Regional Development (DRD) has recently invested in parts of the peninsula, but a lot more needs to be done. I will mention the main road in Portavogie. I was on it last night, and it is absolutely atrocious for a main road out of a fishing village. Something needs to be done. I know that it is not this Minister's responsibility, but that is something that needs to be looked at. We are in line to get, in the near future, a new vessel to cross Strangford lough to Strangford. Some might say, "What about a bridge across the lough?" That would surely create much-needed employment.

The Programme for Government has the economy as its number one priority. We welcome that commitment.

In her written statement to Members on 14 November, the Minister stated that she is to conduct a review into the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and wider tourism structures. Within that review, her tourism priorities are under four main themes, which are: promotion; people and business; products and places; and making it happen. The Ards peninsula has so many tourist attractions that I have no doubt that, with commitment and zeal from all concerned, we can reach that visitor number target of 4.2 million, which will bring with it the revenue of up to £676 million, by December 2014, as the Minister hopes.

Every village on either side of the peninsula has something to offer. I am convinced that, in working with the Department, our local inhabitants will step up to the mark to offer a fantastic visitor experience and, at the same time, create local employment.

In conclusion, if only the peninsula could have another Cyril Lord factory. I am sure that the Minister will remember who Cyril Lord was. I hope that she does.

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): No, she does not.

Mr McCarthy: Cyril Lord was a gentleman who came from Lancashire and settled in Donaghadee. He organised a factory employing, at one time, over 1,000 people from the Ards peninsula and, indeed, from other places. That would solve all of our problems. That is information for the Minister this evening.

As I said earlier, Exploris in Portaferry has brought over 100,000 visitors per annum into the region. They, in turn, spend up to £3 million, helping to sustain many local jobs. Given those figures, if Exploris was to close, I hope that the Minister realises what a disastrous effect that would have in an area of low economic activity.

We are all in the Assembly to make life better for our constituents. I sincerely hope that not only this Minister but other Ministers in the relevant Departments will rise to the challenges ahead and provide economic development for the Ards peninsula.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank Mr McCarthy for securing this Adjournment debate. I know that he and I share a deep affection for the Ards peninsula and a keen desire for it to achieve its full potential. As a local MLA, I am a regular visitor to the peninsula, with an office in Ballywalter and three other monthly surgeries dotted around the area. It is truly one of the most beautiful areas in Northern Ireland. Some might say that it is even more beautiful than Fermanagh.

I am grateful that the Enterprise Minister is present today to respond. The debate comes two years after I tabled a similar Adjournment debate on regeneration in Portavogie. On that occasion, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development responded in the Chamber, but there was certainly no response from her on the ground.

Mr McCarthy has detailed the case for the need for investment in the area, and I do not plan to duplicate but rather to complement his comments. There are a number of programmes ongoing to promote the Ards peninsula, not least among which is the Mourne coastal route, which will direct tourists and day trippers along the peninsula as a more scenic means to travel to the Mournes. As part of that, and in partnership with Ards Borough Council, brown

signs are being erected along the route, and picnic and car parking facilities are being upgraded.

5.00 pm

Given the breadth of history along the Ards peninsula, from the Vikings, the Normans, the Hamilton-Montgomery plantation up to the modern day, there is a wealth of information to be soaked up by any visitor, including at abbeys, castles and the Mount Stewart, Greyabbey and Ballywalter estates. That is, of course, all set against the stunning scenic backdrop of the drumlins and Strangford lough.

There is also excellence on the peninsula in the agriculture sector at thriving farms. In recent times, we have seen the opening of Harrisons in Greyabbey, which has been a wonderful success. With the right investment, businesses can become established and be very successful.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

The Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee conducted an investigation into the creative industries in Northern Ireland. It was clear from that work that the Ards peninsula has a thriving creative sector, much of which is based around sole traders. Ards Borough Council was and should continue to be commended for the work that it does through the Creative Peninsula project in supporting and showcasing the creative talent that is evident in the area.

Among the Committee's recommendations that the Enterprise Minister may be most able to comment on are the following: the development of mechanisms for business in the creative industries to better access experienced business mentoring and approved signposting for services within the creative industries; collaboration with appropriate bodies to create guidance on the creative industries to better enable investors and funders to more adequately assess the viability of creative products and companies, making the provision of funding or investment easier and more likely; building on the access to finance strategy around the creation of investment funds that are better suited to supporting the needs of creative industries; for DETI to be more proactive in signposting rural creative enterprises to the support funding that is available; and for DETI to examine how rural social enterprises in the creative industries can be supported and helped to link with similar businesses in urban areas. I encourage the Minister to look again at that inquiry report and its recommendations because I believe that it is pertinent to this debate, specifically to the area around the Ards peninsula.

The peninsula is a hotspot for creative talent in ceramics, pottery, glass, musical instruments, weaving, and so much more. For all the talent in and stunning natural beauty of the peninsula, there is a need for a strategy and assistance to regenerate the area. I have outlined some of the raw materials that are present in the area upon which that regeneration can be built.

As Mr McCarthy stated, every village on the peninsula has something to offer, but I want to spend some time focusing on Portavogie because it is one of the main villages in the area. Portavogie is unique in Northern Ireland in that it relies and has relied on fishing as almost its sole source of income and the basis for its economy. The other commercial fishing ports in Northern Ireland have a significantly higher level of diversification. The huge cuts

to the fishing fleet, reductions in catch and the narrowing of profit margins have, therefore, hit Portavogie harder than most other areas. This has had a knock-on effect on marketing, harbour jobs, boatbuilding and chandlery supplies. The fleet and, as a result, Portavogie in general have further been affected by rising fuel prices and the devastating impact of weather patterns in the past 12 months.

Given the over-reliance on fishing and its connected industries, I called on the Agriculture Minister to establish a task force to assess options for diversification and to take the lead in developing a vision for Portavogie to create sustainable jobs, regenerate and rejuvenate the village, and to tap into the tourist potential, which I felt would have had wider benefits for the entire Ards peninsula, including villages such as Ballywalter and Ballyhalbert. Sadly, that call was ignored. In response to that debate, a group of local people has come together to try to develop plans for the regeneration of the village. I have been pleased to meet them on several occasions, and I recently met them, the peninsula councillor Robert Adair and the acting director of development in Ards Borough Council to discuss their strategic plans for the village. Such local groups are invaluable in contributing to debates around regeneration in their area, because nobody knows what a locality needs more than those who live there.

There are areas in the village such as Harbour Road — and Main Road, which Mr McCarthy mentioned — that have numerous boarded-up premises crying out for redevelopment. Those are prime spots overlooking a working harbour that should be utilised in tapping into any potential tourist market.

Ards Borough Council has been involved in many excellent schemes to assist the peninsula, but there needs to be a higher-level strategy to encourage outside investment and tourism into the area. As I indicated, I believe that the materials are there, but direction and investment are required.

Mr Nesbitt: May I, too, thank Mr McCarthy for bringing forward the debate? You learn something new every day, and I am surprised that the Minister was not aware of the great Cyril Lord, carpet manufacturer, but that, perhaps, has something to do with certain ages. I am certainly of an age to remember the great ad, "Luxury you can afford, by Cyril Lord". However, as Mr McCarthy at least will remember, Cyril Lord is remembered for going bankrupt.

Yesterday, the Unite union was in this Building to launch a working paper on the economy, entitled 'Growing the Economy and Living Standards'. All the main parties welcomed the report but also agreed that that on its own — just shaking hands and clapping each other on the back — would not be enough. There was a necessity to make it part of the debate, so I am keen to mention a couple of elements that are particular to growing the economy around the peninsula.

The foreword of the report states:

"Our starting point is that employment and enterprise creation is a social and collective activity requiring substantial public interventions, expansionary economic policies, rising wages and living standards and a profound extension of stakeholder participation ... We have an excellent opportunity to fundamentally

re-think our models and strategies for indigenous enterprise development.”

That applies to the peninsula as much as to anywhere else in Northern Ireland, so I am glad to use it as a starting point today. The document makes reference to the potential of renewable energies. As I have said before, the peninsula is an ideal location because if you extend your reach up to east Belfast and Belfast harbour, there is the £50 million logistics centre that is being put together for DONG Energy, which will develop offshore wind.

If you then come down to Newtownards at the top of the peninsula, you have the regional college with its environmental unit, very much practically based and testing prototypes of energy efficiency in heating, cooling and other areas of modern technology. You then make your way down the full length of the peninsula and there is SeaGen, which has now been joined by other tidal renewables, so you find that the lough is a global leader in experimentation in renewable tidal energies. You see that there is the potential for this area of Northern Ireland to become at least a UK centre of excellence for the study of renewable energy. That research arm could also be the missing element in rejuvenating the Exploris centre, which does not have any element where you can go and study what is being done in renewable energies in Strangford lough.

The Unite document also talks about key target sectors. I often refer to the fact that 100 years ago, when our economy was booming, it was built on a small number of sectors, such as shipbuilding, engineering, agrifood, rope works and linen. The document talks about renewables. It also talks tourism and eco-tourism. The peninsula is ripe for development in terms of tourism. Mount Stewart is consistently voted one of the top three gardens in the whole of the United Kingdom. Now beside it, as Miss McIlveen mentioned, Harrison's has reinvented itself with a brand new garden centre and restaurant. Once you develop a market for people who are keen on gardening, which means that you need more than one day to comfortably visit all that is on offer in one venue, then you have cracked the difficult problem of getting them to come back. The combination of a renewed Mount Stewart and these new developments such as Harrison's begins to offer that sort of product to gardeners.

Those who know gardeners or who are keen gardeners themselves know that the one thing gardeners do is spend money.

The peninsula has a unique tourism offer in Ulster Scots, including the Hamiltons and the Montgomerys. What could be better than to educate people, possibly even Members, in the history of the Ulster Scots. To quote A T Q Stewart's 'The Narrow Ground':

“The Hamiltons and the Montgomerys did not wrestle a fertile, cultivated and prosperous region from Gaelic proprietors. They came instead to a country devastated by war and by famine.”

It is for the people of the peninsula to claim the Ulster-Scots heritage of the Hamiltons and the Montgomerys.

Perhaps more controversially, one of the greatest fighting men in the history of the British Army, Blair Mayne, was born at the top of the peninsula in Newtownards, close to the Somme Heritage Centre. There is military history

and heritage, which has tourism potential for the Ards peninsula.

There is also agrifood and food processing. As was said, we have some of the most outstanding food entrepreneurs not only in Northern Ireland but in the United Kingdom or on this island. The lough, the soil and the sea have great potential for the economic development of the Ards peninsula. When driving down the peninsula, you see farmers proudly displaying, at the edges of their fields near the road, that they supply the products that they grow in their fields to major supermarket chains.

We have to move away from the old notion that the economy is some sort of binary construct and that it is either public sector or private sector. There is a third way: the social economy. It seems that, with the rural nature of the Ards peninsula, there is potential for the social economy — the so-called not-for-profit sector. That sector does generate profit, but it goes back in for the benefit of the people of the area. There is huge potential from the public, private and social economies working together to generate real wealth and to give real hope to the people of the Ards peninsula, which is part of the Strangford constituency that I am so proud to serve.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Member who secured this debate. He is a very active and proud champion of the Ards peninsula, so fair play to him. It is not incumbent on me to say that I am surprised that there are more people in the Chamber tonight who are not from the Ards peninsula than those who are. Maybe that speaks louder than any voices in here.

We must recognise and appreciate that the single biggest hurdle to the economic development of the Ards peninsula is the poor transport and connectivity features of the area, which make it one of the most socially deprived areas in the North for accessibility to basic services. The lack of public transport availability and connectivity for transport corridors makes the area virtually untouchable for prospective investors, whether in the public or private sector.

When you consider the greatly dispersed rural nature of the peninsula and the urgent need to upgrade various main routes, it beggars belief that the Ards peninsula receives so little from the Department for Regional Development for maintenance, road schemes and larger infrastructure projects. No doubt my colleague from south Down will say that he knows what it feels like because his constituents have been waiting for the Ballynahinch bypass for the best part of half a century.

Infrastructure on the peninsula is extremely poor. For nearly 20 years, there has been a sustained campaign for the resurfacing of the main A20 road from Newtownards to Portaferry. Only in the past year have works commenced on addressing the issue on certain parts of the road.

The last large infrastructure scheme to be completed was the Newtownards bypass, which was signed off by my colleague Conor Murphy after a 20-year campaign. That welcome addition has improved the commute to and from the peninsula and has the added bonus of clearing congestion in Newtownards town centre.

Without improved connectivity and transport links, the economic development of the Ards peninsula will always struggle. On that note, I welcome recent correspondence received by Down District Council indicating an expression

of interest from a Russian energy company to explore the opportunity to build a dam across the lough, with a connecting road on top. That proposal will certainly meet varying degrees of reaction but, at the very least, it will open up the debate once more about the level of community and government support for a connecting structure across Strangford lough. People and businesses in the Ards deserve that at least.

5.15 pm

The loss of banking services in lower Ards has had a detrimental effect on individuals, families and businesses in the area. In particular, the closure of the Northern Bank in Portaferry has left a huge gap in local service delivery. People are now forced to travel out of Portaferry and often as far away as Newtownards to carry out very simple tasks. The same can be said for villages such as Portavogie and Ballywalter, which have little or nothing in the way of available services to offer visitors or shoppers coming into the area. If you were to walk through any village in lower Ards, you would not be able to count on one hand the number of derelict, vacant businesses and residential buildings.

Portaferry Regeneration is a great example of how community leaders can work for the development of their area. There is opportunity in every community for local people to aspire to what Portaferry Regeneration has achieved. After securing a £1.2 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund two years ago, the group has been to the fore in addressing some of the key social and economic deprivation in the town. A number of years ago, Portaferry Regeneration, in conjunction with some local community groups, rolled out a fantastic programme of streetscapes to regenerate the town centre. Its work is to be commended, as is the work of groups such as Kircubbin Regeneration, which has successfully put its village on the map by attracting new business to the area and investing heavily in community facilities. I understand that Portavogie Regeneration recently secured DARD rural development funding, which I hope will help that community to break down some of the barriers that it might face in developing and attracting business.

At a recent event that I co-hosted with my colleagues Cairíona Ruane and Martina Anderson MEP, we discussed the sustainability and future of the fishing industry across the east Down coast. I was very grateful to the representatives from Portavogie who attended because, ultimately, the fishing sector will be a key economic driver for the village. Miss McIlveen touched on the need for diversification. In fact, we spoke to one particular group that is applying to SEA for European funding worth £2.6 million to do just that. That money will be very important.

The abject failure of local government and associated organisations to build economic prosperity on the Ards peninsula has been highlighted since the council's disastrous decision to move towards the closure of the Exploris aquarium. The benefits to the local economy of Exploris have been well rehearsed in the House over the past few months, but, once again, I reiterate the importance of finding a long-term solution to the future of the facility. As a direct employer of 18 people, a contributing factor to a £3 million secondary spend in the local economy and a world-class tourist attraction,

the facility must be saved. Without Exploris, I cannot emphasise enough how every business in Portaferry at least, and possibly as far afield as Downpatrick and Newtownards, is likely to be hit very hard by a loss of footfall, visitors, trade and profit. It is not an overestimation to say that the closure of Exploris might lead to the closure of Portaferry.

Tourism is the ultimate driver for the economic development of the Ards peninsula. From sights such as Kearney village to Mount Stewart gardens to Kirkistown racetrack to Saint Patrick's Trail, the area offers many already first-class destinations, and there are hundreds more that, with the correct investment and support, could be developed to make the peninsula one of Ireland's most attractive and visited areas. The area is a key facet of the Tourist Board's Strangford lough tourism destination plan. The recent decision by DOE to accredit the lough as a marine conservation zone is a platform upon which we have an opportunity to showcase the unique visitor experience on offer.

We must recognise the demographics and dynamics of local employment trends in the Ards. It is quite depressing to watch the mass exodus every morning from towns such as Portaferry and Kircubbin, with hundreds of cars leaving the district and transporting people to work in Belfast or further afield. Many of those people are, however, simply grateful for the opportunity to avail themselves of work at all. If you compare them with the ones they are leaving behind, you see that the situation is more depressing to the eye. In a town such as a Portaferry, which has relied heavily on the construction industry as a key economic driver for many years, times are, indeed, very gloomy. To that end, local and regional government need to step up to the mark. They need to work with communities, particularly in rural areas such as lower Ards, to improve employment opportunities and increase business start-ups, to support the construction industry and to target major infrastructural projects in order to get our construction people back out to work.

Mr Rogers: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I congratulate Mr McCarthy on bringing this very important issue to the Assembly. I am glad to see the Minister here because every little bit that she does for the Ards peninsula enhances south Down as well. Michelle talked about the Mourne coastal route. There is a lot of potential to get people to the Ards peninsula and then, by coming across on the ferry and so on, into south Down.

A number of weeks ago, the Assembly gave a clear endorsement of the Exploris facility and an assurance that everything will be done to keep it open. The aquarium is crucial to the local economy and, indeed, to the local tourism sector. An improved Exploris, which ranks as a first-rate tourist attraction for the North, will help to complement efforts to drive the economy of the Ards peninsula.

As Mr Nesbitt indicated, Exploris has other potentials, whether those are in renewable energy or promoting aquaculture. Exploris contributes directly to the tourist economy in south Down and complements the family-friendly cultural tourism that is on offer in the neighbouring St Patrick's country and Lecale area. That is why it is imperative that the Executive and, in particular, relevant Ministers put their heads together to work out a comprehensive and foolproof plan for saving Exploris. If

we fail to deliver such a plan, the economic prospects of the whole area will be seriously impacted.

Through the use of the Strangford ferry, many people visit the lough area to access the bars, shops and restaurants. In the most recent monitoring round, money was allocated to improving the ferry. That is welcome, and it will provide an additional incentive for people who are hoping to sample what the area has to offer. Danny Kennedy also made an announcement at the end of July this year about £271,000 for resurfacing the road. Those improvements are needed if we are to fulfil the economic prospects of those who are living in and around the Ards peninsula. The improvement works to the ferry and that road surfacing will help to improve accessibility to the area. That should lead to greater numbers of tourists in the area and provide a welcome boost for the local economy.

I am only too aware of the challenges that all our fishing ports are experiencing, but the recent FLAG initiative, which is, by the way, the DARD fishing villages' initiative, will hopefully assist the regeneration of Portavogie.

Economic development in Ards is heavily dependent on the unique sites in the area. Those need to be developed. Scrabo Tower, Mount Stewart House, Grey Abbey and the Kirkistown motorsport circuit could be fully promoted. Those attractions have not always been properly utilised, but they need to be if we are to maximise the number of tourists in the area.

Finally, the Ards peninsula needs a robust plan for economic development. Ards Borough Council must work in conjunction with colleagues in north Down, Down and the Assembly to find a way to improve the economic prospects of the area.

Mrs Foster: First, let me thank Mr McCarthy for providing me with the opportunity to speak on this issue and to say to him that, as an MLA for a peripheral constituency, I understand completely the issues that he talked about today. Obviously, I did not know Mr Lord. I asked my friend Miss McIlveen whether she recalled him, and she said, "I was a child at the time". Considering that she has the same birth year as me, that lets me off that particular hook, Mr McCarthy. However, I recognise the importance of textiles and all the jobs that it brought. Exactly the same thing occurred with the textile industry in Fermanagh.

Any current discussion on the Ards peninsula cannot ignore what is happening in and around Exploris at present. I had a very good meeting with Jim Shannon MP and the representatives of Friends of Exploris in October, at which I confirmed that, since 1991, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has provided over £1.8 million in support to the facility for capital, marketing and, indeed, other schemes. However, I have made the point on a number of occasions that, in considering the future of Exploris, it is vital — I think that Mr Hazzard made this point — that the long-term commerciality of the project is improved so that it can continue into the future.

I think that all of us want to make sure that Exploris continues to operate. However, it must do so in a viable way and not in a way that simply defers issues that are quite clearly present at this point in time. In short, we need to ensure that any solution to Exploris's problems is commercially focused. On that basis, I have given a commitment to Friends of Exploris that, if any such commercially focused proposals come to me, I will look at

them in a positive way. I hear what the Member is saying about the council. I wait to hear from the council about the motion that was recently passed, and I reiterate the commitment that I already made in the House to him today. Furthermore, although no financial support is available at present from NITB through its capital grant schemes, it will, of course, be there to work with Ards Borough Council on marketing activity, business planning and all those other ancillary elements that will hopefully help to make the project more commercially viable.

I turn to the wider issue of economic development in the Ards peninsula and across the Strangford constituency. It is interesting to listen to the different contributions and to acknowledge that I heard mentioned in the debate the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Minister for Regional Development. There was a reference to skills, and, of course, we talked about local government. My role, of course, was mentioned. Again, that is a recognition that economic well-being and economic development lie with the Executive as a whole and not just with one Minister. That has been recognised in the contributions that have been made today.

For our part, Invest Northern Ireland has made some 700 offers to businesses in the area, amounting to £10 million of support. That will lead to total investment in the constituency of some £63 million. That underlines the fact that we are far from being complacent about seeking to work with businesses in areas outside of city centres and are actually engaging regionally to help businesses in more remote locations to grow and develop. Of course, it is very important that we work with all the small businesses and indigenous companies across Northern Ireland in that respect. That support has led to the promotion of over 550 new jobs across the Strangford constituency, and it is not unreasonable to assume that many people who live in the Ards peninsula will have benefited, both directly and indirectly, from those jobs and the new employment opportunities that are being created.

Our help and support is not exclusively focused on job creation, and many programmes and interventions from Invest Northern Ireland are aimed at improving the overall competitiveness of the economy. In Strangford over the past five years, that has resulted in almost 130 offers of support to help companies engage in research and development or, indeed, invest in improving the skills of their workforce.

Strangford, like all the constituencies across Northern Ireland, has not been immune to the impact of the economic downturn, and that has meant that many businesses have either had to reduce the size of their workforce or take an unavoidable decision to close completely. Again, we have been trying to help through our intervention with the jobs fund to help companies employ people quickly and deliver jobs on the ground as quickly as possible. In Strangford alone, there are currently 17 jobs fund projects at various stages of development, with the potential to lead to a total of 170 new jobs, 69 of which have already been created. So, a lot of activity is ongoing in the Strangford area.

As well as the mainstream Invest Northern Ireland activity, we are working with Ards Borough Council and the South East Economic Development (SEED) group of councils on a range of new initiatives under the European Union's local economic development measure. To me, those measures

at local council sometimes work very effectively because they are very much grassroots-based. Miss McIlveen mentioned the Portavogie regeneration group, and Mr Hazzard mentioned a number of other regeneration groups. Those are very much to be commended, because it is often local people who will know what the answers are to the local issues, and when they come together in an organised way such as that, they can lobby local councils and government more effectively for what they need in the area. I am a great believer in coming together at local level to come forward to government to make a plea. When you come forward positively with a solution to issues, that is much more beneficial than just complaining about the fact that nothing is happening in your area. I am a great believer in self-help in that respect. Of course, one has to respond positively when you have the case put in front of you, but I believe very strongly that that is the way ahead.

I will deal with at some of the issues that Members mentioned. Mr McCarthy mentioned a bridge across Strangford lough. I am not sure that that would work, given that Strangford lough is the most protected piece of water in Northern Ireland. There are so many different environmental protections. That having been said, SeaGen has been put in place in an environmentally friendly way, and, indeed, Queen's University has its laboratory in Portaferry and does a lot of very good research and development down there, so who knows what is possible in the area?

5.30 pm

I did have a little bit of a laugh, Mr Nesbitt, if you do not mind, when you mentioned the gardens of Mount Stewart and the new garden centre. I think that garden centre unionists are very important, and we know that from previous times. Therefore, we commend the work going on in Mount Stewart and look forward to the regeneration; I understand that everything is going well. I had a meeting with the National Trust just today and heard, amongst other things, about how Mount Stewart has been progressing. It is good to hear of the work that is going on in that area.

Connectivity is a key element of what has been mentioned today. I will pass on those comments to the Minister for Regional Development. We all know that, in peripheral areas of Northern Ireland, connectivity is critical to economic development; that is physical connectivity and telecoms as well. I hope to bring forward a plan in the very near future in relation to more interventions in that space.

Adjourned at 5.31 pm.

Written Ministerial Statements

The content of these written ministerial statements is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Written Ministerial Statements

The content of these written ministerial statements is as received at the time from the Ministers. They have not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Wider Tourism Structures

Published at 3 pm on Thursday 14 November 2013

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): I wish to make a Written Statement to the Assembly to advise Members of my plans to conduct a review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and wider tourism structures.

Tourism is a key driver of our economy and is an important element of the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government and Economic Strategy. The NI Economic Strategy is central to the delivery of the Executive's overall strategic aim of growing the NI economy and tackling disadvantage.

An extensive consultation on tourism with a broad range of stakeholders was undertaken in 2009/10. This consultation identified, in broad terms, how tourism should be developed over the next 10 years and proposed a number of ambitious targets to grow tourism's contribution to the Northern Ireland economy. Based on this consultation the Programme for Government contains the following targets – "Increase visitor numbers to 4.2 million and tourist revenue to £676 million by December 2014".

My Department has set out a range of tourism priorities, under four main themes linked to the Economic Strategy.

These key themes are:

Promotion – led by NITB and Tourism Ireland, bringing new visitors and welcoming back visitors to see a place that is confidently moving on.

People and Business – working with people and businesses to develop a visitor experience that is unique and an industry that has pride and professionalism.

Product and Places – investing in products and places to make them better for residents and ready to receive the visitors of the future.

Making it Happen – identifying the roles and responsibilities of businesses, Departments and agencies and setting out how we monitor progress.

In December 2008, I commissioned the Independent Review of Economic Policy (IREP). The report provided much of the basis for the Economic Strategy and a revised structure within Invest NI. Following on from IREP, I indicated that I would like to conduct a review of the NITB.

In announcing the review I stated that I wanted "to ensure that there is a greater alignment between what NITB does and the work of Invest NI".

The overall aim of the review therefore is to ensure that current organisational structures are the optimum necessary to deliver the targets and actions set out in the Programme for Government and the Economic Strategy and that these are effectively aligned with the work of Invest NI. The review will therefore consider whether current DETI/NITB/Invest NI arrangements are sufficient to ensure:

- the delivery of the tourism objectives within the Programme for Government and Economic Strategy;
- effective delivery of the various statutory functions set out in the remit which falls to NITB under the Tourism NI Order 1992.

and:

- a. advise on the extent to which existing NITB and Invest NI structures, policies, programmes and resource allocations are sufficiently aligned;
- b. identify whether there is merit in the adoption of any new structural arrangements, policies or programmes; and
- c. identify whether there are any issues which risk compromising the delivery of the relevant strategies, including those which fall to other departments or bodies.

Project Brief

I have specifically tasked the Review with identifying opportunities for improvement. In particular the Review is tasked with making recommendations designed to:

- a. ensure that appropriate structures are in place to deliver the objectives and targets for tourism and ensure alignment with the work of Invest NI;
- b. identify opportunities to capitalise on NITB's working links within the NI Executive and on an east/west and north/south basis, including the relationships with Tourism Ireland and Visit Britain;
- c. ensure the effective delivery of integrated business support services to the tourism industry across its many sectors;
- d. prepare for the impact of the Review of Public Administration on tourism development in Northern Ireland; and

- e. rationalise, where it is cost-effective to do so, the provision and delivery of corporate services (including accommodation) within NITB and Invest NI.

Timing

It is anticipated that the review will be completed by the end of March 2014.

I will provide further information to the Assembly when the review is complete.

Environment

Creation of a Network of Marine Protected Areas

Published at 12.00 noon on Monday 18 November 2013

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (the Act) creates new powers for the Department of the Environment (the Department), with the agreement of the Secretary of State, to designate Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in Northern Ireland's inshore region to protect nationally important marine habitats and species.

Section 20(7) of the Act places a duty on the Department to make a statement about the principles which it intends to follow when designating MCZs to help contribute to the creation of a UK MPA network.

This statement fulfils the duty in section 20(7) of the Act.

Within the context of devolution, administrations are working together to deliver a coherent network of well managed Marine protected Areas (MPAs). They have issued a 'Joint Administrations Statement'¹ outlining the UK contribution to an ecologically coherent MPA network in the North East Atlantic.

The Northern Ireland MPA network will encompass a range of different types of protected areas including:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats of European importance;
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for seabirds of European importance;
- Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) for nationally important habitats and species;
- Ramsar sites for wetlands;
- Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs) for nationally important habitats and species. Strangford Lough MNR became a MCZ on enactment of the Bill.

MCZs, along with existing protected sites in our marine environment, will contribute to achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) by 2020 and deliver our contribution to the ecologically coherent network of MPAs under the OSPAR convention on the protection of the marine environment in the North East Atlantic.

The concept of an ecologically coherent network is still evolving and no clear definition is agreed as yet. However, guidance has been developed under the OSPAR Convention (OSPAR 2006)² on the key design features associated with establishing an ecologically coherent network. The Department has adopted seven MPA network design principles from the OSPAR Commission guidance. The following design principles will be used as the basis for MCZ selection:

- 1 <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/documents/protected/mpa-network-joint-admin-statement-201212.pdf>
- 2 http://www.ospar.org/documents/DBASE/DECRECS/Agreements/06-03e_Guidance%20ecol%20coherence%20MPA%20network.doc

Representativity	the network should represent the range of marine habitats and species present in Northern Ireland's territorial waters;	<p>The Department will base its decisions on the best available science and will draw on the scientific expertise of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Marine Division, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Loughs Agency, National Museums Northern Ireland, Queens University Belfast and the University of Ulster together with other evidence from the wider scientific community and sea-user communities. The Department acknowledges that some evidence may be uncertain or incomplete.</p> <p>The Department is clear that once designated, effective management is essential to ensure the delivery of the conservation objectives of a MCZ and thereby ensure the site's contribution to the MPA network. The conservation objectives will reflect the purpose of the MCZ, namely to protect, prevent deterioration or contribute to the recovery of the feature(s) and will be specific to each feature within each MCZ. There will be differing conservation objectives for sites which will set out any maintenance or recovery measures that will be required to achieve favourable condition.</p> <p>The Department will work with stakeholders including public authorities when developing recommendations about any management actions and options to introduce specific measures deemed necessary to deliver the conservation objectives for MCZ features. Management of activities in or affecting MCZs will be determined on a site-by-site basis. The Department will manage unregulated activities through bylaws and common enforcement powers.</p> <p>As part of the management process and to account for a marine environment which varies both naturally and under anthropogenic pressures, MCZs can be de-selected, modified, or moved to ensure they are still protecting the feature(s) they were designated to protect, or to ensure they continue to fulfil their contribution to the network.</p>
Replication	ensure replication of habitats and species with other parts of the UK as appropriate to achieve an overall network;	
Adequacy	the network should be of adequate size to deliver its ecological objectives and ensure long-term protection and/or recovery;	
Viability	the network should be made up of self-sustaining, geographically dispersed component sites of sufficient size large enough to ensure habitats and species are self sustaining;	
Connectivity	ensure the network has linkages among individual MPAs and between regional networks;	
Management	MCZs should be managed to ensure protection of the feature(s) for which they were selected and to support the functioning of an ecologically coherent network;	
Best available science	the designation of MCZs should be based on the best information which is currently available. Where there is a lack of full scientific certainty this should not be used as a reason for postponing decisions on the selection of sites.	

The OSPAR Commission guidance is being used by the other UK administrations as the basis for network design.

In Northern Ireland, marine conservation is focusing on habitats and species that are important in the local context. The network will focus on protecting a range of representative and threatened, rare or declining species and habitats – referred collectively as Priority Marine Features. The site selection process is adaptive to allow for the incorporation of new data on the location, condition and effects of pressures on the features to be protected.

These Priority Marine Features will form the basis of MCZ designation and include marine species, habitats and geological (including geomorphological) features. Many of these features occur in the existing SAC/ASSI network. Examples include common skate, oceanic quahog, seagrass beds, maerl beds and deep mud habitats.

A fundamental principle of the Department's approach to marine nature conservation is that conservation should be integrated with productive and sustainable use of the seas. It is important therefore that users of the seas should be actively involved in our conservation policy and that the MPA network and its sites are well understood and supported. The Department encourages the co-existence of MCZs and economic, cultural and social activities where they are mutually compatible as this exemplifies the key spirit of sustainable development.

The Department considers the approach to selecting, designating and managing MCZs as well as the ecologically coherent network to which they contribute, will significantly contribute to achieving the vision of a clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environment.

This statement of principles will be kept under review, and the Department will continue to keep the Northern Ireland Executive informed of any key developments.

Copies of this statement will be laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Regional Development

A26 Dualling — Glarryford to Drones Road — Publication of Notice of Intention to Proceed and Making of Statutory Orders

Published at 12 noon on Tuesday 19 November 2013

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):

I wish to inform Members of my decision to proceed with the £65 million A26 Dualling – Glarryford to Drones Road scheme.

As Members will be aware, following the October Monitoring Round announcement in the Assembly on 21 October 2013, I welcomed the Executive's decision to secure £75 million of capital funding for my Department for 2014/15. As a result of this, the A26 Frosses Road Dualling scheme is one of the projects I identified to take forward. Public Inquiries have been held and the Inspector's report was submitted to the Department in April 2013.

The Inspector recommended that the proposed dual carriageway should be constructed more or less in accordance with the preferred route.

The Inspector made three minor recommendations relating to accommodation works, all of which were accepted by the Department.

Part V of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 sets out the statutory requirements for the assessment of environmental impacts of road schemes. Having caused an Appropriate Assessment to be carried out and having considered the Environmental Statement and the consultation responses to it, I am satisfied that the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed scheme have been properly assessed and have been sufficient to inform judgements on the scheme. Accordingly, in light of the assessment undertaken and information presented within the Statement to Inform the Appropriate Assessment and the Environmental Statement, I accept the Department's conclusion (as the Competent Authority) that construction and operation of the A26 Dualling Scheme would not by itself, or in combination with other known plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity of the Main Valley Bogs, Special Areas of Conservation.

I have carefully considered the Department's Statement and agree with its conclusions. I have therefore decided to proceed with the scheme. In doing so, I commit my Department to carrying out the necessary works to facilitate the Inspector's recommendations and the environmental design measures, as well as the mitigation measures detailed in the A26 Departmental Statement.

Construction of the scheme will provide approximately 7 km of new carriageway between the B64 Glarryford crossroads (the end of the existing dual carriageway) and the A44 Drones Road junction.

The new dual carriageway will closely follow the existing road corridor, with the section adjacent to the Frosses Trees going marginally off-line, thus protecting these iconic sets of trees. The new dual carriageway will have significant benefits to the road user, with the main objective of the scheme being to reduce congestion, improve journey times and road safety. To improve road safety, a central reserve road restraint system will be

erected along the full length of the dual carriageway and will prevent central reserve crossover.

The scheme will benefit the economy. The local construction industry will also benefit through an increase in demand for construction materials, as well as giving a significant boost to commercial trade in the surrounding area.

I have asked my Department to publish the formal Notice of its intention to proceed with the scheme and to make the necessary Statutory Orders. Subject to successful procurement, construction of the scheme is programmed to start late 2014.

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Rare Diseases: UK Strategy

Published at 9.30 am on Friday 22 November 2013

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make a Written Statement to the Assembly to advise Members of the publication of the United Kingdom (UK) Strategy for Rare Diseases.

In 2012, the Department of Health in London launched a UK-wide public consultation on a Plan for Rare Diseases which sought to set in motion the work to integrate all current and future initiatives at local, regional and national levels in the field of rare diseases.

I now wish to advise that the work on the UK Strategy for Rare Diseases by the Health Departments in the four UK countries is complete, and the Strategy is to be published today, 22 November 2013. Should Members wish to obtain a copy of the report, it can be found on my Department's website www.dhsspsni.gov.uk.

The UK Strategy is intended as an overarching framework document that sets out a shared vision for improving the lives of people with rare diseases, with a focus on patients and their families/carers. It includes a number of UK-wide strategic commitments for each UK nation to consider, and identifies key milestones up to 2020 for implementation of the Strategy.

While the Strategy is for the UK as a whole, its implementation in the four UK nations will be determined by each devolved administration to best meet the needs of their respective populations. The Northern Ireland implementation is being taken forward by the NI Rare Diseases Stakeholder Group led by my Department, which comprises representation from Queen's University, the University of Ulster, the Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, the Regional Genetics Centre and the Northern Ireland Rare Disease Partnership which represents patients' interests.

The Northern Ireland Rare Diseases Implementation Plan will be published in early 2014.

There are between 5,000 and 8,000 rare diseases. Each one affects less than 0.1% of the UK's population, but together they affect the lives of 3 million people. I and the other health ministers across the UK are committed to improving services for people with rare diseases, and we share the hope that, through this Strategy and the forthcoming implementation plans for each of the four UK countries, we can significantly raise the profile of rare diseases, leading to better outcomes for the many people who live with these conditions as well as their families and carers.

Committee Stages

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Finance and Personnel
20 November 2013

Public Service Pensions Bill [NIA Bill 23/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Dominic Bradley (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Paul Girvan
Mr John McCallister
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr Mitchel McLaughlin
Mr Adrian McQuillan

Witnesses:

Mr Stephen Ball }
Mrs Grace Nesbitt } *Department of Finance
and Personnel*

The Deputy Chairperson: Are members content to proceed to the formal clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill? *[Interruption.]* I am sorry; you do not have any speaking rights. *[Interruption.]* I will adjourn the meeting.

The Committee suspended at 11.57 am and resumed at 11.59 am.

On resuming —

The Deputy Chairperson: Members, we will resume the meeting. Thank you all for your cooperation during that brief interruption.

We will now begin the clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Bill. This session will be recorded for the Hansard report. Therefore, all electronic devices, with the exception of Committee tablets, must be switched off while the Committee is in session, otherwise they may interfere with the transmission and recording of proceedings. I refer members to the updated secretariat paper, which has been tabled, to assist with the clause-by-clause decisions. It has been updated from the version in the packs to take account of Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) undertakings to table amendments to clauses 5, 12 and 14. An updated table of issues from the evidence can be found in the Committee meeting pack, along with a copy of the Bill. We will now go to the secretariat paper.

Clause 1 (Schemes for persons in public service)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause contains the enabling power for new public service pension schemes and schemes providing other benefits, such as injury and compensation benefits, that are made under the Bill. The Committee and the Northern Ireland Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU) raised an issue in

respect of the clause, to which DFP responded. That can be found in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 2 (Responsible authority for schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause enables the Departments listed in schedule 2 to make scheme regulations for the main categories of persons in public service. The Committee and the ICTU raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That is in the table of issues.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 3 (Scheme regulations)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause contains additional provisions about how the power to make scheme regulations under the Bill may be used. NIC-ICTU, the British Medical Association (BMA) and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That is in the table of issues.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 4 (Scheme manager)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause makes provision for public service pension schemes to have a scheme manager who is to be responsible for managing or administering the scheme. The Committee and the BMA raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. Information on that can be found in the table of issues.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 5 (Pension board)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause requires schemes to provide for the establishment of a pension board to assist the scheme manager with certain matters. NIC-ICTU, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) raised issues

in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. The information is in the table of issues in your meeting packs.

Mr Girvan: Chair, can we agree with the amendment?

The Deputy Chairperson: I would add that, arising from the Committee's scrutiny relating to NILGA's concerns, the Department has agreed to table an amendment to replace "must" with "may" in clause 5(2).

Mr Girvan: With the Committee's agreement, I think that we should agree to the amendment to change "must" to "may" in clause 5(2).

The Deputy Chairperson: Are you in agreement?

Mr Girvan: Yes.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 6 (Pension board: information)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause requires the scheme manager to publish information about the pension board for the scheme or schemes. No issues were raised in the evidence about the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 7 (Scheme advisory board)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause requires schemes to provide for the establishment of a scheme advisory board to advise on certain matters. NIC-ICTU, the NASUWT and NILGA raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. The information is in your meeting packs.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 8 (Types of scheme)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause sets constraints on the design of schemes, including requiring defined benefit schemes to provide those benefits through a career average revalued earnings (CARE) scheme or such other description of defined benefit scheme as DFP may specify in regulations but not a final salary scheme. NIC-ICTU and the NASUWT raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. Again, the information is in the table of issues in your meeting packs.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 9 (Revaluation)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides for the revaluation of pensionable earnings of a person in a CARE scheme in accordance with changes in prices or earnings as set out in an annual order made by DFP. The Committee, NIC-ICTU and the NASUWT raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. Is the Committee content with clause 9?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: The Committee divided on this last week. I think that my party is still not content to be part of a unanimous decision. I also think that we would reserve our position until Consideration Stage. However, I do not want to divide the Committee.

Mr Girvan: If you want to table an amendment, you can do so at that stage.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I can; that is right.

The Deputy Chairperson: As I said at the outset, members are free to reserve their position on any of the clauses and to table amendments at Consideration Stage.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: To allow you to proceed, Chair, I will reserve my position on the clause.

Mr McCallister: Likewise.

The Deputy Chairperson: OK. Thank you.

Clause 10 (Pension age)

Mr Girvan: Chair, there is really only one area of the clause about which I have concern.

The Deputy Chairperson: Can we wait until we deal with the formalities of putting the clause to the Committee?

Clause 10 contains requirements relating to the normal pension age of schemes made under the Bill, including linkage with the state pension age in most cases. The Committee, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), NIC-ICTU, NASUWT and NIHRC raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. Responses were also sought from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Health Department, which were referred to earlier. Is the Committee content with clause 10?

Mr Girvan: My issues with clause 10 are similar to Mitchel's concerns about clause 9. My party will consider whether to table an amendment at Consideration Stage.

Mr McCallister: Likewise, Chair. It might be useful if we could agree a Committee amendment for Consideration Stage.

Mr Girvan: I am looking at only one area.

The Deputy Chairperson: Can members indicate whether they want to speak?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I suggest to you, Chair, that, in the interests of saving time, we record that there is no agreed Committee position on the issue.

The Deputy Chairperson: Yes. John, do you want to speak on this?

Mr McCallister: I am content with that. I would like it if we could, at some point, agree an amendment. That would be useful. Our concerns about the clause are probably all the same, so it might be useful if we could get a Committee amendment before Consideration Stage, if that is possible.

The Deputy Chairperson: Thanks, John. For the sake of the minutes, can I clarify with you, Paul, that you are referring to clause 10 and not to clause 9?

Mr Girvan: Clause 10.

The Deputy Chairperson: Thank you. Do you want to say something additional?

Mr Girvan: No. I agree with what John just said. It would be better if we could come forward with an agreed approach. However, to allow us to move forward, we will take Mitchel's form of words.

The Deputy Chairperson: I take it that all parties, including mine, are adopting a reserved position on the clause and that parties intend to work together to formulate an agreed amendment to it at Committee Stage?

Mr Girvan: I think that an agreed amendment would be the right way forward.

The Deputy Chairperson: If possible.

Mr McCallister: All this harmony will never catch on.

The Committee Clerk: Is the Committee content that the record states that the Committee did not agree clause 10 at this stage?

Members indicated assent.

Clause 11 (Valuations)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause requires that defined benefit schemes be actuarially valued in accordance with DFP directions. The Committee, the BMA and NIC-ICTU raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. The information is in the table of issues in your meeting packs.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 12 (Employer cost cap)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause requires scheme regulations for defined benefit schemes to set an employer cost cap. It sets out how that cap should be set, measured and operated. The Committee, the BMA and NIC-ICTU raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. Following the concerns that the Committee raised, the Department has agreed to table an amendment to clause 12 to make the direction and regulation-making powers subject to consultation.

Is the Committee content with clause 12, subject to the Minister tabling an amendment at Consideration Stage undertaking to include further provisions to the fact that DFP directions and regulations may be made only after DFP has consulted with the relevant stakeholders?

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 13 (Employer contributions in funded schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides for the setting of the employer contributions rate in defined benefit schemes with a pension fund, most notably the funded local government pension scheme Northern Ireland. The clause requires an actuarial valuation of the pension fund to inform the setting of the employer contribution rate and makes provision for the valuation to be reviewed. At its meeting on 13 November, the Committee agreed to table the following amendment:

"In clause 13, page 9, line 20

After 'Qualified' insert —

'and must not be —

(a) an employee of the responsible authority;

(b) the scheme manager;

(c) a scheme manager; or

(d) an employee of the Department of Finance and Personnel."

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 14 (Information about benefits)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides for scheme regulations to require scheme managers for defined benefit schemes under clause 1 to provide active pension scheme members with benefit information statements in accordance with the requirements of the clause. The Committee and the NIC-ICTU raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. The Committee identified a typographical error in subsection (1) at line 24 and has agreed to table an amendment to address that. Is the Committee content with the clause, subject to the Minister tabling an amendment at Consideration Stage undertaking to insert in line 24 the word "a" after the words "which is"?

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 15 (Information about schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause relates to the collection and publication of information about schemes under clause 1. It allows DFP to direct schemes to publish or provide information to DFP and to specify how and when that information is to be published or produced. NIC-ICTU raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. The information is in the table of issues in your meeting packs.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 16 (Records)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause allows the Department for Social Development (DSD) to make regulations requiring scheme managers of pension schemes made under clause 1 and any connected schemes to keep specified records on, for example, information about contributions due to the scheme. No issues were raised about the clause in the evidence.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 17 (Regulatory oversight)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause makes provision about the regulatory responsibility of the Pensions Regulator in relation to the governance and administration of public service schemes made under the Bill, connected schemes and other public service pension schemes. The Committee raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. The information is in the table of issues in your meeting packs.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 18 (Restriction of existing pension schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides that benefits may not be provided under existing pension schemes in relation to service after the closing date for the scheme. Its effect is to bring to an end further accrual

of pension benefits in existing schemes, except where transitional arrangements have been agreed to allow those who are closest to retirement to continue to accrue benefits under the scheme. NIC-ICTU raised issues in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. The information is in the table of issues in your meeting packs.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 19 (Closure of existing injury and compensation schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause deals with existing injury and compensation schemes. It permits scheme regulations to provide for the closure or restriction of existing schemes that provide for the payment of benefits relating to compensation for loss of office and injury benefits. No issues were raised in the evidence about the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 20 (Final salary link)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause introduces schedule 7, which sets out the final salary link that applies to past service in the final salary schemes restricted under clause 18. No issues were raised in the evidence about the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 21 (Consultation)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause obliges the responsible authority to consult those who are likely to be affected before making or changing scheme regulations. The current procedures for making changes to current public service pension schemes vary from scheme to scheme. This Committee and NIC-ICTU raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 22 (Procedure for protected elements)

The Deputy Chairperson: In this clause, the policy intention is that the reforms legislated for in the Bill are designed to last for 25 years. The clause specifies enhanced consultation and report procedures for changes to protected elements of a scheme for a period of 25 years. The Committee raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 23 (Procedure for retrospective provision)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides a procedure to be followed when retrospective provisions are included in scheme regulations proposed by the relevant authority. The Committee, BMA, NIC-ICTU and NIHR raised issues in respect of the clause that DFP responded to. That is in the table of issues in the meeting pack. My

party will reserve its position on this until Consideration Stage.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 24 (Other procedure)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause sets out the legislative procedures that apply to the making of scheme regulations. A higher level of Assembly scrutiny is required in each case if scheme regulations are used to amend primary legislation or to make retrospective amendments that appear to the responsible authority to have significant adverse effects in relation to members of schemes. The Committee, NIC-ICTU and NASUWT raised issues in respect of the clause that DFP responded to. Information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack. My party may reserve its position on this until Consideration Stage.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I have indicated that we will do likewise.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 25 (Extension of schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause allows schemes made under clause 1 to be extended to persons who are not in the main categories of persons in public service specified. NIC-ICTU raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 26 (Non-scheme benefits)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause allows scheme managers and employers to make payments towards the provision of pensions and other benefits that are not delivered through a scheme made under clause 1 for persons who could have access to such schemes. This will enable employers to contribute to private occupational pension schemes where members of public service schemes wish to take out or retain private occupational pensions in addition to or instead of being members of public service schemes. NIC-ICTU raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 27 (Consequential and minor amendments)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause introduces schedule 8, which contains consequential and minor amendments to primary legislation that are required because of the provisions of the Bill. No issues were raised during evidence on this clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 28 (Existing local government scheme)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides for certain regulations made under article 9 of the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 to have effect as though they were scheme regulations made under clause 1 of the

Bill. The clause will apply only to regulations under which benefits are provided to or in respect of service on or after 1 April 2014. It will apply only to regulations that provide for pension benefits in respect of service on or after that date. NIC-ICTU raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 29 (Existing schemes for civil servants: extension of access)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause introduces schedule 9, which amends the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 to extend access to schemes made under article 3 of that order. No issues were raised during evidence on the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 30 (New public body pension schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: In this clause, there are defined benefit schemes for those in public service aside from the main schemes for civil servants, local government workers, health service workers, teachers, police, fire and rescue services and the devolved judiciary. The clause imposes constraints on the design of new pension schemes that may be created under the power in clause 31 for bodies and offices whose pension schemes are restricted for future accrual and whose members cannot join one of the schemes established under clause 1. It also governs the design of pension schemes that are set up in the future or established under future legislation for public bodies, unless future legislation makes specific different provision. NIC-ICTU and the Independent Financial Review Panel (IFRP) raised issues in respect of the clause that DFP responded to. That is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: We have made our bed, and we will lie in it.

Clause 31 (Power to restrict other existing public body pension schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause contains provision for DFP to specify public bodies whose pension schemes would be restricted so that no benefits are provided under the scheme to or in respect of a person in relation to their service in the schemes after a date to be specified. IFRP raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 32 (Existing public body pension schemes: pension age)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause allows an existing public body pension scheme to reform itself by including provision that the normal pension age and deferred pension age of members of those schemes is to be the

same as their state pension age — subsection (1)(a). The link may apply only to benefits accrued under the scheme after the provision to establish that link took effect. The Committee and IFRP raised an issue in respect of the clause to which DFP responded. That information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack. Is the Committee content with clause 32 as drafted?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: Can I just check something? In the notes, it states:

“This clause requires a commencement order by DFP to take effect. The final date for restriction of public body schemes is not yet determined. The proposed amendment would have the effect of placing a requirement on those schemes to change the current provisions for pension age prematurely.”

That does not make a lot of sense.

The Deputy Chairperson: Are you referring to the actual Bill?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I am talking about the departmental response.

The Committee Clerk: It is in the table of issues, at pages 103 to 104.

The Deputy Chairperson: Can you shed any light on that, Shane?

The Committee Clerk: It is just an extract from the DFP response to the issue.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: OK.

The Deputy Chairperson: Are you content, Mitchel?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: No. I do not have a clue what was left out. I do not know what it means.

The Deputy Chairperson: Do you want to reserve your position on that?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I do not want to hold things up, but I do not know what we will be agreeing to. I cannot agree to that as it stands, unless somebody can help.

The Deputy Chairperson: Do you want me to ask Mrs Nesbitt to elaborate on that point?

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: That is always very helpful.

Mrs Grace Nesbitt (Department of Finance and Personnel): Can I bring a friend?

The Deputy Chairperson: Yes.

Mr Stephen Ball (Department of Finance and Personnel): One of the issues that were discussed during the evidence sessions was whether the clause should be amended to state “must” instead of “may”. I think that we provided clarification. Some schemes will not have to reform by 2015. The clause enables those schemes to have the leeway to reform at a later date, so “must” would be inappropriate in that it would force them to change. The legislation would be dictating that they change even though that is not the policy intention, so “may” was the —

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I was not querying that. We may have just an extract from a longer response from yourselves. What is missing may or may not be significant, but I am puzzled by its absence.

Mr Ball: The correspondence probably proposed, suggested or asked us to give a view on a possible amendment.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: Do you have the full response in front of you in hard copy? I do not. Do you need me to remind you what it was, if that would help?

Mrs G Nesbitt: We responded on 1 November. There is nothing further in the response to what you have there, so there is not a bit missing.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: To allow things to proceed, we will just reserve our position. We may or may not feel the need to take this matter up at Consideration Stage.

The Deputy Chairperson: OK.

Mrs G Nesbitt: The question was whether an amendment would be proposed to change “may” to “must”. Our response, put really simply, was no, if that makes it clearer.

Mr Ball: I think that the extract refers to the quotation that Grace just gave.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: OK.

The Deputy Chairperson: Thanks, Mrs Nesbitt and Mr Ball.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin: I will reserve my position.

The Deputy Chairperson: Agreed, with reservations noted.

Clause 33 (General interpretation)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause contains definitions. No issues were raised during evidence on the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 34 (Regulations, orders and directions)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause sets out the meaning of “affirmative procedure”. Subsection (2) provides that directions given under the Bill by DFP may be varied or revoked. No issues were raised during evidence on the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 35 (Financial provision)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides that any expenditure for the provision of pensions or other sums payable to present or former holders of judicial office are to be paid out of money provided by the Assembly. No issues were raised during evidence on the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 36 (Commencement)

The Deputy Chairperson: The clause provides for when and how the provisions of the Bill are to come into force. The provisions listed in subsection (1) come into force automatically on the day the Bill is enacted. The Committee raised an issue in respect of the clause to

which DFP responded. That information is in the table of issues in the meeting pack.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 37 (Short title)

The Deputy Chairperson: This clause states:

“This Act may be cited as the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.”

No issues were raised during evidence on the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Schedule 1 (Persons in public service: definitions)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides the definitions of persons in public service. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 2 (Responsible authorities)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides the definition of responsible authorities. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 3 (Scope of scheme regulations: supplementary matters)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides the scope of the regulations by setting out the eligibility and admission to membership. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 4 (Regulatory oversight)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides for regulatory oversight and consequential changes to current affected legislation. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 5 (Existing pension schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides for the affected schemes. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 6 (Existing injury and compensation schemes)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides for the scope of affected schemes. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 7 (Final salary link)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides for persons who remain in an old scheme for past service. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 8 (Consequential and minor amendments)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule provides for consequential and minor amendments. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Schedule 9 (Existing schemes for civil servants: extension of access)

The Deputy Chairperson: The schedule amends the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 to extend access to schemes under that order that provide for superannuation benefits for civil servants. No issues were raised during evidence on the schedule.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

The Deputy Chairperson: An initial draft of the Committee's report on the Bill to the Assembly will be considered as the next agenda item, with a view to agreeing the final draft report on 27 November, before Committee Stage expires on 29 November. Members may wish to consider whether they have any recommendations or requests for assurance that they wish to see included in the report.

Consideration Stage is a matter for the Minister to bring forward in line with the requirements set out in Standing Orders. However, DFP has indicated that it will be scheduled for 14 January 2014. Any agreed Committee amendments are required to be tabled in advance of the Consideration Stage. If proposed Committee amendments are agreed, the Bill Office will advise on any minor or consequential amendments that will need to be made at a later date.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Social Development
21 November 2013

Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill [NIA Bill 24/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Alex Maskey (Chairperson)
Mr Mickey Brady (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Fra McCann
Mr Sammy Wilson

Witnesses:

Mr Gary McAlorum } *Department for*
Mr Liam Quinn } *Social Development*

The Chairperson: Officials from the Department are here to brief the Committee on the amendments and to ensure that members are clear on their meaning. We have with us Liam Quinn and Gary McAlorum, who will give the Committee a wee update on the amendments just to make sure that people are clear on their intention and are satisfied with them. Is that fair enough?

Mr Liam Quinn (Department for Social Development): It is, yes, Chairman. We have seven amendments. Most have come forward as a result of concerns raised by members and try to deal with those issues. There are also fairly minor technical amendments. I will ask my colleague Gary to go through the amendments one by one.

Mr Gary McAlorum (Department for Social Development): I will go through the amendments very briefly indeed.

The amendment to clause 1, and the amendment to the related definition in clause 30, clarify how councils should treat, for licensing purposes, areas where historical rights to hold a market exist.

Clause 14 allows a council to revoke a licence for a single breach of the licence conditions. To address members' concerns, the clause will be amended to allow for revocation where the licence holder has persistently failed to comply with any condition of the licence. Members will also wish to note that the amendment will apply to suspension of licenses under clause 15.

Members will note that clause 19 will be heavily amended. The proposed amendments address members' concerns

by providing the opportunity for a licence holder to make representations to a council before it takes the final decision to revoke, suspend or make a compulsory variation to a licence. The licence holder should normally have 21 days to make representations, but there may be exceptions to that: for example, if public safety concerns require the pavement cafe area to be closed with immediate effect.

Clause 21 provides for an appeal to the Magistrates' Court in respect of a wide range of licensing decisions taken by a council. The proposed amendment will extend the right of appeal to a decision to limit the duration of a licence under clause 5.

Two very minor amendments are to be made to the schedule. They simply clarify technical issues concerning the Bill's impact on liquor licensing and street trading legislation.

The Chairperson: Do members want to go through those amendments or need any further clarification?

Mr Wilson: We raised the issue of the length of time that consultees have to respond. I felt that the Committee had accepted that we should have some correction there, rather than simply a provision that people would be consulted. There has not been any change to that particular clause.

The Chairperson: Is there not something about 28 days in that requirement, Liam?

Mr Quinn: There are two things. First, there is the 28-day requirement to advertise and for people to respond if they have any objections to the licence. The second issue is that councils are already required, through the European services directive, to publish timescales for dealing with a licence application. So, as part of this process, a council will be required to say that it will deal with a licence application within a specified period. If it has not dealt with it within that period, the licence will be deemed to have been granted. So, as part of their licensing scheme, each council will say that it expects to deal with a licence application within, for example, two months or whatever it happens to be.

Mr McAlorum: As Liam said, under clause 10(5), the Bill makes provision for a period of 28 days for representations to be made on an application.

Mr Dickson: My apologies for using this opportunity to ask a question, but I am new to the Committee and was not here at the beginning of the Bill. Was an equality impact assessment done on the effects of the Bill? How does that affect any supplier of goods and services if a pavement cafe, for example, is in a public space where people may be seated beside kerbstones which are painted in various colours that are perceived to be not neutral and, therefore, may be a detriment to the delivery of goods and services?

Mr McAlorum: On the question of an equality impact assessment, we did a screening of the policy, but we did not do a full equality impact assessment, on the basis that the legislation itself will address issues particularly for pedestrians and the disabled in relation to access to the pavement.

Mr Dickson: It does not then, per se, deal with the issue of goods and services being delivered in a fair and equal way in a place where it is comfortable for people to sit?

Mr Quinn: No, it does not. However, if the council feels that it should not be granting a licence in an area of that nature, it will take that into account.

Mr Dickson: Does the council have the power to take that into account in the legislation? Does the legislation advise or direct it to take that into account?

Mr Quinn: No. The legislation does not specifically direct councils to take that into account, but it is something that they should take into account generally as part of their normal duties, is it not?

Mr Dickson: I have a serious concern that the Bill does not address the issue of the delivery of goods and services and equality in the area where people may be required to sit or be seated in public, and I ask the Department to consider that.

Mr F McCann: On the back of that, I am trying to work out how you actually do that and how premises are supplied. I know that, in some places, it is done in the middle of the night, so that it does not infringe on the delivery of a service from a cafe or whatever the premises may be. Could Stewart elaborate on that and how it fits in with the ability to run something like that?

Mr Dickson: My understanding of the equality legislation is that, under goods and services, somebody delivering goods or a service to the general public is required to do that from an equality perspective. That includes freedom from sectarian graffiti, for example, which is unlikely to be inside the premises but has real potential to be outside the premises. Therefore, depending on their particular viewpoint, members of the public would be deterred by the colours that were painted on the pavement or the graffiti demonstrated on the walls within the roped-off or contained area for the pavement cafe. There is a general duty of care on the council to deal with that, and I understand that, but it has not been highlighted. I am concerned that it has not been highlighted in respect of the equality impact assessment.

Mr McAlorum: Even when a licence is granted, the area remains a public area for the purposes of the law.

Mr Dickson: It does not mean that it is a shared area.

The Chairperson: There will have to be a recommendation from the Committee at the end of this,

because we do not have a formal proposition on the table as yet.

Mr Allister: Maybe Stewart has more working knowledge of painted pavements than I have, but I would have thought that the problem with painted pavements is at the extremity of the pavement, at the kerb, as it is normally kerb painting. With regard to the Bill, I cannot anticipate any pavement cafe extending to the kerb. Therefore, if the concern is about what is happening within the specified area, it is hard to imagine that it will be a problem.

Mr Wilson: If the concern is about graffiti on a wall, I imagine that anybody who has premises with such graffiti would get it cleaned off fairly quickly for the sake of the appearance of their premises. My worry would be about how far you would go on this. If, for example, you have a closed-off area and there is a lamp post at the edge of the footpath with a flag on it, are you saying that that would be a reason for not granting the licence for the closed-off area? That would be outside the control of the owner.

Mr Dickson: I accept that. However, there are circumstances where there are murals and other words and things painted on the kerbstones of the pavement, which could be inside the curtilage of the prescribed area. What equality impact assessment has been done in respect of that?

Mr Quinn: The equality impact assessment that we carried out focused very much on access for disabled people and those sorts of issues.

Mr Dickson: It missed out other equality issues.

Mr Quinn: We did not really see the Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill as a vehicle for trying to improve shared spaces; it was more about improving the economy.

Mr Dickson: That is the answer to my question: you did not.

The Chairperson: At this point, it falls without the legislation on pavement cafes. That is the point that you are making. However, all premises are subject to all the other normal laws of the land as they may be. Without any formal suggestion or recommendation on that, we will move on. Stewart, thank you for that.

If members are happy, we will move on to the clause-by-clause scrutiny. Are members happy with the amendments as outlined by Liam and Gary?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: We will move to the clause-by-clause section of the meeting. I will have to go through these — as it says on the tin — clause by clause.

Clause 1 (Meaning of *pavement café licence* and other key terms)

The Chairperson: I do not want to go through each clause if people are happy that we know what they are.

Some issues were raised in respect of clause 1, and the Department addressed those on 14 November. I take it that people have the amendments before them. Is the Committee content with clause 1 as amended by the Department?

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 2 to 13 put and agreed to.

Clause 14 (Revocation of licence)

The Chairperson: Is the Committee content with clause 14 as amended by the Department?

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 15 to 18 put and agreed to.

Clause 19 (Notice of revocation, suspension or compulsory variation)

The Chairperson: Is the Committee content with clause 19 as amended by the Department?

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 20 put and agreed to.

Clause 21 (Appeals)

The Chairperson: Is the Committee content with clause 21 as amended by the Department?

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 22 to 29 put and agreed to.

Clause 30 (Definitions)

The Chairperson: Is the Committee content with clause 30 as amended by the Department?

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 31 and 32, put and agreed to.

Schedule (Consequential Amendments)

The Chairperson: I remind members that the Department proposes to amend the schedule, and I refer you to the consolidated list for the exact wording of that. Are people happy with the schedule as proposed under the amended wording? I will put the question formally.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

The Chairperson: That concludes the Committee's clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill. A draft report will be considered by the Committee at next week's meeting. Are members content with that?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Thank you, members; and thank you, Liam and Gary, for your support to the Committee over the past number of months.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for the Environment
21 November 2013

Carrier Bags Bill [NIA Bill 20/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Anna Lo (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Brown (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr Tom Elliott
Mr Ian McCrea
Mr Barry McElduff
Mr Peter Weir

The Chairperson: Today is our last opportunity to discuss the clauses of the Bill. Any decisions made today will be final. We are going to write up the report.

We are broadly content with the Bill, as drafted, but there have been some concerns about the clarity of the date. The Department has agreed to draft an amendment to specify a firm date for phase 2 charging to begin. Subject to sight of that amendment, we are broadly content with the Bill. Are members content?

Mr Weir: I agree with that, but, following the earlier discussion, do we need to put it on record that our understanding is that the agreed date would be in January 2015?

The Chairperson: We can do that; there is no objection to that. Following our discussion, members are content that the first Monday in January — 5 January 2015 — could be the starting date.

Clause 1 (Extension of the 2008 Act to carrier bags)

The Chairperson: Clause 1 represents a major change in policy by omitting the term “single use” from carrier bags subject to the levy. Members were content with clause 1, as drafted, but wished to delay the commencement of the Bill. We have now considered the Department’s proposal for an amendment. The Bill Office has provided us with the wording of a Committee amendment. We will keep that in case we need it, although we do not need to table it if we decide against it. We reached agreement on an amendment to the clause. The Department says that it will not amend clause 1, and a new clause is coming for the commencement.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 2 (Regulations under Schedule 6 to the 2008 Act)

The Chairperson: The clause gives power to the Department to increase the minimum levy through affirmative regulations and to exercise discretion in how it applies the charging requirements. Members previously indicated that they were broadly content with the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 3 (Requirement to charge)

The Chairperson: The clause clarifies that the charge will apply to bags whether or not they are used to carry away goods, provided that they are capable of being used to do so. We previously indicated that we were broadly content with the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 4 (Sellers)

The Chairperson: The clause gives the Department the power to specify retailers by the number of full-time or full-time equivalent employees that they have. Members were broadly content with the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 5 (Payment of the charge)

The Chairperson: The clause gives the Department the power through affirmative regulations to stipulate how the proceeds of the levy are to be paid over and to charge interest on payments received late. We did not have any concerns about this clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 6 (Carrier bags defined by price)

The Chairperson: The clause extends the definition of carrier bags to be specified by price as well as by the existing technical specifications. The Minister has indicated that there will be a 20p minimum price threshold. Members previously indicated that they were broadly content with the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 7 (Records and enforcement)

The Chairperson: The clause gives the Department the power through regulations to require retailers to keep certain records that must be produced to the Department on request. We previously indicated that we were broadly content with the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 8 (Civil sanctions)

The Chairperson: The clause removes the requirement for the Department to lay before the Assembly a review of the operation of civil sanctions where there has been a breach of the carrier bags regulations. Members previously indicated that they were broadly content with the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 9 (Review)

The Chairperson: The clause requires the Department to lay a report before the Assembly within three years of the commencement of the Act, assessing the effectiveness of the legislation and the need for any amendment. Members saw and were content with the wording of an amendment suggested by the First Minister to introduce a provision for an ad hoc review of exemptions. The Department has indicated that it intends to bring forward the amendment at Consideration Stage. Other than the length of the review period, the Committee has previously indicated that it is broadly content with the clause.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

Clause 10 (Short title)

The Chairperson: There were no comments on this clause in the consultation or at our previous meetings.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

The Chairperson: That concludes the formal clause-by-clause consideration of the Carrier Bags Bill. I thank the officials for their attendance at today's meeting and the previous meetings.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety
27 November 2013

Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill [NIA Bill 27/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Wells (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Mickey Brady
Ms Pam Brown
Mr Gordon Dunne
Mr Samuel Gardiner
Mr Kieran McCarthy

The Chairperson: I remind members that this is the formal clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, which is a vital and essential part of the Committee's duties and is needed for the preparation of the Committee report. This is the final opportunity for the Committee to propose amendments to the Bill. I advise members that I will formally put the Question on each clause. What the Committee is required to do is vote that it is content with the clause as drafted, that it is not content and wishes to amend the clause or that it is not content and wishes to oppose the clause.

I remind members that no issues were raised with the Bill and no amendments have been proposed by the Department. I ask members to keep the Bill folder, which is the red folder that is being handed out now, in front of them as we go through the clauses. If members are in agreement, we will move directly to the clause-by-clause scrutiny.

Clause 1 (Functions of RBSO: support services)

The Chairperson: Clause 1 provides the Business Services Organisation with legal cover to provide support to the Department and the full range of its arm's-length bodies.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 2 (Other functions of RBSO)

The Chairperson: Clause 2 provides a power to allow the Business Services Organisation to administer health and social care functions on behalf of the Department.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 3 (Minor amendments)

The Chairperson: Clause 3 deals with minor amendments to the conditions of membership of the Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency and the Business Services Organisation.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 4 (Meaning of "the 2009 Act")

The Chairperson: Clause 4 explains that any references in the Bill to "the 2009 Act" mean the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (NI) 2009. Is the Committee content with clause 4?

Mr Dunne: Is that Northern Ireland?

The Chairperson: That is your very place.

Mr Dunne: That is good. I will agree with that.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Clause 5 (Short title)

The Chairperson: Clause 5 is the short title of the Bill. Is the Committee content with clause 5?

Mr Dunne: What was that, Chair? I missed that.

The Chairperson: I take it that that is agreement.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, put and agreed to.

Schedule (Amendments consequential on the 2009 Act)

The Chairperson: The schedule contains amendments that should have been in schedule 6 to the reform Act.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, put and agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

The Chairperson: I inform members that the Committee will consider the draft report on the Bill's Committee Stage at its next meeting.

Written Answers

This section contains the written answers to questions tabled by Members.

The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 1 November 2013

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Commissioner for Public Appointments: Recommendations

Mr Elliott asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what recommendations were made by the Commissioner for Public Appointments; and how their Department has sought to implement these recommendations.

(AQW 20155/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): One of the functions of the Commissioner for Public Appointments is to audit relevant departmental public appointment processes to establish whether his Code of Practice has been complied with. This can involve auditing a specific appointment process or a wider review of a more general issue affecting all departments.

The audits provide important learning for all departments which is applied to future competitions.

Translation Costs: Departmental Letters and Documents

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the cost of translating departmental letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20459/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The cost of translating our Departmental letters and documents over the past five years is detailed in the table below.

Amount spent within each year	Translation into Irish	Translation into other languages	Total for year £
2012 - 2013	£1,433.24	£396.00(Ulster Scots)	£1,829.24
2011 - 2012	£1,812.36	£446.72 (Including £316.72 Ulster Scots and £130 for a range of languages including Irish)	£2,259.08
2010 - 2011	£2,136.54	£812.90 (Including £286.02 Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian; £422.00 Ulster Scots; £104.88 Irish to English)	£2,949.44
2009 - 2010	£1,339.29	£751.71 (Including £532.75 Ulster Scots and £218.96 Irish to English) €1,500.00 (French to English)	£2,091.00 €1,500.00
2008 - 2009	£1380.60	£470.50 (£350.00 Ulster Scots; £75.50 Irish to English and £45 Malay to English)	£1,851.10

Transgender Community

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in terms of its legal obligation under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, how their Department consults with the transgender community.

(AQW 20982/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM liaises regularly with the Trans Forum and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Forum, which also represents transgender groups. In addition, Transgender sectoral groups are included on the Department's section 75 consultee list and are represented on the Gender Advisory Panel (GAP). The GAP has an oversight role in respect of the delivery and review of the Gender Equality Strategy, which promotes gender equality across all Government Departments. A review of the Strategy is currently underway and will take account of transgender equality issues.

Public Assemblies, Parades and Protest Body

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the background to the setting up of the Public Assemblies, Parades and Protest Body.
(AQW 24221/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: As set out in Together: Building a United Community, the independently chaired all-party group, to consider parades and protests; flags, symbols and emblems and related matters; and the past, has been established to ensure that an agreed way forward can be achieved on the most difficult matters affecting our society.

Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Skills Pillar

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the Update on Progress with the Investment Strategy 2011-21 which was published on 24 July 2013, to define the scope of the skills pillar; and whether this only includes primary and post-primary school new builds or refurbishment.
(AQW 25666/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The skills pillar in the Investment Strategy 2011-21 covers a range of investments to ensure a well-educated population, with the skills necessary to engage positively in society and an increasingly globalised economy. It therefore covers schools at primary and post-primary levels, further and higher education infrastructure and libraries. It covers all types of major investment, including new builds, refurbishment and the renewal or commissioning of information technology associated with learning.

Capital expenditure on primary and post-primary schools is the largest sector within the skills pillar; however since 2011 other projects delivered or significantly progressed under the skills pillar include:

- Investment in Belfast Metropolitan College, the South Eastern Regional College, the South West College and the Southern Regional College;
- Investment in new or updated libraries and library vehicles;
- A new Libraries IT system.

A list of projects under the skills pillar which are in progress or recently completed is available through the ISNI Delivery Tracking System (DTS) on www.isni.gov.uk.

Energy Wise Campaign

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the amount paid to Navigator Blue for the development of the Energy Wise brand since August 2011; and (ii) for a breakdown of the (i) total spend; and (ii) cost of the Energy Wise Campaign to date.
(AQW 26326/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Energywise brand was developed as part of the wider Energywise advertising campaign. There are no separate costs for branding only.

The Energywise campaign has been used by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Department for Social Development and by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The following table sets out expenditure figures held by the Government Advertising Unit in relation to the Energywise campaign since August 2011. It sets out the direct costs to Navigator Blue for all aspects of the campaign, the third party costs and the media costs.

Department	Direct costs	Third party costs	Media costs	Total
DETI	£42,063	£119,527	£240,742	£402,332
DSD	£890	N/A	£15,025	£15,915
NIHE	£5905	£11,821	£73,624	£91,350

Flags Protocol Working Group

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 22906/11-15 and AQW 24732/11-15, when the Flags Protocol Working Group last met.
(AQW 26439/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Flags Protocol Working Group last met on 4 April 2012.

Magdalene Laundries

Mr Brady asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps they will take to assist people who suffered in Magdalene Laundry type institutions.

(AQO 4778/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The publication of the McAleese report into Magdalene Laundries in the Republic of Ireland raised questions about the system of Magdalene Laundries here, and about the situations and experiences of the women who lived in them.

In light of that report and representations made to us, we appointed a senior civil servant to draw up a scoping paper in regard to the Magdalene Laundry type institutions that operated here so as to inform us of what potential actions we might be able to take.

We received that report just prior to recess and we are currently giving serious consideration to the options that have been laid out before deciding the way forward.

Under the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse, any woman who entered a Laundry before she was 18 may contribute to the Inquiry, including recounting their childhood experiences to the Inquiry's Acknowledgement Forum and having those experiences acknowledged.

However, we recognise that there are women who were over the age of 18 when they entered the Magdalene Laundry type institutions.

We are appalled to think that women in Laundries here could have endured the same harsh conditions and callous treatment as was documented by Senator McAleese. Our thoughts and sympathies are with any women who suffered in these types of institutions.

Victims and Survivors Service

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the Victims Commissioner's claim that the Victims and Survivors Service is not fit for purpose.

(AQW 27262/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department takes the Commissioner's concerns extremely seriously and has established a Victims and Survivors Programme Board to address all matters raised by the Commissioner. Kathryn Stone, the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors (CVS), Anne Dorbie, Chief Executive of the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) and OFMDFM Special Advisers are represented on the Board along with OFMDFM officials. The Board met for the first time on 15 October 2013.

The current assessment process is a priority issue that will be dealt with by the Programme Board, as this is a fundamental component in addressing the individual needs of victims and survivors.

Older People's Commissioner

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the impact of the role of the Older People's Commissioner.

(AQW 27294/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Commissioner for Older People has made a positive impact on a number of key areas with the aim of safeguarding and promoting the interests of older people. These include her support and involvement in the Social Security Agency's "Make the Call" campaign and at the Department's invitation, the Commissioner chairs the Ageing Strategy Advisory Group which has significantly shaped the developing draft Active Ageing Strategy.

Following extensive consultation with older people the Commissioner is currently undertaking a number of major projects including reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of the law and policy relating to older people. This is in addition to the Commissioner's work with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Health and Social Care Trusts, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and other relevant bodies to ensure that standards and quality of care are at the heart of services provided to older people.

Pensioners' Trust

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following the recent launch of the Pensioners' Trust, what steps are being considered to support and help highlight the work the Trust seeks to offer older people.

(AQW 27332/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We welcome the launch of the Pensioners' Trust which will engage with older people and support projects that tackle their concerns. Age Sector Platform, which set up the Trust, organises the Pensioners' Parliaments which allow older people to have their say on the issues that matter to them. Junior Minister McCann spoke at the regional Parliament in Belfast in May to show her support for their work.

Age Sector Platform has assisted the Department with the development of the draft Active Ageing Strategy through participation in our Ageing Strategy Advisory Group. The Advisory Group has highlighted the need for practical and financial support for older people's groups. We have committed to giving this issue full consideration during the consultation process on the draft Strategy which will commence in the coming weeks.

Internet Safety Strategy for Children

Mr McCallister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether their "gapping and mapping exercise", in relation to an Internet Safety Strategy for Children, has been completed, and if so, when the results will be published.

(AQW 27457/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In order to ensure a cross departmental approach is taken to child internet safety, the Department has undertaken a gap analysis involving six departments. A questionnaire was issued to each department seeking updates on current actions to address child internet safety and gaps as well as future actions being considered to promote better internet safety.

Returns from departments have been received and are now being validated. A report containing the findings of this exercise is being finalised. It is anticipated that the report should be available shortly.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many cases of Bovine Tuberculosis have been reported in each of the last two years.

(AQW 27120/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The number of cases of Bovine Tuberculosis reported over a period of time comprises both the number of animals that reacted positively to a TB skin test (TB reactor animals) plus those identified at routine slaughter that subsequently are confirmed as being TB positive following lengthy laboratory testing. Therefore the most recent 12 month period for which each of this information becomes available is different.

For test reactors, the most recent available information refers to the period September 2012 to August 2013 during which 9184 animals were removed as reactors. During the equivalent period from September 2011 to August 2012, 10526 animals were removed.

For animals at routine slaughter that subsequently were confirmed as infected the most recent available information refers to the period from May 2012 to April 2013, disclosing 639 such animals. During the equivalent period from May 2011 to April 2012, 577 such animals were disclosed.

Tuberculosis Disease Statistics in the north of Ireland are available on the DARD internet.

Cattle Smuggling

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many cases of cattle smuggling across the border have been reported, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27121/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Cattle smuggling across the border in an illicit trade that is invariably associated with the substitution of false domestic identities into the illegally imported or exported cattle. As such accurate and reliable reporting or recording of smuggling is difficult and in the absence of verification, DARD does not classify or record cases under the category of smuggling. DARD does however keep a record of illegal cattle import and export cases that can be verified or where there was sufficient evidence to undertake an investigation. In 2011 there were three cases investigated, in 2012 there were seven cases and in 2013, to date, there have been three cases investigated.

Johne's Disease Expert and Manager

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 26100/11-15, to provide a breakdown of costs associated with (i) the recruitment of a Johne's disease expert; and (ii) the salary of the Johne's disease Programme Manager.

(AQW 27125/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As detailed in my answer to AQW 26100/11-15 my Department's letter of offer to Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) made a maximum of £7,935 and £50,217 funding available towards the recruitment and salary/costs of a Johne's Programme Manager. This maximum offer of funding was calculated on estimated costs. However to date my Department has not received a claim from AHWNI in respect of the recruitment or salary of the Johne's Programme Manager. Therefore at this time I am unable to provide you with a breakdown of the actual costs.

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Programme

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 26097/11-15, to detail (i) what would prevent her Department's Veterinary Service from conducting an in-house Bovine Viral Diarrhoea programme; (ii) when and why the decision was taken to outsource the programme to Animal Health and Welfare NI; and (iii) what tendering process was completed when appointing Animal Health and Welfare NI to undertake the programme.

(AQW 27127/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: While responsibility for Animal Health and Welfare Policy rests with my department as in other industries government intervention is where there is a strong public interest to do so on behalf of society and where the market on its own cannot achieve the policy objective. It is therefore normal that government takes responsibility to deal with diseases which would impact considerably on public health or trade or on the social economy of the north. Examples of such diseases are Avian Flu, Foot and Mouth, Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) and Brucellosis (BR).

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is a disease which impacts at farm level through loss of production, it poses no risk to public health or the overall economy of the north. It is therefore the responsibility of industry to tackle such diseases.

It is not appropriate for my Department's Veterinary Service to undertake an in-house BVD eradication programme, their priority must rest with bovine TB and BR.

I was delighted when industry decided for the first time ever to be proactive in collectively tackling production diseases. The establishment of Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) in 2012, which is a not for profit organisation, was a major step forward for the industry here.

When AHWNI approached my Department for assistance, in looking at all of the options including delivery by my Department, the option which demonstrated best value was to provide funding support to AHWNI.

As outlined above, no decision was taken to outsource the programme, industry had taken the initiative to eradicate this disease, hence no tendering process was necessary as my Department procured no goods or services

Forest Service's Business Plan 2013-14: Tree Disease Resistance

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there are plans to commence a project to plant vegetation that is genetically resistant to tree disease, under the supporting targets in the Forest Service's Business Plan 2013-2014.

(AQW 27134/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The All-Ireland Chalara Control Strategy which I jointly launched with Minister Tom Hayes TD, amongst other matters recognised the importance of research in developing disease resistance to Chalara Ash die-back.

This is, as is the case with most tree breeding projects, a long term aspiration and the best way forward is to work co-operatively with a range of organisations including the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), DEFRA, Forest Research, and charitable organisations such as the Future Trees Trust. In this way we will be able to share knowledge and experience on tree breeding in a way that best equips us to find trees that are resistant to a wide range of tree disease and adapted to the degree of climate change likely to be found in Ireland.

As this work is done outside the Forest Service it is not a specific target for the Agency.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many cattle reacted to a thirty day Bovine Tuberculosis test, in the last six months.

(AQW 27217/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The question refers to pre-movement and pre-export Brucellosis tests.

During the 6 month period from 16 April 2013 to 16 October 2013, three cattle were deemed to be reactors on the basis of pre-movement Brucellosis serological test results. Bacteriological culture results for two of these animals were negative; one result is still pending.

Livestock Stolen in South Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many incidents of stolen livestock have been reported in the South Antrim area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27220/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on (a) stolen or (b) animals reported missing is kept on the Department's database the Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS). APHIS does not differentiate between missing or stolen animals. These two categories are recorded collectively on APHIS (Table 1).

APHIS does not keep information by constituency, however Mallusk Divisional Veterinary Office on Table 1 covers mainly the South Antrim area.

We are currently developing a system for the recording of sheep stolen or reported missing. Table 1 provides the number of cattle reported as missing or stolen over the last three years by Divisional Veterinary Office area.

Table 1

Divisional Veterinary Office	No. Cattle Reported Missing or Stolen		
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Armagh	497	342	389
Ballymena	142	192	143
Coleraine	169	196	210
Dungannon	788	506	625
Enniskillen	294	312	296
Londonderry	194	160	242
Mallusk	105	135	56
Newry	294	429	406
Newtownards	276	157	240
Omagh	311	378	407
Total	3,070	2,807	3,014
	Total For All 3 Years		8,891

Land Owned or Controlled by DARD in South Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) amount; and (ii) location of departmental owned/controlled land in South Antrim.

(AQW 27221/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My department owns or controls approximately 944 hectares of land in South Antrim. Each location is detailed in the table below. The land is managed by the Forest Service agency and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.

Table - Owned and Controlled land in South Antrim

Location	Amount (Hectares)
Muckamore Forest, Muckamore, Antrim	52.24
Randalstown Forest, Mill Town, Randalstown	176.40
Tardree Forest, near Kells, Antrim	332.05
Tardree Forest, near Kells, Ballyclare	47.01
CAFRE Greenmount Campus, Muckamore, Antrim	336
Total Owned/Controlled Land	943.70

Outsourcing of Functions: DARD

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she intends to outsource any of her Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27254/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department's Savings Delivery Plans to 2014/15 are on track for achievement at this stage and there is currently no plan to outsource any of DARD's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

However all options will be reviewed when identifying efficiencies to meet any new DARD budget reduction targets agreed by the Executive as part of future Budget exercises.

Sugar Beet

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) quantity; and (ii) value of locally grown sugar beet, for each of the last three years.

(AQW 27297/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Based on information contained in returns to the Agricultural and Horticultural Census conducted annually in June, no sugar beet has been grown locally during the last three years.

Rural Development Programme: Funding

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide a breakdown of the funding provided to each sub regional network under the Rural Development Programme.

(AQW 27316/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Community Support Networks are not funded through the Rural Development Programme.

The Rural Community Development Support Programme is currently funded from the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation budget.

Sugar Industry

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine with regards to re-establishing a sugar industry serving the island of Ireland.

(AQW 27362/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that there has been renewed industry interest in the south about re-establishing a sugar industry, but as yet I have not had any discussions with Minister Coveney on the subject.

Cooperatives

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the economic value of the co-operative sector within the agri-food sector; and (ii) the number of jobs sustained within it, for each of the last five years; and to outline the specific plans her Department has to further support its growth.

(AQW 27363/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not hold economic value or employment data specific to co-operatives within the agri-food sector.

The current Rural Development Programme (RDP) administered by my Department provides support for groups of farmers working together to improve competitiveness and growth. Support arrangements through the RDP can take many different forms and can facilitate the formation of co-operatives and the support of these groups through their formative years.

As the current RDP comes to an end, I am reviewing the uptake and success of this support and have consulted with industry on proposals for similar arrangements in the next programme. The proposal would provide support for the set up and operation of cooperation groups, networks or clusters between at least two participants in the agriculture, food, forestry sectors and others to achieve the objectives and priorities of the Rural Development Programme.

The type of groups established would depend on the needs and objectives of the group members, and could include Buying Groups, Supply Groups, Marketing Groups, Co-operatives, and Producer Organisations. Co-operation support is also proposed for Small Medium Enterprises (SME) and micro food producers to reduce their marketing, logistics and distribution costs by innovative methods.

Cooperatives

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what support her Department offers to communities wishing to establish a local co-operative.

(AQW 27364/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current Rural Development Programme (RDP) administered by my Department provides support for groups of farmers working together to improve their returns from the marketplace. While these arrangements can take many different forms the RDP can facilitate the formation of co-operatives and support groups through their formative years.

Although the current RDP is coming to a close, anyone interested in supply chain co-operatives can avail of support from experienced mentors to develop their ideas. I am reviewing the uptake and success of the current programme and have consulted with industry on proposals for similar support in the next programme. The proposal would provide support for the set up and operation of cooperation groups, networks or clusters between at least two participants in the agriculture, food, forestry sectors and others to achieve the objectives and priorities of the Rural Development Programme.

The type of group established would depend on the needs and objectives of the group members, and could include Buying Groups, Supply Groups, Marketing Groups, Co-operatives, and Producer Organisations. Co-operation support is also proposed for Small Medium Enterprises (SME) and micro food producers to reduce their marketing, logistics and distribution costs by innovative methods.

Dairy Processing Plant in County Fermanagh

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has carried out any work to assess the demand for a dairy processing plant in Co. Fermanagh.

(AQW 27365/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In past years we have seen substantial rationalisation of the dairy processing industry driven by economic factors. This has resulted in a number of dairy companies being taken over or closing down. In these cases the milk pools supplying these companies has been subsumed by other processors, so that the farmers still have an outlet for their milk. Although this does facilitate greater processing efficiency and a more sustainable industry, it has resulted in reduced employment in some areas.

My Department has not carried out any specific work to assess the demand for a dairy processing plant in Co Fermanagh. The Agri-food strategy board has produced a Strategic Action Plan for the growth of the local Agri-food industry to 2020 and beyond. The action plan entitled "Going for Growth" has identified a number of opportunities in the global marketplace. While new market outlets may necessitate increased demand for processing capacity in future, any proposal for additional processing capacity would have to meet the strategic objectives of the industry.

Wind Farm Development

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has considered leasing suitable sites within forest parks for windfarm development.

(AQW 27390/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department are considering the potential for some of its forest land to be developed for Wind Farms consistent with its forestry objectives. Recruitment of a wind farm programme manager to take this work forward is currently on-going.

At this stage and until the further analysis work has been completed, I am not in a position to speculate on the suitability of any particular forests or whether they might be leased in the future for wind farm development.

Broadband: South Down

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the roll-out of rural broadband; and to outline how this roll-out will benefit rural dwellers in South Down.

(AQW 27542/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I understand that the 'Invitation to Tender' for the NI Broadband Improvement Project was issued on 2 October 2013, with a closing date of 6 November 2013 and it is anticipated that a contract will be signed by the end of this year. Roll-out will commence after contracts are agreed.

It is my intention to target as many postcode areas as possible within the list of 7,539 rural broadband "not spots" based on multiple deprivation, including some within your own area. Not all areas will be able to fully benefit from this round of targeting however, as success is dependent upon the technical solutions available within the existing budget.

Broadband: South Down

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what specific areas in South Down are likely to benefit from the roll-out of rural broadband in the months ahead.

(AQW 27544/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Within the overall list of 7,539 broadband 'not spots' there are a number of South Down post codes included. However the identification of specific areas that will fully benefit from the initiative will depend on the technical solutions available within the budget.

The 'Invitation to Tender' for the NI Broadband Improvement Project, which opened on 2 October 2013 will close on 6 November 2013 and it is anticipated that a contract will be signed by the end of this year. At that point it will be possible to specify the exact areas which the technical solution will cover.

Department of Education

Controlled Sector Body and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools: Budget

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what the budget will be for the (i) proposed controlled sector body; and (ii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, in (a) 2014; and (b) 2015.

(AQW 27258/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The budget for the proposed controlled sector support body has yet to be determined for 2014 and 2015. However, the controlled sector support body will only be in operation in a context where

significant reforms have been taken forward as promised by the November 16, 2011 Heads of Agreement and the Education Bill: namely, the establishment of ESA complimented by new sectoral bodies and the dissolution of existing structures including CCMS.

The CCMS Resource Budget for financial year 2013-14 is £3,262,000, based on allocations made to date. No Capital Budget has been allocated to CCMS in 2013-14. Capital and Resource Budgets have yet to be confirmed for 2014-15.

Public Consultations: DE

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Education to detail how many public consultations his Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27522/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Since May 2007 my Department has carried out 49 public consultations. The details of each are included in the table below.

Year	Consultation	Responses
2007	The Teachers' Pensions (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2008	0
2007	Consultation on the Sustainable Schools Policy	119
2007	Joint DE DEL Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance Strategy	94
2007	Consultation on Draft Regulations to Prohibit Discrimination by General Qualifications Bodies on the Grounds of Disability	12
2007	Policy on Supporting Ethnic-Minority Children and Young People who have English as an Additional Language	184
2008	Consultation on Draft Pupil Records and Reporting Regulations and Levels of Progression	99
2008	Review of Irish-medium Education	100
2008	Review of Literacy and Numeracy Strategy	213
2008	Every School A Good School – School Improvement Policy	203
2008	Area-based Planning Policy Consultation on the RPA screening form & –RPA Policy paper 22	36
2008	Consultation on draft Regulations on the use of mark enhancements in examinations, in cases where disabled students have been granted exemptions	6
2008	Consultation on Building a Better Future	271
2009	DE Staff Transfer Scheme	0
2009	Every School a Good School: The Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion	2902
2009	Consultation on the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the Teachers' (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations (NI) 2010 and complementing amendments to the Teachers' Superannuation Regulations (NI) 1998	18
2009	Food in Schools Policy	209
2009	School Circular – The Education of Children and Young People from the Traveller Community	103
2009	Equality Impact Assessment of the Transfer 2010 Guidance	29
2009	Transfer 2010 Guidance	3195
2009	Consultation on the draft teachers' (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations (NI) 2009	77
2009	Promoting Equality through the Review of Public Administration	27
2010	Draft Early Years (0-6) Strategy	1986
2010	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy	72
2010	Draft EQIA on the Proposal to Withdraw Funding from Preparatory Departments of Grammar Schools	426
2010	Common Funding Formula Consultation January 2010	204

Year	Consultation	Responses
2010	School Admissions (Exceptional Circumstances) Regulations 2010	16
2010	Disability Action Plan	5
2010	Teacher Education in Climate Change – The Way Forward	48
2010	Joint DE/DEL Draft Government STEM Strategy	43
2011	Revised Equality Scheme, Audit of Inequalities/Action Plan	16
2011	EQIA consultation on funding for Transfer Interviews	55
2011	DE Draft Budget 2011-2015	162
2011	Consultation on Proposed Increases to Contributions for members of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) 2012	21
2011	Proposed Changes to GCSEs	460
2012	Consultation on 'Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning'	332
2012	Joint Consultation with DEL on the cessation of a Statistical release on Participation in Full-Time Education and Vocational Training by 16 and 17 Year Olds.	1
2012	Consultation on the Provision of Performance and other Information about Pupils and Schools	57
2012	Consultation on Proposed Increases to Contributions for members of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) 2013	17
2012	Consultation on the Draft Traveller Child In Education Action Framework	103
2012	Joint Consultation with DEL on the Future of the Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme	62
2012	Proposals to widen the powers of the General Teaching Council for NI and extend its remit to include the Further Education sector (led by DEL)	41
2012	Consultation on Priorities for Youth Policy	518
2012	Potential Short Term Changes to A levels	99
2013	Consultation on amendment to the NI Teachers' Pensions Scheme (NITPS) to reflect Workplace Pension Reform and Miscellaneous Amendments 2013	1
2013	Consultation on draft regulations to implement amendments to the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme to reflect Workplace Pension Reform (auto-enrolment) and Miscellaneous Amendments	1
2013	Consultation on Amendments to the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) to remove "cap and share" provisions and to provide for completion of a 2012 valuation without having first completed a 2008 valuation	0 at 30/10/2013 - consultation closes 25/11/2013
2013	Fundamental Review of GCSES and A Levels	15 at 30/10/2013 consultation closes 20 December 2013
2013	Consultation on Putting Pupils First – Reforming the Common Funding Scheme	14,000 approximately at 30/10/2013 – consultation closed on 25/10/2013 but responses are still being sorted and counted
2013	Consultation on Draft Equality Impact Assessment of the Proposals for the Reform of the Common Funding Scheme	1 as at 30/10/2013 – consultation closes 29/11/2013

Common Funding Formula: Schools in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the financial impact of the proposed Common Funding Formula on each school in North Down.

(AQW 27539/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

It is not possible therefore to project the levels of funding that will be available at individual school or pupil level in the incoming financial year.

It should be remembered that investment in schools is on the way up rather than on the way down. The ASB is set to increase by £15.8m next year and I have already announced my intention to inject an additional £30m into it over the next two years, targeted at social deprivation.

Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level as well as my final decisions on changes to the Common Funding Scheme.

Teachers: Substitute Teacher Register

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many teachers are currently registered on the Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register.

(AQW 27562/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 8021 teachers registered on the Substitute Teacher Register.

In the last twelve months 2522 teachers have been removed from the Substitute Teacher Register.

Teachers: Substitute Teacher Register

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many teachers have been removed from Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register in the last twelve months.

(AQW 27563/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 8021 teachers registered on the Substitute Teacher Register.

In the last twelve months 2522 teachers have been removed from the Substitute Teacher Register.

Teachers for Literacy and Numeracy: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in the North Down constituency that have benefitted from the appointment of additional teachers to assist children with literacy and numeracy issues.

(AQW 27621/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The primary and post-primary schools listed in the table below are eligible to appoint additional teachers. The table also shows whether appointments have been completed as at 25 October 2013.

School	Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Teachers allocated.	Recruitment Status as at 25 October 2013.
Primary Schools		
Bloomfield Primary School	1.0	Appointed
Clandeboye Primary School	0.2	Ongoing
Kilcooley Primary School	0.2	Ongoing
Post-Primary Schools		
Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College	2.0	1.0 appointed 1.0 ongoing
Priory College	1.0	Appointed
St Columbanus' College	1.0	Appointed

Examination Fees for Pupils

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education how many post-primary schools charge pupils a fee to sit exams: and to outline the guidelines on the practice of pupils paying to sit exams.

(AQW 27632/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Post-primary schools are expected to meet the cost of examination fees from within their delegated budgets. Chapter 19 of the Governor's Handbook outlines school fees, charges and remissions and specifically provides that no fees or charges can be levied in respect of the entry of a registered pupil for any public examination for which the pupil is being prepared by the school.

However there are circumstances when a school may pass on the cost of examination fees to pupils, namely when the pupil may have received private tuition or be re-sitting an examination.

Every post-primary school should have a charging and remissions policy in place outlining their relevant charges.

Free School Meals Indicator: Transfer of Funding

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education for a detailed breakdown of the transfer of funding from schools that will receive less funding to those that will receive more, under the Free School Meals Indicator.

(AQW 27637/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The consultation on my proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme ended on 25 October 2013. I will consider all responses before making any final decisions on these proposals.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

It is not possible therefore to project the levels of funding that will be available at individual school or pupil level in the incoming financial year.

It should be remembered that investment in schools is on the way up rather than on the way down. The ASB is set to increase by £15.8m next year and I have already announced my intention to inject an additional £30m into it over the next two years, targeted at social deprivation.

Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level as well as my final decisions on changes to the Common Funding Scheme.

Primary Schools in North Down: Budget

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the budget for each primary school in the North Down area, for each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 27687/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Details of the budgets made available to primary schools in North Down area, listed below, under the Common Funding Formula arrangements, are available on the South Eastern Education & Library Board's website. Details of school budgets distributed in the last two financial years can be accessed using the following links –

http://80.4.159.11/school_man_new/pdfs/2012-13_Budget_Statements.pdf

http://80.4.159.11/school_man_new/pdfs/2013-14_Budget_Statements.pdf

DE ref	School name		
■ 4011650	Ballyholme Primary School	■ 4011631	Hollywood Primary School
■ 4016430	Ballymagee Primary School	■ 4016002	Kilcooley Primary School
■ 4011265	Ballyvester Primary School	■ 4016192	Kilmaine Primary School
■ 4051680	Bangor Central Primary School	■ 4011681	Millisle Primary School
■ 4013023	Bloomfield Primary School	■ 4016067	Rathmore Primary School
■ 4011670	Clandeboye Primary School	■ 4033008	St Anne's Primary School
■ 4011645	Crawfordsburn Primary School	■ 4036146	St Comgall's Primary School
■ 4011654	Donaghadee Primary School	■ 4036148	St Malachy's Primary School
■ 4053020	Glencraig Integrated Primary School	■ 4031628	St Patrick's Primary School
■ 4013045	Grange Park Primary School	■ 4016111	Towerview Primary School

Source: NI school census

Note: the above list of primary schools excludes two grammar Preparatory Departments (4610097, Glenlola Collegiate and 4620044, Sullivan Upper School) – whose funding share is shown as part of the relevant grammar school budget).

Primary Schools in North Down: Number of Teachers

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of teachers employed by each primary school in the North Down area.

(AQW 27689/11-15)

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

Table 1. Headcount of teachers in North Down parliamentary constituency, 2012/13.

School Name	Postal Town	Headcount
Ballyholme Primary School	Bangor	29
Ballymagee Primary School	Bangor	18
Ballyvester Primary School	Donaghadee	7
Bangor Central Primary School	Bangor	28
Bloomfield Primary School	Bangor	22
Clandeboye Primary School	Bangor	10
Crawfordsburn Primary School	Bangor	14
Cygnets House Preparatory Department	Bangor	7
Donaghadee Primary School	Donaghadee	20
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	Hollywood	11
Grange Park Primary School	Bangor	18
Hollywood Primary School	Hollywood	17
Kilcooley Primary School	Bangor	11
Kilmaine Primary School	Bangor	24
Millisle Primary School	Newtownards	10
Rathmore Primary School	Bangor	25
St Anne's Primary School	Donaghadee	4
St Comgall's Primary School	Bangor	13
St Malachy's Primary School	Bangor	15
St Patrick's Primary School	Hollywood	11
Sullivan Upper Preparatory School	Hollywood	16
Towerview Primary School	Bangor	19

Source: Teacher Payroll and Pensions Administration System

Department for Employment and Learning

Access to Work Programme: Advertising

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the amount spent on advertising the Access to Work Programme.

(AQW 27038/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The Department, through its Disability Employment Service (DES), actively promotes Access to Work, along with its full range of specialist disability employment programme provision which includes Work Connect, Workable (NI), Condition Management Programme and the Job Introduction Scheme.

The Department recently revised the DES publicity brochures, which includes a specific supplement on Access to Work, and distributed 10,000 copies of these to the Jobs and Benefits Offices and JobCentres for issue to the public and other relevant stakeholders.

During the current financial year, 2013/14, DES has spent £11,430.00 on these publicity materials. In the year 2012/2013 the equivalent expenditure was £11,187.00.

Information on Access to Work and other Departmental employment programmes is readily available on the internet via the NI Direct and Department for Employment and Learning websites.

DEL Provision: Disability

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department is taking to promote inclusion and provision for people with a disability.

(AQW 27065/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is very aware of the problems and barriers that people with a disability encounter, in relation to social inclusion and specifically, the ability to obtain and sustain employment. My Department offers a range of programmes and services to help people with a disability play a full and active role in society.

Some examples of the specialist disability services that are available include:

Careers Service

The Department's Careers Service has developed and implemented a social inclusion policy which focuses on addressing the needs of young people facing, or vulnerable to, social exclusion, including young people with a disability.

Working with multi-disciplinary teams, including teachers, doctors, occupational therapists, transition officers, educational psychologists, as well as community & voluntary sector organisations, they contribute to the young person's Transition Plan by providing impartial careers guidance. This helps the young person and their parents/guardians to make informed decisions about the options available to them on leaving school

Training Programmes

The Department has specialist contracted providers for its two flagship training programmes, Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI. These organisations provide additional tailored support to participants with disabilities so that they are given every opportunity to overcome their difficulties during their time on the training programme.

The Department also provides a Pre-Entry Training Support Referral for school leavers with a disability who express an interest in joining Training for Success.

Employment Services

The Department's Disability Employment Service (DES) provides an extensive range of pre-employment and in-work support for people with a disability, through a variety of internal and contracted services and programmes. These include:

- A dedicated Occupational Psychology Service;
- Workable programme;
- Access to Work programme;
- Condition Management Programme;
- Job Introduction Scheme; and
- Work Connect.

European Social Fund and Collaboration & Innovation Fund

Through the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF), the Department is funding a total of 21 projects that specifically target people with disability. These projects have been offered funding amounting to £29.4 million, over the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2015. In addition, the Department's Collaboration and Innovation Fund is supporting a number of projects aimed specifically at young people with a disability.

Further Education

Through the Additional Support Fund, the Department commits £4 million per annum to Further Education colleges to help deliver courses and provide individual support and assistance to students with a learning difficulty and/or disability. This funding is comprised of £2 million per annum through the Additional Support Fund (ASF) - to help with the cost of technical and/or personal support, whilst another £2 million is devoted to (ASF) Discrete Provision - which enables FE Colleges to deliver tailored discrete courses for students who are unable, due to the nature/degree of their disability/learning difficulty, to access mainstream provision.

Higher Education

The Department provides funding, through Disabled Students Allowances, to help students pay for the extra costs they may incur when studying their higher education course, as a direct result of a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty.

South West College: Beacon Centre

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 26594/11-15, to detail the number of adults who participated in the specific course broken down by having (i) learning difficulties; (ii) mental illness; and/or (iii) a physical disability, during the academic year 2012/13.

(AQW 27225/11-15)

Dr Farry: The question raised in AQW 26594/11-15 was in relation to the college's work with Beacon Centres. As I mentioned in previous responses, this type of delivery is for adults with mental health issues. My Department does not hold the information requested. I have referred the question to the Director of South West College, who will respond directly to Lord Morrow.

Further and Higher Education: Students with Learning Disabilities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning in relation to students with learning disabilities attending specifically tailored courses at Further & Higher Education facilities, to detail (i) how many colleges are re-enrolling students to the same course, multiple times as no further provision is available; and (ii) which colleges have enrolled the same student onto these specific courses three times or more.

(AQW 27233/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the absence of full coverage of a Unique Learner Number, my Department does not currently hold valid and reliable information regarding the tracking of individual students across different courses and academic years. It is expected that such analysis will be available in the next two or three years as full population of the Unique Learner Number is implemented.

However, I can advise that Departmental guidance for further education (FE) colleges, in relation to the application of the Additional Support Fund, insists that all students must have a clear individual progression route and developmental pathway and, importantly, should not be repeating any previously undertaken qualifications or similar levels of qualifications.

Additionally colleges advise that curriculum and qualification pathways and educational guidance and support within this specially tailored provision, are specifically structured to support learner progression within the special discrete provision, to mainstream FE programmes or beyond. This ensures that students are not re enrolled on the same course multiple times.

In instances where a student has been enrolled again on the same course, it has either been as requested by the student, or where programmes are considered beneficial to the student's everyday needs. This is not necessarily a progression in terms of educational attainment, though it may develop the student's personal and life skills.

Universities: Entrants

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of local students entering universities outside of Northern Ireland in each of the last 5 years.

(AQW 27272/11-15)

Dr Farry: The table below details the number of Northern Ireland Domiciled first year students enrolled at universities outside of Northern Ireland from 2007/08 to 2011/12.

Academic year	English Institutions	Scottish Institutions	Welsh Institutions	Republic of Ireland Institutions	Total
2007/08	4,663	1,460	188	349	6,660
2008/09	4,682	1,400	229	298	6,609
2009/10	4,722	1,413	236	341	6,712
2010/11	5,091	1,362	236	256	6,945
2011/12	5,557	1,367	263	300	7,487

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Notes:

- 1 The latest available data are for the 2011/12 academic year.
- 2 First year enrolments include undergraduate and post graduate students and fulltime and part time students.
- 3 Data on NI students attending other European or worldwide universities are not available.
- 4 Figures for NI domiciled first year enrolments at the Open University have been excluded from the above table. Although The Open University is defined as an English Institution it is likely that any NI domiciled enrolments will not be based in England.
- 5 For information the number of first year Northern Ireland domiciled student enrolments at the Open University is provided in the table below:

Academic year	NI Domiciled First year enrolments at Open University
2007/08	1948
2008/09	2148
2009/10	2322
2010/11	2319
2011/12	2198

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Universities: Maximum Student Number

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the current cap on university numbers and how has this number varied in each of the last 10 years.

(AQW 27275/11-15)

Dr Farry: There is no overall cap on university student numbers in Northern Ireland. However, the number of full-time undergraduate places at each university is subject to a cap, known as the Maximum Student Number (MaSN), as a means of controlling the cost to Government of student support.

The MaSN does not apply to part-time undergraduates, postgraduates (with the exception of PGCEs), to students from outside the EU or to students from Great Britain and the Islands who commenced study from academic year 2012/13. The universities are free to recruit as many non-MaSN controlled students as they wish.

The total MaSN allocation to Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster, in each of the last ten academic years, is shown overleaf.

Academic Year	MaSN Allocation
2004/05	23,284
2005/06	23,530
2006/07	23,754
2007/08	23,822
2008/09	23,904
2009/10	23,954
2010/11	23,979
2011/12	23,930
2012/13	23,935
2013/14	24,258

I am committed to, and have agreed, further increases in MaSN allocations across the Northern Ireland Higher Education sector over the next two years.

Outsourcing of Functions: DEL

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27289/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have no plans at this time to outsource any departmental functions that are currently being delivered in-house.

There are a number of departmental employment and training programmes that are already outsourced through competitive tender including Steps to Work, Workable, Work Connect, Apprenticeships NI and Training for Success. In addition, my department awards grants to mainly community and voluntary sector organisations to deliver programmes under the Collaboration and Innovation Fund for young people not in education, employment or training, and under the European Social Fund for a range of groups facing barriers to employability.

Employment Appeals Tribunal

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the possibility of creating an Employment Appeals Tribunal.

(AQW 27379/11-15)

Dr Farry: Following the 2009-10 review of systems for resolving workplace disputes, my Department indicated that it would work closely with relevant authorities to explore the legal, practical and regulatory implications of establishing an Employment Appeal Tribunal in Northern Ireland.

This work has been placed on hold pending the outcome both of my Department's own wide ranging review of employment law, which has potential implications for the way in which disputes are referred to the tribunal system, and decisions that will ultimately need to be agreed at Executive level as to the future administration, organisation and structure of tribunals in Northern Ireland.

South West College: Audit on Learning Disability Provision

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 26901/11-15, to detail (i) why he is refusing to allow full sight of the audit; and (ii) the findings in regard to the other colleges included in the audit.

(AQW 27403/11-15)

Dr Farry: As I mentioned in my response to AQW 26901/11-15, I have shared the findings of the audit of further education provision for adults with learning disabilities, in South West College, with Lord Morrow and the Committee for Employment and Learning, as agreed.

The audit was conducted by my Department to determine the availability of provision and is available to those who require it. I have placed the information requested in the Assembly Library and on the DEL website at www.delni.gov.uk/

Management and Leadership Development Programme Initiatives

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the Management and Leadership Development Programme Initiatives in the North Down constituency.

(AQW 27537/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department offers a suite of leadership and management interventions across Northern Ireland, which aim to improve the skills of both companies and individual managers. This suite of 29 programmes comprises the Management Analysis and Planning (MAP) Programme, the Management and Leadership Development Programme (MLDP), and the INTRO Graduate management development programme. Since April 2013 these programmes have been fully funded for interested companies and participants.

During the last three years, in the North Down constituency area seven companies have availed of the MAP programme; 53 individual managers have participated in MLDP; and 21 graduates have participated on the INTRO Graduate Management Development Programme. A total of £133,000 in funding has been provided to date. In addition, a focused leadership and management roadshow event was held in Bangor, providing details of available leadership and management support as well as providing a leadership themed talk by a leading UK expert.

Young People: Opportunities and Prospects

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 26884/11-15, given the significant difference in numbers of opportunities available in constituencies of comparable size, what steps are being taken to ensure that there are reasonable prospects for young people irrespective of where they live.

(AQW 27580/11-15)

Dr Farry: Since the launch of the Youth Employment Scheme my Department has worked closely with employers across Northern Ireland to secure a range of opportunities in all geographical and occupational areas.

A range of opportunities are open to young people irrespective of where they live. My Department facilitated a very successful work placement event in partnership with Bombardier on 26 June 2013, in Belfast, at which 60 work placements were on offer. The event was open to and actively promoted right across Northern Ireland and attracted interest from young people from a wide range of areas outside of Belfast. Young people receive assistance with travel costs to work placements.

My Department is currently establishing partnerships with key employers across Northern Ireland to encourage them to offer Youth Employment opportunities. There have already been notable successes with key employers to date. One example, is Asda, which has provided job search training to unemployed clients through their in-store Work Clubs. In the last month 118 clients participated in Asda Work Clubs across Northern Ireland and we are working with other employers to look at similar events.

Advisers in local Jobs and Benefit Offices and JobCentres continue to work with young people on an individual basis to match them to opportunities that will develop their employability and jobsearch skills.

Finally, my Department is planning to host further employer awareness events in the coming months and will continue to promote the Youth Employment Scheme ensuring it continues to lead to the creation of opportunities right across Northern Ireland for all of our young people.

South West College: Students with a Learning Difficulty and/or Disability

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 25524/11-15, whether this invalidates previous responses in relation to provision for students with a learning difficulty and/or disability prior to the commencement

of the September 2013 term at the Dungannon Campus, South West College, and if so, if this indicates that no such specific courses were in place; and if no courses were in place, to outline the specific provision for students with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

(AQW 27594/11-15)

Dr Farry: My reply to AQW 25524/11-15 sought to clarify the position regarding provision available at the Dungannon campus of South West College.

It has been explained in a previous response (AQW 26949/11-15), that, prior to the commencement of the September 2013 term at the Dungannon campus, there was no provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The provision referred to in previous responses, was delivered at the Dungannon campus, in conjunction with the Beacon Centre, and was aimed at adults with mental health issues. The College did not consider this provision to be appropriate for young adults leaving special schools

Also, as previously advised in my reply to AQW 25873/11-15, the current provision offered at the Dungannon campus of South West College for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is the "On Board Personal Learning Programme" course. This is a part-time course, operating one day per week.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Smart Region Project

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for a breakdown of the projected cost of the Smart Region project.

(AQW 26790/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The SMART Region project has secured ERDF funding totalling £56,500 towards the costs of employing a DATA analyst until December 2015.

It is anticipated that the project will subsequently identify strategic EU projects up to 2020 and once identified those projects will be costed accordingly.

Smart Region Project

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the criteria for selecting an area for the Smart Region project.

(AQW 26791/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The SMART Region project proposal was brought forward for consideration by stakeholders in the Fermanagh and Omagh regions.

The proposers were keen to explore as a pilot project how the SMART concept could be applied to yield benefits in their rural sub-region.

The pilot project is expected to have the potential to inform how other sub-regions/councils might identify strategic EU projects up to 2020.

Smart Region Project: Omagh and Fermanagh

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the intensive data analysis which will be used to create a Smart Region in the districts currently covered by Omagh and Fermanagh Councils.

(AQW 26792/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Project Board which is representative of central government, local government, public sector and private sector will provide the broad direction for the data analysis to be undertaken.

It is expected that this will be wide ranging, capturing data on the region's assets and its potential for future development. It will focus on increasing competitiveness and improving the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the region.

Invest NI and Foreign Investors

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how many new jobs have been created by InvestNI in each constituency in each year since 2011; and (ii) how many potential foreign investors visited each constituency over the same period and the outcomes of the visits.

(AQW 27036/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) Invest NI has developed new systems that will allow it to begin reporting on the number of jobs created across its full range of interventions from the start of the next financial year. At present, Invest NI reports on the number of jobs that

have been created as a result of the Jobs Fund. The jobs created by constituency in each full financial year since the Fund commenced on 1st April 2011 are outlined below:

Table 1: Invest NI Jobs Fund Jobs Created by Parliamentary Constituency Area (FY 2011-12 to 2012-13)

PCA	2011-12	2012-13
Belfast East	84	80
Belfast North	85	50
Belfast South	107.5	280
Belfast West	53	80
East Antrim	5	20
East Londonderry	45	40
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	63	136
Foyle	116	179
Lagan Valley	60	59
Mid Ulster	119	261
Newry & Armagh	48	83
North Antrim	26	67
North Down	31	23
South Antrim	41.5	100
South Down	49	60
Strangford	30	35
Upper Bann	22.5	48
West Tyrone	30.5	72

Notes:

- 1 Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.
- 2 Jobs reported at 0.5 are indicative of part-time jobs secured.

Invest NI reports on the basis of the jobs promoted by the businesses it supports. The jobs promoted by constituency for each of the years in question is provided below:

PCA	2011-12	2012-13
Belfast East	274	216
Belfast North	468	244
Belfast South	1,025	1,220
Belfast West	295	375
East Antrim	144	520
East Londonderry	171	166
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	270	491
Foyle	397	469
Lagan Valley	381	279
Mid Ulster	660	820
Newry & Armagh	264	309
North Antrim	179	210
North Down	154	103
South Antrim	272	256

PCA	2011-12	2012-13
South Down	291	125
Strangford	169	167
Upper Bann	224	519
West Tyrone	201	678

- (ii) During the financial years 2011-12 and 2012-13, Invest NI hosted 383 credible inward investment visits across all Parliamentary Constituency Areas (PCA)

Table 2: Inward Investment Visits by Parliamentary Constituency Area (FY 2011-12 to 2012-13)

PCA	2011-12	2012-13
Belfast East	51	53
Belfast North	25	36
Belfast South	62	63
Belfast West	7	9
East Antrim	14	16
East Londonderry	3	3
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	0	0
Foyle	7	4
Lagan Valley	1	7
Mid Ulster	1	0
Newry & Armagh	3	3
North Antrim	1	4
North Down	0	1
South Antrim	0	5
South Down	0	1
Strangford	1	0
Upper Bann	2	0
West Tyrone	0	0

Notes:

- 1 A credible visit is defined as one where Invest NI can claim to have promoted a DCA or PCA by bringing a potential inward investor, who has an identifiable project proposal, to that area.
- 2 In addition to the above listed visits, Invest NI has also facilitated a number of visits by other organisations e.g. influencers, overseas governments and trade bodies, which serve to strengthen FDI & Trade links in overseas markets.

It is difficult to quantify the specific outcomes of each and every visit by an inward investor. Some international companies will visit on the basis of 'fact finding' even though no potential investment is imminent. A high quality visit programme can help a specific area, and Northern Ireland as a whole, gain traction so that it remains in contention for when a potential investor chooses to proceed with their project.

Establishing a direct relationship between a specific visit and a subsequent investment is also difficult. This is because a company may make several visits before making a decision whether and where to invest. Securing an inward investment usually spans a considerable period (typically 18 to 24 months) and is often the result of many factors which may, or may not, include location visits.

Invest NI: Venture Capital Funds

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how much InvestNI has invested in venture capital funds; and (ii) how much money has been recovered by InvestNI on funds, in which InvestNI or the Industrial Development Board had invested, which were either closed or on fund closure distributions.

(AQW 27039/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) Invest NI has invested £25.525 million in venture capital funds.
- (ii) To date, only one venture capital fund (Crescent Capital I) in which Invest NI or the Industrial Development Board has invested in has reached the end of its life. Invest NI did not recover any money on the closure of this fund. However the rationale for investing in and promoting venture capital funds extends beyond the achievement of financial returns for the Fund and its investors. It is about gaining economic development benefits through building venture capital expertise and acceptance of equity investment within the Northern Ireland business community.

NI Small Business Loan Fund

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how much has been spent on leaflets advertising the NI Small Business Loans Fund; and (ii) where leaflets have been distributed.

(AQW 27040/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Small Business Loan Fund is managed on Invest NI's behalf by Ulster Community Investment plc (UCI plc). The manager has responsibility for marketing the Fund throughout Northern Ireland and pays for promotional material, including leaflets, from the management fee. As such Invest NI does not have any spend on leaflets advertising the Fund. Details of the Fund are promoted on the boosting business website: <http://www.boostingbusinessni.com/jobs/access-to-finance/>
- (ii) The manager has distributed leaflets through:
- Local Enterprise Centers and their tenants;
 - Past and current participants on the Social Entrepreneurship Programme and Tradelinks Programme by direct mail;
 - E-mail shots to Coleraine, Londonderry and Strabane Borough Council databases, with all remaining council areas soon to be covered;
 - Direct mail shot to all accountancy practices across Northern Ireland; and
 - Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

Regional Start Initiative

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the uptake to the Regional Start Initiative since its inception, broken down by Regional Delivery Partners.

(AQW 27041/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI's Regional Start Initiative commenced on 22nd October 2012. All five regional contract areas are delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland. The enquiries and Business Plan approvals by contract area to 31 March 2013 are as follows:

Contract Area	Enquiries	BPA's
Eastern	703	203
North East	272	108
North West	401	202
Southern	440	161
Western	310	229
Total	2,126	903

Jobs Created in North Antrim: Invest NI

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been created in the North Antrim constituency by InvestNI in each of the last 5 years; and of these, how many have attracted salaries greater than the Public Sector Median.

(AQW 27103/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI currently reports on the number of jobs that have been created through the Jobs Fund.

The table below shows the jobs created during the Fund's first two years. The Jobs Fund was specifically designed to accelerate job creation and did not therefore have any associated job quality targets (i.e. salaries above the Private Sector Median).

Jobs Fund Jobs Created	2011-12	2012-13
North Antrim	26	67

Invest NI has developed new systems that will allow it to begin reporting on the number of jobs created across its full range of interventions from the start of the next financial year.

Invest NI currently reports on the basis of the jobs promoted by the companies it supports. On this basis, the information for North Antrim for each of the last full five financial years is:

All Jobs Promoted	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
North Antrim	191	39	82	80	60

Invest NI's targets for attracting jobs above the Northern Ireland Private Sector Median (PSM) are specifically related to the jobs it promotes from foreign-owned investments and the growth of locally-owned businesses. On this basis, the total number of jobs in North Antrim attracting salaries above the Northern Ireland PSM in North Antrim in each of the last five years is as follows:

FDI and Local Jobs Promoted Above PSM	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
North Antrim	0	17	7	24	10

Trading Standards: Cigarettes

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what role Trading Standards' officials have in visiting and inspecting tobacconists for illegally imported cigarettes and to detail the inspections have been carried out in Ballymena in the last year.

(AQW 27105/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Trading Standards Service (TSS) has Service Level agreements with PSNI and HMRC. The agreements allow for the exchange of information on matters of joint interest and for the agreement on which organisation will take the lead role. In relation to illegally imported cigarettes, Trading Standards Service enforces the Trade Marks Act 1994 and responds to complaints or intelligence received. No inspections have been carried out in Ballymena in the past year.

Jobs Created in North Antrim: International Investors

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of jobs created by international investors in the North Antrim constituency, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27106/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI currently reports on the number of jobs that have been created through the Jobs Fund. Since the Fund commenced on 1st April 2011, it has created 93 jobs in North Antrim, all of which were in locally-owned companies.

Invest NI has developed new systems that will allow it to begin reporting on the number of jobs created across its full range of interventions from the start of the next financial year.

Invest NI reports on the basis of the jobs promoted by the companies it supports. The number of jobs promoted by foreign-owned companies in North Antrim during the period in question is shown below

FDI Jobs Promoted	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
North Antrim	0	17	0	0	0

It should be noted that any final decision on where an inward investor chooses to locate is a matter for the business itself and will be taken based on a range of factors including available skilled labour, appropriate infrastructure and the proximity of existing clusters of companies in their business sector.

Tourism Infrastructure

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what grants are available to improve tourism infrastructure in seaside towns.

(AQW 27119/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Tourism Development Scheme is currently closed for applications and at present there is no appropriate scheme open. There is the opportunity, however, to register interest for potential future funding schemes should these become available at tds@nitb.com.

Tourism 2020: Northern Ireland Hotels Federation Report

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation's recent publication Tourism 2020 - Investing in our Future.

(AQW 27128/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I welcome the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) Tourism 2020 document. Many of the issues highlighted within it fit with the overarching strategic objectives of the Programme for Government and Northern Ireland Economic Strategy, and our specific commitment to grow tourism into a £1billion industry by 2020.

Our focus more recently has been on delivering the necessary tourism product, key events and global marketing campaigns to ensure that 2012 and 2013, which have been crucial years for Northern Ireland tourism, are successful and bring maximum economic benefit to the local economy.

There are many positive indications that Northern Ireland tourism is moving in the right direction and I welcome the views of the Northern Ireland Hotel Federation which will be taken on board as the Department looks to the future development of the sector, as we build on the legacy of these last two years.

Giro d'Italia 2014

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether funding for tourism promotion will be made available to councils in East Antrim prior to the Giro d'Italia 2014.

(AQW 27132/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In order to maximise opportunities for the Giro d'Italia, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) will promote the event to our key markets of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A fully integrated marketing campaign will be put in place underpinned by extensive PR and activation activity in both markets.

NITB will of course work closely with the local authorities to maximise any potential promotional opportunities.

Giro d'Italia 2014

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department will provide additional funding to Larne and Moyle Borough Councils to help facilitate the Giro d'Italia 2014.

(AQW 27133/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department, through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), has set up a number of working groups specifically designed to address all aspects of the Giro d'Italia 2014.

It is my understanding that the Chief Executives from both Larne and Moyle Councils have been invited to attend the inaugural Giro d'Italia 2014 Local Authority Group meeting which will take place in early November.

These working groups are exclusively created to discuss how the Local Councils can capitalise on the Giro and the opportunities it brings to the area.

My Department, through NITB, has already committed £3 million to secure the Giro d'Italia for Northern Ireland which will facilitate this global event coming to Northern Ireland and indeed travelling through both the Larne and Moyle areas.

Data Centre in Coleraine

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, following the announcement of planning approval for a data centre in Coleraine, what development opportunities exist beyond the initial announcement.

(AQW 27142/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The 5NINES Data Centre announcement last week was great news for the Coleraine and wider East Londonderry area and indeed for Northern Ireland overall. Such developments are seen as essential to the overall IT infrastructure and have the capacity to assist in attracting other ICT related businesses that have an ever increasing need for data centre services such as that provided by 5NINES.

Invest NI's overseas sales teams will promote the new Data Centre to relevant companies in international markets. This, along with the excellent telecoms and IT research base at the University of Ulster Coleraine and the engineering talent available in the North West region should help attract more FDI and local companies to explore the location as a suitable place to establish and grow their operations from.

Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland: Prosecutions

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how legal costs are financed in cases where the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) attempts to prosecute a company for alleged health and safety breaches, yet these prosecutions are found to be incorrect in court, such as the case of Trevor Bailie, where the HSENI attempted on two occasions to prosecute.

(AQW 27152/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) investigates incidents and forwards files to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, the body which independently makes prosecution decisions. HSENI seeks to recover legal costs following a successful prosecution. If a prosecution is unsuccessful, or if a defendant is granted legal aid, or if a Judge does not award costs, HSENI is obliged to pay the legal costs.

Prosecution cases are taken in the more serious health and safety incidents. They aim to deal with those individuals and organisations that break the law, often unnecessarily causing death or serious injury. They also serve as a deterrent to others and ultimately they significantly contribute to making work and workplaces safer now and for the future.

In the six years from 2007 to date, HSENI has seen 117 cases disposed of in either the Crown Courts or Magistrates' Courts. Of these, 113 resulted in convictions resulting in fines totalling £2,640,101. This equates to a 97% success rate.

Anti-fraud Unit: DETI

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department has an anti-fraud unit; and if so, to detail (i) annual budget; (ii) staff compliment; and (iii) successes to date.
(AQW 27180/11-15)

Mrs Foster: DETI's Anti-Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan align with DFP guidance.

The Department fully participates in the UK wide National Fraud Initiative, an initiative to prevent and detect fraud.

DETI does not have a specific anti-fraud investigation unit. However in the event of a fraud, either suspected or actual, the Department's Internal Audit Service is responsible for investigating.

Tourism 2020: Northern Ireland Hotels Federation Report

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation Tourism 2020 Report.
(AQW 27238/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I welcome the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) Tourism 2020 document. Many of the issues highlighted within it fit with the overarching strategic objectives of the Programme for Government and Northern Ireland Economic Strategy and our specific commitment to grow tourism into a £1 billion industry by 2020.

Our focus more recently has been on delivering the necessary tourism product, key events and global marketing campaigns to ensure that 2012 and 2013, which have been crucial years for Northern Ireland tourism, are successful and bring maximum economic benefit to the local economy.

There are many positive indications that Northern Ireland tourism is moving in the right direction and I welcome the views of the Northern Ireland Hotel Federation which will be taken on board as the Department looks to the future development of the sector, as we build on the legacy of these last two years.

InterTradelreland

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much funding Intertradelreland received from her Department for the most recent five years for which data is available.
(AQW 27241/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The table below sets out the funding InterTradelreland has received from my Department over the last five financial years. As part of Budget 2010 (2011-2015) the Body is delivering 3% year-on-year efficiencies on its 2010-11 Final Plan Budget. Efficiency details are available on the DETI website at <http://www.detini.gov.uk/index/deti-spending-proposals.htm>.

DETI Funding to Intertradeireland

Year	Amount £'000's
2008-09	3,314
2009-10	3,799
2010-11	3,472
2011-12	2,877*
2012-13	3,367**

* The funding required to be transferred by DETI to finance InterTradelreland activities in 2010-11 was reduced by the utilisation by InterTradelreland of £500,000 from its reserves.

** An in-year allocation of £115,000 was made to InterTradelreland in 2012-13 to address inescapable pension pressures. Should such pressures arise, there is agreement that they be funded in-year.

Business Start-ups: North Antrim

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of business start ups in the North Antrim constituency in 2012/13.

(AQW 27276/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI approved 100 local business start up projects in the North Antrim parliamentary constituency area in the 2012-13 financial year.

Jobs Created in North Antrim: Jobs Fund

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of jobs created in the North Antrim constituency as a result of the Jobs Fund; and what percentage this represents of the total number so created throughout Northern Ireland.

(AQW 27277/11-15)

Mrs Foster: From its launch in April 2011 until 31st March 2013 a total of 93 jobs were created in North Antrim as a result of the Jobs Fund. This represents 3.45% of the overall total of 2,689 jobs created throughout Northern Ireland at 31st March 2013.

Invest NI: Financial Assistance in North Antrim

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the total financial assistance provided by InvestNI to companies in the North Antrim constituency in each of the last five years; and (ii) the percentage that this represents of the total assistance throughout Northern Ireland.

(AQW 27278/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The table below shows (i) the total financial assistance approved by Invest NI to companies located in the North Antrim parliamentary constituency area in each of the last five financial years; and (ii) the percentage that this represents of the total assistance approved throughout Northern Ireland.

Invest NI Assistance Approved in North Antrim PCA (2008-09 to 2012-13)

Year	North Antrim (£m)	N Antrim % of NI
2008-09	2.5	1.9%
2009-10	6.1	3.4%
2010-11	6.1	5.7%
2011-12	2.4	2.9%
2012-13	7.4	5.8%

Invest NI: Land in North Antrim

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many acres of land in North Antrim, under the aegis of InvestNI, is available for economic development; and what percentage this represents of the total availability in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 27281/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Within the North Antrim constituency, Invest NI's total landholding is 104.5 acres, of which 68 acres has been developed and is occupied by businesses, leaving a further 36.5 acres remaining available.

The land availability figure represents 5% of the total available land held by Invest NI across Northern Ireland.

Outsourcing of Functions: DETI

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she intends to outsource any of her Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27290/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The delivery of efficiencies is, and will continue to be, reviewed by my Department on an ongoing basis.

At this time the Department does not plan to increase the level of outsourcing already undertaken by private sector partners. This is in the context that a considerable proportion of the Department's Corporate Services are already provided centrally via Enterprise Shared Services within the Department of Finance and Personnel. These services include Human Resources, Information Technology, Financial transaction processing, and Staff Training. The HR service has already been substantially outsourced to the private sector, and while the other services remain within the NICS, they all include elements of outsourcing.

Broadband: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the percentage of North Down that has access to broadband internet, broken down by (i) area; and (ii) population; and whether there are plans to increase availability.

(AQW 27320/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department does not routinely gather data on broadband internet connection and is unable, therefore, to provide the details on access as requested.

My Department has initiated the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project, which aims to ensure that, by 2015, virtually all premises in Northern Ireland, including North Down, are able to avail of a broadband download speed of at least 2Mbps, and at least 90% of premises are provided with superfast broadband, with speeds in excess of 24Mbps.

Following public consultation on the proposed intervention area, an 'Invitation to Tender' to deliver the project issued on 2 October 2013, with a closing date of 6 November 2013. A number of post codes in the North Down area have been included for consideration in both the proposed basic (2Mbps) and superfast (24Mbps) intervention areas. Details of these post codes have now been published on the Departments website at <http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-telecoms-index/deti-telecoms-whats-new.htm>. It is anticipated that a contract will be signed with the provider by the end of this year, with implementation completed by 2015.

VAT: Hospitality Sector

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, following the Budget in the Republic of Ireland and the Irish Government's decision to retain a 9 percent VAT rate for the hospitality sector, for her assessment of the impact this will have, particularly in border areas.

(AQW 27333/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Republic of Ireland 9% VAT rate for the hospitality sector has been in place since July 2011. Although no assessment of the impact on tourism in Northern Ireland has been carried out, I recognise that Northern Ireland is in a uniquely difficult competitive position, being the only region within the United Kingdom with a land border with another EU state where VAT on tourism services is only 9%. The 20% VAT rate in Northern Ireland is recognised as significantly impacting on the hospitality sector's cost base, affecting the industry's ability to offer a high quality visitor experience. I am acutely aware that this impact is further emphasised in border counties, especially when customers come to make significant purchasing decisions, such as selecting venues to host events.

I welcome the recent Northern Ireland Hotel Federation (NIHF) report 'Tourism 2020' which highlighted the impact of the increased VAT rate on the tourism and hospitality sectors and I know that the local industry is working to consolidate evidence of the impact from a local perspective. I recently met with the outgoing and incoming Chairs of the NIHF, to discuss a range of industry issues, which included concerns about the current VAT rate in Northern Ireland.

Departmental Funding: DETI

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much funding her Department has provided to (i) the Consumer Council; (ii) Advice NI; (iii) the Citizens Advice Bureau; and (iv) the Utility Regulator, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27334/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The funding provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) is as follows:

	Consumer Council £k	Citizens Advice £k	Advice NI £k
2008/09	1,651	417	-
2009/10	1,605	512	424
2010/11	1,398	410	561
2009/12	1,415	385	513
2012/13	1,577	129	840

DETI does not provide any funding to the Utility Regulator.

Invest NI: Review

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there is a requirement to periodically review InvestNI, and if so, to detail when the most recent review was completed.

(AQW 27337/11-15)

Mrs Foster: A comprehensive review of Invest NI took place during 2009-10 as part of the Independent Review of Economic Policy (IREP). A further review of Invest NI performance was carried out by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and a report published in 2012. The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) between my Department and Invest NI allows for periodic reviews of Invest NI.

Consumer Council: Review

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how Mr Paul Simpson was appointed to conduct the review of the Consumer Council; (ii) how many other candidates were considered; and (iii) what skills and experience Mr Paul Simpson has that made him most suitable to conduct the review.

(AQW 27338/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) Mr Simpson was appointed under a Direct Award Contract, and in accordance with DFP's established procurement guidelines.
- (ii) No other candidates were considered.
- (iii) DETI appointed Mr Simpson, a retired senior civil servant on the basis of the breadth of his experience gained in a number of Departments in a wide range of policy, finance and governance roles, and in recognition of the skills and experience he would bring to the review in relation to the effective use of public funds, and the delivery of Ministerial and statutory objectives.

Department of the Environment

Minerals Applications

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to planning applications for minerals extraction or minerals plant and machinery, how many of the planning applications currently being processed (i) are retrospective; and (ii) require an Environmental Statement.

(AQW 26973/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The Minerals Management Unit currently has a total number of 76 planning applications. Of this total, 55 applications are for mineral extraction or mineral plant and machinery.

Of the 55 applications, 33 are retrospective and 8 applications are accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

Taxis: Regulations

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what plans there are to increase resources for the enforcement of taxi regulations.

(AQW 27046/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver and Vehicle Agency currently has two dedicated PSV enforcement teams responsible for both taxi and bus enforcement. The combined complement of these teams currently stands at 20 enforcement officers with immediate plans to increase this resource by a further 4 staff to contribute to the enforcement of taxi regulations.

Hydroelectric Schemes

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration is given to the culmination effect of hydroelectric schemes on water flows when determining an individual planning application for an additional hydroelectric scheme.

(AQW 27116/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I welcome the contribution that renewable energy applications make to the drive to reduce carbon emissions in line with international and national commitments. The Department supports such renewable energy applications unless it would generate unacceptable adverse effects, which are not outweighed by the local and wider environmental, economic and social benefits of the development.

The main policy context for the assessment of such proposals is set out in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 18 'Renewable Energy' which was published in August 2009. The aim of the PPS is to facilitate the siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment in order to achieve Northern Ireland's renewable energy targets, and to realise the benefits of renewable energy.

In the assessment of applications for hydro-electric schemes the cumulative impact of schemes are material planning considerations to be taken into account on a case by case basis in reaching a balanced decision. Where necessary, this assessment may be informed by consultation with a number of statutory and non-statutory bodies such as NIEA, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Loughs Agency.

The applicant may be required to submit environmental information in order to assess the impact of the proposal and this may include, for example, surveys on the effects of changed flow regimes and water quality. The Department expects a high level of design for any proposed hydro-electric scheme.

Hydroelectric Schemes

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what is the threshold after which a planning application for a hydroelectric scheme requires an Environmental Impact Assessment; and why the threshold is set at this level.

(AQW 27118/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department welcomes the contribution that renewable projects make to the reduction of carbon emissions and acknowledges the importance of processing these applications in a consistent and timely manner. As Minister I am fully supportive of renewable energy and believe firmly in the contribution that renewables make to the economy.

The threshold for Environmental Impact Assessment Determination is provided for under Schedules 1 and 2 of The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (NI) 2012 (as amended). In the case of hydro-electric schemes, under schedule 2 (3) (i), a determination is required if the installation is designed to produce more than 0.5 megawatts.

The thresholds used for these assessments are set out in The Planning (EIA) Regulations (NI) 2012, which has been transposed from European Legislation.

Taxis: Single-tier System

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department is committed to a single-tier taxi system.

(AQW 27170/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department is working to implement the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 including a single-tier taxi system across Northern Ireland. This will be due through subordinate legislation, which is due to come into operation in September 2014.

I remain committed to a single-tier taxi system and the benefits and safeguards it will bring for consumers.

Taxis: Drivers

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what are the proposed charges for the departmental courses for taxi drivers.

(AQW 27171/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department recently consulted on proposals concerning a taxi driver test and periodic training for taxi drivers. These proposals include the introduction of mandatory periodic training for all taxi drivers. The consultation has now closed and my Department's proposed way forward will be provided to the Assembly's Environment Committee in the coming weeks.

There is no proposal for the training to be provided by the Department. Similar training for the bus and freight industries is carried out by approved private sector training bodies. It is not possible at this time to provide precise details of any charges but the recent consultation highlighted that courses in the other vocational industries are available at £50 on average for each 7 hour module. The consultation proposed that all taxi drivers be required to undertake, on average over the length of a taxi driver's licence, one module per year.

Taxis: Drivers

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the rationale for compelling existing taxi drivers to take part in the departmental courses for taxi drivers.

(AQW 27172/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department recently consulted on proposals concerning a taxi driver test and periodic training for taxi drivers. These proposals relate to the arrangements for being granted a taxi driver's licence, and cover the necessary skills to drive a passenger-carrying vehicle safely, with a proposal included to introduce mandatory periodic training. The consultation has now closed and my Department's proposed way forward will be provided to the Assembly's Environment Committee in the coming weeks.

There is no proposal for the training to be provided by the Department.

The rationale behind the proposals to require existing taxi drivers to complete this training before the renewal of their taxi driver licence is to improve road and passenger safety, and increase service standards and professionalism within the industry which will, in addition, help to create an improved public image of the industry and make it a more attractive career option.

Mandatory periodic training would bring the taxi industry in line with other professional drivers in the bus and freight industries. It would also help to create consumer and wider road user confidence in the ability of taxi drivers, as well as improving road safety awareness for the members of the taxi industry. The proposals in the consultation as regards existing drivers were in line with those for the freight and bus industries – that existing drivers will have acquired rights as regards the test, but will be required to complete the periodic training element.

Taxis: Drivers

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the planned training schemes and sessions that his Department will facilitate for existing taxi drivers; and which of these sessions will be compulsory.

(AQW 27173/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department recently consulted on proposals concerning a taxi driver test and periodic training for taxi drivers. These proposals relate to the arrangements for being granted a taxi driver's licence, and cover the necessary skills to drive a passenger-carrying vehicle safely, with a proposal included to introduce mandatory periodic training.

The consultation has now closed and my Department's proposed way forward will be provided to the Assembly's Environment Committee in the coming weeks. As such, my Department has yet to take a final policy position on the form and content of any specific modules to be taken as part of the proposed periodic training requirements.

Taxis: Regulations

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the proposed timetable for new regulations to govern and regulate the taxi industry.

(AQW 27174/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department is progressing a suite of subordinate legislation to implement the provisions of the Taxis Act (NI) 2008. Following recommendations made by the Environment Committee in June 2013, the target operative date for all of these Regulations is September 2014.

The Regulations will build upon the existing Taxi Operator Licensing Regulations which came into operation on 1 September 2012. They will make provision for a single tier taxi system, mandatory fitment of taximeters and a statutory maximum fare tariff, the seizure of vehicles suspected of taxiing illegally, and – dependent on the outcome of consultation exercises – a new taxi driver test (with associated periodic training requirements) and new technical specifications for wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Further details of the timing of the legislative stages of each Regulation will be provided to the Environment Committee in November 2013.

Rates Convergence

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the delivery and utilisation of the proposed £30m that was announced for Rates convergence.

(AQW 27204/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Earlier this year the Executive agreed to provide councils with a reform funding package of £17.8 million over the 2013 to 2015 period, with a commitment of up to £30 million for rates convergence beyond 2015.

The £30 million will be made available for managing rate convergence as a consequence of councils merging and other boundary changes arising from implementation of the local government reform.

DFP and DOE continue to work on the design of a transitional rate relief scheme within the agreed cost envelope of £30m. The relief scheme will help manage rates convergence by protecting those ratepayers otherwise facing sudden and excessive increases as a direct consequence of councils merging or due to other boundary changes.

Expert Review Report by Chris Mills

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether the report currently being undertaken by Chris Mill will be made available to MLAs once it is complete.

(AQW 27211/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I intend to make the Mills Report available to MLAs once I have had time to consider its contents and recommendations.

I will release the report in its entirety with the only exception being any material which may impinge on any legal action currently being pursued in connection with waste issues covered by the report or any personal information that may be protected by the provisions of the Data Protection Act. If there is any such material, it will be redacted from the report.

Hydroelectric Schemes: Fish Stocks

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what assessment has been made of the overall impact of hydroelectric schemes on fish stocks.

(AQW 27212/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) an executive agency within the Department of the Environment is the competent authority responsible for implementing the Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. These regulations provide NIEA with the powers to determine licence applications and enforce compliance with licence conditions through the inspection of abstraction and impounding activities within Northern Ireland (NI).

When assessing the potential impact of a hydro power proposal either in isolation or in combination, NIEA consults widely with the government bodies responsible for protecting fish, fish habitats, and fish migration. NIEA also consults with the non governmental bodies who represent anglers and the angling clubs. Data held within NI on fish monitoring, fish passage, fishery and protected species habitat is assessed during determinations. If an activity or a combination of activities like hydro

power plants were impacting or were likely to impact adversely in the future then NIEA and other Agencies have powers to either request further mitigation or take steps to revoke the licence.

Recent research undertaken by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), Scotland & Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research (SNIFFER) and SEPA has highlighted that well designed, sized, engineered and operated hydropower schemes have only a low impact on waterways, fish habitat, entrapment and migration. A recent request made to DCAL requesting evidence of current or historical adverse impacts on fish (resulting from hydropower turbines) in Northern Ireland for the past 20 years generated a nil return.

However NIEA is responding to anglers concerns and they are active with colleagues across the UK. The Environment Agency for England is currently co-ordinating a research project on hydro power; the outcome of which aims to capture evidence on adverse or positive impacts of hydroelectric projects. The three key research areas are weir pools, fish protection screening, and the potential cumulative impact of schemes. A final report will be available during the latter part of 2014. NIEA are advisory members of this initiative.

I am aware that you have also written to the Loughs Agency and DCAL, both of whom will provide their own responses.

Water Framework Directive: Derogations

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many derogations have been sought from the Water Framework for water extraction, in each of the last three years; (ii) how many derogations have been granted; and (iii) the reasons that the derogations were necessary.

(AQW 27213/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Water Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) provides the powers to implement controls to manage water and afford protection of the water environment in order to maintain high or to maintain or restore good ecological status / potential in accordance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives.

In accordance with the terms of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has classified 575 river water bodies, and adopted the environmental standards developed by the United Kingdom technical guidance group (UKTAG), for managing water resources across the province. Water Resource Standards have been developed to support the ecological needs of defined inland surface water bodies.

Where an abstraction application breaches the UKTAG water resource standards, in terms of the length of the de-watered stretch of river (between the abstraction and return points) and therefore does not support the maintenance of, at least, good ecological status or potential, then the proposal must be assessed for a derogation test under Article 4.7 of the WFD. The UKTAG guidance on the spatial scale impacts provides NIEA with the method to determine if a derogation assessment is required

This criteria enables the Agency to determine whether the impact of the proposed abstraction would be of sufficient scale to cause deterioration to the status of the water body and therefore trigger an Article 4.7 derogation test.

The Agency has assessed two Article 4.7 derogations over the past three years, one for a proposed hydro-scheme within the Roe Valley Country Park in 2011 and a second in respect of a proposed hydro-scheme at the Gelvin River during 2012. After careful consideration by Agency officials, the Gelvin River derogation proposal was initially rejected. The applicant reconsidered his plans and a modified scheme which mitigated and removed the breach of UKTAG standards was subsequently approved.

After careful deliberation the river Roe hydro proposal was granted an Article 4.7 derogation in 2011. NIEA concluded that the adverse impact of the development was countered by high levels of mitigation, intelligent design and the positive social and economic benefits flowing from the scheme, this process was overseen by a representative from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.

Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to list the number of occasions, and the location, in which video-footage has been taken by enforcement staff in relation to a breach of regulations by private hire taxis in the Belfast area; and the subsequent outcome of the evidence gathered.

(AQW 27215/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Enforcement officers within the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) have been provided with digital cameras to assist them with the surveillance and collection of evidence during the course of an investigation. To date there have been no prosecutions against private hire taxis in the Belfast area where it was necessary to provide video footage as evidence.

All video footage which is not used as evidence to support a prosecution must be deleted in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. As such, information in relation to the frequency and location where video evidence has been recorded is not collected or stored unless the video evidence was to be used for prosecution purposes.

Councils: Chief Executives' Salaries

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment what is the process for determining the salaries of Chief Executives of the new councils; and what role his Department will have in establishing the level of salary.

(AQW 27216/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The process to determine the level of chief executive pay for the new posts will be through an independent job evaluation exercise.

All chief executive salary levels are negotiated at a national level via the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives in Northern Ireland (JNC); this is supported by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. I am advised that the current evaluation exercise is not yet complete and therefore the level of salary to be paid has not yet been determined.

My Department has no role in establishing any levels of remuneration for local government staff.

Councils: Chief Executives' Salaries

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment whether the salaries of the Chief Executives in the new councils, established under the Review of Public Administration, will be set in Bands or whether councils will be free to set their own figure.

(AQW 27218/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The process to determine the level of chief executive pay for the new posts will be through an independent job evaluation exercise.

All chief executive salary levels are negotiated at a national level via the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives in Northern Ireland (JNC); this is supported by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. I am advised that the current evaluation exercise is not yet complete and therefore the level of salary to be paid has not yet been determined.

My Department has no role in establishing any levels of remuneration for local government staff.

Councils: Chief Executives' Salaries

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment whether the salaries of the Chief Executives in the new councils will be set at a reduced rate during the shadow council period.

(AQW 27219/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The process to determine the level of chief executive pay for the new posts will be through an independent job evaluation exercise.

All chief executive salary levels are negotiated at a national level via the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives in Northern Ireland (JNC); this is supported by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. I am advised that the current evaluation exercise is not yet complete and therefore the level of salary to be paid has not yet been determined.

My Department has no role in establishing any levels of remuneration for local government staff.

Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment whether a private hire taxi can be hailed on-street, or accept non-pre-booked passengers; and if not, (i) what are the insurance implications in these circumstances; (ii) whether this is a breach of regulations; and (iii) what is the penalty.

(AQW 27263/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Current private hire taxi licences do not permit the vehicle to be used for plying for hire, only for carrying passengers for reward.

Private hire vehicle licensees who cause or permit the vehicle to ply for hire would be in contravention of the Public Service Vehicle Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1985 and the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The penalty is a £30 fixed penalty ticket, or a maximum fine of £2500 if taken to court.

Any insurance implications of private hire taxi vehicles being used to ply for hire would be a matter between the insurance company and the policy holder.

Wind Farms: Planning Applications in West Tyrone

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many applications for wind farms have been submitted in the West Tyrone area since 2010; (ii) who submitted each application; and (iii) how many of these applications have been approved.

(AQW 27287/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The following table sets out the number of wind farm applications received in the West Tyrone parliamentary constituency since 2010 and the number of those approved.

**Applications Received and Approved in West Tyrone Parliamentary Constituency
From 1st April 2009 to 31st August 2013**

	Financial year				
	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	April to August 2013
Applications received	1	6	3	3	3
Applications approved	4	5	2	1	0

The following table advises on the applicant for each application and the Agent (i.e. who submitted the application).

Planning Ref. No.	Applicant	Agent who submitted application
K/2009/0243/F	Thornog Wind Farm Ltd.	Canavan Associates Ltd.
J/2010/0174/F	Mr. William Stevenson	McCormick Design
J/2010/0168/F	SSE Renewables UK Ltd.	Turley Associates
J/2010/0481/F	Bord Gais Energy	Bord Gais Energy
K/2010/0758/F	SSE Renewables UK Ltd.	AECOM
J/2011/0082/F	DW Consultancy Ltd.	Canavan Associates Ltd.
J/2011/0128/F	Ballylaw Wind Farm Ltd.	TCI Renewables Ltd.
K/2011/0237/F	SSE Renewables UK Ltd.	SKM Enviros
J/2011/0148/F	Meenablugh Wind Farm Ltd.	Canavan Associates Ltd.
K/2011/0239/F	Altamuskin Wind Farm Ltd.	Canavan Associates Ltd.
K/2013/0102/F	Slieveard Wind Farm Ltd.	Canavan Associates Ltd.
J/2013/0080/F	SSE Renewables UK Ltd	Turley Associates
K/2013/0145/F	SSE Renewables UK Ltd	Turley Associates
K/2013/0181/F	Arc NI 3 Ltd (REI Ltd)	Turley Associates
J/2013/0112/F	Crighshane Energy Ltd.	Jennings O'Donovan
J/2013/0187/F	Seegronan Wind Farm Ltd.	Canavan Associates Ltd.

Notes:

1. Up to 31st August 2013 is currently our latest Renewable Energy information.
2. All applications received in the year may not have had a decision issued within the same time period and applications decided in the year may not have been received in the same time period. Therefore direct comparisons between the figures cannot be made. Applications received also include withdrawn applications.

NIEA

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the membership of the Board of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

(AQW 27312/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The NIEA is an executive agency within the Department of the Environment. It's Board consists of officials holding the following posts in the Department: the Chief Executive of the Agency; Director of Natural Heritage; Director of Built Environment; Director of Environmental Protection; and Director of Innovation Strategies. There is also an Independent Board Member on the Board whose term of office expires on 31 October 2013.

Biodiversity Strategy

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made on updating the draft biodiversity strategy.

(AQW 27393/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Significant progress has been made on the development of a revised strategy to take account of high level initiatives and actions which will assist in halting biodiversity loss. It is hoped to have a draft of this strategy ready for widespread consultation by late November/early December 2013 and for the final document to be published in March 2014, in line with the Programme For Government target.

Stop and Temporary Stop Notices

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 25917/11-15, to detail (i) the year each of the 16 Stop Notices and Temporary Stop Notices were served; (ii) how many of the Temporary Stop Notices were followed up with a Stop and Enforcement Notice; and (iii) the 16 cases.

(AQW 27411/11-15)

Mr Durkan: 16 Stop / Temporary Stop Notices have been served between 2003 and 2013 (please see the table below).

Of the Temporary Stop Notices, 3 required follow up Stop and Enforcement Notices.

Each of the 6 Stop Notices issued with associated Enforcement Notices.

Case	Notice	Year	Follow up
A/2012/0016/CA	Temporary Stop	2012	
A/2013/0008/CA	Temporary Stop	2013	
A/2013/0034/CA	Temporary Stop	2013	
B/2004/0017/CA	Temporary Stop	2007	Stop and Enforcement
E/2002/0016/CA	Stop	2003	N/A
E/2009/0071/CA	Stop	2012	N/A
J/2008/0081/CA	Temporary Stop	2011	
J/2012/0045/CA	Temporary Stop	2012	
K/2004/0075/CA	Temporary Stop	2007	Stop and Enforcement
K/2005/0121/CA	Temporary Stop	2007	No File
K/2010/0079/CA	Temporary Stop	2013	
K/2012/0094/CA	Temporary Stop	2012	Stop and Enforcement
M/2010/0049/CA	Stop	2010	N/A
P/2007/0056/CA	Stop	2008	N/A
P/2009/0061/CA	Stop	2013	N/A
P/2012/0034/CA	Stop	2013	N/A

10 Temporary Stop Notices, 3 of which required follow up Stop and Enforcement Notices

6 Stop Notices issued with associated Enforcement Notices.

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment why his Department has yet to answer AQW 24473/11-15, given that the information sought was originally asked under AQW 20089/11-15 on 19 February 2013; and when an answer can be expected.

(AQW 27552/11-15)

Mr Durkan: AQW 24473/11-15 was answered on 23rd October 2013.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Car Parking Spaces: Government

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of car parking spaces that have been owned by the government, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 25356/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The number of car parking spaces owned by the government, in each of the last ten years is:

Year	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
Spaces	45944	45944	45806	45871	45871	45833	48392	48303	48198	48047

Rating of Empty Homes

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the Rating of Empty Homes since October 2011. (AQW 26716/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The policy will be subject to a full policy evaluation which all policies undergo in due course. Given that it has only been operating since 2011, this will not take place for some time.

Counsel Instructed from Outside the Jurisdiction

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 22821/11-15, what fees and reasonable expenses have been paid to counsel instructed from outside the jurisdiction, in each of the last five years. (AQW 26809/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Solicitors in the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) acting on behalf of Departmental clients are required to instruct counsel who are appointed to the Northern Ireland Government Civil Panels, all of whom are called to the Northern Ireland Bar. Only where the level of knowledge and expertise required is not available from the Panels will consideration be given to instructing off-panel, and then only with the authority of the instructing Department and the approval of the Departmental Solicitor.

In litigation matters payments to counsel are directed via DSO and I have provided in the schedule attached the information requested in this regard. I would add that the accounting information held does not disaggregate between fees and reasonable expenses. It should be noted that the sums for

the last two years are not representative of a trend but rather include substantial fees in very significant cases where briefs had been sent in earlier years and the cases were charged in those two years.

However where counsel is engaged for consultation, opinion, advice, etc. not associated with litigation then payment is made directly by the instructing Department and DSO does not hold records of these payments and would not be able to produce this information except at disproportionate cost.

Schedule of payments made to counsel instructed from outside the jurisdiction (Litigation matters only):

Financial Year	Total Payments
2008-09	£65,380.10
2009-10	£67,306.99
2010-11	£65,962.74
2011-12	£291,730.65
2012-13	£417,081.06

Public Prosecution Service: Governance

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the governance arrangements between his Department and the Public Prosecution Service. (AQW 27090/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) is a public sector organisation, and as such, is not directly governed by my Department.

Public Sector Employment

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the percentage of the total number of people employed in the public sector, broken down by each Council area, (AQW 27201/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The table attached details the percentage and total number of employee jobs in the public sector, broken down by each District Council Area. The figures refer to the number of employee jobs at the 3rd September 2012.

Table 1: Northern Ireland Employee Jobs by District Council Area

District Council Area	Public Sector	% of Total
Antrim	10,501	5.0%
Ards	4,641	2.2%
Armagh	6,165	2.9%
Ballymena	6,350	3.0%

District Council Area	Public Sector	% of Total
Ballymoney	2,308	1.1%
Banbridge	2,684	1.3%
Belfast	68,344	32.3%
Carrickfergus	2,400	1.1%
Castlereagh	11,398	5.4%
Coleraine	6,188	2.9%
Cookstown	2,058	1.0%
Craigavon	11,573	5.5%
Derry	15,611	7.4%
Down	5,979	2.8%
Dungannon	3,992	1.9%
Fermanagh	5,808	2.7%
Larne	1,893	0.9%
Limavady	2,435	1.1%
Lisburn	8,577	4.0%
Magherafelt	3,636	1.7%
Moyle	1,023	0.5%
Newry & Mourne	8,296	3.9%
Newtownabbey	6,088	2.9%
North Down	5,284	2.5%
Omagh	6,316	3.0%
Strabane	2,252	1.1%
Total	211,800	100%

Source: NI Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), September 2012.

Banks

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail any discussions he has had with the local banks, particularly Ulster Bank in relation to assisting with the banking needs of their customers, particularly business customers.

(AQW 27202/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I met with Ulster Bank in August to discuss a broad range of local banking issues including the demand for and the bank's approach in providing business lending.

Legal Costs: DFP

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total cost of all legal cases the Department has been involved in since 2007.

(AQW 27226/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The total cost of all legal cases incurred by my Department since 2007 is provided in the following table.

Financial Year	Total Cost £'000
2007/08	748
2008/09	314
2009/10	507
2010/11	255

Financial Year	Total Cost £'000
2011/12	910
2012/13	250
Total	2,984

Emigration Figures

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total number of people who have emigrated, broken down by year, between and including 1980 and 1986.

(AQW 27231/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The table below contains estimates of out-migration from Northern Ireland to Great Britain and countries outside the UK for each year in the period mid-1981 to mid1986. Estimates of out-migration are not available prior to mid1981.

Period	Total out migration
Mid-1981 to Mid-1982	18,740
Mid-1982 to Mid-1983	18,940
Mid-1983 to Mid-1984	19,007
Mid-1984 to Mid-1985	19,002
Mid-1985 to Mid-1986	19,112

Emigration Figures

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total number of people who have emigrated in the last 5 years.

(AQW 27232/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The table below contains estimates of out-migration from Northern Ireland to Great Britain and countries outside the UK for each year in the period mid-2007 to mid2012.

Period	Total out migration
Mid-2007 to Mid-2008	22,688
Mid-2008 to Mid-2009	21,604
Mid-2009 to Mid-2010	23,394
Mid-2010 to Mid-2011	25,218
Mid-2011 to Mid-2012	24,570

Port of Belfast

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether any of his officials were approached during previous administrations by HM Treasury in relation to the sale of the Port of Belfast.

(AQW 27314/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: DFP officials were contacted by HM Treasury officials around May 1998 when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, announced an Investment fund for Northern Ireland which was, in part, predicated on proceeds from the sale of the Port of Belfast.

Special EU Programmes Body: Recruitment Embargo

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to (i) outline the reasons for the recruitment embargo at the Special EU Programmes Body; and (ii) for his assessment of the impact of this embargo on delivering new programmes.

(AQW 27388/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There is no recruitment embargo at the Special EU Programmes Body.

Public Consultations: DFP

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail how many public consultations his Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27414/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Details in relation to consultations undertaken by my Department in each calendar year since 2007 are provided in the table at Annex A.

Annex A

Year	Title of Public Consultation	Number of Responses
2007	Executive Review of Rating	114
	Budget 2007	9500
2008	Lone Pensioner Allowance	10
	Reduction of Max Cap	151
	Rating of Empty Homes	46
	Rates Deferment	27
	Data Sharing	19
	Green Rebates	34
	The Building (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2010	57
	Electronic Land Registration	9
	Missing Persons – A Consultation on the draft Presumption of Death Bill (Northern Ireland) 2008	7
Pleural Plaques	94	
2009	Decapitalisation Rate for Specialised Properties	6
	Microgeneration	2
	Dormant Accounts Scheme Consultation on Spending Priorities for NI	128
	Review of 2010-11 Spending Plans	18
	'Improving Payment Practices in the Construction Industry in Northern Ireland: April 2009'.	7
	Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service	11
	Analysis of Sickness Absence in the NI Departments and Personnel Statistics for the 11 NI Departments	5
	Statistics on Employment in the NICS	7
	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2009 Consultation	132
2010	Draft Budget 2011-15, Spending and Savings Proposals within DFP	35
	Landlord Allowance	24
	Budget 2010	7030
	The Building (Amendment No.2) Regulations (NI) 2010	30
	The Building Regulations (NI) 2011 Phase 1 Consultation Process	46
	Draft Damages (Asbestos-related Conditions) Bill (Northern Ireland) (2010)	12

Year	Title of Public Consultation	Number of Responses
2011	Rating of Commercial Premises	70
	The Road Traffic (Financial Penalty Deposit) (Interest) Order (Northern Ireland)	4
	The Building Regulations (NI) 2011 Phase 2 Consultation Process	43
	Pay Statistics for the NICS	6
	Cessation of the Northern Ireland Abstract of Statistics Online	18
	Consultation on draft statutory guidance on forced marriage	3
2012	Consultation on Increased Member Contributions 2012-2013	94
	Reflections on future European Funding Priorities	12
	Dormant Accounts Proposed Appointment of the Ulster Community Investment Trust	8
	Consultation on proposals to amend the Scheme for Construction Contracts in Northern Ireland Regulations 1999	6
	The Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013	40
	The Building (Prescribed Fees)(Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013	28
	Call for evidence on the Common European Sales Law	43
	Consultation on the law of damages	9
2013	Northern Ireland Executive Welfare Reform: Rate Rebate Replacement Arrangements Preliminary Consultation Paper, January 2013	20
	Consultation on Increased Member Contributions 2013-2014	147
	Consultation on Proposals to Reform Public Service Pensions from April 2015	46
	Building Regulations: Amendment to Technical Booklet B	19
	Landlord Allowance	16
	Rate Rebate Replacement Arrangements Consultation Paper, July 2013	Ongoing
	Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland)	Ongoing
	Decapitalisation Rate for Specialised Properties	Ongoing

Civil Servants: Sickness Absence

Mr Milne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of civil servants currently on sickness absence for work related stress, broken down by Department.

(AQW 27498/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The attached table details the number of staff, in each Department, recorded as being absent due to work related stress on the 30th September 2013.

	Number of staff
DARD	8
DCAL	2
DE	7
DEL	10
DETI	0
DFP	14
DHSSPS	2
DOE	14

	Number of staff
DOJ	35
DRD	1
DSD	23
OFMDFM	1
PPS	1
NICS Overall	118

Civil Service Pensions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether staff and trade unions will be properly consulted on the Civil Service Pensions Future Delivery Scheme.

(AQW 27547/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Yes.

Capital Awards

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the breakdown of capital awards, as announced in his statement on 21 October 2013.

(AQW 27627/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Statement to the Assembly on 21 October 2013 announced some £177 million of capital allocations for 2014-15. While I highlighted only a few of the major allocations at that time, the detail of all departmental allocations were included in a table accompanying my Statement.

This table is now published with my Statement on the DFP website and can be accessed using the following link:

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/statement-on-2013-14-october-monitoring>

Capital Allocations

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in respect of each Department, to detail the success rate in attaining capital allocations, broken down as a percentage of their total bid.

(AQW 27628/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Statement to the Assembly on 21 October 2013 announced the Executive's capital allocations relating to both October monitoring and the Capital reallocation exercise for 2014-15. The tables attached show, for each department, total capital bids submitted; allocations made; and the percentage these capital allocations represent as a proportion of total bids.

Table: 2013-14 Percentage of Departmental Capital Bids Met

DEPARTMENT	Bids Submitted £ million	Allocations Made £ million	%
DARD	0.6	0.0	0.0%
DCAL	1.0	1.0	100.0%
DETI	0.7	0.0	0.0%
DFP	1.8	1.8	100.0%
DOE	1.8	1.1	60.0%
DRD	56.7	26.2	46.2%
DSD	10.0	5.0	50.0%
PPS	0.1	0.1	100.0%
Totals	72.7	35.2	48.4%

Table: 2014-15 Percentage of Departmental Capital Bids Met

DEPARTMENT	Bids Submitted £ million	Allocations Made £ million	%
AOCC	0.0	0.0	100.0%
DARD	37.2	19.9	53.4%
DCAL	28.2	16.1	57.1%
DEL	20.6	11.8	57.4%
DFP	3.3	3.3	100.0%
DHSSPS	89.1	33.0	37.0%
DOE	18.2	3.0	16.5%
DOJ	56.0	2.3	4.1%
DRD	242.0	75.2	31.1%
DSD	3.0	0.0	0.0%
NIA	4.7	4.3	91.8%
PPS	0.2	0.2	100.0%
Totals	502.6	169.0	33.6%

*these figures may not add up due to roundings

Departmental Expenditure Limit: Capital

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide a breakdown of the £23.9 million of capital departmental expenditure limit pressure in 2014/15, following the non-disposal of anticipated income-generating assets, indicating the contribution to the figure of the maintenance cost of these assets; and the likely impact of non-disposal into future years. (AQW 27629/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The £23.9 million capital receipts shortfall does not include maintenance costs, only the anticipated disposal values associated with the relevant revenue generating assets. Although there will be some costs associated with retaining these assets, such as depreciation and maintenance, the level of resource revenue is anticipated to be around £2.3 million per annum.

Departmental Expenditure Limit: Resource

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the challenge of addressing Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) over-commitment of £94.5m in 2014/15 will be compounded by the anticipated decrease in Resource DEL over coming years. (AQW 27676/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The anticipated Resource DEL reductions in the period beyond 2015-16 will not add to the challenge of addressing the £94.5 million overcommitment, which is purely an in-year budget management issue. Indeed, the anticipated decrease in Resource DEL beyond 2015-16 may act as a catalyst to encourage departments to begin reforming existing budgets now to prepare for possible reductions in the future.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mater Hospital: Samples

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many samples were dealt with by the on-site lab at the Mater Hospital in each month of the last three years; (ii) how many samples have had to be couriered each month from the Mater Hospital to the Royal Victoria Hospital, as a result of the lab in the Mater Hospital being closed from 4pm to 9am, since the change in April 2013; and (iii) what is the cost of couriering these samples between the hospitals. (AQW 27048/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):

- (i) The number of samples dealt with by the on-site lab at the Mater Hospital in each month of the last three years is shown in Table 1 overleaf.

The out of hours arrangements for dealing with samples operate from the hours of 4pm to 8:

- (ii) 30am. The number of samples couriered each month from the Mater hospital to the Royal Victoria Hospital, as a result of the lab in the Mater Hospital being closed between these hours, since the change in April 2013, are shown in Table 2 overleaf.
- (iii) Belfast Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust has advised that the cost of couriering these samples between the hospitals, to the end of September 2013, is approximately £304,000.

Table 1: Number of samples that were dealt with by the on-site lab at the Mater Hospital

	2010/11											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of samples	14,292	15,244	15,333	15,253	13,971	14,822	15,306	15,312	13,589	14,275	14,106	16,916

	2011/12											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of samples	15,252	17,572	17,980	15,676	15,809	16,135	15,848	15,501	15,559	17,573	17,208	17,821

	2012/13											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of samples	16,242	17,959	16,045	16,016	16,991	16,577	18,333	17,970	16,375	18,635	14,096	14,299

	2013/14					
	April	May	June	July	August	September
Number of samples	14,054	14,957	15,364	16,964	16,335	16,657

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Table 2: Number of samples couriered from the Mater Hospital to the Royal Victoria Hospital, April – September 2013

	2013/14					
	April	May	June	July	August	September
Number of samples couriered	2,495	2,490	2,268	2,389	2,410	2,728

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Mater Hospital: X-ray Service

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to outline the process by which the X-ray service at the Mater Hospital is managed and processed by a private company in England; (ii) what assessment has been carried out on the effectiveness of this system; and (iii) what action is being taken to recruit qualified local staff to ensure the service can be provided and maintained in the Mater.

(AQW 27049/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The X-ray department within the Mater Hospital is managed by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. In November 2012 the Trust entered into a contract with a private company, Medica Group, to report on a small proportion of Computed Tomography (CT) images as a result of vacancies in consultant radiologist posts within the Trust. The CT scans continue to be undertaken by Trust staff, with the scanned images being accessed remotely by Medica and reporting on by radiologists.
- (ii) The Trust monitors the service provided by Medica against agreed quality and performance indicators including response times between completion of scan and availability of the report back into the Trust. There are also regular review meetings between Medica and the Trust to discuss performance.
- (iii) There are two consultant radiologist posts currently being advertised. Closing date for applications is 29 October 2013.

Mater Hospital: MRI Scanner Service

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many scans have been carried out on the MRI scanner at the Mater Hospital in each month of the last three years; (ii) how many of these scans have been carried out under (a) the Health Service; and (b) the private system; (iii) to outline the process by which the allocation of slots of the MRI scanner are decided upon; and (iv) whether the Mater is able to avail of slots for this service as a priority.

(AQW 27050/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) & (ii) The MRI Scanner in the Mater hospital is owned by the Belfast Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust, but operated under contract by Alliance Medical. This contract allows Alliance Medical to undertake private patient scans but I cannot report on the number of private scans carried out by Alliance Medical, as I have been advised by the Belfast HSC Trust that this information is commercial in confidence.

The number of scans carried out on the MRI scanner at the Mater hospital, under the Health Service, in each month of the last three years, is shown in the table overleaf.

- (iii) The Mater hospital radiology department has three half day lists per week, during which they schedule their patients. Appointment dates and times for the MRI scanner are allocated, by a consultant radiologist, according to degree of clinical urgency.

- (iv) Should an urgent or emergency scan be required on patients outside these periods, the hospital is able to access the scanner. The contract allows Alliance to undertake private patient scans at all other times.

Number of scans carried out on the MRI scanner at the Mater hospital, under the Health Service

	2010/11											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of scans carried out	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	437	577	609	596

	2011/12											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of scans carried out	536	451	466	392	418	408	345	409	364	480	477	457

	2012/13											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of scans carried out	496	494	432	516	480	488	529	503	360	514	520	449

	2013/14					
	April	May	June	July	August	September
Number of scans carried out	448	570	510	476	491	411

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

N/A Data not available

Paediatric Psychologists

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of paediatric psychologists in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 27095/11-15)

Mr Poots: The numbers of paediatric psychologists in each HSC Trust are shown in the table below. Trusts have given figures for staff providing their Paediatric Psychology service, please note that this does not include psychologists who work in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services as this is a separate service.

HSC Trust	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	15	11.3
Northern	2	0.7
South Eastern	9	7.4
Southern	3	0.4
Western	3	2.0

Source: HSC Trusts

Notes

- 1) The Belfast Trust Paediatric Psychology Service is at the Regional Children's Hospital. As such, a significant proportion of their paediatric psychology service is dedicated to providing psychological support and intervention for the regional paediatric specialty services based at the hospital, whose patients come from across Northern Ireland.

Domiciliary Care

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what proportion of domiciliary care devices in each Health and Social Care Trust are provided by the (i) Health Service; and (ii) independent sector.

(AQW 27109/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is assumed that the question refers to domiciliary care services. Information on which is published on the DHSSPS website and can be found in Table 1 of the Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland publication at the web address below.

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/statistics_and_research-cib-pub/adult_statistics/statistics_and_research-dom_care_services.htm

Day Care Provision: Rathmoyle

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will set a date by which suitable alternative day care provision will be put in place on the Rathmoyle site.

(AQW 27139/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern HSC Trust advise it is unable to provide a date at present.

The Trust is currently exploring all options for suitable alternative day care provision. It has initiated a process of consultation with service users, their families and carers and other stakeholders about the re-provision of day services.

The Trust is committed to ongoing consultation and engagement with those affected to ensure smooth transition from the existing site to future day support.

Inpatients Registered with a GP

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many in-patients in each Health and Social Care Trust, who have been in hospital for longer than two years, are registered with a GP; and what is the cost per patient to the Health Service.

(AQW 27175/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Information on the number of inpatients in each Health and Social Care Trust (HSC), who have been in hospital for more than two years and are registered with a GP is detailed below in Table 1:

Table 1: Number of Inpatients Who Had Been in Hospital Continuously for More Than 2 Years at 30th September 2013, by Programme of Care (POC) Admitted Under

HSC Trust	Programme of Care Admitted Under				Total Number of Patients in Hospital More Than 2 Years	No. Registered with GP
	Acute*	Elderly Services	Mental Health	Learning Disability		
Belfast	3	0	57	133	193	107
Northern	1	0	25	31	57	28

HSC Trust	Programme of Care Admitted Under				Total Number of Patients in Hospital More Than 2 Years	No. Registered with GP
	Acute*	Elderly Services	Mental Health	Learning Disability		
South Eastern	15	0	24	0	39	33
Southern	0	3	11	2	16	14
Western	3	15	22	5	45	26
Northern Ireland	22	18	139	171	350	208

* Patients admitted for Neuro-disability / Brain Injury have been included with the Acute POC

As at 30th September 2013, almost 9 in 10 (310, 88.6%) patients in hospital for more than two years had been admitted under the mental health or learning disability POC.

Almost six in ten (208, 59.4%) of those patients in hospital for more than two years are registered with a GP.

- (ii) Information on the cost per patient to the Health Service, for patients who have been in hospital for more than two years, is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Patients who are not Entitled to Free Health Care

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what financial incentive exists to encourage hospitals to recoup the costs incurred by treating patients who are not entitled to free health care.

(AQW 27176/11-15)

Mr Poots: The financial incentive to recover costs associated with treating patients not entitled to NHS care is that recouped funds offset the cost of treatment and ensures that this treatment is neither subsidised or met by funds intended for NHS for patients.

Anti-fraud Unit: DHSSPS

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has an anti-fraud unit; and if so, to detail its (i) annual budget; (ii) staff compliment; and (iii) successes to date.

(AQW 27181/11-15)

Mr Poots: The provision of Counter Fraud and Probity Services ('CFPS') for HSC organisations is undertaken by the Business Services Organisation. The CFPS Unit within BSO has a staff compliment of 27 (which includes 5 specialist fraud investigators) and an annual budget of £1.2m.

Examples of key successes in 2012-13 include

- £200k recovered by Probity Services from errors in claims for payment submitted by FPS practitioners;
- £40k was recovered from patient exemption checks for ophthalmic and dental charges;
- £40k recovered from a major Counter Fraud Service ophthalmic investigation;
- The removal of 108 people from GP registration lists, based on investigations which showed they were not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland and therefore not entitled to register for free access our health and social care services.
- 33 foreign nationals were removed from the GP registration list as they were not legally in the country. Some of these would have produced false documents.

Examples of successful prosecutions include:

- The investigation of cases of bursaries claimed by student nurses. A nurse was found guilty of falsifying exam grades on her bursary application. She was given a conditional discharge active for 2 years. In a separate case, a student nurse was given a discretionary disposal by the police on the understanding that she repaid the £1048 to which she was not entitled.
- The case of a care worker who falsely claimed for mileage that he was not entitled to was investigated. The care worker has had his employment terminated and his registration removed by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council;
- A person who altered a dental prescription to obtain a prescribed medication was investigated. The person was given a 5 month prison sentence.
- A person was investigated and found to be obtaining regular medication in the name of another family member. The person was found guilty in court and sentenced to one year's probation.

Mater Hospital: Maternity Service

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what advice is given by GPs to promote the Maternity Service at the Mater Hospital, Belfast and ensure the long term future of maternity provision at the Mater Hospital. (AQW 27185/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is committed to building on the tradition of the Mater Hospital and to continue to provide a safe maternity service for the whole of Belfast.

GPs have been advised to continue to refer women for booking to the Belfast Trust in keeping with their current practice. Appointments are issued centrally and choice discussed, on the basis of risk assessment, with the woman at her booking appointment. Antenatal services continue to be delivered within the Mater Hospital's Outpatients Department.

GPs provide advice to patients on the range of options available for the care of their particular condition so that they can make an informed choice. Patient choice is key in the decision making process rather than the promotion of any individual service or hospital.

Mater Hospital: Maternity Service

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there is a business case for the management and delivery of the maternity service to be taken inside the Mater and be part of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's delivery in-house. (AQW 27186/11-15)

Mr Poots: Maternity services in the Mater Hospital, both midwife led unit and obstetric antenatal care, are already integrated with the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service as part of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's maternity services; therefore, there is no requirement for a business case.

There are no plans to diminish or relocate any of the maternity services currently available at the Mater Hospital.

Mater Hospital: MRI Scanner Service

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there is a business case in place for the Mater to assume the management and delivery of the MRI scanner service and for its functioning to be part of its in-house service within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 27187/11-15)

Mr Poots: Currently there is no business case for the Mater to assume management and delivery of the MRI scanner service.

The MRI scanner in the Mater Hospital is owned by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and operated under contract by an independent provider. Management of the scanner, including the radiographic and administrative staff, is the responsibility of the independent provider.

Community Pharmacies: Emergency Prescriptions

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's guidelines to community pharmacies on charging for emergency prescriptions. (AQW 27193/11-15)

Mr Poots: The legal requirement relating to the supply of a prescription only medicine in an emergency are clearly described in regulations 224 and 225 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/1916); the relevant previous legislation is Article 8 of the Prescriptions Only Medicines (Human Use) Order 1997 (S.I. 1997/1830).

My Department issued guidelines to community pharmacists regarding the emergency supply of prescription only medicines at the request of the patient in 2009, 2011 and 2012. Links to the guidelines are attached: -

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/letter_from_mike_mawhinney_to_pharmacists__emergency_supply_poms_loans_.pdf

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dispensing_with_no_script.pdf (joint letter with HSCB)

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/letter_-_pharmacists__emergency____supplies_of_prescription_only_medicines.pdf

With reference to charging for an emergency supply of a medicine, a medical practitioner may contact a pharmacist and ask them to provide a patient with specific medicines with an undertaking given by the practitioner that a prescription will be provided to the pharmacist within 72 hours. In this case, no charge is payable by the patient.

The legislation also permits a pharmacist to make an emergency supply of a medicine on the request of a patient, provided certain conditions are met. The supply of medicines by a pharmacist in this case is a private transaction not funded by the Health Service and so the pharmacist may make a charge for medicines supplied.

Personality Disorder Service

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current waiting time for people to avail of the Personality Disorder Service in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 27224/11-15)

Mr Poots: Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust.

The Western HSC Trust stated that Personality Disorder Services are currently being developed within the Trust. Individuals with a diagnosis of personality disorder are seen and assessed throughout the service and prioritised based on need. There is also a Personality Disorder Group which facilitates group therapy. If a service user is deemed suitable for 1:1 work, the longest wait for intervention is 20 weeks.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the Northern Health and Social Care Trust will spend on converting Bretten Hall into accommodation for the Trust Management Team at Antrim Hospital.

(AQW 27244/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these questions together as they are inter-related.

I can confirm that I have recently met with Trust officials and they have updated me on their plans to identify suitable accommodation to house their Senior Management Team on the Antrim Hospital site. As part of the Trust's Improvement Plan, it was felt imperative that all of the Trust's Senior Management Team should be as close as possible to the clinical teams and Bretten Hall was identified as the best location.

The need to minimise any capital costs as part of the proposed move was discussed.

The Trust has been working closely with the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and has offered alternative accommodation to enable some BSO staff, currently located in Bretten Hall, to relocate to other Trust property. The Trust and BSO are working to determine the extent of reconfiguration required whilst keeping costs to a minimum.

Officials from my Department are working with the Trust to determine the costs of converting a section of Bretten Hall into suitable accommodation for the Trust's Senior Management Team when some of the BSO staff are relocated to other Trust accommodation. There are no plans to change any other accommodation in Bretten Hall. Costs of converting other accommodation for BSO staff are currently being assessed.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust on avoiding capital expenditure so that a turnaround team can be housed at Antrim Hospital.

(AQW 27246/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these questions together as they are inter-related.

I can confirm that I have recently met with Trust officials and they have updated me on their plans to identify suitable accommodation to house their Senior Management Team on the Antrim Hospital site. As part of the Trust's Improvement Plan, it was felt imperative that all of the Trust's Senior Management Team should be as close as possible to the clinical teams and Bretten Hall was identified as the best location.

The need to minimise any capital costs as part of the proposed move was discussed.

The Trust has been working closely with the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and has offered alternative accommodation to enable some BSO staff, currently located in Bretten Hall, to relocate to other Trust property. The Trust and BSO are working to determine the extent of reconfiguration required whilst keeping costs to a minimum.

Officials from my Department are working with the Trust to determine the costs of converting a section of Bretten Hall into suitable accommodation for the Trust's Senior Management Team when some of the BSO staff are relocated to other Trust accommodation. There are no plans to change any other accommodation in Bretten Hall. Costs of converting other accommodation for BSO staff are currently being assessed.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he was informed by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust that it was not possible to house a turnaround team for Antrim Hospital at Bush House.

(AQW 27248/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these questions together as they are inter-related.

I can confirm that I have recently met with Trust officials and they have updated me on their plans to identify suitable accommodation to house their Senior Management Team on the Antrim Hospital site. As part of the Trust's Improvement Plan, it was felt imperative that all of the Trust's Senior Management Team should be as close as possible to the clinical teams and Bretten Hall was identified as the best location.

The need to minimise any capital costs as part of the proposed move was discussed.

The Trust has been working closely with the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and has offered alternative accommodation to enable some BSO staff, currently located in Bretten Hall, to relocate to other Trust property. The Trust and BSO are working to determine the extent of reconfiguration required whilst keeping costs to a minimum.

Officials from my Department are working with the Trust to determine the costs of converting a section of Bretten Hall into suitable accommodation for the Trust's Senior Management Team when some of the BSO staff are relocated to other Trust accommodation. There are no plans to change any other accommodation in Bretten Hall. Costs of converting other accommodation for BSO staff are currently being assessed.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline any additional capital expenditure by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust at Antrim Hospital, in order to house senior managers.

(AQW 27249/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these questions together as they are inter-related.

I can confirm that I have recently met with Trust officials and they have updated me on their plans to identify suitable accommodation to house their Senior Management Team on the Antrim Hospital site. As part of the Trust's Improvement Plan, it was felt imperative that all of the Trust's Senior Management Team should be as close as possible to the clinical teams and Bretten Hall was identified as the best location.

The need to minimise any capital costs as part of the proposed move was discussed.

The Trust has been working closely with the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and has offered alternative accommodation to enable some BSO staff, currently located in Bretten Hall, to relocate to other Trust property. The Trust and BSO are working to determine the extent of reconfiguration required whilst keeping costs to a minimum.

Officials from my Department are working with the Trust to determine the costs of converting a section of Bretten Hall into suitable accommodation for the Trust's Senior Management Team when some of the BSO staff are relocated to other Trust accommodation. There are no plans to change any other accommodation in Bretten Hall. Costs of converting other accommodation for BSO staff are currently being assessed.

Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a)

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to supply contracts awarded where Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a) apply, to detail the maximum rate at which a price increase can be requested and granted.

(AQW 27265/11-15)

Mr Poots: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a) are developed specifically for each individual procurement exercise and the nature of the goods or services being procured are considered during the development of the Special Conditions of Contract for all contracts awarded above £30,000. Unless stated within those Special Terms and Conditions of Contract, there is no maximum rate at which a price increase can be requested or granted.

However, any contractor seeking a price increase must take cognisance of the conditions of the contract relating to price and price amendment that they have accepted (contained within SS17a). There is a duty on HSC organisations to ensure value for money both in the award of any contract and throughout the life of that contract. In that context, the contractor must provide detailed justification for any increase being sought and such justification does not automatically guarantee acceptance of any increase sought.

Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a)

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to supply contracts awarded where Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a) apply, to detail the (i) minimum; and (ii) maximum periods that must elapse following the award of a supply contract before a supplier may request a price increase.

(AQW 27266/11-15)

Mr Poots: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a) are developed specifically for each individual procurement exercise and the nature of the goods or services being procured are considered during the development of the Special Conditions of Contract. It is therefore not possible to detail the minimum and maximum periods that must elapse following the award of a supply contract before a supplier may request a price increase.

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding his Department provided for the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27269/11-15)

Mr Poots: The total funding provided by my Department to the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in each of the last five years is set out below:

	Financial year	2011/12 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2009/10 £'000	2008/09 £'000
Revenue	6,515	5,968	6,311	6,087	5,523
Capital	137	45	26	50	50
Total	6,652	6,013	6,337	6,137	5,573

Clinical Trials

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the economic value of clinical medical trials; (ii) what estimation has been made of the potential economic value; (iii) the barriers to increasing the number of clinical medical trials that take place; and (iv) how he is increasing the number of clinical trials carried out locally.

(AQW 27295/11-15)

Mr Poots: Clinical trials bring benefits for people's health and healthcare, for the economy and for advances in biomedical sciences and associated industries.

- (i) The global pharmaceuticals industry invests some £4.5 billion in the UK annually on capital, salaries and other costs for Research & Development (R&D) of which a sizeable portion is on clinical trials.
- (ii) Infrastructure for clinical trials has been developed across Northern Ireland's health and social care sector to be compatible with the rest of the UK, albeit lesser in scale. In addition to inward investment by industry, new funding opportunities include the EU R&D budget, Horizon 2020, that will commence in 2014 and will prioritize clinical trials supported by pre-existing clinical infrastructure.
- (iii) Current barriers include competition from countries eg in Asia and Eastern Europe where safety standards and data quality regulation are less rigorous. However recent trends show pharmaceutical companies withdrawing from such locations as they value more highly the quality of results achievable from trials in Western Europe. Direct competitors of NI include Scotland that has invested heavily (£50M from Scottish Enterprise over the 5 years to 2012 + significant investment from its Health Department) to establish itself as a destination of choice for globally-mobile Life Sciences investment.
- (iv) My Department's investment in NI clinical trials infrastructure is via the Health & Social Care R&D (HSC R&D) Fund, managed through the Public Health Agency. Clinical Research Networks (ie research nurses, and support services such as pharmacy, radiography etc) have been developed for 12 major diseases across all Trusts and primary care. Some 5,000 patients annually participate in clinical trials locally, often avoiding the previous need to travel to GB. A Public Health Research Network is also in place. Projected HSC R&D investment from 2013 to 2017 is almost £19M. My Department will work closely with DETI to develop a new NI Life and Health Sciences Strategy in which opportunities to benefit from clinical trials will be a central feature.

Greenmount Agricultural College

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Greenmount Agricultural College, Antrim, to detail (i) how much has been spent by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust on the purchase of the College; and (ii) how the Northern Health and Social Care Trust intends to utilise the site.

(AQW 27304/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Trust has no plans to purchase Greenmount Agricultural College.

Supply Contract SS16A

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 24003/11-15, what further changes will be required to supply contract SS16A as a result of this amending Regulation.

(AQW 27321/11-15)

Mr Poots: BSO PaLS' supply contract SS16A was amended in May 2013 to take account of the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2013.

BSO is currently seeking legal advice as to the impact of the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (No.2) Regulations 2013 upon the Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract (SS16A) and where a change is required, an amendment will be made.

Late Payment of Commercial Debts (No. 2) Regulations 2013

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the significance of UK Statutory Instrument 2013 No 908, which came into force on 14 May 2013, and issued under the title The Late Payment of Commercial Debts (No.2) Regulations 2013; and (ii) when his Department first became aware of this amending Regulation.

(AQW 27322/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) UK Statutory Instrument 2013 No. 908 amends the provision governing the late payment of commercial debt by removing the provision which could have given debtors a further 30 days payment period after an acceptance and verification procedure has been completed.
- (ii) My Department first became aware of this amending Regulation on 3 September 2013 when an amended version of Dear Accounting Officer Letter DAO (DFP) 04/13 was received from the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Asthma Standards

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to ensure that Asthma Standards, as outlined in the Service Framework for Respiratory Health and Wellbeing, are updated and fully implemented.

(AQW 27330/11-15)

Mr Poots: Service Frameworks are fundamentally reviewed following three years in existence to determine whether any of the standards or associated performance indicators should be updated, amended or replaced.

The review of the Service Framework for Respiratory Health and Wellbeing is currently taking place and the asthma standards will be considered during this exercise.

Following the review a revised Service Framework will be issued. It is the role of the Health and Social Care Board, working in partnership with the Public Health Agency, to ensure that the Service Framework is implemented.

Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to retain and further develop the Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh.

(AQW 27339/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) recently launched its consultation on Inpatient Based Addiction Treatment Services, which outlines proposals for a re-configuration of all the Tier 4 addiction services currently delivered by the Health & Social Care Trusts, including the Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh. The Consultation highlights that the present service configuration is characterised by variation in structure, role and function. It therefore sets out proposals for a more standardised, and evidence-based, regional model.

This consultation, which is available at: http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/consult/Consultation-Tier_4_Addiction_Services/index.html#P-1_0, closes on 10 January 2014. No decisions have been made about the future of any addiction services across Northern Ireland. I would therefore like to encourage as many people as possible to feed into the consultation process. The HSCB will take all comments and views into consideration before finalising proposals.

Legal Highs

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's response to the sale of 'legal highs', including those sold over the counter as potpourri in some local shops.

(AQW 27340/11-15)

Mr Poots: Substances referred to as "legal highs" have a psychoactive effect but are not currently covered by the UK-wide Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. However, the term "legal high" is misleading and we refer to them as "New Psychoactive Substances".

The enforcement of the Misuse of Drugs Act in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the PSNI. If PSNI suspect that sales may be in breach of Misuse of Drugs legislation, then the responsibility lies with them to undertake further investigations as appropriate.

With regards to my Department's power to take direct action to combat the sale of these substances, the Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG) has a statutory interest in the sale of such products only where the sale may breach the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMRs). MRG has carried out, and continues to carry out, test purchases and in the past this has led to cases where successful prosecutions have been taken under the HMRs.

MRG continues to monitor the situation from a HMRs perspective and does conduct unannounced inspection visits to High Street retail outlets throughout Northern Ireland, removing or test purchasing suspect products for forensic analysis if appropriate.

Previously, this Department raised concerns about these new substances directly with the Home Office and the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) – proposing a new classification be added to the Misuse of Drugs Act to allow these types of substances, following consideration by ACMD, to be temporarily banned for up to 12 months while they are fully researched. This was taken forward by the Home Office and temporary banning powers have been placed in legislation. Those caught committing a temporary class drug offence will face criminal sanctions of up to 14 years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

I have also recently written to the Home Secretary setting out my concerns about the accessibility of New Psychoactive Substances and seeking a more robust and consistent approach to addressing this issue across the UK. While closing down shops that sell these substances will not completely solve the problem, I believe it would help to send a clear message about how seriously we are taking this issue, and how dangerous many of these substances can be.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Headquarters Relocation

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are plans to relocate the Headquarters of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to Bretton Hall in Antrim Area Hospital, and if so, to detail the cost of the move and for his assessment of whether this is justifiable and value for money considering the additional staff costs that would be incurred under the Agenda for Change Agreement.

(AQW 27345/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Trust is considering plans to accommodate their Senior Management Team at Bretten Hall.

As the proposed move would require staff from the Business Services Organisation who are currently located there to move elsewhere, work is currently in hand to cost the work involved.

An appropriate business case will be completed which will address the need for and value for money of the proposal. This will take into account all of the relevant costs to be incurred, including any implications of Agenda for Change.

Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the future of the Addiction Treatment Unit at Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital, Omagh.

(AQW 27346/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) recently launched its consultation on Inpatient Based Addiction Treatment Services, which outlines proposals for a re-configuration of all the Tier 4 addiction services currently delivered by the Health & Social Care Trusts, including the Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh. The Consultation highlights that the present service configuration is characterised by variation in structure, role and function. It therefore sets out proposals for a more standardised, and evidence-based, regional model.

This consultation, which is available at: http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/consult/Consultation-Tier_4_Addiction_Services/index.html#P-1_0, closes on 10 January 2014. No decisions have been made about the future of any addiction services across Northern Ireland. I would therefore like to encourage as many people as possible to feed into the consultation process. The HSCB will take all comments and views into consideration before finalising proposals.

Belfast City Hospital: Security Staff

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he is aware of the concerns of security staff working at Belfast City Hospital in relation to proposed changes to shift patterns, and if so, for his assessment of the concerns.

(AQW 27347/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware of on-going dialogue between the Belfast HSC Trust Management Side and Trade Unions to address the concerns of a specific group of staff in relation to proposed changes to shift patterns.

I am assured that the Trust is committed to limiting the impact of any changes on individuals and teams and as a consequence has temporarily suspended the implementation of the proposed shift changes until an agreed way forward can be found that satisfies the needs of all stakeholders.

South West Acute Hospital: Parking

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the parking tariffs for (i) staff; and (ii) visitors at the South West Hospital, Enniskillen.

(AQW 27391/11-15)

Mr Poots: Of the 788 car parking spaces available at the South West Acute Hospital in Enniskillen, all but 49 adjacent to the Emergency Department are free. For the 49 spaces, the tariffs for staff and visitor car parking are as follows:

Up to 1 hour	0.70p
Up to 2 hours	£1.40
Up to 3 hours	£2.10
Up to 4 hours	£2.80
Up to 5 hours	£3.50
Up to 6 hours	£4.20

Up to 8 hours	£4.90
Over 8 hours	£5.60

Gastroenteritis-type Illnesses: Passenger Ships

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he is aware of evidence that links the berthing of a passenger ship where a gastroenteritis-type illness has affected passengers, and the rise of the same gastroenteritis-type illness in the Belfast area.

(AQW 27392/11-15)

Mr Poots: Routine surveillance of gastrointestinal illness, including both laboratory notifications and outbreak reports, indicates that there are no increases in norovirus or gastrointestinal illness in Northern Ireland beyond that which would be expected at this time of the year.

The recent outbreak of norovirus on board the cruise ship Boudicca was managed by the on-board medical team according to recognised national guidance. The Public Health Agency, in fulfilling their role under the International Health Regulations 2005, worked closely with Belfast City Council Port Health, the Harbour Commissioners, the ship's agent and Fred Olsen Cruise Lines to ensure that the vessel's incident team received the necessary public health advice and assistance to manage the outbreak while at sea; ensure that adequate public health arrangements were made on the ship's arrival in port to deal with the disembarking of symptomatic and asymptomatic passengers and crew, and ensure that all necessary public health steps were taken to sanitise the vessel before further cruise passengers embarked.

Enniskillen Ambulance Station: Capital Funding

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there will be an impact on the Ambulance Service in Fermanagh given that he did not receive the £1.9 million bid to the 2014-15 Capital Funds for Enniskillen Ambulance Station.

(AQW 27459/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these questions together as they are inter-related.

The impact of not receiving the £1.9m bid in the recent 2014/15 reallocation exercise is that funding for the permanent replacement of the Enniskillen Ambulance Station (£5m) will need to be considered as part of the overall prioritisation of the DHSSPS capital programme, once the business case has been approved. There is not expected to be any impact on the service provided.

The £1.9m would have covered the first year's expenditure for the £5m project.

Enniskillen Ambulance Station: Capital Funding

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans are in place for the £1.9 million as bid for in 2014-15 Capital Funding.

(AQW 27460/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these questions together as they are inter-related.

The impact of not receiving the £1.9m bid in the recent 2014/15 reallocation exercise is that funding for the permanent replacement of the Enniskillen Ambulance Station (£5m) will need to be considered as part of the overall prioritisation of the DHSSPS capital programme, once the business case has been approved. There is not expected to be any impact on the service provided.

The £1.9m would have covered the first year's expenditure for the £5m project.

Legal Costs: Blood Donation and Adoption

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the legal costs to date of upholding his ban on (i) blood donations from sexually active gay men; and (ii) adoption by gay and unmarried couples, including judicial reviews, legal challenges and appealing decisions.

(AQW 27618/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The legal costs incurred to date by my Department on blood donations from sexually active gay men are £37,112 (net of VAT).
- (ii) The legal costs incurred to date by my Department on adoption by gay and unmarried couples are approximately £40,000. This figure includes the costs associated with the High Court and Court of Appeal proceedings. At this stage we do not have a final figure for the legal fees associated with the leave application to the Supreme Court.

Department of Justice

Criminal Justice Inspection Reports

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the responses by the Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service on Sunday Sequence on 6 October 2013 to criticism contained within the Criminal Justice Inspection Reports are reflective of the view of his Department.

(AQW 27080/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Director General acknowledged that the recent Criminal Justice Inspection reports highlight a number of issues where improvement is required. This is recognised by the Department. A major change programme is in place across the Prison Service and there have been significant changes at Hydebank Wood in recent months, including the appointment of a new Governor and Deputy Governor. They, together with NIPS senior management, will continue to drive forward this programme of change.

Public Prosecution Service

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice when proposals will be brought forward to address the unaccountable nature of the Public Prosecution Service.

(AQW 27093/11-15)

Mr Ford: A number of accountability mechanisms already exist. Section 30(11) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 contains provisions on accountability to the Assembly on finance and administration matters. A concordat entered into on devolution indicated that the PPS would endeavour in response to other queries to provide relevant information to assist the Assembly in its business when that did not interfere with the Director's quasi-judicial role or the Service's legal duties. There are statutory requirements for the Director's annual report to be published and laid and for a code of practice for prosecutors. Accountability also comes from the potential for judicial review.

Last year with the agreement of the First Minister and deputy First Minister I undertook a consultation on strengthening accountability to the Assembly, and the role of the Attorney General. The responses to that exercise and way forward are currently being considered and I hope to discuss these with the First Minister and deputy First Minister shortly.

Public Prosecution Service

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of times he and his Department have had discussions with the (i) Attorney General; and (ii) Director of Public Prosecutions on accountability proposals relating to the Superintendence of the Public Prosecution Service.

(AQW 27097/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is not possible to give a definitive answer: not every discussion officials may have on the telephone is noted, for example. But I have had three meetings with the Attorney General at which governance and accountability were the specific issues; they have also been an agenda item at my regular stocktake meetings with the Director. I expect to have further discussions with them and with the First Minister and deputy First Minister in the coming months before bringing firm proposals to the Justice Committee and Executive.

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships: MLAs

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of MLAs that sit on Policing and Community Safety Partnerships; and the remuneration each has received to date.

(AQW 27099/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are currently four MLAs who sit on Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. PCSP members are not remunerated but can claim a meeting expense payment for a maximum of 20 meetings per financial year. They can also claim travel expenses relating to PCSP business.

Taxed Legal Costs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the dates on which the subject cases were concluded in relation to taxed legal costs in 2012/13.

(AQW 27102/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Taxing Master assessed 1,888 legal aid related cases in 2012/2013.

A list of cases assessed in 2012/2013 is contained at Annex A, which details the dates cases were assessed and the date of the final court order to which they relate.

Annex A

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00252	02-Apr-12	07-Dec-11	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00293	02-Apr-12	08-Nov-11	105	21
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00259	02-Apr-12	18-Oct-11	120	24
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00256	02-Apr-12	27-Sep-11	135	27
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00248	02-Apr-12	14-Sep-11	144	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00280	02-Apr-12	06-Sep-11	150	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00294	02-Apr-12	17-Jun-11	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00297	02-Apr-12	18-May-11	229	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00282	02-Apr-12	15-Feb-11	295	59
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00285	02-Apr-12	08-Feb-11	300	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00291	02-Apr-12	26-Jan-11	309	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00284	02-Apr-12	08-Nov-10	366	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00289	02-Apr-12	15-Sep-10	404	81
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00288	02-Apr-12	16-Apr-10	512	102
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00290	02-Apr-12	14-Dec-09	601	120
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00292	02-Apr-12	10-Nov-09	625	125
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00316	02-Apr-12	17-Sep-09	663	133
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00279	02-Apr-12	11-Sep-09	667	133
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00298	02-Apr-12	30-Apr-08	1024	205
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00296	02-Apr-12	28-Sep-07	1177	235
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00251	02-Apr-12	27-Feb-06	1591	318
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00324	02-Apr-12	06-Dec-05	1650	330
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00277	03-Apr-12	21-Dec-11	75	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00295	03-Apr-12	27-Oct-11	114	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00304	03-Apr-12	26-Sep-11	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00283	03-Apr-12	19-Sep-11	142	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00273	03-Apr-12	08-Sep-11	149	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00305	03-Apr-12	18-May-11	230	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00800	03-Apr-12	02-Feb-11	305	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00234	03-Apr-12	03-Dec-10	348	70
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00299	03-Apr-12	09-Feb-10	561	112
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00300	03-Apr-12	29-Jan-10	568	114
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00307	03-Apr-12	21-Oct-09	640	128
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00264	03-Apr-12	28-May-09	744	149
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00275	03-Apr-12	19-Dec-07	1120	224
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00262	03-Apr-12	31-May-02	2568	514
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01490	12-Apr-12	16-Mar-11	282	56
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00356	14-Apr-12	29-Nov-11	99	20

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00301	16-Apr-12	29-Jun-11	209	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00317	18-Apr-12	30-Jan-12	58	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00319	18-Apr-12	17-Jan-12	67	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00330	18-Apr-12	02-Dec-11	99	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00336	18-Apr-12	24-Nov-11	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00315	18-Apr-12	07-Nov-11	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00321	18-Apr-12	06-Sep-11	162	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00238	18-Apr-12	29-Jun-11	211	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00331	18-Apr-12	04-May-11	251	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00334	18-Apr-12	05-Apr-11	272	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01550	18-Apr-12	07-Mar-11	293	59
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00333	18-Apr-12	12-Jan-11	331	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00314	18-Apr-12	23-Nov-10	367	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00320	18-Apr-12	05-Mar-10	554	111
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/10/00620	18-Apr-12	16-Dec-09	611	122
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00313	18-Apr-12	23-Jun-09	737	147
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00312	18-Apr-12	16-Feb-07	1349	270
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00311	18-Apr-12	28-Nov-05	1668	334
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00318	19-Apr-12	07-Dec-11	97	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00354	19-Apr-12	15-Nov-11	113	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00368	19-Apr-12	06-Oct-11	141	28
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00332	19-Apr-12	04-Oct-11	143	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00335	19-Apr-12	15-Sep-11	156	31
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00306	19-Apr-12	01-Jun-11	232	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00341	19-Apr-12	19-May-11	241	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00350	19-Apr-12	16-May-11	244	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00766	19-Apr-12	13-Apr-11	267	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00328	19-Apr-12	01-Mar-11	298	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00339	19-Apr-12	08-Dec-10	357	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00329	19-Apr-12	26-May-10	497	99
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00366	19-Apr-12	25-Mar-10	541	108
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00392	19-Apr-12	15-Feb-10	569	114
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00326	19-Apr-12	16-Nov-09	634	127
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00367	19-Apr-12	29-Apr-09	777	155
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00327	19-Apr-12	26-Mar-07	1324	265
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00310	19-Apr-12	14-Jun-06	1527	305
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00361	19-Apr-12	13-Feb-03	2396	479
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00091	20-Apr-12	02-Jun-11	232	46

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00185	20-Apr-12	22-Feb-11	304	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01483	20-Apr-12	09-Mar-04	2119	424
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00761	20-Apr-12	14-Nov-01	2723	545
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01484	20-Apr-12	17-May-00	3113	623
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01466	20-Apr-12	22-May-97	3892	778
Legal Aid	T/HC/07/00817	21-Apr-12	05-Oct-06	1447	289
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00601	23-Apr-12	12-Dec-11	96	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00371	23-Apr-12	04-Oct-11	145	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00372	23-Apr-12	26-May-11	238	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00358	23-Apr-12	13-Apr-11	269	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00376	23-Apr-12	13-Apr-11	269	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00343	23-Apr-12	08-Apr-11	272	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00351	23-Apr-12	25-Nov-10	368	74
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/00823	23-Apr-12	28-May-09	758	152
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00370	23-Apr-12	24-Mar-09	805	161
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00390	24-Apr-12	09-Feb-12	54	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00384	24-Apr-12	19-Dec-11	92	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00377	24-Apr-12	14-Dec-11	95	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00382	24-Apr-12	29-Nov-11	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00392	24-Apr-12	19-May-11	244	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00373	24-Apr-12	10-May-11	251	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00355	24-Apr-12	11-Apr-11	272	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00381	24-Apr-12	25-Feb-11	303	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00391	24-Apr-12	10-Nov-10	380	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00393	24-Apr-12	20-Sep-10	417	83
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00352	24-Apr-12	03-Jun-10	494	99
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00389	24-Apr-12	26-Feb-10	563	113
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00374	24-Apr-12	08-May-08	1034	207
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00353	24-Apr-12	16-Oct-07	1181	236
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00378	24-Apr-12	23-Apr-07	1307	261
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00379	24-Apr-12	10-Jun-99	3359	672
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00267	25-Apr-12	22-Sep-11	155	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01613	25-Apr-12	31-Aug-11	171	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00375	25-Apr-12	16-May-11	248	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00394	25-Apr-12	25-Nov-10	370	74
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00080	25-Apr-12	15-Sep-10	421	84
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01605	25-Apr-12	18-Sep-08	940	188
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/02/00728	25-Apr-12	06-Jun-00	3102	620
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00134	27-Apr-12	08-Feb-10	580	116

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00385	29-Apr-12	14-Dec-11	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00357	29-Apr-12	20-Oct-11	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00395	29-Apr-12	30-Sep-11	151	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00337	29-Apr-12	20-Sep-11	159	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00364	29-Apr-12	24-Jun-11	221	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00338	29-Apr-12	10-May-11	254	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00346	29-Apr-12	28-Mar-11	285	57
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00383	29-Apr-12	13-Dec-10	360	72
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00322	29-Apr-12	14-Jun-10	490	98
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00388	29-Apr-12	04-Mar-10	562	112
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00396	29-Apr-12	20-Nov-08	897	179
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00362	29-Apr-12	13-Sep-02	2511	502
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00287	30-Apr-12	13-Oct-11	143	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00347	30-Apr-12	13-Sep-11	165	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01309	30-Apr-12	18-May-11	249	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00089	30-Apr-12	01-Apr-11	282	56
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01235	30-Apr-12	15-Mar-11	295	59
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00468	30-Apr-12	17-Nov-09	640	128
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00872	30-Apr-12	22-Oct-09	658	132
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/01318	30-Apr-12	14-Jan-08	1121	224
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00137	30-Apr-12	16-Jan-06	1641	328
Legal Aid	T/HC/05/00233	30-Apr-12	13-Mar-03	2383	477
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00409	01-May-12	21-Nov-11	117	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00344	01-May-12	18-Nov-11	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00406	01-May-12	18-Oct-11	141	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00401	01-May-12	06-Sep-11	171	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00399	01-May-12	28-Mar-11	287	57
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00360	01-May-12	10-Jan-11	342	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00404	01-May-12	04-Oct-10	412	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00408	01-May-12	16-Feb-10	576	115
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00897	01-May-12	19-Oct-09	662	132
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00754	01-May-12	30-Jun-09	741	148
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00405	01-May-12	19-Jun-09	748	150
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00414	01-May-12	02-Apr-08	1065	213
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00365	02-May-12	30-Jan-12	68	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00444	02-May-12	16-Dec-11	99	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00432	02-May-12	13-Dec-11	102	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00421	02-May-12	08-Dec-11	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00437	02-May-12	22-Nov-11	117	23

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00442	02-May-12	15-Nov-11	122	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00410	02-May-12	14-Nov-11	123	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00433	02-May-12	07-Nov-11	128	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00436	02-May-12	07-Nov-11	128	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00439	02-May-12	26-Sep-11	158	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00407	02-May-12	16-Sep-11	164	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00419	02-May-12	14-Sep-11	166	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00434	02-May-12	08-Sep-11	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00363	02-May-12	07-Sep-11	171	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00417	02-May-12	07-Sep-11	171	34
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/01410	02-May-12	06-Sep-11	172	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00440	02-May-12	24-Jun-11	224	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00424	02-May-12	10-Jun-11	234	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00429	02-May-12	29-Nov-10	373	75
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00431	02-May-12	22-Nov-10	378	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00413	02-May-12	02-Jun-10	501	100
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00418	02-May-12	17-May-10	513	103
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00402	02-May-12	11-May-10	517	103
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00416	02-May-12	15-Dec-08	883	177
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00428	02-May-12	03-Dec-08	891	178
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00430	02-May-12	21-Nov-06	1422	284
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00441	02-May-12	06-Nov-06	1433	287
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00445	03-May-12	13-Feb-12	59	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00446	03-May-12	18-Jan-12	77	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00447	03-May-12	06-Dec-11	108	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00456	03-May-12	22-Nov-11	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00426	03-May-12	17-Nov-11	121	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00427	03-May-12	19-Sep-11	164	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00459	03-May-12	09-Dec-10	366	73
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00457	03-May-12	04-Nov-10	391	78
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00448	03-May-12	28-Jan-10	591	118
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00425	03-May-12	02-Jun-03	2329	466
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00452	04-May-12	10-Jan-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00450	04-May-12	13-Dec-11	104	21
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00340	04-May-12	08-Sep-11	172	34
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00458	04-May-12	19-Oct-10	404	81
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00455	04-May-12	04-Dec-09	631	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00222	04-May-12	02-Jun-09	764	153
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00469	09-May-12	28-Nov-11	118	24

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00474	09-May-12	24-Nov-11	120	24
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00466	09-May-12	23-Nov-11	121	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00479	09-May-12	22-Nov-11	122	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00420	09-May-12	17-Nov-11	125	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00464	09-May-12	29-Sep-11	160	32
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00453	09-May-12	27-Sep-11	162	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00463	09-May-12	08-Sep-11	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00454	09-May-12	15-Jul-11	214	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00473	09-May-12	23-Jun-11	230	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00462	09-May-12	22-Jun-11	231	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00468	09-May-12	06-Jun-11	243	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00476	09-May-12	29-Nov-10	378	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00478	09-May-12	19-Nov-09	645	129
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00477	09-May-12	10-Aug-09	718	144
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00483	10-May-12	06-Feb-12	69	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00465	10-May-12	17-Jan-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00484	10-May-12	10-Jan-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00486	10-May-12	18-Oct-11	148	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00472	10-May-12	04-Oct-11	158	32
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00475	10-May-12	27-Sep-11	163	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00497	10-May-12	27-Jun-11	229	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00487	10-May-12	09-Feb-11	327	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00481	10-May-12	08-Nov-10	394	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00489	10-May-12	04-Mar-10	571	114
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00501	10-May-12	22-Oct-08	927	185
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00496	10-May-12	07-May-03	2352	470
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00498	11-May-12	15-Mar-12	42	8
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00500	11-May-12	16-Dec-11	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00397	11-May-12	10-Nov-11	132	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00493	11-May-12	18-Oct-11	149	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00539	11-May-12	06-Jul-11	223	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00495	11-May-12	19-Jan-11	343	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00488	11-May-12	18-Jan-11	344	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00184	11-May-12	08-Sep-10	438	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00309	12-May-12	11-Dec-09	631	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00548	14-May-12	01-Mar-12	53	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00529	14-May-12	15-Feb-12	64	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00532	14-May-12	22-Nov-11	125	25

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00531	14-May-12	15-Nov-11	130	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00521	14-May-12	09-Nov-11	134	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00482	14-May-12	18-Oct-11	150	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00511	14-May-12	11-Oct-11	155	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00505	14-May-12	28-Sep-11	164	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00530	14-May-12	13-Sep-11	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00485	14-May-12	08-Sep-11	178	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00491	14-May-12	22-Jul-11	212	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00369	14-May-12	30-Jun-11	228	46
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00492	14-May-12	29-Jun-11	229	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00514	14-May-12	23-Mar-11	299	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00504	14-May-12	09-Mar-11	309	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00533	14-May-12	28-Feb-11	316	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00517	14-May-12	13-Jan-10	609	122
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00508	14-May-12	04-Dec-07	1160	232
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00510	14-May-12	29-May-07	1295	259
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00506	14-May-12	09-Jan-06	1656	331
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00303	14-May-12	10-Mar-03	2396	479
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00509	14-May-12	07-Oct-02	2506	501
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00557	15-May-12	08-Mar-12	49	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00526	15-May-12	22-Feb-12	60	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00547	15-May-12	17-Feb-12	63	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00544	15-May-12	25-Jan-12	80	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00558	15-May-12	25-Jan-12	80	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00549	15-May-12	18-Jan-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00515	15-May-12	05-Dec-11	117	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00540	15-May-12	01-Dec-11	119	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00520	15-May-12	08-Nov-11	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00535	15-May-12	19-Oct-11	150	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00537	15-May-12	10-Oct-11	157	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00554	15-May-12	13-Sep-11	176	35
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00502	15-May-12	04-Jul-11	227	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00545	15-May-12	21-Jun-11	236	47
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00534	15-May-12	20-Jun-11	237	47
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00499	15-May-12	02-Jun-11	249	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00536	15-May-12	19-May-11	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00542	15-May-12	25-Jan-11	341	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00541	15-May-12	16-Dec-10	369	74

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00543	15-May-12	23-Sep-10	429	86
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00601	15-May-12	10-Nov-09	656	131
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00550	15-May-12	25-Jun-09	754	151
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00553	15-May-12	10-Jun-08	1026	205
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00516	15-May-12	06-Sep-96	4093	819
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00565	16-May-12	22-Feb-12	61	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00564	16-May-12	08-Feb-12	71	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00566	16-May-12	17-Jan-12	87	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00562	16-May-12	19-Dec-11	108	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00573	16-May-12	28-Sep-11	166	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00569	16-May-12	21-Jun-11	237	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00560	16-May-12	18-May-11	261	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00559	16-May-12	10-May-11	267	53
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00518	16-May-12	04-May-10	532	106
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00563	16-May-12	24-Feb-10	581	116
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00525	16-May-12	23-Feb-10	582	116
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00571	16-May-12	17-Dec-09	630	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00403	18-May-12	05-Oct-11	163	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00568	18-May-12	14-Sep-11	178	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00579	22-May-12	09-Feb-12	74	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00580	22-May-12	26-Jan-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00582	22-May-12	19-Jan-12	89	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00576	22-May-12	22-Oct-10	413	83
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00578	22-May-12	27-Jan-05	1909	382
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00584	23-May-12	29-Nov-11	127	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00583	23-May-12	22-Sep-11	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00596	23-May-12	15-Jun-11	246	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00606	23-May-12	08-Mar-11	317	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00588	23-May-12	03-Feb-11	340	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00577	23-May-12	04-Oct-10	428	86
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00595	23-May-12	20-Sep-10	438	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00581	23-May-12	21-May-07	1308	262
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00597	24-May-12	06-Mar-12	58	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00604	24-May-12	29-Jun-11	237	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00666	24-May-12	15-Mar-10	574	115
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00599	24-May-12	26-Jun-09	760	152
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00415	25-May-12	13-Feb-12	75	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00603	25-May-12	31-May-11	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00302	25-May-12	17-Dec-10	376	75

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00449	25-May-12	02-Feb-10	604	121
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00477	25-May-12	23-Nov-09	655	131
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00400	25-May-12	20-May-09	788	158
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00618	28-May-12	05-Mar-12	61	12
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00567	28-May-12	16-Feb-12	73	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00611	28-May-12	21-Dec-11	114	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01392	28-May-12	12-Nov-10	402	80
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00423	28-May-12	27-Oct-09	675	135
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00625	29-May-12	01-Dec-11	129	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00555	29-May-12	11-Sep-07	1231	246
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00617	30-May-12	20-Dec-11	117	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00586	30-May-12	06-Dec-11	127	25
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00591	30-May-12	28-Nov-11	133	27
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00594	30-May-12	17-Oct-11	163	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00587	30-May-12	15-Sep-11	185	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00585	30-May-12	16-Sep-10	445	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00605	30-May-12	03-Mar-09	847	169
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00598	31-May-12	07-Sep-11	192	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00623	01-Jun-12	08-Dec-10	388	78
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00683	01-Jun-12	10-Jun-08	1039	208
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01425	06-Jun-12	29-Jun-11	246	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00608	07-Jun-12	27-Feb-12	74	15
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00015	07-Jun-12	10-Feb-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00561	07-Jun-12	09-Feb-12	86	17
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00019	07-Jun-12	13-Jan-12	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00635	07-Jun-12	21-Dec-11	122	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00590	07-Jun-12	05-Oct-11	177	35
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00016	07-Jun-12	30-Sep-11	180	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00619	07-Jun-12	30-Sep-11	180	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00644	07-Jun-12	13-Sep-11	193	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00575	07-Jun-12	07-Sep-11	197	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00574	07-Jun-12	06-Sep-11	198	40
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00602	07-Jun-12	05-Sep-11	199	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00632	07-Jun-12	09-May-11	284	57
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00637	07-Jun-12	16-Mar-11	322	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00636	07-Jun-12	27-Jan-11	356	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00641	07-Jun-12	05-Oct-10	438	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00640	07-Jun-12	29-Apr-10	551	110

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00643	07-Jun-12	24-Mar-10	577	115
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00631	07-Jun-12	15-Jun-09	779	156
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00633	07-Jun-12	16-Dec-08	908	182
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00649	08-Jun-12	22-Mar-12	57	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00648	08-Jun-12	20-Mar-12	59	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00646	08-Jun-12	31-Jan-12	94	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00647	08-Jun-12	20-Sep-11	189	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00209	08-Jun-12	25-Jan-11	359	72
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01057	08-Jun-12	26-Jun-09	771	154
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00349	08-Jun-12	19-Feb-07	1385	277
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00243	11-Jun-12	05-Sep-11	201	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00167	11-Jun-12	08-Oct-10	437	87
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00650	12-Jun-12	08-Feb-12	90	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00672	12-Jun-12	18-Jan-12	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00664	12-Jun-12	10-Jan-12	111	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00677	12-Jun-12	05-Dec-11	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00673	12-Jun-12	12-Oct-11	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00662	12-Jun-12	06-Apr-11	310	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00657	12-Jun-12	10-Dec-10	393	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00663	12-Jun-12	03-Mar-10	595	119
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00652	13-Jun-12	20-Mar-12	62	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00622	13-Jun-12	28-Feb-12	77	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00616	13-Jun-12	30-Sep-11	184	37
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00638	13-Jun-12	19-Sep-11	193	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00467	13-Jun-12	29-Mar-11	317	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00149	13-Jun-12	15-Mar-11	327	65
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00653	13-Jun-12	09-Mar-11	331	66
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/00678	13-Jun-12	01-Jun-10	532	106
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00676	14-Jun-12	21-Mar-12	62	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00675	14-Jun-12	23-Feb-12	81	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00681	14-Jun-12	23-Feb-12	81	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00687	14-Jun-12	07-Feb-12	93	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00629	14-Jun-12	26-Jan-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00630	14-Jun-12	24-Nov-11	146	29
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00627	14-Jun-12	09-Nov-11	157	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00654	14-Jun-12	22-Sep-11	191	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00717	14-Jun-12	22-Sep-11	191	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00651	14-Jun-12	21-Sep-11	192	38

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00655	14-Jun-12	27-Jun-11	254	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00556	14-Jun-12	11-Mar-10	591	118
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00461	14-Jun-12	12-May-09	808	162
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00551	14-Jun-12	18-Feb-09	867	173
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00628	14-Jun-12	04-Dec-08	921	184
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00201	15-Jun-12	29-Sep-10	448	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00433	15-Jun-12	25-Jun-09	777	155
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00694	18-Jun-12	05-Apr-12	53	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00693	18-Jun-12	14-Feb-12	90	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00688	18-Jun-12	30-Jan-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00695	18-Jun-12	08-Dec-11	138	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00679	18-Jun-12	07-Mar-11	336	67
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00111	18-Jun-12	24-Sep-10	452	90
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00412	18-Jun-12	19-Feb-07	1391	278
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00689	18-Jun-12	16-Jan-03	2458	492
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00691	19-Jun-12	28-Feb-12	81	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00711	19-Jun-12	20-Dec-11	131	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00712	19-Jun-12	16-Sep-11	198	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00696	19-Jun-12	23-May-11	282	56
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00462	19-Jun-12	24-Nov-09	671	134
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01303	19-Jun-12	24-Nov-09	671	134
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00715	20-Jun-12	12-Apr-12	50	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00716	20-Jun-12	14-Feb-12	92	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00665	20-Jun-12	07-Feb-12	97	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00661	20-Jun-12	03-Feb-12	99	20
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00017	20-Jun-12	26-Jan-12	105	21
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/11/00053	20-Jun-12	26-Sep-08	974	195
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00668	21-Jun-12	26-Jan-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00720	21-Jun-12	07-Dec-11	142	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00719	21-Jun-12	01-Dec-11	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00614	21-Jun-12	29-Nov-11	148	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00722	21-Jun-12	07-Nov-11	164	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00443	21-Jun-12	20-Sep-11	198	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00725	21-Jun-12	06-Jul-11	252	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00682	21-Jun-12	27-Jun-11	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01335	21-Jun-12	29-Mar-11	323	65
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00667	21-Jun-12	23-Mar-11	327	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00724	21-Jun-12	16-Feb-11	352	70
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00485	21-Jun-12	18-Oct-10	439	88

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00524	21-Jun-12	08-Jun-10	533	107
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01558	21-Jun-12	18-May-10	548	110
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00726	21-Jun-12	13-Apr-10	573	115
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01123	21-Jun-12	16-Jun-09	788	158
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00294	21-Jun-12	06-Feb-06	1664	333
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/08/00550	21-Jun-12	12-Feb-04	2181	436
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00741	22-Jun-12	28-Feb-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00731	22-Jun-12	16-Feb-12	92	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00732	22-Jun-12	30-Nov-11	148	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00742	22-Jun-12	15-Apr-11	311	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00740	22-Jun-12	22-Jun-10	524	105
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00683	22-Jun-12	27-Apr-10	564	113
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00724	22-Jun-12	29-Jan-10	626	125
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00728	22-Jun-12	24-Nov-09	674	135
Legal Aid	T/HC/07/01345	22-Jun-12	11-Aug-06	1531	306
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/00542	22-Jun-12	30-Apr-04	2126	425
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00137	27-Jun-12	08-Oct-10	449	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00707	27-Jun-12	03-Mar-10	606	121
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00093	27-Jun-12	20-May-03	2377	475
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00645	03-Jul-12	15-Feb-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00710	03-Jul-12	15-Feb-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00621	03-Jul-12	23-Sep-11	203	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00600	03-Jul-12	28-Mar-11	332	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00626	03-Jul-12	21-Dec-10	401	80
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/00620	03-Jul-12	26-May-10	550	110
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00024	04-Jul-12	15-Jun-12	14	3
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00023	04-Jul-12	31-May-12	25	5
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00021	04-Jul-12	04-May-12	44	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00746	04-Jul-12	25-Apr-12	51	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00757	04-Jul-12	12-Mar-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00666	04-Jul-12	05-Mar-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00756	04-Jul-12	22-Feb-12	96	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00758	04-Jul-12	15-Dec-11	145	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00748	04-Jul-12	06-Dec-11	152	30
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00022	04-Jul-12	25-Nov-11	159	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00747	04-Jul-12	06-Oct-11	195	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00745	04-Jul-12	19-Sep-11	208	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00754	04-Jul-12	15-Sep-11	210	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00752	04-Jul-12	14-Sep-11	211	42

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00749	04-Jul-12	05-Jul-11	262	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00744	04-Jul-12	12-Apr-11	322	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00759	04-Jul-12	07-Apr-11	325	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00751	04-Jul-12	21-Jan-11	379	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00760	04-Jul-12	27-Apr-10	572	114
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00755	04-Jul-12	25-Sep-00	3073	615
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00634	05-Jul-12	07-Oct-09	717	143
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/00100	05-Jul-12	04-Dec-08	936	187
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00512	05-Jul-12	15-Mar-05	1908	382
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00253	10-Jul-12	29-Nov-10	422	84
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00593	10-Jul-12	25-Feb-10	619	124
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00610	16-Jul-12	11-Jan-11	395	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00674	16-Jul-12	11-Jan-11	395	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00435	20-Jul-12	13-Oct-05	1767	353
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00199	23-Jul-12	27-Oct-11	193	39
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00612	23-Jul-12	19-Oct-11	199	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00315	23-Jul-12	21-Sep-09	741	148
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00527	23-Jul-12	20-Jan-09	915	183
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00103	24-Jul-12	10-Nov-10	445	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00021	25-Jul-12	09-Sep-10	490	98
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00467	26-Jul-12	20-Oct-10	462	92
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00710	31-Jul-12	01-Mar-10	632	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00209	03-Aug-12	11-Feb-10	647	129
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01259	11-Aug-12	02-Jun-11	312	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01370	13-Aug-12	05-Oct-10	485	97
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00713	14-Aug-12	28-Feb-12	121	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00698	14-Aug-12	26-Sep-11	232	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00345	14-Aug-12	13-Sep-11	241	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00750	14-Aug-12	05-Jul-11	291	58
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00132	14-Aug-12	27-Jun-11	297	59
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01103	14-Aug-12	06-Jun-11	312	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01236	14-Aug-12	11-May-11	330	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00671	14-Aug-12	24-Feb-11	384	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01133	14-Aug-12	07-Feb-11	397	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00791	14-Aug-12	20-Jan-11	409	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00680	14-Aug-12	09-Dec-10	439	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00733	14-Aug-12	21-Sep-10	496	99
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00669	14-Aug-12	29-Jun-10	556	111
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00520	14-Aug-12	25-Aug-09	776	155

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00936	14-Aug-12	26-Mar-09	884	177
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00470	14-Aug-12	06-May-08	1116	223
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00743	14-Aug-12	18-Jun-03	2390	478
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00822	14-Aug-12	03-Mar-03	2467	493
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00034	15-Aug-12	08-Jun-12	49	10
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00026	15-Aug-12	15-May-12	67	13
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00025	15-Aug-12	20-Apr-12	84	17
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00033	15-Aug-12	20-Apr-12	84	17
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00035	15-Aug-12	20-Apr-12	84	17
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00036	15-Aug-12	20-Apr-12	84	17
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00037	15-Aug-12	15-Apr-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00730	15-Aug-12	07-Mar-12	116	23
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00030	15-Aug-12	06-Jan-12	159	32
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00031	15-Aug-12	06-Jan-12	159	32
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00697	15-Aug-12	24-Nov-11	190	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00727	15-Aug-12	10-Nov-11	200	40
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00699	15-Aug-12	10-Nov-11	200	40
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00690	15-Aug-12	28-Sep-11	231	46
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00020	15-Aug-12	16-Sep-11	239	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00692	15-Aug-12	30-Aug-11	252	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00734	15-Aug-12	11-Aug-11	265	53
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00684	15-Aug-12	17-Jun-10	565	113
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00007	15-Aug-12	12-Feb-10	654	131
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00768	15-Aug-12	11-Feb-10	655	131
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00039	15-Aug-12	29-Oct-04	2034	407
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00773	16-Aug-12	19-Apr-12	86	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00904	16-Aug-12	19-Apr-12	86	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00782	16-Aug-12	08-Mar-12	116	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00714	16-Aug-12	29-Feb-12	122	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00771	16-Aug-12	24-Feb-12	125	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00753	16-Aug-12	14-Feb-12	133	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00768	16-Aug-12	11-Jan-12	157	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00762	16-Aug-12	24-Nov-11	191	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00772	16-Aug-12	21-Nov-11	194	39
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00736	16-Aug-12	12-Oct-11	222	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00765	16-Aug-12	27-Sep-11	233	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00763	16-Aug-12	22-Sep-11	236	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00766	16-Aug-12	06-Jun-11	314	63

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01024	16-Aug-12	24-Feb-11	386	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00784	16-Aug-12	04-Feb-11	400	80
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00761	16-Aug-12	18-Jan-11	413	83
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00779	16-Aug-12	11-Jan-11	418	84
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00738	16-Aug-12	16-Dec-10	436	87
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00778	16-Aug-12	10-Dec-10	440	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00781	16-Aug-12	07-Dec-10	443	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00787	16-Aug-12	08-Sep-10	507	101
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00735	16-Aug-12	08-Jul-10	551	110
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00783	16-Aug-12	11-Jan-10	679	136
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00780	16-Aug-12	31-Mar-09	883	177
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00774	16-Aug-12	11-Dec-08	961	192
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00770	16-Aug-12	08-Sep-08	1029	206
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00786	16-Aug-12	05-Feb-07	1444	289
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00777	16-Aug-12	03-Mar-06	1685	337
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00767	16-Aug-12	17-Oct-03	2305	461
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00775	17-Aug-12	03-Dec-09	707	141
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00792	18-Aug-12	01-Feb-12	143	29
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00790	18-Aug-12	17-Jan-12	154	31
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00798	18-Aug-12	14-Sep-11	243	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00797	18-Aug-12	09-May-08	1116	223
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00788	18-Aug-12	14-Apr-08	1135	227
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00793	18-Aug-12	09-Jan-08	1203	241
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00794	18-Aug-12	09-Jan-08	1203	241
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00807	21-Aug-12	03-May-12	79	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00804	21-Aug-12	07-Mar-12	120	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00806	21-Aug-12	13-Feb-12	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00791	21-Aug-12	17-Aug-11	265	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00769	21-Aug-12	08-Sep-08	1032	206
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00796	21-Aug-12	21-Apr-04	2175	435
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00819	22-Aug-12	23-Apr-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00818	22-Aug-12	28-Mar-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00803	22-Aug-12	20-Feb-12	133	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00795	22-Aug-12	14-Feb-12	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01083	22-Aug-12	14-Feb-12	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00813	22-Aug-12	01-Feb-12	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00802	22-Aug-12	19-Dec-11	178	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00494	22-Aug-12	28-Nov-11	193	39

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00799	22-Aug-12	08-Nov-11	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00800	22-Aug-12	29-Sep-11	235	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00812	22-Aug-12	29-Jun-11	301	60
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00570	22-Aug-12	22-Jun-11	306	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00820	22-Aug-12	13-Apr-10	617	123
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00801	22-Aug-12	22-Mar-10	633	127
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00644	22-Aug-12	30-May-06	1627	325
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00808	23-Aug-12	27-Feb-12	129	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00523	23-Aug-12	06-Feb-12	144	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01406	23-Aug-12	28-Apr-11	346	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00817	23-Aug-12	15-Nov-10	464	93
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00805	23-Aug-12	28-May-10	585	117
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00815	23-Aug-12	30-Oct-09	735	147
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00814	27-Aug-12	10-Nov-11	208	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00639	27-Aug-12	16-Sep-11	247	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00821	27-Aug-12	01-Dec-10	454	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00811	27-Aug-12	29-Nov-10	456	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00816	27-Aug-12	22-Jun-10	570	114
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00810	27-Aug-12	10-Nov-00	3077	615
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00846	28-Aug-12	02-May-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01062	28-Aug-12	02-May-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00837	28-Aug-12	21-Mar-12	115	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00845	28-Aug-12	15-Mar-12	119	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00841	28-Aug-12	06-Mar-12	126	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00848	28-Aug-12	23-Feb-12	134	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00839	28-Aug-12	15-Feb-12	140	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00838	28-Aug-12	14-Feb-12	141	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00844	28-Aug-12	07-Feb-12	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00809	28-Aug-12	14-Nov-11	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00939	28-Aug-12	14-Nov-11	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00835	28-Aug-12	28-Sep-11	240	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00834	28-Aug-12	11-May-11	340	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00822	28-Aug-12	17-Sep-10	508	102
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00825	28-Aug-12	05-Mar-09	909	182
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00842	28-Aug-12	14-Mar-07	1425	285
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00833	28-Aug-12	19-May-06	1638	328
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00858	29-Aug-12	16-Apr-12	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00829	29-Aug-12	27-Mar-12	112	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00830	29-Aug-12	27-Mar-12	112	22

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00853	29-Aug-12	27-Mar-12	112	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00827	29-Aug-12	22-Mar-12	115	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00851	29-Aug-12	29-Feb-12	131	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00856	29-Aug-12	27-Feb-12	133	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00863	29-Aug-12	22-Feb-12	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00857	29-Aug-12	13-Feb-12	143	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00861	29-Aug-12	06-Feb-12	148	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00854	29-Aug-12	26-Jan-12	155	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00721	29-Aug-12	10-Jan-12	167	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00855	29-Aug-12	13-Dec-11	187	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00860	29-Aug-12	08-Nov-11	212	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00764	29-Aug-12	22-Sep-11	245	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00852	29-Aug-12	31-Aug-11	261	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00718	29-Aug-12	09-Jun-11	320	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00849	29-Aug-12	10-May-11	342	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00826	29-Aug-12	16-Nov-09	728	146
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00859	29-Aug-12	26-Jan-09	938	188
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01137	29-Aug-12	29-May-08	1110	222
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00847	29-Aug-12	25-Oct-07	1265	253
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00785	29-Aug-12	20-Jan-03	2508	502
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00862	29-Aug-12	29-Aug-00	3132	626
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00836	30-Aug-12	07-Dec-11	192	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00592	30-Aug-12	21-Mar-11	379	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01224	30-Aug-12	21-Dec-09	704	141
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00823	30-Aug-12	24-Jun-09	832	166
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00876	31-Aug-12	02-May-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00867	31-Aug-12	21-Mar-12	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00892	31-Aug-12	28-Feb-12	134	27
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00877	31-Aug-12	27-Feb-12	135	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00875	31-Aug-12	16-Feb-12	142	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00873	31-Aug-12	07-Feb-12	149	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00865	31-Aug-12	03-Feb-12	151	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00872	31-Aug-12	19-Jan-12	162	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00880	31-Aug-12	15-Dec-11	187	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00870	31-Aug-12	23-Nov-11	203	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00874	31-Aug-12	17-Nov-11	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00868	31-Aug-12	04-Oct-11	239	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00878	31-Aug-12	13-Sep-11	254	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00609	31-Aug-12	06-Sep-11	259	52

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00881	31-Aug-12	29-Jun-11	308	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00843	31-Aug-12	18-Feb-11	401	80
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00883	31-Aug-12	07-Feb-11	410	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00885	31-Aug-12	30-Nov-10	459	92
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00223	31-Aug-12	26-Jan-10	679	136
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01021	31-Aug-12	16-Dec-09	708	142
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00869	31-Aug-12	28-Apr-09	874	175
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00884	31-Aug-12	01-May-07	1394	279
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00864	31-Aug-12	19-Feb-07	1445	289
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00897	01-Sep-12	14-May-12	80	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00896	01-Sep-12	22-Feb-12	138	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00888	01-Sep-12	30-Jan-12	155	31
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00886	01-Sep-12	19-Dec-11	185	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00893	01-Sep-12	16-Sep-11	251	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00898	01-Sep-12	13-Oct-05	1797	359
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00900	03-Sep-12	17-Apr-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00915	03-Sep-12	17-Apr-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00918	03-Sep-12	21-Mar-12	119	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00917	03-Sep-12	23-Jan-12	161	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00910	03-Sep-12	13-Oct-11	233	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00909	03-Sep-12	17-May-11	340	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00913	03-Sep-12	03-May-11	350	70
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00906	03-Sep-12	16-Sep-10	513	103
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00894	03-Sep-12	08-Jun-10	585	117
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00907	03-Sep-12	15-Oct-09	753	151
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00912	03-Sep-12	29-Sep-09	765	153
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00891	03-Sep-12	07-Sep-09	781	156
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00889	03-Sep-12	30-Jun-09	830	166
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00911	03-Sep-12	08-Oct-04	2062	412
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00902	04-Sep-12	10-May-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00905	04-Sep-12	04-May-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00903	04-Sep-12	24-Apr-12	96	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00929	04-Sep-12	20-Apr-12	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00925	04-Sep-12	27-Mar-12	116	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00930	04-Sep-12	26-Mar-12	117	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00924	04-Sep-12	15-Mar-12	124	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00895	04-Sep-12	12-Mar-12	127	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00922	04-Sep-12	07-Dec-11	195	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00926	04-Sep-12	24-Feb-11	399	80

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01082	04-Sep-12	24-Feb-11	399	80
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00933	04-Sep-12	21-Oct-10	489	98
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00579	04-Sep-12	12-Oct-10	496	99
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00238	04-Sep-12	05-Oct-10	501	100
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00908	04-Sep-12	23-Jun-09	836	167
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00923	04-Sep-12	27-May-09	855	171
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00943	05-Sep-12	10-May-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00946	05-Sep-12	25-Apr-12	96	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00941	05-Sep-12	27-Mar-12	117	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00966	05-Sep-12	13-Mar-12	127	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00940	05-Sep-12	07-Mar-12	131	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00964	05-Sep-12	09-Feb-12	150	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01240	05-Sep-12	09-Feb-12	150	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00934	05-Sep-12	25-Jan-12	161	32
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00937	05-Sep-12	23-Jan-12	163	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00956	05-Sep-12	16-Jan-12	168	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00958	05-Sep-12	09-Jan-12	173	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01210	05-Sep-12	15-Dec-11	190	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00960	05-Sep-12	08-Dec-11	195	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00947	05-Sep-12	21-Nov-11	208	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01218	05-Sep-12	21-Nov-11	208	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00950	05-Sep-12	10-Sep-11	258	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00935	05-Sep-12	10-Jun-11	324	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00953	05-Sep-12	23-Mar-11	381	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00954	05-Sep-12	07-Mar-11	393	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00949	05-Sep-12	23-Apr-10	619	124
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00299	05-Sep-12	19-Oct-09	753	151
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00959	05-Sep-12	29-Jun-09	833	167
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/00889	05-Sep-12	24-Jun-09	836	167
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00952	05-Sep-12	15-May-09	864	173
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00832	05-Sep-12	03-Apr-08	1155	231
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00948	05-Sep-12	11-Jun-07	1368	274
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00984	06-Sep-12	10-May-12	86	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00972	06-Sep-12	03-May-12	91	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00980	06-Sep-12	06-Mar-12	133	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00979	06-Sep-12	16-Feb-12	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00976	06-Sep-12	31-Jan-12	158	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00957	06-Sep-12	15-Dec-11	191	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00974	06-Sep-12	26-Oct-11	227	45

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00963	06-Sep-12	04-Oct-11	243	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00971	06-Sep-12	30-Sep-11	245	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00967	06-Sep-12	15-Sep-11	256	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01207	06-Sep-12	15-Sep-11	256	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00973	06-Sep-12	16-Jun-11	321	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00968	06-Sep-12	07-Jun-11	328	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00987	06-Sep-12	16-May-11	344	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00978	06-Sep-12	09-Feb-11	412	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01152	06-Sep-12	17-Dec-10	450	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00969	06-Sep-12	24-Nov-10	467	93
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00982	06-Sep-12	23-Sep-10	511	102
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01003	07-Sep-12	09-May-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01007	07-Sep-12	26-Mar-12	120	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00998	07-Sep-12	14-Mar-12	128	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00993	07-Sep-12	06-Mar-12	134	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00990	07-Sep-12	20-Feb-12	145	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00997	07-Sep-12	16-Jan-12	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01009	07-Sep-12	19-Oct-11	233	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00882	07-Sep-12	17-Aug-11	278	56
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00991	07-Sep-12	06-Apr-11	373	75
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00992	07-Sep-12	28-May-09	857	171
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01019	10-Sep-12	11-Jun-12	66	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01010	10-Sep-12	09-May-12	89	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01064	10-Sep-12	03-May-12	93	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01018	10-Sep-12	26-Apr-12	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01037	10-Sep-12	26-Apr-12	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01026	10-Sep-12	28-Mar-12	119	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01017	10-Sep-12	26-Mar-12	121	24
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01005	10-Sep-12	26-Mar-12	121	24
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01030	10-Sep-12	14-Mar-12	129	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00996	10-Sep-12	22-Feb-12	144	29
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01059	10-Sep-12	14-Feb-12	150	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00975	10-Sep-12	17-Jan-12	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01041	10-Sep-12	17-Jan-12	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01011	10-Sep-12	16-Jan-12	171	34
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01033	10-Sep-12	12-Jan-12	173	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01035	10-Sep-12	12-Dec-11	196	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01015	10-Sep-12	06-Dec-11	200	40

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01027	10-Sep-12	01-Dec-11	203	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00938	10-Sep-12	29-Nov-11	205	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01016	10-Sep-12	29-Nov-11	205	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01034	10-Sep-12	29-Nov-11	205	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01051	10-Sep-12	28-Nov-11	206	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01031	10-Sep-12	11-Nov-11	217	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01039	10-Sep-12	18-Oct-11	235	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01028	10-Sep-12	12-Oct-11	239	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01055	10-Sep-12	06-Oct-11	243	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01020	10-Sep-12	30-Sep-11	247	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01057	10-Sep-12	15-Sep-11	258	52
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01032	10-Sep-12	13-Sep-11	260	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01050	10-Sep-12	29-Jun-11	314	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01022	10-Sep-12	11-Apr-11	371	74
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01052	10-Sep-12	16-Dec-10	453	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01056	10-Sep-12	17-Nov-10	474	95
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01023	10-Sep-12	05-Mar-10	657	131
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01058	10-Sep-12	10-Feb-10	674	135
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01014	10-Sep-12	28-Jan-10	683	137
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00995	10-Sep-12	06-May-09	874	175
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00999	10-Sep-12	26-Feb-09	923	185
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/00866	10-Sep-12	02-Jun-08	1116	223
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01001	10-Sep-12	10-May-06	1654	331
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01044	11-Sep-12	20-Jun-12	60	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01048	11-Sep-12	19-Jun-12	61	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01049	11-Sep-12	17-May-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01067	11-Sep-12	10-May-12	89	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01054	11-Sep-12	18-Apr-12	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01045	11-Sep-12	27-Mar-12	121	24
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01061	11-Sep-12	21-Mar-12	125	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00914	11-Sep-12	13-Feb-12	152	30
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01043	11-Sep-12	13-Feb-12	152	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01078	11-Sep-12	01-Feb-12	160	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01131	11-Sep-12	11-Jan-12	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00899	11-Sep-12	09-Jan-12	177	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01040	11-Sep-12	16-Dec-11	193	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01047	11-Sep-12	12-Oct-11	240	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01079	11-Sep-12	02-Jun-11	334	67

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01091	11-Sep-12	12-Apr-10	632	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01084	11-Sep-12	10-Apr-08	1154	231
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01100	13-Sep-12	20-Jun-12	62	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01106	13-Sep-12	13-Jun-12	67	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01105	13-Sep-12	23-May-12	82	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01111	13-Sep-12	22-May-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01093	13-Sep-12	30-Apr-12	99	20
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01074	13-Sep-12	18-Apr-12	107	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01069	13-Sep-12	13-Mar-12	133	27
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01098	13-Sep-12	13-Mar-12	133	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01110	13-Sep-12	08-Mar-12	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01080	13-Sep-12	07-Mar-12	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01066	13-Sep-12	29-Feb-12	142	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01071	13-Sep-12	23-Feb-12	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01076	13-Sep-12	15-Feb-12	152	30
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01081	13-Sep-12	01-Feb-12	162	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01095	13-Sep-12	30-Jan-12	164	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01094	13-Sep-12	22-Dec-11	191	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01068	13-Sep-12	20-Dec-11	193	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01085	13-Sep-12	23-Nov-11	212	42
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01087	13-Sep-12	18-Oct-11	238	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01088	13-Sep-12	13-Oct-11	241	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01090	13-Sep-12	12-Oct-11	242	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01096	13-Sep-12	05-Sep-11	269	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01108	13-Sep-12	22-Jun-11	322	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01109	13-Sep-12	16-Jun-11	326	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01075	13-Sep-12	09-May-11	354	71
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00951	13-Sep-12	15-Mar-11	393	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01089	13-Sep-12	13-Oct-10	502	100
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01077	13-Sep-12	08-Mar-10	659	132
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01073	13-Sep-12	29-Jun-09	839	168
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01070	13-Sep-12	20-Oct-08	1019	204
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01065	13-Sep-12	16-Sep-08	1043	209
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00546	14-Sep-12	10-Sep-08	1048	210
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00042	15-Sep-12	15-Jul-12	45	9
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00029	15-Sep-12	30-Apr-12	100	20
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00046	15-Sep-12	11-Sep-09	786	157
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00041	15-Sep-12	16-Oct-07	1284	257

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00032	16-Sep-12	29-Jun-12	56	11
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00045	16-Sep-12	27-Jun-12	58	12
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00044	16-Sep-12	29-May-12	79	16
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00043	16-Sep-12	11-Jul-03	2396	479
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01153	17-Sep-12	29-Jun-12	57	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01176	17-Sep-12	29-Jun-12	57	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01144	17-Sep-12	28-Jun-12	58	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01138	17-Sep-12	27-Jun-12	59	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01141	17-Sep-12	27-Jun-12	59	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01115	17-Sep-12	25-Jun-12	61	12
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01156	17-Sep-12	14-Jun-12	68	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01107	17-Sep-12	13-Jun-12	69	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01140	17-Sep-12	07-Jun-12	73	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01148	17-Sep-12	24-May-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01161	17-Sep-12	24-May-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01316	17-Sep-12	24-May-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01099	17-Sep-12	23-May-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01143	17-Sep-12	17-May-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01119	17-Sep-12	23-Apr-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01147	17-Sep-12	23-Apr-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01122	17-Sep-12	21-Mar-12	129	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01104	17-Sep-12	12-Mar-12	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01154	17-Sep-12	12-Mar-12	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01152	17-Sep-12	21-Feb-12	150	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01127	17-Sep-12	15-Feb-12	154	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01126	17-Sep-12	08-Feb-12	159	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01174	17-Sep-12	24-Jan-12	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01245	17-Sep-12	24-Jan-12	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01117	17-Sep-12	16-Jan-12	176	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01116	17-Sep-12	14-Nov-11	221	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00471	17-Sep-12	13-Oct-11	243	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01155	17-Sep-12	12-Oct-11	244	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01112	17-Sep-12	06-Oct-11	248	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00615	17-Sep-12	22-Sep-11	258	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01132	17-Sep-12	19-Sep-11	261	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01097	17-Sep-12	13-Sep-11	265	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01118	17-Sep-12	13-Sep-11	265	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01149	17-Sep-12	05-Sep-11	271	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00411	17-Sep-12	07-Jun-11	335	67

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00503	17-Sep-12	17-May-11	350	70
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01175	17-Sep-12	11-May-11	354	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01150	17-Sep-12	14-Apr-11	373	75
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01125	17-Sep-12	31-Mar-11	383	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01069	17-Sep-12	25-Feb-11	407	81
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01139	17-Sep-12	22-Feb-11	410	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01128	17-Sep-12	16-Feb-11	414	83
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01121	17-Sep-12	14-Feb-11	416	83
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00359	17-Sep-12	08-Feb-11	420	84
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01157	17-Sep-12	06-Dec-10	466	93
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01130	17-Sep-12	15-Nov-10	481	96
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01124	17-Sep-12	12-Oct-10	505	101
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01123	17-Sep-12	21-Sep-10	520	104
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01548	17-Sep-12	14-Sep-10	525	105
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01120	17-Sep-12	27-May-10	603	121
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01133	17-Sep-12	27-Apr-10	625	125
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01134	17-Sep-12	21-Oct-09	759	152
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01129	17-Sep-12	24-Nov-08	996	199
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/01059	17-Sep-12	10-Mar-08	1181	236
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/01121	17-Sep-12	10-Mar-08	1181	236
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01164	18-Sep-12	16-May-12	90	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00994	18-Sep-12	10-May-12	94	19
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01193	18-Sep-12	24-Apr-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01170	18-Sep-12	06-Mar-12	141	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01160	18-Sep-12	05-Mar-12	142	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00916	18-Sep-12	11-Jan-12	180	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01179	18-Sep-12	10-Jan-12	181	36
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00981	18-Sep-12	10-Jan-12	181	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01173	18-Sep-12	06-Jan-12	183	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01177	18-Sep-12	27-Oct-11	234	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00986	18-Sep-12	16-Sep-11	263	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00879	18-Sep-12	06-Sep-11	271	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01012	18-Sep-12	27-Jun-11	322	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00955	18-Sep-12	10-Jun-11	333	67
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01167	18-Sep-12	06-Jun-11	337	67
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01171	18-Sep-12	26-May-11	344	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01192	18-Sep-12	28-Apr-11	364	73
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01180	18-Sep-12	28-Mar-11	387	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01182	18-Sep-12	16-Mar-11	395	79

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01178	18-Sep-12	15-Feb-11	416	83
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01188	18-Sep-12	06-Jan-11	444	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01163	18-Sep-12	07-Dec-10	466	93
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01168	18-Sep-12	18-Nov-10	479	96
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01198	18-Sep-12	18-Nov-10	479	96
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01165	18-Sep-12	12-Nov-10	483	97
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00932	18-Sep-12	26-Apr-10	627	125
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00965	18-Sep-12	20-Apr-10	631	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01195	18-Sep-12	21-Dec-09	717	143
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01042	18-Sep-12	02-Oct-09	773	155
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01166	18-Sep-12	22-Jan-09	954	191
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01169	18-Sep-12	17-Sep-04	2088	418
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01219	20-Sep-12	20-Jul-12	45	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01197	20-Sep-12	25-Jun-12	64	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01220	20-Sep-12	21-Jun-12	66	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01199	20-Sep-12	11-Jun-12	74	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01212	20-Sep-12	07-Jun-12	76	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01186	20-Sep-12	29-May-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01229	20-Sep-12	28-May-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01217	20-Sep-12	23-May-12	87	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01225	20-Sep-12	26-Apr-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01221	20-Sep-12	25-Apr-12	107	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01194	20-Sep-12	15-Mar-12	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01191	20-Sep-12	12-Jan-12	181	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01208	20-Sep-12	13-Oct-11	246	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01189	20-Sep-12	03-Oct-11	254	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01200	20-Sep-12	26-Sep-11	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01206	20-Sep-12	10-Aug-11	292	58
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01185	20-Sep-12	04-Jul-11	319	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01190	20-Sep-12	04-Jul-11	319	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01202	20-Sep-12	15-Feb-11	418	84
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01201	20-Sep-12	11-Jan-11	443	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01196	20-Sep-12	17-Dec-10	460	92
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01204	20-Sep-12	17-Dec-10	460	92
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01216	21-Sep-12	27-Jun-12	63	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01269	21-Sep-12	27-Jun-12	63	13
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00049	21-Sep-12	23-May-12	88	18
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00050	21-Sep-12	23-May-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01213	21-Sep-12	15-May-12	94	19

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01241	21-Sep-12	25-Apr-12	108	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01233	21-Sep-12	16-Apr-12	115	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01238	21-Sep-12	26-Mar-12	130	26
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00018	21-Sep-12	23-Mar-12	131	26
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01235	21-Sep-12	15-Mar-12	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01224	21-Sep-12	29-Feb-12	148	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01231	21-Sep-12	29-Feb-12	148	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01226	21-Sep-12	28-Jun-11	324	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01230	21-Sep-12	16-Jun-11	332	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01234	21-Sep-12	09-Feb-11	423	85
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01399	21-Sep-12	14-Jun-10	595	119
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01236	21-Sep-12	05-May-09	884	177
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01237	21-Sep-12	11-Feb-08	1205	241
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01277	24-Sep-12	04-Jul-12	59	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01262	24-Sep-12	28-Jun-12	63	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01246	24-Sep-12	13-Jun-12	74	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01253	24-Sep-12	08-May-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01247	24-Sep-12	01-May-12	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01036	24-Sep-12	30-Apr-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01255	24-Sep-12	24-Apr-12	110	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01263	24-Sep-12	18-Apr-12	114	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01256	24-Sep-12	16-Mar-12	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01273	24-Sep-12	09-Mar-12	142	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01266	24-Sep-12	22-Feb-12	154	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01268	24-Sep-12	16-Feb-12	158	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01072	24-Sep-12	13-Feb-12	161	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01249	24-Sep-12	26-Jan-12	173	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01258	24-Sep-12	23-Nov-11	219	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01265	24-Sep-12	28-Sep-11	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01254	24-Sep-12	09-Sep-11	272	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01274	24-Sep-12	08-Sep-11	273	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01267	24-Sep-12	06-Sep-11	275	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01248	24-Sep-12	23-Jun-11	328	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01275	24-Sep-12	25-May-11	349	70
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01272	24-Sep-12	11-May-11	359	72
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01279	24-Sep-12	06-Apr-11	384	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01243	24-Sep-12	22-Mar-11	395	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01280	24-Sep-12	16-Mar-11	399	80
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01282	24-Sep-12	18-Jan-11	440	88

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01004	24-Sep-12	18-Nov-10	483	97
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01252	24-Sep-12	27-Sep-10	521	104
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01264	24-Sep-12	25-Nov-09	739	148
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01281	24-Sep-12	27-May-09	869	174
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01257	24-Sep-12	27-Apr-09	891	178
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01086	24-Sep-12	08-Sep-08	1056	211
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01244	24-Sep-12	21-Oct-05	1807	361
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01284	25-Sep-12	25-Jun-12	67	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01283	25-Sep-12	14-Mar-12	140	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01289	25-Sep-12	25-Oct-11	241	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01309	25-Sep-12	14-Dec-09	727	145
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01310	26-Sep-12	11-Jun-12	78	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01312	26-Sep-12	21-Mar-12	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01307	26-Sep-12	13-Mar-12	142	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01291	26-Sep-12	20-Feb-12	158	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01311	26-Sep-12	18-Jan-12	181	36
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01315	26-Sep-12	28-Nov-11	218	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01286	26-Sep-12	24-Nov-11	220	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01293	26-Sep-12	09-Sep-11	274	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01290	26-Sep-12	16-May-11	358	72
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01326	27-Sep-12	16-Aug-12	31	6
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01338	27-Sep-12	25-Jun-12	69	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01318	27-Sep-12	21-Jun-12	71	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01295	27-Sep-12	19-Jun-12	73	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01346	27-Sep-12	19-Jun-12	73	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01334	27-Sep-12	25-May-12	90	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01303	27-Sep-12	22-May-12	93	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01337	27-Sep-12	21-May-12	94	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01308	27-Sep-12	10-May-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01320	27-Sep-12	10-May-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01322	27-Sep-12	09-May-12	102	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01348	27-Sep-12	03-May-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01325	27-Sep-12	01-May-12	108	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01319	27-Sep-12	16-Apr-12	119	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01328	27-Sep-12	29-Mar-12	131	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01330	27-Sep-12	07-Mar-12	147	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01299	27-Sep-12	30-Jan-12	174	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01335	27-Sep-12	10-Jan-12	188	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01323	27-Sep-12	20-Dec-11	203	41

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01314	27-Sep-12	15-Dec-11	206	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01300	27-Sep-12	02-Dec-11	215	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01113	27-Sep-12	11-Nov-11	230	46
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01305	27-Sep-12	08-Apr-11	385	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01344	27-Sep-12	09-Mar-11	407	81
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01301	27-Sep-12	25-Jan-11	438	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01341	27-Sep-12	23-Nov-10	483	97
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01306	27-Sep-12	27-Aug-10	545	109
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01321	27-Sep-12	08-Jun-10	603	121
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00788	27-Sep-12	30-Apr-10	630	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01327	27-Sep-12	18-Jun-09	856	171
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00620	28-Sep-12	20-Oct-11	247	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00989	28-Sep-12	16-May-11	360	72
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01343	01-Oct-12	28-May-12	91	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00828	01-Oct-12	22-Jun-10	595	119
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00887	01-Oct-12	09-Mar-10	670	134
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01339	01-Oct-12	11-Apr-08	1167	233
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01135	02-Oct-12	14-May-12	102	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01287	02-Oct-12	14-May-12	102	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01114	02-Oct-12	09-May-12	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01136	02-Oct-12	08-May-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01276	02-Oct-12	08-May-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01354	02-Oct-12	07-Dec-11	215	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01355	02-Oct-12	14-Sep-11	275	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00983	02-Oct-12	25-May-11	355	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01358	02-Oct-12	03-Dec-10	478	96
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01159	02-Oct-12	04-Nov-10	499	100
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01360	02-Oct-12	04-Oct-10	522	104
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00895	02-Oct-12	17-Nov-09	751	150
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01352	02-Oct-12	07-Jan-09	975	195
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01366	04-Oct-12	22-May-12	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01367	04-Oct-12	24-Apr-12	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01368	04-Oct-12	20-Apr-12	120	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00789	04-Oct-12	07-Sep-11	282	56
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01251	04-Oct-12	31-May-11	353	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01359	04-Oct-12	17-May-11	363	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01370	04-Oct-12	02-Feb-11	437	87
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01362	04-Oct-12	17-Jan-11	449	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01357	04-Oct-12	15-May-09	885	177

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01145	05-Oct-12	21-Jun-12	77	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01365	05-Oct-12	23-May-12	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01092	05-Oct-12	21-Dec-11	208	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01151	05-Oct-12	29-Jun-11	333	67
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01381	08-Oct-12	26-Jul-12	53	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01374	08-Oct-12	28-Jun-12	73	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01378	08-Oct-12	27-Jun-12	74	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01380	08-Oct-12	22-May-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01379	08-Oct-12	21-May-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01187	08-Oct-12	27-Mar-12	140	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01347	08-Oct-12	13-Feb-12	171	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01203	08-Oct-12	27-Jan-12	182	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00840	08-Oct-12	15-Nov-11	235	47
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01331	08-Oct-12	12-Oct-11	259	52
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01333	08-Oct-12	14-Mar-11	411	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01349	08-Oct-12	18-Jan-11	450	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01063	08-Oct-12	08-Feb-10	696	139
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01376	08-Oct-12	04-Feb-10	698	140
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00040	09-Oct-12	29-Jun-12	73	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01184	09-Oct-12	12-Jun-12	86	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01386	09-Oct-12	24-May-12	99	20
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00028	09-Oct-12	18-May-12	103	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01211	09-Oct-12	27-Mar-12	141	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01388	09-Oct-12	14-Nov-11	237	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01385	09-Oct-12	16-Mar-10	671	134
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01384	09-Oct-12	22-Sep-08	1057	211
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01415	10-Oct-12	23-May-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01393	11-Oct-12	20-Jul-12	60	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01239	11-Oct-12	30-May-12	97	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01060	11-Oct-12	26-Apr-12	121	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01242	11-Oct-12	16-Jan-12	194	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00522	11-Oct-12	30-Jun-11	336	67
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01222	11-Oct-12	12-Apr-11	393	79
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01214	11-Oct-12	09-Feb-07	1480	296
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01396	12-Oct-12	09-May-12	113	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01261	12-Oct-12	16-Apr-12	130	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01390	12-Oct-12	09-Feb-12	177	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01394	12-Oct-12	28-Nov-11	230	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01398	12-Oct-12	07-Jun-11	354	71

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01403	15-Oct-12	13-Sep-12	23	5
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01411	15-Oct-12	13-Sep-12	23	5
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01422	15-Oct-12	12-Jun-12	90	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01400	15-Oct-12	11-May-12	112	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01407	15-Oct-12	27-Mar-12	145	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01408	15-Oct-12	05-Mar-12	161	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01406	15-Oct-12	16-Feb-12	173	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01401	15-Oct-12	08-Feb-12	179	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01405	15-Oct-12	14-Nov-11	241	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01404	15-Oct-12	07-May-10	637	127
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00055	16-Oct-12	27-Sep-12	14	3
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00051	16-Oct-12	20-Sep-12	19	4
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00038	16-Oct-12	15-Apr-12	132	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01412	16-Oct-12	30-Jan-12	187	37
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01288	16-Oct-12	26-Jan-12	189	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01270	16-Oct-12	24-Jan-12	191	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01413	16-Oct-12	10-Dec-10	483	97
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01420	16-Oct-12	16-Nov-09	762	152
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01332	17-Oct-12	04-Jul-12	76	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01402	17-Oct-12	09-May-12	116	23
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01317	17-Oct-12	09-Dec-10	485	97
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00739	17-Oct-12	16-Mar-10	677	135
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01418	17-Oct-12	07-Dec-05	1791	358
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01431	18-Oct-12	25-Jun-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01427	18-Oct-12	26-Apr-12	126	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01387	18-Oct-12	28-Mar-12	147	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01430	18-Oct-12	07-Dec-11	227	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00589	18-Oct-12	30-Jun-11	341	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01340	18-Oct-12	31-May-11	363	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01429	18-Oct-12	14-Dec-10	483	97
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01424	18-Oct-12	10-Jan-05	2029	406
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00656	19-Oct-12	06-Jan-09	989	198
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01441	22-Oct-12	12-Sep-12	29	6
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01437	22-Oct-12	28-May-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01435	22-Oct-12	02-May-12	124	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01433	22-Oct-12	30-Mar-12	147	29
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/00722	22-Oct-12	09-May-07	1424	285
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01442	22-Oct-12	28-Jan-02	2801	560
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01453	25-Oct-12	14-Jun-12	96	19

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01452	25-Oct-12	17-Jan-12	203	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01418	25-Oct-12	16-Jun-11	356	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01455	25-Oct-12	01-Dec-10	497	99
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01454	25-Oct-12	30-Apr-10	650	130
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01389	26-Oct-12	26-Jun-12	89	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01458	26-Oct-12	09-May-12	123	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01372	26-Oct-12	26-Apr-12	132	26
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00047	26-Oct-12	19-Apr-12	137	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01382	26-Oct-12	05-Dec-11	235	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01419	26-Oct-12	20-Sep-11	289	58
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00942	26-Oct-12	07-Sep-11	298	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01356	26-Oct-12	15-Sep-10	553	111
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/11/00926	26-Oct-12	08-Sep-10	558	112
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01460	26-Oct-12	11-Jun-10	621	124
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/09/00737	26-Oct-12	14-Sep-06	1597	319
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01383	26-Oct-12	06-May-05	1951	390
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01416	31-Oct-12	09-Sep-11	299	60
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00058	02-Nov-12	12-Oct-12	16	3
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01462	02-Nov-12	13-Jun-12	103	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01466	02-Nov-12	13-Jun-12	103	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01469	02-Nov-12	13-Jun-12	103	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01467	02-Nov-12	05-Apr-12	152	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01436	02-Nov-12	21-Feb-12	184	37
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01409	02-Nov-12	31-Jan-12	199	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01395	02-Nov-12	09-Jan-12	215	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01423	02-Nov-12	05-Dec-11	240	48
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01373	02-Nov-12	08-Nov-11	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01450	02-Nov-12	13-Mar-09	951	190
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01444	02-Nov-12	22-Jan-09	987	197
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01446	02-Nov-12	22-Jan-09	987	197
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01447	02-Nov-12	22-Jan-09	987	197
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01448	02-Nov-12	22-Jan-09	987	197
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00056	05-Nov-12	08-Oct-12	21	4
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00057	05-Nov-12	20-Sep-12	33	7
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01459	05-Nov-12	31-May-12	113	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01468	05-Nov-12	02-May-12	134	27
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01205	05-Nov-12	13-Jan-12	212	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01461	05-Nov-12	12-Jan-12	213	43

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01484	05-Nov-12	12-Jan-12	213	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01512	05-Nov-12	06-Oct-11	283	57
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00348	05-Nov-12	13-Sep-11	300	60
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00323	05-Nov-12	17-May-11	385	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01497	05-Nov-12	11-May-11	389	78
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01513	05-Nov-12	04-Oct-10	546	109
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01499	05-Nov-12	06-Sep-10	566	113
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01377	05-Nov-12	14-Apr-10	669	134
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01478	05-Nov-12	19-Jan-10	730	146
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/01056	05-Nov-12	21-May-09	903	181
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01457	06-Nov-12	28-Sep-12	28	6
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01474	06-Nov-12	12-Sep-12	40	8
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01487	06-Nov-12	12-Sep-12	40	8
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01505	06-Nov-12	28-Jun-12	94	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01472	06-Nov-12	14-Jun-12	104	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01507	06-Nov-12	11-Jun-12	107	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01504	06-Nov-12	02-May-12	135	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01506	06-Nov-12	13-Mar-12	171	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01508	06-Nov-12	07-Mar-12	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01476	06-Nov-12	31-Jan-12	201	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01496	06-Nov-12	11-Jan-12	215	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01491	06-Nov-12	29-Dec-11	224	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01473	06-Nov-12	15-Dec-11	234	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01304	06-Nov-12	14-Nov-11	257	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01440	06-Nov-12	14-Nov-11	257	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01298	06-Nov-12	10-Nov-11	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01432	06-Nov-12	07-Nov-11	262	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01414	06-Nov-12	26-Sep-11	292	58
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01502	06-Nov-12	10-Mar-11	434	87
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01509	07-Nov-12	21-Oct-11	274	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00824	07-Nov-12	15-Sep-11	300	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01172	07-Nov-12	15-Sep-11	300	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01510	07-Nov-12	04-Jul-11	353	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01514	07-Nov-12	24-Feb-11	445	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01515	07-Nov-12	25-Jun-09	880	176
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00901	08-Nov-12	21-May-12	124	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00921	08-Nov-12	08-Sep-11	306	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01439	09-Nov-12	14-Dec-11	238	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01445	09-Nov-12	22-Jan-09	992	198

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00773	09-Nov-12	20-Feb-04	2276	455
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01528	12-Nov-12	25-Jun-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01523	12-Nov-12	20-Apr-12	147	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01529	12-Nov-12	28-Feb-12	185	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01520	12-Nov-12	01-Feb-12	204	41
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01456	12-Nov-12	01-Feb-12	204	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01522	12-Nov-12	20-Oct-11	278	56
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01351	12-Nov-12	06-Oct-11	288	58
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01008	12-Nov-12	27-Jun-11	361	72
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01434	12-Nov-12	05-Apr-11	420	84
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01524	12-Nov-12	03-Mar-11	443	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00151	12-Nov-12	12-Oct-10	545	109
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01142	12-Nov-12	04-May-10	660	132
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01216	12-Nov-12	21-Apr-10	669	134
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01485	12-Nov-12	24-Sep-09	818	164
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01519	12-Nov-12	15-Mar-07	1478	296
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01534	14-Nov-12	26-Jul-12	80	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01532	14-Nov-12	11-Oct-11	287	57
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01535	14-Nov-12	01-Apr-11	424	85
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01503	14-Nov-12	10-Feb-10	721	144
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01489	14-Nov-12	01-Feb-10	728	146
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01414	14-Nov-12	12-Jun-09	894	179
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00063	15-Nov-12	08-Sep-11	311	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01371	15-Nov-12	07-Apr-08	1204	241
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01444	15-Nov-12	11-Mar-08	1223	245
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00048	19-Nov-12	07-Sep-12	52	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01483	19-Nov-12	01-Aug-12	79	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01479	19-Nov-12	31-Jul-12	80	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01511	19-Nov-12	25-Jul-12	84	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01525	19-Nov-12	26-Jun-12	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01527	19-Nov-12	13-Jun-12	114	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01516	19-Nov-12	17-May-12	133	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01296	19-Nov-12	16-Apr-12	156	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01494	19-Nov-12	27-Mar-12	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01531	19-Nov-12	20-Mar-12	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01533	19-Nov-12	13-Feb-12	201	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01501	19-Nov-12	31-Jan-12	210	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01438	19-Nov-12	10-Jan-12	225	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01500	19-Nov-12	12-Dec-11	246	49

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01471	19-Nov-12	22-Sep-11	303	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00983	19-Nov-12	14-Sep-11	309	62
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01392	19-Nov-12	29-Jun-11	364	73
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/11/01153	19-Nov-12	14-Jun-10	636	127
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01490	19-Nov-12	15-Oct-07	1331	266
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01465	19-Nov-12	18-May-07	1437	287
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01464	19-Nov-12	09-Jan-03	2573	515
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01547	20-Nov-12	04-Oct-12	34	7
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01521	20-Nov-12	01-Aug-12	80	16
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01495	20-Nov-12	08-Mar-12	184	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01541	20-Nov-12	16-Feb-12	199	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01546	21-Nov-12	11-Sep-12	52	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01557	21-Nov-12	16-Aug-12	70	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01561	21-Nov-12	30-May-12	126	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01481	21-Nov-12	17-May-12	135	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01537	21-Nov-12	05-Mar-12	188	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01538	21-Nov-12	05-Mar-12	188	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01569	21-Nov-12	10-Feb-11	465	93
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01563	21-Nov-12	01-Jun-10	647	129
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01556	22-Nov-12	09-Oct-12	33	7
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01560	22-Nov-12	17-Sep-12	49	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01549	22-Nov-12	12-Sep-12	52	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01545	22-Nov-12	06-Jun-12	122	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01553	22-Nov-12	17-May-12	136	27
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01544	22-Nov-12	03-May-12	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01550	22-Nov-12	01-May-12	148	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01498	22-Nov-12	29-Mar-12	171	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01551	22-Nov-12	26-Mar-12	174	35
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01363	22-Nov-12	26-Mar-12	174	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01581	22-Nov-12	15-Mar-12	181	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01536	22-Nov-12	30-Sep-11	300	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01554	22-Nov-12	30-Jun-11	366	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01588	22-Nov-12	10-Jun-10	641	128
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01552	22-Nov-12	29-Oct-08	1062	212
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01000	22-Nov-12	07-Feb-08	1251	250
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01002	22-Nov-12	19-Jan-06	1786	357
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01568	24-Nov-12	20-Jun-12	113	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01573	24-Nov-12	02-Nov-11	278	56
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01567	24-Nov-12	19-Aug-11	331	66

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01570	24-Nov-12	02-Jul-08	1148	230
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01559	25-Nov-12	27-Jun-12	108	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01580	26-Nov-12	25-Jun-12	111	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01582	26-Nov-12	25-Jun-12	111	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01565	26-Nov-12	14-Jun-12	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01579	26-Nov-12	20-Feb-12	201	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01575	26-Nov-12	20-Sep-11	310	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01572	26-Nov-12	12-Jan-10	750	150
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00065	27-Nov-12	26-Oct-12	23	5
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01586	27-Nov-12	08-Oct-12	37	7
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00060	27-Nov-12	25-Sep-12	46	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01543	27-Nov-12	26-Jun-12	111	22
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00059	27-Nov-12	18-May-12	138	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01583	27-Nov-12	10-May-12	144	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01548	27-Nov-12	26-Mar-12	177	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01587	27-Nov-12	20-Feb-12	202	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01589	27-Nov-12	09-Feb-12	209	42
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00054	27-Nov-12	22-Sep-11	309	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01591	27-Nov-12	04-May-11	410	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/00796	27-Nov-12	29-Jun-07	1413	283
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01592	28-Nov-12	06-Jun-11	388	78
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00685	29-Nov-12	15-Feb-12	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00928	29-Nov-12	25-Nov-09	787	157
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01482	30-Nov-12	08-Mar-12	192	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01417	30-Nov-12	19-Apr-10	685	137
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01620	02-Dec-12	06-Sep-12	62	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01619	03-Dec-12	18-Oct-12	33	7
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01615	03-Dec-12	17-Oct-12	34	7
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01576	03-Dec-12	11-Sep-12	60	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01630	03-Dec-12	06-Sep-12	63	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01629	03-Dec-12	19-Jun-12	120	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01612	03-Dec-12	18-Jun-12	121	24
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01539	03-Dec-12	12-Jun-12	125	25
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01324	03-Dec-12	30-Apr-12	156	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01617	03-Dec-12	28-Feb-12	200	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01614	03-Dec-12	20-Feb-12	206	41
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01555	03-Dec-12	25-Jan-12	224	45

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01627	03-Dec-12	10-Nov-11	278	56
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01618	03-Dec-12	19-Sep-11	316	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01621	03-Dec-12	07-Jun-11	390	78
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01623	03-Dec-12	19-Oct-10	555	111
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00706	03-Dec-12	22-Apr-10	683	137
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01626	03-Dec-12	29-Jun-09	896	179
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00003	03-Dec-12	24-Oct-08	1072	214
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01628	03-Dec-12	22-May-08	1183	237
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01542	03-Dec-12	14-Dec-04	2080	416
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01633	05-Dec-12	24-Sep-12	53	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01602	05-Dec-12	26-Jun-12	117	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01616	05-Dec-12	26-Jun-12	117	23
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01564	05-Dec-12	21-Feb-12	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01632	05-Dec-12	05-Oct-11	306	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01635	05-Dec-12	31-Aug-11	331	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01625	05-Dec-12	12-Nov-10	539	108
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01480	06-Dec-12	18-Sep-12	58	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01585	06-Dec-12	14-Jun-12	126	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01603	06-Dec-12	22-May-12	143	29
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01517	06-Dec-12	23-Feb-12	206	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01006	06-Dec-12	20-Jan-12	230	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01361	06-Dec-12	18-Jan-12	232	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01598	06-Dec-12	13-Sep-11	323	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01597	06-Dec-12	02-Aug-10	614	123
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01470	06-Dec-12	19-Dec-08	1035	207
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01562	06-Dec-12	11-May-07	1455	291
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01606	07-Dec-12	11-Jun-12	130	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01607	07-Dec-12	02-May-12	158	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00831	07-Dec-12	27-Mar-12	184	37
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01594	07-Dec-12	14-Feb-12	214	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01604	07-Dec-12	23-Jan-12	230	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00737	07-Dec-12	14-Sep-11	323	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01599	07-Dec-12	07-Sep-11	328	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01350	07-Dec-12	20-Jun-11	385	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01609	07-Dec-12	13-Jan-09	1019	204
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01605	07-Dec-12	14-Jan-08	1280	256
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01644	09-Dec-12	29-Jun-12	116	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01642	09-Dec-12	27-Jun-12	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01640	09-Dec-12	19-Jun-12	124	25

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01646	09-Dec-12	15-Dec-11	257	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01643	09-Dec-12	11-Oct-11	304	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01648	09-Dec-12	22-Sep-10	578	116
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01638	09-Dec-12	23-Nov-09	795	159
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01645	09-Dec-12	05-May-05	1982	396
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01636	09-Dec-12	24-Apr-02	2773	555
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01651	10-Dec-12	12-Jun-12	130	26
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01397	10-Dec-12	29-Mar-12	183	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01294	10-Dec-12	15-Feb-12	214	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00962	10-Dec-12	20-Sep-11	320	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01653	10-Dec-12	09-Nov-10	545	109
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01655	10-Dec-12	11-Jun-09	913	183
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01656	10-Dec-12	23-Jun-08	1166	233
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00755	11-Dec-12	09-Jun-10	655	131
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/10/00675	11-Dec-12	12-Apr-10	697	139
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00411	11-Dec-12	04-Mar-10	724	145
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/10/00367	11-Dec-12	14-Dec-09	782	156
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/00946	11-Dec-12	08-Jul-09	895	179
Legal Aid	T/HC/04/00610	11-Dec-12	30-Apr-02	2771	554
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01659	12-Dec-12	02-Oct-12	52	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01663	12-Dec-12	11-Sep-12	67	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01661	12-Dec-12	10-Sep-12	68	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01668	12-Dec-12	24-Jan-12	232	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01650	12-Dec-12	22-Nov-11	277	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01658	12-Dec-12	03-Oct-11	313	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01652	12-Dec-12	13-Sep-10	588	118
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00959	12-Dec-12	14-Jun-10	653	131
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01664	12-Dec-12	12-Nov-09	805	161
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/00793	12-Dec-12	28-Oct-09	816	163
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01667	12-Dec-12	11-Mar-09	981	196
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01662	13-Dec-12	25-Jun-12	124	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01666	13-Dec-12	17-Feb-12	215	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01426	13-Dec-12	12-Dec-11	264	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01669	13-Dec-12	07-Sep-11	332	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01657	13-Dec-12	12-Nov-10	545	109
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00382	13-Dec-12	04-Oct-10	574	115
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00200	13-Dec-12	24-Jun-04	2211	442
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01593	14-Dec-12	29-May-12	144	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01670	16-Dec-12	22-May-12	149	30

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01679	16-Dec-12	24-Feb-12	211	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01682	16-Dec-12	21-Feb-12	214	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01673	16-Dec-12	06-Feb-12	225	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01680	16-Dec-12	29-Nov-11	274	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01683	16-Dec-12	20-Sep-10	585	117
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01672	16-Dec-12	17-Feb-10	738	148
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01693	17-Dec-12	22-Oct-12	41	8
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01687	17-Dec-12	08-Oct-12	51	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01686	17-Dec-12	28-Jun-12	123	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01675	17-Dec-12	05-Mar-12	206	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01681	17-Dec-12	25-Nov-11	277	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01674	17-Dec-12	28-Oct-11	297	59
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01689	17-Dec-12	29-Jun-11	384	77
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01518	17-Dec-12	07-Jun-11	400	80
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01488	17-Dec-12	02-Jun-11	403	81
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01692	17-Dec-12	24-Sep-10	582	116
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01684	17-Dec-12	18-Jan-10	761	152
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01677	17-Dec-12	19-Apr-07	1478	296
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01232	18-Dec-12	14-Mar-12	200	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01342	18-Dec-12	23-Nov-11	280	56
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01697	19-Dec-12	05-Sep-12	76	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01649	19-Dec-12	26-Jun-12	127	25
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01696	19-Dec-12	27-Mar-12	192	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01698	19-Dec-12	14-Dec-10	527	105
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01699	20-Dec-12	18-Sep-12	68	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01700	20-Dec-12	22-May-12	153	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01695	20-Dec-12	06-Mar-12	208	42
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00016	20-Dec-12	13-Feb-12	224	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01701	20-Dec-12	07-Nov-11	294	59
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00070	20-Dec-12	01-Apr-11	450	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00071	20-Dec-12	01-Apr-11	450	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01704	21-Dec-12	22-Nov-12	22	4
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01703	21-Dec-12	14-Dec-11	268	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01639	21-Dec-12	27-Feb-09	996	199
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00174	04-Jan-13	12-Jun-12	149	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01710	07-Jan-13	30-Nov-12	27	5
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01713	07-Jan-13	03-Oct-12	69	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01705	07-Jan-13	01-Oct-12	71	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01714	07-Jan-13	01-Oct-12	71	14

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01707	07-Jan-13	19-Sep-12	79	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00004	07-Jan-13	19-Sep-12	79	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00010	07-Jan-13	26-Jun-12	140	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01709	07-Jan-13	25-Apr-12	184	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00001	07-Jan-13	29-Mar-12	203	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01711	07-Jan-13	09-Dec-10	543	109
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01590	07-Jan-13	18-Jan-10	776	155
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01706	07-Jan-13	17-Nov-09	820	164
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00066	08-Jan-13	23-Nov-12	33	7
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00012	08-Jan-13	04-Oct-12	69	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00009	08-Jan-13	29-Jun-12	138	28
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00008	08-Jan-13	28-Jun-12	139	28
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00061	08-Jan-13	22-Jun-12	143	29
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00068	08-Jan-13	21-Jun-12	144	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00007	08-Jan-13	14-May-12	172	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00013	08-Jan-13	01-Mar-11	486	97
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00028	09-Jan-13	24-Sep-12	78	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00019	09-Jan-13	11-Sep-12	87	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00022	09-Jan-13	10-Sep-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00024	09-Jan-13	10-Sep-12	88	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00025	09-Jan-13	21-Jun-12	145	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00033	09-Jan-13	21-Jun-12	145	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00026	09-Jan-13	22-May-12	167	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00017	09-Jan-13	28-Mar-12	206	41
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01637	09-Jan-13	16-Feb-12	235	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00011	09-Jan-13	14-Feb-12	237	47
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01608	09-Jan-13	16-Nov-11	301	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00015	09-Jan-13	20-Oct-11	320	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00014	09-Jan-13	30-Sep-11	334	67
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01601	09-Jan-13	30-Aug-11	357	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00029	09-Jan-13	12-Apr-11	457	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00027	09-Jan-13	08-Feb-11	502	100
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00042	09-Jan-13	22-Feb-08	1274	255
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01584	10-Jan-13	10-Sep-12	89	18
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00064	10-Jan-13	18-May-12	170	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00031	10-Jan-13	01-May-12	183	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00036	10-Jan-13	23-Apr-12	189	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00018	10-Jan-13	13-Mar-12	218	44

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01526	10-Jan-13	26-Jan-12	251	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00023	10-Jan-13	17-Jan-12	258	52
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01375	10-Jan-13	28-Oct-11	315	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00038	10-Jan-13	15-Apr-11	455	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00035	10-Jan-13	14-Apr-11	456	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01399	10-Jan-13	13-Apr-11	457	91
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/10/01380	10-Jan-13	13-Sep-10	609	122
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00034	10-Jan-13	07-Sep-06	1656	331
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00041	13-Jan-13	21-Nov-12	38	8
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00037	13-Jan-13	02-Oct-12	74	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00040	13-Jan-13	01-Oct-12	75	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00043	13-Jan-13	25-Sep-12	79	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00039	13-Jan-13	16-May-12	173	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00046	13-Jan-13	22-Feb-12	233	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00054	14-Jan-13	25-Oct-12	58	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00047	14-Jan-13	22-Oct-12	61	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00057	14-Jan-13	25-Jun-12	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00050	14-Jan-13	15-Apr-11	457	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00056	14-Jan-13	17-Nov-09	825	165
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00061	15-Jan-13	03-Oct-12	75	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00065	15-Jan-13	26-Jun-12	146	29
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01660	15-Jan-13	19-Jun-12	151	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00064	15-Jan-13	03-May-11	446	89
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00060	15-Jan-13	24-Mar-11	474	95
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00059	15-Jan-13	02-Feb-11	510	102
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01647	15-Jan-13	04-May-10	706	141
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00003	16-Jan-13	08-Oct-12	73	15
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00005	16-Jan-13	13-Sep-12	90	18
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00001	16-Jan-13	29-Jun-12	144	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/00783	16-Jan-13	24-Sep-08	1126	225
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00074	17-Jan-13	10-Dec-12	29	6
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01678	17-Jan-13	02-Oct-12	78	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00066	17-Jan-13	25-Sep-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00076	17-Jan-13	12-Sep-12	92	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00072	17-Jan-13	25-Jun-12	149	30
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00067	17-Jan-13	17-May-12	176	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00063	17-Jan-13	05-Mar-12	229	46
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00069	17-Jan-13	12-Jan-12	266	53

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00062	17-Jan-13	28-Oct-11	320	64
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00007	18-Jan-13	20-Sep-12	87	17
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01690	18-Jan-13	13-Jun-12	158	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00075	18-Jan-13	27-Jun-11	410	82
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01285	18-Jan-13	08-Sep-10	618	124
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01530	18-Jan-13	08-Apr-05	2031	406
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01685	20-Jan-13	15-Oct-12	70	14
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01691	20-Jan-13	25-Oct-11	324	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00078	20-Jan-13	07-Oct-11	336	67
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00077	20-Jan-13	06-Oct-11	337	67
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00079	20-Jan-13	28-Jan-04	2343	469
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00088	21-Jan-13	27-Sep-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00080	21-Jan-13	18-Sep-12	90	18
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00052	21-Jan-13	11-Sep-12	95	19
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00053	21-Jan-13	11-Sep-12	95	19
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/12/00069	21-Jan-13	11-Sep-12	95	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00083	21-Jan-13	07-Jun-12	163	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00084	21-Jan-13	25-Jan-12	259	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00081	21-Jan-13	16-Dec-11	287	57
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00085	21-Jan-13	04-Nov-10	578	116
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00087	21-Jan-13	24-Jun-10	673	135
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/00016	21-Jan-13	10-May-10	706	141
Legal Aid	T/HC/09/00495	21-Jan-13	15-Sep-08	1136	227
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00090	22-Jan-13	20-Jun-12	155	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00089	22-Jan-13	01-Mar-12	234	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00100	23-Jan-13	14-Sep-12	94	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00103	23-Jan-13	21-Mar-12	221	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00098	23-Jan-13	06-Feb-12	253	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00102	23-Jan-13	20-Dec-11	287	57
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00099	23-Jan-13	04-Oct-11	342	68
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00107	23-Jan-13	29-Sep-11	345	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00096	23-Jan-13	27-Sep-11	347	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00095	23-Jan-13	08-Apr-11	469	94
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00106	23-Jan-13	09-Apr-09	990	198
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00101	23-Jan-13	05-Mar-07	1538	308
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00111	24-Jan-13	23-Oct-12	68	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00110	24-Jan-13	10-Oct-12	77	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00105	24-Jan-13	11-Sep-12	98	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00109	24-Jan-13	06-Mar-12	233	47

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00108	24-Jan-13	25-Feb-08	1284	257
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01577	25-Jan-13	21-Feb-12	244	49
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01610	25-Jan-13	13-Jan-10	793	159
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/12/01595	25-Jan-13	07-Feb-06	1819	364
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00114	27-Jan-13	19-Nov-12	50	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00115	27-Jan-13	14-Nov-12	53	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00123	27-Jan-13	26-Oct-12	66	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00113	27-Jan-13	24-Sep-12	90	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00112	27-Jan-13	10-Sep-12	100	20
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00002	27-Jan-13	29-Jun-12	151	30
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00005	27-Jan-13	29-May-12	174	35
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00003	27-Jan-13	23-Jun-11	417	83
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00021	27-Jan-13	20-Dec-10	550	110
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00117	28-Jan-13	19-Jun-12	160	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00124	28-Jan-13	19-Jun-12	160	32
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00121	28-Jan-13	30-May-12	174	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00119	28-Jan-13	15-May-12	185	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00120	28-Jan-13	05-Mar-12	236	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00480	28-Jan-13	05-Dec-08	1082	216
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00127	29-Jan-13	26-Sep-12	90	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00133	29-Jan-13	24-Sep-12	92	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00128	29-Jan-13	18-Sep-12	96	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00131	29-Jan-13	18-Sep-12	96	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00122	29-Jan-13	16-Apr-12	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00126	29-Jan-13	08-Mar-12	234	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01654	29-Jan-13	23-Jan-09	1048	210
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00129	29-Jan-13	14-Oct-04	2164	433
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00144	30-Jan-13	06-Nov-12	62	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00118	30-Jan-13	26-Oct-12	69	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00151	30-Jan-13	04-Oct-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00141	30-Jan-13	27-Mar-12	222	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00139	30-Jan-13	03-Oct-11	348	70
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00130	30-Jan-13	27-May-11	439	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/01207	30-Jan-13	29-Jun-10	677	135
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01566	30-Jan-13	14-Apr-10	731	146
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00153	30-Jan-13	18-Feb-10	770	154
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00150	30-Jan-13	07-Sep-01	2974	595
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00168	31-Jan-13	20-Nov-12	53	11

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00155	31-Jan-13	19-Nov-12	54	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00166	31-Jan-13	08-Nov-12	61	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00162	31-Jan-13	26-Oct-12	70	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00165	31-Jan-13	01-Oct-12	89	18
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01712	31-Jan-13	11-Sep-12	103	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00134	31-Jan-13	10-Sep-12	104	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00161	31-Jan-13	21-Aug-12	118	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00132	31-Jan-13	27-Jun-12	157	31
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00152	31-Jan-13	28-May-12	179	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00160	31-Jan-13	30-Apr-12	199	40
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00032	31-Jan-13	25-Apr-12	202	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00157	31-Jan-13	19-Apr-12	206	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00167	31-Jan-13	27-Mar-12	223	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00159	31-Jan-13	07-Sep-10	628	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00158	31-Jan-13	11-Jun-09	951	190
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00146	31-Jan-13	28-Jun-07	1461	292
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00149	31-Jan-13	21-Mar-06	1793	359
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00156	31-Jan-13	28-Jun-04	2244	449
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00173	02-Feb-13	12-Sep-12	103	21
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00045	02-Feb-13	16-May-12	188	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00170	03-Feb-13	01-Oct-12	90	18
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00051	03-Feb-13	10-May-11	454	91
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00048	03-Feb-13	30-Jun-09	939	188
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00175	03-Feb-13	20-Feb-08	1293	259
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00049	03-Feb-13	11-Jun-07	1475	295
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00169	04-Feb-13	21-Nov-12	54	11
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00180	04-Feb-13	24-Sep-12	96	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00179	04-Feb-13	06-Jun-12	174	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00172	04-Feb-13	23-May-12	184	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00135	04-Feb-13	16-May-12	189	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00181	04-Feb-13	24-Apr-12	205	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00178	04-Feb-13	26-Mar-12	226	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00850	04-Feb-13	23-Feb-12	248	50
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00171	04-Feb-13	16-Feb-12	253	51
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01215	04-Feb-13	11-Jan-12	279	56
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00052	04-Feb-13	24-Oct-11	336	67
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00184	04-Feb-13	21-Apr-09	990	198
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00190	05-Feb-13	04-Dec-12	46	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00198	05-Feb-13	15-Nov-12	59	12

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00197	05-Feb-13	27-Sep-12	94	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00195	05-Feb-13	18-Sep-12	101	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00188	05-Feb-13	23-Apr-12	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00193	05-Feb-13	16-Nov-11	320	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00884	06-Feb-13	22-Apr-10	730	146
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01443	07-Feb-13	29-Jun-11	422	84
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01613	08-Feb-13	05-Oct-10	614	123
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00194	10-Feb-13	19-Sep-12	103	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00183	10-Feb-13	19-Jun-12	169	34
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00208	10-Feb-13	28-May-12	185	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00191	10-Feb-13	17-Dec-09	822	164
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00281	10-Feb-13	03-Feb-09	1049	210
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00202	11-Feb-13	15-Jan-13	20	4
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00073	11-Feb-13	20-Nov-12	60	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00200	11-Feb-13	07-Nov-12	69	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00201	11-Feb-13	18-Oct-12	83	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00212	11-Feb-13	04-Oct-12	93	19
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/13/00082	11-Feb-13	11-Sep-12	110	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00187	11-Feb-13	09-May-12	199	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00211	11-Feb-13	24-Apr-12	210	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00199	11-Feb-13	22-Sep-11	363	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00204	11-Feb-13	06-Sep-11	375	75
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00656	11-Feb-13	08-Mar-10	766	153
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00203	11-Feb-13	19-Nov-09	843	169
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01486	11-Feb-13	06-Sep-06	1679	336
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00227	12-Feb-13	12-Dec-12	45	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00225	12-Feb-13	23-Oct-12	81	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00222	12-Feb-13	26-Sep-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00221	12-Feb-13	24-Sep-12	102	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00215	12-Feb-13	18-Sep-12	106	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00214	12-Feb-13	11-Jun-12	177	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00217	12-Feb-13	11-Jun-12	177	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00218	12-Feb-13	30-Apr-12	207	41
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00209	12-Feb-13	05-May-11	464	93
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00220	12-Feb-13	02-Feb-10	791	158
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00216	12-Feb-13	29-Oct-08	1120	224
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00226	12-Feb-13	14-Feb-08	1304	261
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00223	13-Feb-13	12-Sep-12	111	22

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/13/00093	13-Feb-13	28-Jun-12	165	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00224	13-Feb-13	24-Apr-12	212	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01574	13-Feb-13	26-Sep-11	363	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00228	13-Feb-13	16-Sep-11	369	74
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/10/00086	13-Feb-13	09-Nov-09	853	171
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00004	14-Feb-13	19-Jun-12	173	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01634	14-Feb-13	01-Dec-11	316	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01364	14-Feb-13	29-Nov-10	579	116
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00234	14-Feb-13	03-Mar-10	772	154
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00020	15-Feb-13	16-Sep-10	632	126
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00236	17-Feb-13	06-Dec-12	52	10
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00230	17-Feb-13	22-Oct-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00233	17-Feb-13	22-Oct-12	85	17
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00239	17-Feb-13	11-Jun-12	180	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00232	17-Feb-13	21-Nov-11	325	65
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00238	17-Feb-13	14-Apr-08	1265	253
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00136	18-Feb-13	28-Jun-12	168	34
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00138	18-Feb-13	24-Apr-12	215	43
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00145	18-Feb-13	27-Apr-10	735	147
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00248	19-Feb-13	18-Oct-12	89	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00253	19-Feb-13	26-Sep-12	105	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00243	19-Feb-13	06-Jul-12	163	33
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00242	19-Feb-13	20-Jun-12	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00240	19-Feb-13	15-Jun-12	178	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00252	19-Feb-13	11-Jun-12	182	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00241	19-Feb-13	09-Jan-12	292	58
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00250	19-Feb-13	08-Dec-11	314	63
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00251	19-Feb-13	27-Oct-11	344	69
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00256	20-Feb-13	04-Oct-12	100	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00358	20-Feb-13	21-Jun-12	175	35
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/13/00092	20-Feb-13	21-Jun-12	175	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00055	20-Feb-13	28-Mar-12	236	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00259	20-Feb-13	21-Mar-12	241	48
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00104	20-Feb-13	05-Sep-11	383	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00249	20-Feb-13	03-Jun-11	449	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/01/00614	20-Feb-13	19-Feb-01	3133	627
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00142	21-Feb-13	25-Sep-12	108	22
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00147	21-Feb-13	20-Sep-12	111	22

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/13/00143	21-Feb-13	12-Sep-12	117	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00260	21-Feb-13	20-Jun-12	177	35
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00245	21-Feb-13	25-May-12	195	39
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01571	21-Feb-13	13-Oct-11	356	71
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00053	21-Feb-13	07-Apr-11	491	98
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00255	21-Feb-13	15-Feb-11	528	106
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/13/00068	21-Feb-13	08-Jun-10	708	142
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00163	21-Feb-13	24-Jan-07	1587	317
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01402	21-Feb-13	06-Feb-04	2360	472
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00267	22-Feb-13	08-May-12	209	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00244	22-Feb-13	19-Apr-12	222	44
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00261	22-Feb-13	23-Nov-11	328	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00262	22-Feb-13	08-Sep-11	382	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00030	22-Feb-13	14-Apr-10	748	150
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00265	24-Feb-13	09-Jan-13	33	7
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00263	24-Feb-13	20-Dec-12	47	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00520	24-Feb-13	20-Jun-12	178	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00266	24-Feb-13	07-Jun-12	187	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00269	24-Feb-13	08-May-12	209	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00264	24-Feb-13	14-Mar-12	248	50
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00196	25-Feb-13	19-Dec-12	49	10
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00014	25-Feb-13	29-Nov-12	63	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00642	25-Feb-13	15-Oct-12	96	19
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00164	25-Feb-13	08-Oct-12	101	20
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00002	25-Feb-13	24-Sep-12	111	22
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00182	25-Feb-13	20-Sep-12	113	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00272	25-Feb-13	10-Sep-12	121	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00271	25-Feb-13	18-May-12	202	40
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00186	25-Feb-13	08-May-12	210	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00270	25-Feb-13	01-Mar-12	258	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00094	25-Feb-13	08-Dec-11	318	64
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00273	25-Feb-13	29-Sep-11	368	74
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00097	25-Feb-13	09-Jun-11	448	90
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01596	25-Feb-13	29-Nov-10	586	117
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/01702	25-Feb-13	23-Jan-09	1067	213
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00275	26-Feb-13	03-Dec-12	62	12
Legal Aid / 1/2 Party and Party	T/HC/13/00185	26-Feb-13	26-Oct-11	350	70

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00276	26-Feb-13	04-May-11	475	95
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00018	27-Feb-13	24-Jan-13	25	5
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00011	27-Feb-13	07-Jan-13	38	8
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00280	27-Feb-13	10-Dec-12	58	12
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00017	27-Feb-13	03-Dec-12	63	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00278	27-Feb-13	18-Jun-12	183	37
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00282	27-Feb-13	23-Dec-11	309	62
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00058	27-Feb-13	07-Sep-11	386	77
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00285	28-Feb-13	12-Jun-12	188	38
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00205	28-Feb-13	28-Feb-12	263	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00286	28-Feb-13	14-Feb-12	273	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00988	28-Feb-13	27-Jun-11	439	88
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00287	28-Feb-13	26-May-11	461	92
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00289	28-Feb-13	21-Oct-10	616	123
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00460	28-Feb-13	17-Sep-10	640	128
Legal Aid	T/HC/12/00985	28-Feb-13	30-Mar-10	763	153
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00291	03-Mar-13	25-Oct-12	92	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00293	03-Mar-13	24-Nov-11	332	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00292	03-Mar-13	21-Sep-11	378	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00298	04-Mar-13	14-Nov-12	79	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00302	04-Mar-13	02-Oct-12	110	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00303	04-Mar-13	25-Sep-12	115	23
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00304	04-Mar-13	14-Feb-12	275	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00296	05-Mar-13	02-Oct-12	111	22
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00294	05-Mar-13	14-Aug-12	146	29
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00295	05-Mar-13	26-Jun-12	181	36
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00297	05-Mar-13	21-Feb-12	271	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00315	06-Mar-13	16-Oct-12	102	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00314	06-Mar-13	15-Oct-12	103	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00306	06-Mar-13	19-Sep-12	121	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00312	06-Mar-13	15-May-12	212	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00313	06-Mar-13	09-Feb-11	541	108
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00310	06-Mar-13	02-Sep-10	655	131
Legal Aid	T/HC/10/01388	06-Mar-13	30-May-06	1767	353
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00006	07-Mar-13	10-Jan-13	41	8
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00021	07-Mar-13	07-Jan-13	44	9
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00020	07-Mar-13	07-Dec-12	65	13
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00207	07-Mar-13	26-Oct-12	95	19
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00235	10-Mar-13	05-Nov-12	90	18

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00318	10-Mar-13	18-Oct-12	102	20
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00317	10-Mar-13	16-Oct-12	104	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00324	10-Mar-13	01-May-12	224	45
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00322	10-Mar-13	24-Feb-12	271	54
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00332	11-Mar-13	18-Dec-12	60	12
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00325	11-Mar-13	10-Dec-12	66	13
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00331	11-Mar-13	05-Nov-12	91	18
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00330	11-Mar-13	17-Oct-12	104	21
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00326	11-Mar-13	01-Oct-12	116	23
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00231	11-Mar-13	17-Apr-12	235	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00210	11-Mar-13	30-Mar-12	247	49
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00328	11-Mar-13	29-Sep-11	378	76
Legal Aid	T/HC/11/00628	11-Mar-13	30-Mar-11	509	102
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00288	11-Mar-13	11-Mar-10	783	157
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00333	12-Mar-13	29-Jan-13	31	6
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00337	12-Mar-13	25-Sep-12	121	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00316	12-Mar-13	21-Jun-12	189	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00321	12-Mar-13	16-May-12	215	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00327	12-Mar-13	15-May-12	216	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00334	12-Mar-13	14-May-12	217	43
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00338	12-Mar-13	17-Apr-12	236	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00339	12-Mar-13	19-Dec-11	322	64
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00254	12-Mar-13	08-Dec-11	329	66
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00344	13-Mar-13	07-Feb-13	25	5
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00345	13-Mar-13	14-Jan-13	43	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00350	13-Mar-13	05-Nov-12	93	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00340	13-Mar-13	23-Feb-12	275	55
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00355	13-Mar-13	14-Jun-11	457	91
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00342	13-Mar-13	05-Apr-11	507	101
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00348	13-Mar-13	13-Sep-10	653	131
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00354	13-Mar-13	14-Oct-08	1152	230
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00341	13-Mar-13	27-Jun-08	1229	246
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00336	13-Mar-13	13-May-04	2305	461
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00346	14-Mar-13	24-May-12	211	42
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00213	14-Mar-13	18-Jan-12	302	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00351	14-Mar-13	08-Sep-11	396	79
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01665	15-Mar-13	31-Mar-09	1034	207
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00359	18-Mar-13	22-Feb-11	540	108
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00015	19-Mar-13	08-Feb-13	28	6

Taxation Type	Reference Number	Assessment Date	Final Order Date	Working Days between Final Order and Assessment	Working Weeks between Final Order and Assessment
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00357	19-Mar-13	22-Jan-13	41	8
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00012	19-Mar-13	14-Jan-13	47	9
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00366	19-Mar-13	03-Dec-12	77	15
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00363	19-Mar-13	26-Jun-12	191	38
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00360	19-Mar-13	13-Jun-12	200	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00368	19-Mar-13	01-Mar-12	274	55
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00279	19-Mar-13	24-Jan-12	301	60
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00370	19-Mar-13	05-Dec-11	337	67
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00274	19-Mar-13	26-Oct-11	365	73
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00361	19-Mar-13	23-Sep-10	649	130
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00362	19-Mar-13	12-Jan-07	1613	323
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00372	20-Mar-13	08-Nov-12	95	19
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00281	20-Mar-13	12-Jun-12	202	40
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00137	20-Mar-13	08-Sep-11	400	80
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00384	25-Mar-13	30-Jan-13	39	8
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00383	25-Mar-13	06-Dec-12	78	16
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00385	25-Mar-13	14-Nov-12	94	19
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00386	25-Mar-13	08-Nov-12	98	20
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00284	25-Mar-13	02-May-12	234	47
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00375	25-Mar-13	29-Mar-12	258	52
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00388	25-Mar-13	22-Mar-12	263	53
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00376	25-Mar-13	18-Feb-11	547	109
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/12/01146	25-Mar-13	27-May-10	738	148
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00283	25-Mar-13	13-Jan-10	834	167
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00380	25-Mar-13	24-Feb-09	1065	213
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00387	25-Mar-13	27-May-08	1260	252
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00373	25-Mar-13	27-Feb-06	1846	369
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00008	26-Mar-13	21-Dec-12	68	14
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00013	26-Mar-13	19-Dec-12	70	14
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00393	26-Mar-13	08-Nov-12	99	20
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00299	26-Mar-13	08-Oct-12	122	24
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00394	26-Mar-13	13-Feb-12	292	58
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00392	26-Mar-13	24-Jan-12	306	61
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00389	26-Mar-13	23-Sep-08	1176	235
Legal Aid / Party and Party	T/HC/13/00512	27-Mar-13	26-Jun-12	197	39
Criminal Appeals	T/CA/13/00022	27-Mar-13	20-Nov-09	874	175
Legal Aid	T/HC/13/00356	28-Mar-13	15-Jun-11	467	93

Driving without Insurance

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice what is the average fine issued to 17 to 24 year olds for driving without insurance compared to the average car insurance premium for young drivers; and for his assessment of this as a deterrent in addressing this crime.

(AQW 27104/11-15)

Mr Ford: Uninsured driving is an offence under Article 90(4) of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 and in 2009, the most recent year for which figures are available, 1,762 convictions were made against 17 to 24 year-olds, 1,619 of whom received a fine. The average fine imposed was £231.97 but fines ranged up to £750. Courts also have powers to sentence up to 6 months' imprisonment and in the same year 15 persons aged 17-24 received a custodial sentence¹.

Sentencing is a matter for the independent Judiciary and under his Programme of Action, announced in 2011, the Lord Chief Justice is taking steps to ensure consistency and transparency in sentencing decisions. As part of this work he has established a Sentencing group to enhance the guidance available to the judiciary.

Guidelines for the offence of driving without insurance have now been developed and are published on the Judicial Studies Board website (www.jsbni.com). The starting point is now a fine plus 8 penalty points, with the penalty points of course providing a particular disincentive.

Levels of motor insurance premiums are a matter for the private sector motor insurance industry. While my Department does not collect information on premium levels, various pieces of research have highlighted the comparatively high cost of motor insurance for young drivers in Northern Ireland. These costs have been a matter of concern across a number of Departments. They have been discussed at the Ministerial Group on Road Safety, chaired by the Environment Minister, on which I sit.

My Department has also contributed to the investigation of claims management companies and referral fees led by the Department of Finance and Personnel; we meet regularly with the Law Society and the Consumer Council on motor insurance related issues; and have met with the Association of British Insurers to discuss how reducing costs in the civil litigation system could lead to lower insurance premiums.

¹ Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included. The figures provided relate to convictions for all classifications of the offence specified.

Driving Offences

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice how his Department is ensuring that the (i) convictions; (ii) penalties; and (iii) fines awarded for serious driving offences match the seriousness of the offence.

(AQW 27115/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have been working on issues of transparency and consistency of sentencing with the Lord Chief Justice. Sentencing in the individual case is entirely a matter for the judiciary taking into account all relevant considerations and it is important that the independence of the judiciary is maintained. However, I realise that, sometimes, the sentence handed down can fall short of victims' and the wider community's expectations.

Under his Programme of Action on sentencing, announced in 2011, the Lord Chief Justice has established a Sentencing Group to enhance the guidance available to the judiciary, through oversight of the development and publication of sentencing guidelines. Guidelines for road traffic offences heard in the Magistrates Courts have now been developed and are published on the Judicial Studies Board website (www.jsbni.com). Various guideline judgments for road traffic offences heard in the Crown Court, including very serious driving offences, are also available on the website.

These measures contribute to increased consistency in sentencing decisions and, it is hoped, better inform victims and the wider public by increasing the transparency of those decisions.

Ultimately, for the offence of causing death, or grievous bodily injury, by dangerous driving, the Director of Public Prosecutions has the power to refer the case to the Court of Appeal, where it is considered that the sentence is unduly lenient.

Courts: Registered Intermediary Scheme

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the Registered Intermediary Service for vulnerable witnesses and defendants providing evidence in court; and to detail how many times this has been utilised per court division, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27137/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Registered Intermediaries Schemes pilot was launched on 13 May 2013 in respect of indictable offences which will be heard in the Crown Court sitting in Belfast. The pilot is scheduled to run for 18 months. Early indications are that the pilot is working well at the police investigative stage; a Registered Intermediary has not yet been used during a trial. I have, therefore, decided to extend the scope of the pilot to all Crown Courts across Northern Ireland from 11 November 2013 in order to have a sufficient number and range of cases to evaluate it effectively.

Legal Aid: Spend

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice how much has been spent on Legal Aid in each of the last five years.
(AQW 27155/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice (DOJ) came into existence on 12th April 2010.

The total spent on Legal Aid, including administration costs, in each of the last 3 financial years, is as follows:

2010/11	£101.1m
2011/12	£108.6m
2012/13	£107.1m

Legal Aid: Budget

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice to outline the steps taken to reduce the Legal Aid budget.
(AQW 27156/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have already taken steps to make significant savings in respect of criminal legal aid. I introduced new standard fees for Crown Court cases in 2011, which will deliver £18.3m in annual savings, and set new criteria for legal aid funding of representation in Crown Court cases in 2012, which will deliver further annual savings of £1.5m. I will shortly implement changes to Magistrates' Courts fees which will save a further £0.2m.

I will also shortly be implementing changes to the criteria for legal aid funding for representation in civil cases. Earlier this year I published proposals to make changes to the Financial Eligibility threshold for civil legal aid and to introduce the new Financial Eligibility threshold for criminal legal aid. I also published a proposal to introduce an alternative approach to "money damage" cases, which would remove most of such cases from legal aid. Both of those proposals have completed their public consultation and I will be presenting my final proposal to the Justice Committee within the next few months.

I have also published proposals to make further reduction in Crown Court fees and to introduce new lower fixed fees for civil cases in Magistrates Courts, County Court and the High Court. Public consultation in these proposals is underway.

In the next few months I will also be publishing proposals on fees for Expert Witnesses and my officials will begin work to consider whether the scope of legal aid should be reduced.

Legal Aid: Budget

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice how many applications he has made for additional funding for the Legal Aid budget in monitoring rounds in each of the last five years.
(AQW 27157/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice (DOJ) came into existence on 12th April 2010.

In 2010-11 and 2012-13 the DOJ accessed HM Treasury Reserve funding for legal aid that formed part of the financial settlement on the devolution of justice. The amounts accessed were £19.2m and £2.8m respectively.

In 2011-12, the DOJ accessed £10m of end year flexibility funding that was available to the Department and used this to supplement the legal aid budget.

In 2012-13 the Department requested a switch of funding from capital DEL to resource DEL of £10m and used this to supplement the legal aid budget.

As part of the 2013-14 October in-year monitoring round process, the Department submitted a bid to the Department of Finance and Personnel of £25.4m towards the forecast in-year legal aid pressure.

Legal Aid: Payments to Law Firms

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice how much was paid to law firms in the top ten claimants for Legal Aid in each of the last five years.
(AQW 27158/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission (NILSC) publishes annually the lists of top earners in Legal Aid payments for both Solicitors and Counsel. The top ten claimants in each of the last five years is documented below. Figures for 2012/13 are currently being compiled by the NILSC and should be published by the end of this calendar year.

**Solicitor Firm Payments – Top Ten
2007/08**

Rank	Name	Assessed Gross Total (inc VAT) £
1	Kevin Winters & Co	3,158,195
2	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,661,981
3	G R Ingram & Co	1,233,131
4	Madden & Finucane	1,172,380
5	Patrick Fahy	1,088,755
6	McConnell Kelly & Co	1,065,993
7	McKenna Sweeney McKeown Solicitors	1,061,324
8	McCann & McCann	1,032,811
9	Tiernans	908,541
10	Harte Coyle Collins Solicitors	902,028

2008/09

Rank	Name	Assessed Gross Total (inc VAT) £
1	Kevin Winters & Co	3,302,628
2	Madden & Finucane	1,714,421
3	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,669,311
4	H20	1,277,194
5	McConnell Kelly & Co	1,265,837
6	Higgins Hollywood Deazley	1,224,692
7	McCann & McCann	1,032,904
8	McKenna Sweeney McKeown	978,136
9	Patrick Fahy	948,792
10	MacElhatton & Co	919,491

2009/10

Rank	Name	Assessed Gross Total (inc VAT) £
1	Kevin Winters & Co	2,980,008
2	Madden & Finucane	1,814,920
3	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,639,522
4	McConnell Kelly & Co	1,383,081
5	McKenna Sweeney McKeown Solicitors Ltd	1,313,348
6	McCann & McCann	1,242,904
7	Patrick Fahy	1,008,501
8	GR Ingram & Co Solicitors	936,823
9	John J Rice Solicitors	848,536
10	Sheridan and Leonard	835,200

2010/11

Rank	Name	Assessed Gross Total (inc VAT) £
1	Kevin Winters & Co	2,649,736
2	McKenna Sweeney McKeown Solicitors Ltd	1,804,346
3	Madden & Finucane	1,598,238
4	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,499,202
5	McConnell Kelly & Co	1,163,609
6	McCann & McCann	1,149,798
7	MacElhatton & Co	1,075,248
8	GR Ingram & Co Solicitors	1,070,290
9	Patrick Fahy	9,705,15
10	Sheridan & Leonard	9,666,36

2011/12

Rank	Name	Assessed Gross Total (inc VAT) £
1	Kevin Winters & Co	3,459,725.28
2	Trevor Smyth & Co	1,490,155.37
3	McKenna Sweeney McKeown Solicitors Ltd	1,489,540.04
4	Madden & Finucane	1,477,724.84
5	Donnelly & Wall	1,211,724.55
6	McConnell Kelly & Co	1,146,751.25
7	Higgins Hollywood Deazley	1,090,965.03
8	McCann & McCann	1,072,664.24
9	Patrick Fahy	1,016,157.93
10	Joe Mulholland & Co	977,445.06

COUNSEL PAYMENTS – TOP TEN**2007/08**

Rank	Counsel Name	Assessed Gross Total (Inc VAT) £
1	Mr J Treacy	842,387
2	Mr B MacDonald	762,101
3	Mr W G Berry	706,099
4	Mr M O'Rourke	680,075
5	Mr J E Grant	538,424
6	Mr A D Harvey	516,233
7	Mr C MacCreaner	462,630
8	Mr O Pownall	440,625
9	Mr J Orr	421,433
10	Mr LG McCollum	416,169

2008/09

Rank	Barrister	Assessed Gross Total (Inc VAT) £
1	Mr W G Berry	1,235,222
2	Miss E M McDermott	887,633
3	Mr L P McCrudden	834,145
4	Mr J A Gallagher	649,647
5	Mr B MacDonald	547,942
6	Mr J E Grant	511,741
7	Mr B G McCartney	465,439
8	Mr J F McCrudden	464,479
9	Mr J Kearney	446,847
10	Mr A M Cinnamon	433,896

2009/10

Rank	Barrister	Assessed Gross Total (Inc VAT) £
1	Mr B G McCartney	1,461,399
2	Mr A D Harvey	1,196,867
3	Mr W G Berry	972,410
4	Miss E M McDermott	923,411
5	Mr P Magee	862,709
6	Mr L P McCrudden	771,930
7	Mr N Fox	753,082
8	Mr J A Gallagher	707,713
9	Mr M Mulholland	705,708
10	Mr J F McCrudden	702,755

2010/11

Rank	Counsel Name	Assessed Gross Total (Inc VAT) £
1	Miss E M McDermott	897,657
2	Mr J A Gallagher	704,056
3	Mr D J Hopley	691,912
4	Mr P Magee	577,723
5	Mr A D Harvey	465,675
6	Mr J Orr	399,697
7	Mr C MacCreaner	397,944
8	Mr D P Fee	362,572
9	Mr W G Berry	362,065
10	Mr K Mallon	352,022

2011/12

Rank	Legal Representative	Assessed Gross Total (Inc VAT) £
1	Mr D Fee	904,400.94
2	Mr B Fee	678,005.37
3	Mr M O'Higgins	482,600.00
4	Mr F O'Donoghue	432,651.01
5	Mr P Connolly	426,833.42
6	Ms S Keegan	424,538.09
7	Mr K Vaughan	397,918.96
8	Ms M Higgins	386,633.61
9	Miss S Walsh	380,819.73
10	Miss E M McDermott	337,516.29

Further detailed information is available by accessing the website of the NILSC: www.nilsc.org.uk and the website of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service: www.courtsni.gov.uk.

Security Alerts on the M1

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to detail an estimated cost of dealing with the security alerts on the M1 on 7th, 12th and 14th October 2013.

(AQW 27196/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total estimated PSNI cost is £8,784. This is broken down as follows:

- Air Support £789;
- Tactical Support Group £2,833; and
- Roads and Armed support £5,162.

Prison Service Procedures

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26309/11-15, when a copy of the relevant Northern Ireland Prison Service procedures will be placed in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 27243/11-15)

Mr Ford: A copy of the local Maghaberry Prison policy and procedures pertaining to hot and cold debriefs has been placed in the Assembly library.

Prison Service: STORM

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26970/11-15 (i) given ASSIST was devised as a project for anyone to be trained in suicide awareness and used within communities etc, whether the STORM model, which is clinically devised and delivered, is more suitable for use by staff dealing with vulnerable prisoners; and (ii) as significant difficulties and failings have been identified within the prison environment, whether he will give consideration to introducing STORM.

(AQW 27245/11-15)

Mr Ford: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is an internationally accredited 'first aid' suicide intervention model which equips people to respond to and assist persons at risk and supports the Prison Service's suicide prevention strategy.

Other training and assessment models will be considered as part of the planned review of the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy.

Legal Aid: Budget

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice how he is ensuring that cuts to the Legal Aid budget do not prevent access to justice.

(AQW 27273/11-15)

Mr Ford: A number of consultations have issued this year regarding criminal and civil legal aid and I will give careful consideration to all the points raised in responses. I am committed to protecting those people who do not have the financial means to pay legal fees. However I am equally committed to reforming publicly funded legal services so that we deliver a sustainable service secured for the future. I intend to ensure that the limited funding we have for legal aid is distributed fairly and equitably to ensure that those who can afford to pay for their own representation do so and those who cannot continue to be afforded appropriate representation paid for by the public purse.

Legal Aid: Budget

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice to detail the Legal Aid budget for (i) the last three years; and (ii) the next three years. (AQW 27274/11-15)

Mr Ford:

(i) The Legal Aid Budget for the last three years was as follows:

Financial Year	Initial Budget	Final Budget
2011/12	£83.6m	£108.6m
2012/13	£83.1m	£101.5m
2013/14	£74.9m	£89.5m*

* Current final budget as at 31 October 2013

(ii) The current budget for 2014/15 is £74m, agreed within the Budget 2011-2015 spending review period. Future years have not yet been agreed and are therefore currently unavailable.

All of the above budget figures include the administration costs of the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission.

Prison Service: Notification of Suspension

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 21067/11-15, to explain the anomaly in the answer given that he confirmed that each case of suspension is reviewed on an individual basis as outlined in the Notification of Suspension Form (1995 COCD5) when such information was not included in the notice and suspensions were not kept under review; and to detail his rationale for stating that 'to date it has not been necessary to update the Prison Service Notice of Suspension when such important information was not included in the first instance.

(AQW 27298/11-15)

Mr Ford: The F5 Notification of Suspension form, now obsolete, mentioned that the person suspended was required to report to the Personnel Governor, or other person, if appropriate, once a week whilst they were on suspension. The specific purpose of this weekly meeting was to review the suspension. This is what I was alluding to in my answer to AQW/21067/11-15. I trust this response now clarifies the issue.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 21067/11-15, why the Northern Ireland Prison Service has failed to include in Appendix 5 – NIPS Notification of Suspension under the 2013 Professional Code of Conduct that the suspension (a) will be reviewed; (b) by whom; and (c) on what time basis.

(AQW 27299/11-15)

Mr Ford: The text of the new Professional Code of Conduct was agreed in close consultation with, and has the endorsement of, all the key stakeholders who will be using it including the Prison Officers' Association, the Prison Governors' Association and senior management in the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

The development of the new disciplinary system is an ongoing process for the Northern Ireland Prison Service. It plans to review the new Code over the next 12 months. At that time the Northern Ireland Prison Service will seek views from stakeholders on its operation and how it might be improved further. In the interim I do not think it would be appropriate or helpful of me to comment in detail on the contents of an internal Prison Service document that has the buy in from the full range of stakeholders who are using it.

Prison Service: STORM

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether consideration has been given to the possibility that the flaws in the Supporting Prisoner at Risk procedures are due to it being underpinned by ASSIST and not STORM.

(AQW 27300/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the member to the response I gave to AQW/27245/11-15 on 31 October 2013.

Prison Service: Professional Codes

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail what input the Labour Relations Agency provided to the 2013 Northern Ireland Prison Service Professional Code of Ethics and Values and Code of Conduct; and whether the Northern Ireland Prison Service sought legal advice prior to implementation.

(AQW 27301/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Labour Relations Agency scrutinised the draft of the new Professional Code of Conduct and made comments on it that were taken into consideration when the document was being written.

Legal advice was received and incorporated into the Professional Code of Conduct before it was published.

Further legal advice was received from the Departmental Solicitors Office just prior to the final publication of the document, which related to how the processes set out in the Code could be smoothed out further. However, as these comments did not relate to issues affecting the legal rights of individuals, and the Northern Ireland Prison Service was keen to get the document published and the new disciplinary system in place as soon as possible, it was decided not to incorporate those points at this time. They will however be revisited again when the Code is reviewed next year.

Neither the Labour Relations Agency nor legal advisers were involved in the drafting of the Professional Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics is based on the template for the European Code of Ethics for Prison Staff, which was approved by EU Ministers in April 2012. Professor Andrew Coyle, who wrote the European Code of Ethics, kindly assisted with the drafting of the Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Ethics.

As I mentioned in my response to AQW/27299/11-15, the new disciplinary system, including the new Codes, will be reviewed and updated over the next 12 months. They are therefore transitional documents.

Anti-fraud Unit: DOJ

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department has an anti-fraud unit, and if so, to detail (i) staff complement; (ii) budget; and (iii) success to date.
(AQW 27318/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice (DOJ), including its Agencies but not its arm's length bodies, does not have an anti-fraud unit. However, in line with the Department's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Bribery Policy and Response Plan, the investigation of a suspected fraud may, at the request of management, be undertaken by the Department's Internal Audit Unit.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service, an Executive Agency of the DOJ, has a service level agreement with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide independent investigation services.

Outsourcing of Functions: DOJ

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Justice whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.
(AQW 27356/11-15)

Mr Ford: As part of the process of developing business cases to consider the delivery of functions, all appropriate options, including outsourcing where applicable, are considered by the Department of Justice (DOJ) from a value for money perspective.

The Department, including its Agencies but not its arm's length bodies, has no agreed plans to outsource any functions. However, the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), an Executive agency of the DOJ, intends to outsource learning and skills provision and the provision of maintenance services as they are not part of core NIPS business.

Prison Officers: Severance Package

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what representations his Department has made to HM Revenue and Customs on the issue of the timing of the taxation demanded from former prison officers that accepted the recent severance package.
(AQW 27383/11-15)

Mr Ford: Officials were in discussions with HM Revenue and Customs prior to the initial releases under the Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme for a number of months. These discussions were in relation to which payments were taxable and subject to National Insurance Contributions, how staff would be taxed, the timing of applying to reclaim overpaid tax, and the responsibility of each individual in declaring their taxable income.

Staff were released on the basis of least cost and operational requirements. It would not be appropriate to reimburse staff or review the position as all of the staff were treated in accordance with the relevant tax rules at the date of their departure.

Prison Officers: Severance Package

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department intends to reimburse former prison officers who were taxed at a higher rate as they received a severance payment earlier than had been indicated.
(AQW 27384/11-15)

Mr Ford: Officials were in discussions with HM Revenue and Customs prior to the initial releases under the Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme for a number of months. These discussions were in relation to which payments were taxable and subject to National Insurance Contributions, how staff would be taxed, the timing of applying to reclaim overpaid tax, and the responsibility of each individual in declaring their taxable income.

Staff were released on the basis of least cost and operational requirements. It would not be appropriate to reimburse staff or review the position as all of the staff were treated in accordance with the relevant tax rules at the date of their departure.

Prison Officers: Severance Package

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether there are plans to review the severance payment to prison officers who received their payment earlier than indicated and were therefore subject to a higher rate of tax.

(AQW 27385/11-15)

Mr Ford: Officials were in discussions with HM Revenue and Customs prior to the initial releases under the Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme for a number of months. These discussions were in relation to which payments were taxable and subject to National Insurance Contributions, how staff would be taxed, the timing of applying to reclaim overpaid tax, and the responsibility of each individual in declaring their taxable income.

Staff were released on the basis of least cost and operational requirements. It would not be appropriate to reimburse staff or review the position as all of the staff were treated in accordance with the relevant tax rules at the date of their departure.

Prison Service College Site at Millisle

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26767/11-15, to detail (i) the timeframe for the business case to be produced; and (ii) when disposal is envisaged.

(AQW 27386/11-15)

Mr Ford: A business case that explores options to inform a decision on the early closure of the Prison Service College at Millisle is expected to be completed within approximately three to four months. Consideration will only be given to disposal of the site if, and when, the Prison Service College closes. In the meantime, the site will continue in its present role as the Prison Service College.

Prisoners: Keys

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26555/11-15, to detail the figures as a percentage of the overall prisoner population per relevant facility.

(AQW 27405/11-15)

Mr Ford: As of the 8 October 2013 the percentage of the overall prisoner population, broken down by establishment, who hold a key to their own cell is as follows:

Maghaberry	16%
Magilligan	42.8%
Hydebank Wood	16%
YOC	2%

Historical Sexual Abuse Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26804/11-15, whether there is evidence to suggest that a percentage of historical sexual abuse cases involving children, being processed through the court system, are a result of reluctance to report the alleged offences at the time due to fear of community or terrorist recrimination by engaging with police at the time of the offences.

(AQW 27408/11-15)

Mr Ford: I do not have access to information of this nature in relation to individual live case files which are within the criminal justice process.

It is acknowledged in numerous studies and articles that many victims of sexual offences delay in reporting to police for various reasons. Fear of reprisal may be one of those reasons.

Supporting Prisoners at Risk Procedures

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26672-11-15, given Supporting Prisoner at Risk procedures have been operational for some time, why enhanced auditing only commenced in March 2013; and to outline the monitoring that took place prior to this.

(AQW 27441/11-15)

Mr Ford: Since the introduction of the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy in February 2011, each prison regularly monitors and reviews samples of Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) documentation.

Following a review of best practice an enhanced auditing system of SPAR documentation was introduced in March 2013.

Investigation Findings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26782/11-15, whether the investigation resulted in no further action, informal action or disciplinary charges, and if disciplinary charges resulted, to detail the grades of staff.

(AQW 27444/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service is unable to provide the information requested as disclosure would be likely to lead to identification which would be contrary to the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he is satisfied that the Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct 2013, including Appendices, is fully compliant with the current procedures and statutory provisions of employment legislation, Human Rights and natural justice.

(AQW 27499/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am satisfied that the new Professional Code of Conduct is compliant with the relevant legal requirements.

Coroners

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Justice what steps he is taking to increase the number of coroners to address past cases that are outstanding.

(AQW 27519/11-15)

Mr Ford: Legacy inquests tend to be complex and involve a number of organisations. The Department of Justice is currently assessing what resources are required in order to allow outstanding inquests to progress within an acceptable timescale. This will include an assessment of the necessary coronial resource.

Department for Regional Development

Roads Service: Far Circular Road, Dungannon

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to the proposed resurfacing work at Far Circular Road, Dungannon, to detail (i) the date this issue was first raised with Roads Service; (ii) the dates thereafter it was inspected; (iii) when recommendations for resurfacing were made by Roads Service; and (iv) the cause of the delay.

(AQW 25219/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): The issue of repairs to the Far Circular Road was first raised with officials in late 2010 due to settlement following the installation of a sewer in the road by Northern Ireland Water over a length in excess of a kilometre. In response to these reports, the NIW contractor carried out remedial works to the temporary reinstatement of its trench. The contractor continued to carry out these works throughout 2011, as and when staff from my Department's Roads Service brought problems to his attention.

Since January 2010, Far Circular Road has been inspected on the following 28 occasions: 19/2/2010, 16/3/2010, 21/4/2010, 22/6/2010, 18/8/2010, 24/9/2010, 27/10/2010, 16/12/2010, 22/2/2011, 18/4/2011, 20/6/2011, 1/8/2011, 17/8/2011, 28/9/2011, 26/10/2011, 15/12/2011, 20/2/2012, 26/4/2012, 6/6/2012, 20/6/2012, 17/8/2012, 27/9/2012, 23/10/2012, 17/12/2012, 21/2/2013, 22/4/2013, 18/6/2013 and 16/8/2013. The majority of these were routine safety inspections carried out on an eight week cycle; others were in response to external reports or enquiries.

At the end of 2011, when the final reinstatement was being agreed with the NIW contractor, Roads Service agreed to resurface the 260 metre stretch of the road at the Moy Road end in the following financial year 2012/13. This was in lieu of more extensive works which the contractor agreed to carry out on the remainder of the trench.

On 4 July 2012, Roads Service advised its contractor of a four to six month programme of works that included those planned for Far Circular Road. However, before works on the Far Circular Road commenced, a decision was made to suspend work on all such smaller scale urban resurfacing schemes, to allow Roads Service to take maximum advantage of substantial additional funds that had then been made available to it.

The Member will appreciate that urban work schemes, such as at the Far Circular Road, are more complex and have much lower output capacities usually due to the need to include footway amendments and/or work around underground services. It was therefore considered the wider Dungannon area would be better served by targeting the additional funding, which had financial year restrictions, at the many rural roads that were also in need of resurfacing.

Other similar schemes that were postponed were resurfacing at Grange Road, Ballygawley; Pomeroy Road, Donaghmore at Backford Bridge and the junction of Ballygawley Road with William Street, Dungannon.

In relation to implementation of the resurfacing programme for the current financial year, until now priority has been given to schemes associated with the G8 summit and to completing works on busy urban roads during the school summer holiday period when there is less traffic. The summer holiday period has now come to an end and other schemes are now being taken

forward. I can confirm the scheme on the Far Circular Road commenced on Monday 9 September and was substantially complete on 11 October 2013. It is anticipated the other schemes listed above will be completed by the end of November.

Parking for Tradespeople

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any procedure which allows tradespeople to park vehicles temporarily on (i) double yellow lines; (ii) in time restricted parking bays; and (iii) in pay and display car parks, without displaying a ticket, in order to access the vehicle, without being issued a fine for a limited period whilst work is carried out on nearby premises.

(AQW 27029/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Legislation does not permit any concession for persons working nearby to park temporarily on (i) double yellow lines; (ii) in time restricted parking bays; or (iii) in pay and display car parks.

However, legislation does allow for loading and unloading at all three locations for the period that loading activity is taking place.

Weed Spraying: Urban Settings

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to change the type of spray used to kill weeds in urban settings, such as street pavements.

(AQW 27108/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member my Department currently has no plans to change the specification for weed spray.

Street Lighting: Urban Areas

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria used when deciding to replace street lights in urban areas.

(AQW 27110/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's main criterion for the replacement of old street lighting in urban areas is that the street lighting system is no longer fit for purpose or has reached the end of its useful life. This is generally because the lighting equipment and cable network has become obsolete, defective, or uneconomic to maintain.

Additional factors, such as the scheduling of other works, for example footway reconstruction, may influence the timing of street lighting renewal.

Weed Spraying: Urban Footpaths

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department monitors the effectiveness of spraying weeds on urban footpaths.

(AQW 27111/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has no specific statutory obligation to remove weeds other than in relation to the control of noxious weeds. Roads Service policy and procedures in relation to weed control are aimed at ensuring the safety of road users and preventing the deterioration of the road pavement.

Chemical control of weeds is generally carried out on kerbed and paved areas and normally undertaken in the Spring on an annual basis as a curative measure, with any significant re-growth dealt with as when necessary.

The effectiveness of treatment is monitored by Roads Service staff on a regular basis, which ensures areas requiring further treatment are identified and dealt with accordingly.

Street Lighting: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the streets in North Down that are due to have street lighting replaced in (i) 2013/14; (ii) 2014/15; and (iii) 2015/16.

(AQW 27112/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Information on completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils

I can advise that the detailed budget for subsequent years has not yet been finalised and so it is not possible to provide details of future works programmes at this time.

Footpaths: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the programme of works for the replacement or creation of footpaths in North Down in (i) 2013/14; (ii) 2014/15; and (iii) 2015/16.

(AQW 27113/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Information on completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformatioctype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils

I can advise that the detailed budget for subsequent years has not yet been finalised and so it is not possible to provide details of future works programmes at this time.

Traffic Calming Measures

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development how many traffic calming measures were (i) requested; and (ii) implemented in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27146/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of requests for traffic calming measures are not readily available. However, details of the number of traffic calming schemes implemented, in each of the last three years, are set out in the table below:

Year	Traffic Calming Schemes Implemented
2010/11	28
2011/12	48
2012/13	29

If the Member requires additional information relating to specific areas, I would ask him to contact the relevant officials in my Department's Roads Service.

TEN-T Core Node: Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26544/11-15, to detail (i) why Derry does not meet the criteria required for inclusion as a Core Node; and (ii) what actions can be initiated to meet the criteria.

(AQW 27147/11-15)

Mr Kennedy:

- (i) As previously detailed in AQW 8582/11-15, the criteria for a Core Node on the Trans-European Transport Network is as follows:
- MEGA cities according to ESPONSPON1 with more than 0.5 million inhabitants;
 - conurbations or city clusters which exceed 1 million inhabitants;
 - cities or conurbations located at branching or crossing points on the TEN-T Core Network; or
 - ports with an annual transshipment volume of at least 1% of the total transshipment volume of freight by all EU seaports.

In addition, the European Parliament were successful in negotiating an addition to the

Core Node criteria as follows:

- The main city of NUTS 1 Island regions.

As Londonderry does not currently meet any of these criteria it cannot, therefore, be defined as a Core Node.

- (ii) The capability to meet the above criteria is determined by factors which, clearly, lie outwith the direct control of my Department. Officials in the Department for Regional Development will, of course, continue to monitor the TEN-T Regulation and will respond accordingly should the criteria change.

Transport Links: Projects

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26544/11-15, to detail the other projects relating to Derry's transport links that may be eligible to bid for future EU funding.

(AQW 27150/11-15)

1 Metropolitan European Growth Areas in the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network's Atlas 2006.

Mr Kennedy: Transport projects in the North West region have been supported in the past by European funding programmes including the Trans European Transport Network and INTERREG.

The links to Londonderry on the TEN-T Comprehensive network consist of the Coleraine – Londonderry line for rail, the A2, A6 and A5 for roads in Northern Ireland and the N13 in the Republic of Ireland.

Unlike the Core Network, there is no requirement for Member States to provide a list of pre-identified projects on the Comprehensive Network. This in itself provides a degree of flexibility in terms of bringing proposals forward. It should, however, be recognized that the eligibility of potential projects during this period will to a large extent, be determined by the particular characteristics of each funding call. While the requirement for compatibility with funding call criteria exists, it is important that projects to be brought forward are also compatible with Executive priorities.

Furthermore, as with all competitive funding programmes it is not possible to guarantee that all applications will be successful. I am strongly of the opinion that this competition should not discourage organizations and groups from bringing proposals forward, particularly when very significant levels of funding is being made available to projects on the Comprehensive Network.

Anti-fraud Unit: DRD

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has an anti-fraud unit; and if so, to detail (i) annual budget; (ii) staff compliment; and (iii) successes to date.
(AQW 27179/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not have an anti-fraud unit. However, the Department's Financial Services Branch (FSB) is responsible for coordinating fraud reporting to the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Department of Finance and Personnel. FSB also represents the Department on the NICS Fraud Forum and is responsible for developing and updating the Department's Anti-Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan. In addition, FSB leads the Departmental Anti Fraud Group (DAFG), which includes representatives from the across the Department's business areas and its Arms Length Bodies.

Footpaths: Towerview, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to replace the footpaths in the Towerview area of Bangor.
(AQW 27197/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to confirm my Department has identified the footways in Towerview Avenue and Towerview Crescent, Bangor for consideration and possible inclusion in the Roads Service 2014-2016 footway reconstruction programme in North Down, subject to funding availability and other priorities.

Street Lighting: Bayview Road, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what long term plans his Department has to replace street lighting in the Bayview Road, Bangor.
(AQW 27198/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department prioritises replacement street lighting works based on factors such as maintainability of existing equipment, traffic flow, present lighting standards and the potential to coordinate the works with other works being carried out on the adjoining footway or carriageway. However, there are many locations within this area competing for the finite resources available for such works.

My Department's work programme for the 2013/2014 financial year has been finalised and currently does not include Bayview Road, Bangor. I am, however, pleased to confirm that footway reconstruction and replacement street lighting works in Bayview Road are well placed to be included in the programme for 2014/2015, which has still to be finalised and will be subject to the availability of funding.

Weed Spraying: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of spraying weeds in North Down.
(AQW 27199/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department will spend approximately £78,000 on weed control operations within North Down during the 2013/14 financial year.

Dock Street Car Park, Strabane

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Regional, in relation to Dock Street car park, Strabane, whether he would consider implementing opening hours for other preventative measures to tackle antisocial behaviour, including illegal car racing.
(AQW 27206/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has received a number of complaints about anti-social behaviour in Dock Street car park, Strabane. Whilst it would be extremely difficult to restrict the opening hours of any public car park, I would be prepared to consider the closure of this car park due to its limited usage.

I would, however, like to discuss this proposal with local representatives and the business community before taking any further action.

The Member will be aware that primary responsibility for dealing with anti-social behaviour rests with the PSNI, which whom my officials have been in contact with regarding this issue.

Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26107/11-15, to detail the location of the discrete areas within Antrim that are subject to the Residents Parking Schemes.

(AQW 27222/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are currently no areas within Antrim subject to a Residents' Parking Scheme. A small scheme is proposed for Clarke Court and Masserene Street, which are both located off Bridge Street, Antrim. Drafting of the necessary subordinate legislation is ongoing with the aim of delivering this scheme during 2014.

Metrobus 23 Service to the Stormont Estate

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development why there have been delays to the 08:58 Metrobus 23 service to the Stormont Estate in September and October 2013; and to outline what is being done to ensure that the service runs on time.

(AQW 27247/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has acknowledged that the 08:58 service has been delayed on its previous inward 4b journey which operates from Coopers Mill, beyond Dundonald.

Translink has been actively monitoring Corridor 4 services to try and improve regulation and ensure as far as possible that timetable commitments and customers' needs are met.

Control Room inspectors have been asked to focus on this corridor and mobile inspectors have also been deployed to the route. The latter deployment will be maintained. Translink is currently carrying out a review of schedules across the Metro network including on Corridor 4.

Footpaths: Replacement of Pavement Stones

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria used when deciding to replace damaged pavement stones on a footpath.

(AQW 27252/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Article 8 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, places a duty on my Department to maintain all public roads and footways in a safe and serviceable condition as far as is reasonably practicable. In recognition of this duty of care, my Department's Roads Service has put in place a set of Maintenance Standards for Safety. These standards, which are designed to ensure a consistent service level and a safe highway, while offering value for money, are based on best practice, research and consultation with both the public and other professional bodies and Industry.

Essentially, the Safety Standards and procedures currently in operation, establish frequencies for road and footway inspections, dependent on traffic / pedestrian volumes and specify response times for the repair of defects. Inspection frequencies vary between daily cycles for motorways to four monthly cycles for carriageways carrying low volumes of traffic. Surface defects which are identified outside of these inspection regimes will be dealt with according to the above standards and remedial work arranged as necessary.

Response times specified for the repair of defects are dependent on the severity of the defect and range from one calendar day to simple inclusion in the next work programme for that particular route. These systems and procedures are recognised and accepted by the courts as being robust, given the finite level of funding available.

Speed Limits on Roads

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to reduce speed limits on roads.

(AQW 27280/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is currently reviewing speed limits on all roads which carry through traffic, usually A Class and some higher quality B Class roads.

This review, which was initiated by my Department in 2010, in line with the publication of a new policy in GB, is expected to be complete by April 2015. The outcome of the review will establish if there is a need to amend existing speed limits.

My Department also reviews local speed limits when considering safety issues and when responding to requests from the public.

Reservoirs at Ballysallagh

Mr Cree asked the Minister for Regional Development why one of the reservoirs at Ballysallagh has been drained.

(AQW 27308/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that Lower Ballysallagh reservoir has been drained to allow essential safety work to be undertaken. The reservoir, which is not in service, will be refilled on completion of the proposed maintenance work.

Reservoirs at Ballysallagh

Mr Cree asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's plans for the reservoir at Ballysallagh. (AQW 27309/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the reservoirs at Ballysallagh have been identified as being surplus to requirements and are listed in its Annual Land Disposal Register. However, a timeframe has not yet been identified for offering them to the market.

In disposing of surplus assets, NIW must ensure that it obtains the best price, achieves value for money and maintains high standards of propriety. Any sale is dependent on a number of factors, not least the market conditions at the time of the sale and the level of expressions of interest.

NIW has assured me that all interested parties will be informed before the property is offered for sale or transfer.

Departmental Funding: DRD

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development how much funding his Department has provided to (i) the Consumer Council; (ii) Advice NI; (iii) the Citizens Advice Bureau; and (iv) the Utility Regulator, in each of the last five years. (AQW 27335/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Department for Regional Development has not provided direct funding to any of the four named organisations in the last five years.

However funding has been provided by the Department's Arms Length Bodies in the last five years to the Consumer Council and the Utility Regulator as shown below:

Year	Consumer Council Funding (£'000)	Utility Regulator Funding (£'000)
2009/10	601	2,017
2010/11	668	1,351
2011/12	617	1,420
2012/13	529	1,012
2013/14	516	1,230

Sewerage System in Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of the new sewerage system in Millisle. (AQW 27371/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the cost of the new sewerage system at Shore Road, Millisle is estimated at £2.2 million.

Translink: Revenue Reserves

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail Translink's revenue reserves. (AQW 27372/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The level of Translink's reserves are available in the latest set of audited accounts for 2012/13 that have been laid in the assembly library and are made available to the public. The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company consolidated balance sheet on page 72 provides a detailed breakdown of the assets and liabilities of the group for the financial year ended 31 March 2013.

TEN-T: Roads in County Fermanagh and County Tyrone

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Regional Development what attempts he has made to have roads in Co. Fermanagh and Co. Tyrone included on the TEN-T network. (AQW 27376/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has been actively engaged in negotiations relating to the agreement of the TEN-T Network, and this engagement has contributed to the A5 and A4 roads running through Co. Fermanagh and Co. Tyrone (and which respectively form the 'Western' and 'South Western' Corridors) being among a number of routes included on the Comprehensive Network.

The Comprehensive Network is an integral part of the strategic TEN-T infrastructure, and its primary purpose is to ensure accessibility of, and access to, the Core Network which, in the case of Northern Ireland roads, applies to the Eastern Corridor which extends from the Port of Larne through Belfast and Newry and into the Republic of Ireland.

Carnet Tickets for Rail and Bus Journeys

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development whether consideration has been given to introducing carnet tickets for rail and bus journeys, similar to those used in other parts of the UK's rail and bus network.

(AQW 27470/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A Carnet tickets is when a number of journeys are purchased together and are effectively the same as multi-journey (and Daylink) tickets which Translink already offers for its bus passengers.

The same offer does not currently apply to rail users because the NIR network is an open one, that is, there are no ticketing gates. In the absence of such facilities, and given the busy nature of NIR services, it would not be possible to ensure that each journey used is either validated or cancelled off.

Translink is currently reviewing ticketing options across our operations. Although this project is at an early stage it may allow for carnet tickets to be introduced on rail in the future.

TEN-T Core Network: Belfast-Derry Line

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26544/11-15, to detail whether the Belfast-Derry line would have been eligible for inclusion on the TEN-T Core Network if it had been considered as part of a cross-border route connected to Galway and Cork.

(AQW 27530/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As previously detailed in AQW 27147/11-15 and AQW 8582/11-15, the criteria for the inclusion of a Core Node on the Trans-European Transport Network are as follows:

- MEGA cities according to ESPONSPON2 with more than 0.5 million inhabitants;
- conurbations or city clusters which exceed 1 million inhabitants;
- cities or conurbations located at branching or crossing points on the TEN-T Core Network; or
- ports with an annual transshipment volume of at least 1% of the total transshipment volume of freight by all EU seaports.

In addition, the European Parliament were successful in negotiating an addition to the

Core Node criteria as follows:

- The main city of NUTS 1 Island regions.

Regardless of whether Londonderry is linked to Galway and Cork as part of a cross border route, it does not meet any of the above criteria and cannot therefore be defined as a Core Node.

TEN-T Core Network: A6 and Foyle Port

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26544/11-15, whether the A6 and Foyle Port were proposed for consideration for EU TEN-T Core funding as part of the Connecting Europe Facility.

(AQW 27531/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As previously detailed in AQW 27147/11-15, the criteria for the inclusion of a Core Node on the Trans-European Transport Network are as follows:

- MEGA cities according to ESPONSPON3 with more than 0.5 million inhabitants;
- conurbations or city clusters which exceed 1 million inhabitants;
- cities or conurbations located at branching or crossing points on the TEN-T Core Network; or
- ports with an annual transshipment volume of at least 1% of the total transshipment volume of freight by all EU seaports.

In addition, the European Parliament were successful in negotiating an addition to the Core Node criteria as follows:

- The main city of NUTS 1 Island regions.

As a result of these criteria the A6 and the Foyle Port cannot be considered for EU funding as part of the Core Network within the Connecting Europe facility.

However, in the disbursement of the Connecting Europe Facility funds, 5% of the total budget is due to be reserved for the Comprehensive Network. Consequently, projects related to Londonderry's transport links may still be eligible to bid for EU funding in the future.

2 Metropolitan European Growth Areas in the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network's Atlas 2006

3 Metropolitan European Growth Areas in the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network's Atlas 2006

Department for Social Development

Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department has taken on foot of recommendation 5 of the March 2013 Public Accounts Committee Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts.

(AQW 26689/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): My Department monitors, on a quarterly basis, the implementation of the recommendations from the March 2013 Public Accounts Committee report.

In relation to recommendation 5, the Housing Executive initially commissioned an investigation to look at 20 planned maintenance schemes with a view to identifying the extent of suspected overpayments. This was subsequently extended to cover further schemes to provide a more representative sample, which led to the Housing Executive estimating overpayments amounting to £18m.

Following this in June 2013 the Housing Executive appointed external consultants to carry out an investigation into planned maintenance. The investigation has now concluded and the Chair of the Housing Executive Board is scheduled to report to the Social Development Committee next month on this matter.

The Housing Executive has also advised that their Internal Audit Department has a series of audits planned for 2013/14 through to 2015/16 which were approved by the Housing Executive Audit Committee in June 2013. Table 1 below provides details of these audits.

Table 1 - Planned Internal Audits 2013/14 – 2015/16

Audit Area	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Planned Maintenance - Windows	Jan 2014	√	√
Review of Heating Maintenance	Jan 2014	√	√
ECM	Apr 2014	√	√
Kitchens Maintenance	June 2014	√	√
DLO	June 2014		√
Lifts Maintenance		√	√
Grounds Maintenance		√	√

√ - Date of audit to be confirmed

In addition, the Housing Executive's Corporate Assurance Unit (CAU) has annual inspection programmes which look at contract management arrangements around the management of the following key contracts:

- Planned Maintenance
- Response Maintenance
- Heating Response Maintenance
- Heating Planned Maintenance

CAU has completed extensive work in developing, road-testing and agreeing inspection methodologies for each of the key inspection areas to ensure that the inspection regime is both robust and fit for purpose. The results of the inspections are reported to the Housing Executive's Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. Recommendations made in the inspections are monitored to ensure that these are progressed appropriately.

Housing Executive: Debt

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development what will happen to the debt of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive should it be abolished as a result of social housing reform proposals.

(AQW 26714/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The further exploration of my proposals for the reform of social housing is underway. No decisions have been made as to the treatment of the debt of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Treatment of the debt is a complex financial issue which will require detailed analysis of the various options before any decisions can be made. As you will appreciate this will be a critical component in the financial modelling and establishment of the new landlord(s) which in due course will be subject to the scrutiny and approval of the NI Executive.

Golden Share Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the need to encourage former home owners from redevelopment areas to purchase new homes under the Golden Share Scheme; and whether his Department will publish a leaflet explaining the benefits of the scheme.

(AQW 26948/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Golden Share Scheme was introduced to support owner occupiers living in redevelopment areas to return to the area post regeneration. The initiative provides the opportunity to purchase a new home with any difference in the value of their old home and new home being carried by the housing association responsible for the new build. The arrangement is that those wishing to avail of the scheme should apply to the housing association concerned. The new arrangement was introduced to make it possible for all tenure types to remain part of their community and I would encourage all those interested to make application.

How best to enhance wider public knowledge of the scheme within communities undergoing regeneration is currently under consideration.

Double Glazing

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development who will decide what proportion of the remaining double glazing work to be allocated will be for casement windows and reversible windows.

(AQW 26980/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive advises that their Specification and Codes of Practice allows for three different types of window: fully reversible, flush casement, or storm-proof. They advise that both 'fully reversible' and 'flush casement' are similar in appearance, only differing in the way the opening sashes operate. 'Storm-proof' windows have a different frame profile appearance where sashes overlap the fixed frame and are double sealed. Contractors are afforded the option to design window fenestrations to bungalows, flats and dwellings (up to three storeys) with either 'storm-proof' or 'flush casement' windows. Design proposals are then presented at a Housing Executive Area Clearance House and a Central Clearing House Meeting and are reviewed and approved according to individual scheme merits and on a value for money basis.

Supported Living: Whiteabbey Hospital

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made in securing funding commitments and obtaining planning permission for new supported living accommodation and services at Whiteabbey Hospital.

(AQW 27056/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A 24 unit scheme for people suffering from mental health problems has been programmed into the Social Housing Development Programme for construction start in 2013/14. The site is being developed by Trinity Housing Association.

Capital funding has been set aside in 2013/14 and beyond to fund its construction, subject to an approvable application for grant from Trinity. An application has yet to be received.

Trinity aims to make a planning application before the end of October.

Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development when the policy of ring fencing, in relation to the building of social housing, was introduced for (i) North Belfast; (ii) West Belfast; and (iii) Londonderry and to detail how much money was ring fenced for each area and whether an Equality Impact Assessment was completed before the policy was introduced.

(AQW 27060/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive approved its Londonderry Strategy in 1999. This identified a need for 120 new dwellings per annum in the West Bank. The decision to ring fence this number became operative as part of the Strategic guidelines in 1999/00.

The Housing Executive approved its North Belfast Strategy in 2000. This identified a need for 250 new dwellings per annum. The decision to ring fence this number became operative as part of the Strategic Guidelines review from 2001/02.

The Housing Executive approved its West Belfast Strategy in 2003. This identified a need for 275 new dwellings per annum. The decision to ring fence this number became operative as part of the strategic guidelines review from 2003/04.

The concept of ring fencing to the formulation of the social housing programme through the Strategic Guidelines was introduced by the Housing Executive in the 1990's prior to the introduction of the 2000 equality legislation in Northern Ireland. However, at that time the Strategic Guidelines policy was screened with all other housing policies and scheduled for Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) in Year 5 of the Housing Executive's Equality Scheme timetable. An EQIA was applied in 2007/08 and ring fencing was discontinued in 2008/09.

The Strategic Guidelines as applying to the areas concerned were not ring fenced in financial terms. Rather they were ring fenced by programme share expressed in number of units to be delivered.

Housing Executive: Heating Systems

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the Housing Executive's policy on replacing oil heating systems with gas heating systems.

(AQW 27082/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that oil heating systems have a life expectancy of 15 years, which triggers the inclusion of properties for heating replacement schemes.

The Housing Executive's new heating policy was approved at the end of July 2013 and re-confirms that tenants will continue to be offered gas heating in a mains gas area. Their new policy however allows for tenants who have had oil heating for 15 years and are due for a new boiler to retain oil if they so wish. In such circumstances the Housing Executive ensures that the tenant receives advice on the comparative cost of heating a home with gas as opposed to oil. Advice is provided by the Contractor, local Housing Executive staff, and Heatsmart (who provide independent advice on energy efficiency as part of a Service Level agreement with the Housing Executive).

Social Housing/Affordable Housing

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of (i) social; and (ii) affordable houses built in each constituency since 2011.

(AQW 27098/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In relation to part (i) Table 1 below details the number of social housing starts in each Constituency in each of the last three financial years: -

Table 1

Parliamentary Constituency	2010/11 No. Units	2011/12 No. Units	2012/13 No. Units
East Antrim	6	34	16
North Antrim	16	68	87
South Antrim	133	56	67
Upper Bann	117	18	0
East Belfast	129	82	38
North Belfast	322	101	229
South Belfast	306	117	82
West Belfast	203	194	162
North Down	25	50	38
South Down	219	55	46
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	104	68	32
Foyle	263	211	237
Lagan Valley	218	115	94
East Londonderry	11	40	0
Mid Ulster	64	22	58
Newry & Armagh	141	98	153
Strangford	113	75	29
West Tyrone	28	6	11

In relation to part (ii) the information is not available in the format requested. However, Table 2 below details the number of new build homes purchased under the Co-Ownership Scheme in the 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 financial years, broken down by Council area.

Table 2: New Build Properties Supported

Council Area	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Derry City Council	10	2	2
Limavady Borough Council	7	6	4

Council Area	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Coleraine Borough Council	8	6	1
Ballymoney Borough Council	7	0	7
Moyle District Council	0	0	0
Larne Borough Council	10	5	2
Ballymena Borough Council	11	8	4
Magherafelt District Council	3	5	1
Cookstown District Council	5	2	3
Strabane District Council	2	0	0
Omagh District Council	0	1	0
Fermanagh District Council	0	0	1
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	11	6	4
Craigavon Borough Council	34	28	30
Armagh City and District Council	1	7	0
Newry and Mourne District Council	6	7	8
Banbridge District Council	9	7	3
Down District Council	4	6	5
Lisburn City Council	79	49	47
Antrim Borough Council	25	13	5
Newtownabbey Borough Council	15	23	10
Carrickfergus Borough Council	4	5	0
North Down Borough Council	28	5	3
Ards Borough Council	23	16	6
Castlereagh Borough Council	16	8	5
Belfast City Council	23	10	8

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.

Social Housing Development Programme: Strategic Guidelines

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development (i) why an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Social Housing Development Programme Strategic Guidelines was carried out in 2008 and a further EQIA carried out in 2010; (ii) when each draft EQIA was published; (iii) when each final EQIA was published; (iv) what were the conclusions of the two EQIAs; (v) when were these presented to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive board; (vi) when were they published; and (vii) what changes were made.

(AQW 27130/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) The first 2008 EQIA of the Strategic Guidelines was programmed as part of the Housing Executive equality scheme timetable following an initial screening of all housing policies identified as requiring EQIA. The Strategic Guidelines was programmed as the last in the series of EQIA's and scheduled for Year 5 of the equality scheme timetable.

The second 2010 EQIA of the Strategic Guidelines was the outworking of proposals from a cross departmental working group which recommended amendment to take account of the intensity of housing need as measured in points, time on waiting list and relative proportions.

- (ii) The first draft EQIA was sent out for consultation on 8 September 2008. The second draft EQIA was sent out for consultation on 1 October 2010.
- (iii) The first final EQIA was published on the Housing Executive's website on 5 October 2010. The second final EQIA was published on the Housing Executive's website on 7 June 2011.

- (iv) The conclusion of the first EQIA was that the application of Option 3 to the Strategic Guidelines would take full account of the Housing Executive's duties under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. Option 3 stated that the Strategic Guidelines took account of the housing need assessment process weighted by waiting time of those in housing stress on the waiting list.

The conclusion of the second EQIA was that the application of the recommendations of the Housing Need Working Group would pay due regard to the Housing Executive's duty under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. This specifically required the Strategic Guidelines to take account of the hierarchy of housing need across districts, such as length of time on waiting list, high points levels and high numbers of applicants appearing on the waiting list.

The Housing Executive has offered to make more detailed reports available if required.

- (v) The first EQIA was approved by the Housing Executive Board on 16 December 2009. The second EQIA was approved by the Housing Executive Board on 27 April 2011.
- (vi) As at (iii) above.
- (vii) In summary, the first EQIA resulted in the Strategic Guidelines taking account of waiting times in the formulation of the Social Housing Development Programme.

In summary, the second EQIA required the Strategic Guidelines to take into account waiting times, points levels and numbers of applicants in housing stress in the formulation of the Social Housing Development Programme.

Social Housing: North Belfast Housing Strategy

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the social housing schemes built, or bought off the shelf, in the area covered by the initial North Belfast Housing Strategy, which ran from 2000 to 2007, including the (i) location of each scheme; (ii) the relevant the Housing Association; (iii) the year of the scheme; and (iv) the number of units.

(AQW 27159/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Details are as follows:

Financial Year – 2001/02

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
Prospect Phase 1	Newbuild	50	Flax	2001/02	Ardoyne
Wheatfield Phase 1 [Transfer]	Newbuild	13	Fold	2001/02	Alliance
Rehabilitation Phase 1	Acquired	10	Newington	2001/02	Limestone
New Lodge Phase 3[M] [2610NRJ]	Newbuild	13	Newington	2001/02	Carlisle/New Lodge
North Queen Street [26.10.PRR]	Newbuild	22	Newington	2001/02	Carlisle/New Lodge
Carrick Hill Phase 6 [26.10.716]	Newbuild	43	Oaklee	2001/02	Carrick Hill
Clifton/Oldpark Ph.4 [2610Mtz]	Newbuild	25	Oaklee	2001/02	Ardoyne
Total		176			

Financial Year – 2002/03

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
St Mary's:23-25 Whitewell Rd.	Newbuild	23	Ark	2002/03	Shore Cres./G'mount
Wolfhill:Ligoniel	Newbuild	42	B.I.H.	2002/03	Upper Ligoniel
Ponsonby Avenue	Newbuild	3	Clanmil	2002/03	Gainsborough/D'cairn
47-49 Cliftonville Road	Newbuild	12	Clanmil	2002/03	C'ville./Antrin Rd.
3 Northwood Drive	E.S.P.	6	Filor	2002/03	Skegoniel
211 Oldpark Road	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2002/03	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisitions Phase 1	Rehab	10	Flax	2002/03	Ardoyne
Grove [Mixed Tenure] Phase 2	Newbuild	41	Grove	2002/03	Shore Cres./G'mount
Whitewell [Church Of God]	Newbuild	18	Habinteg	2002/03	Upr.&Lwr. Whitewell

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
Newington Area Phase 2A	E.S.P.	7	Newington	2002/03	Gainsborough/ D'cairn
Newington Area Phase 2B	E.S.P.	2	Newington	2002/03	Gainsborough/ D'cairn
216/220 Limestone Road	Rehab	17	Newington	2002/03	Gainsborough/ D'cairn
Westland Road [2610Pvf]	Newbuild	6	Nth&West	2002/03	Cavehill
Lime Court:carrickhill [2003/04]	Off-Shelf	5	Oaklee	2002/03	Clifton
Clifton Courtyard [2003/04]	Off-Shelf	25	Oaklee	2002/03	Ardoyne
Total		218			

Financial Year – 2003/04

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
Glenbryn Phase 1 [Transfer]	Newbuild	30	B.I.H.	2003/04	Alliance
Antrim Road Phase 1 A&B	E.S.P.	4	Clanmil	2003/04	316 General
Ligoniel:hicks Bullick	Newbuild	41	Clanmil	2003/04	Upper Ligoniel
24 Clifton Crescent	Rehab	1	Clanmil	2003/04	Clifton
Ardoyne Acquisitions Phase 2B	E.S.P.	5	Flax	2003/04	Ardoyne
Prospect Park Phase 2	E.S.P.	9	Flax	2003/04	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisitions Phase 2A	E.S.P.	3	Flax	2003/04	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisitions Phase 3A&B	E.S.P.	6	Flax	2003/04	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisitions Phase 2C	E.S.P.	2	Flax	2003/04	Ardoyne
Ardilea Street	Newbuild	4	Flax	2003/04	Ardoyne
Herbert Street Phase 1	Newbuild	32	Flax	2003/04	Ardoyne
Wheatfield Phase 2 [Transfer]	Newbuild	18	Fold	2003/04	Alliance
Grove Phase 3 [Petrol Station]	Newbuild	17	Grove	2003/04	Shore Cres./ G'mount
13 York Crescent [Addition]	R.I.	1	Grove	2003/04	Grove
Newington Phase 3	E.S.P.	15	Newington	2003/04	Gainsborough/ D'cairn
New Lodge H.A.A. Phase 4 [2610Nrk]	Newbuild	21	Newington	2003/04	Carlisle/New Lodge
Coulter's Site: North Belfast	Newbuild	32	Newington	2003/04	Cavehill
38 Kansas Avenue	Rehab	3	Newington	2003/04	Cavehill
Clifton/Oldpark Ph. 5 [Transfer]	Newbuild	26	Oaklee	2003/04	Ardoyne
Total		270			

Financial Year – 2004/05

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
Norglen/Ligoniel	E.S.P.	2	B.I.H.	2004/05	Upper Ligoniel
Gainsborough Phase 1 [Transfer]	Newbuild	26	B.I.H.	2004/05	Limestone
Summerhill Court [Transfer]	Newbuild	9	B.I.H.	2004/05	Lower Oldpark
47/69 B'sillan Rd.: Bungalows	Off-Shelf	10	B.I.H.	2004/05	Ballysillan
Antrim Rd.Phase 1D	E.S.P.	4	Clanmil	2004/05	Limestone

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
Antrim Rd.Phase 1C(79 Kansas Ave.)	Rehab	1	Clanmil	2004/05	Limestone
Ardoyne Acquisitions Phase 3 C	E.S.P.	2	Flax	2004/05	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisition Phase 4 A	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2004/05	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisition Phase 4 B	E.S.P.	3	Flax	2004/05	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisition Phase 4 C	E.S.P.	2	Flax	2004/05	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisition Phase 4 D	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2004/05	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisition Phase 4 E	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2004/05	Ardoyne
Woodland Avenue	Newbuild	13	Flax	2004/05	Cliftonville
Torrens Phase 2 [Transfer]	Newbuild	34	Fold	2004/05	Torrens
Newington Acq. Phase 4A	E.S.P.	5	Newington	2004/05	Limestone
30&36 N'ington St/Atlantic Ave	E.S.P.	3	Newington	2004/05	Limestone
Newington Acq. Phase 4 (Deerpark)	Off-Shelf	9	Newington	2004/05	Limestone
Henry Place:carlisle House Ph.2	Newbuild	9	Oaklee	2004/05	Carlisle/New Lodge
Brookhill Avenue	Newbuild	9	Oaklee	2004/05	Cavehill
Henderson Avenue	Newbuild	12	Oaklee	2004/05	Cavehill
Clifton/Oldpark:bt Site	Newbuild	2	Oaklee	2004/05	Cavehill
Total		158			

Financial Year – 2005/06

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
27-37,Talbot Street	Newbuild	33	B.I.H.	2005/06	Clifton
23 Carlisle Square	E.S.P.	1	Clanmil	2005/06	Clifton
Nth. Bel Acq.Ph.1B (24 Dawson Street)	E.S.P.	1	Clanmil	2005/06	Clifton
38 Clifton Drive	E.S.P.	1	Clanmil	2005/06	Cliftonville
Mountcollyer Phase 1 [T][Alp]	Newbuild	35	Clanmil	2005/06	Limestone
Pilot Street[Alp]	Newbuild	68	Clanmil	2005/06	Clifton
Egg Factory:ardoyn Rd.[Alp]	Newbuild	69	Clanmil	2005/06	Ardoyne
Nth. Bel Acq.Ph.1A (25W'bank Gdns)	Rehab	1	Clanmil	2005/06	316:General
58 Glenwood Street	E.S.P.	1	Filor	2005/06	Alliance
86 Hesketh Park	E.S.P.	1	Filor	2005/06	Alliance
Ardoyne Acquisitions Ph.5A	E.S.P.	2	Flax	2005/06	Ardoyne
7 Kansas Avenue	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2005/06	Ardoyne
10 Loughery Court	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2005/06	Cavehill
Ardoyne Acquisitions Ph.5C	E.S.P.	3	Flax	2005/06	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisitions Ph.5B	E.S.P.	2	Flax	2005/06	Ardoyne
Flax Rehabs 2	Rehab	2	Flax	2005/06	Ardoyne
18 Northwick Drive	E.S.P.	1	Fold	2005/06	Cliftonville
Torrens Crescent Phase 2[T]	Rehab	2	Fold	2005/06	Torrens
Torrens Crescent:rehabs [T]	Rehab	12	Fold	2005/06	Torrens

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
141 Shore Road	E.S.P.	1	Grove	2005/06	Shore Cres./ G'mount
1 Keadyville Avenue	E.S.P.	3	Grove	2005/06	Shore Cres./ G'mount
Riteprice:185A York Road[Alp]	Newbuild	6	Grove	2005/06	Limestone
504 Antrim Road	Newbuild	7	Habinteg	2005/06	Cavehill
38&40 Brucevale Park	E.S.P.	2	Newington	2005/06	Limestone
84 Jamaica Street	E.S.P.	1	Nth&West	2005/06	Ardoyne
Jamaica Street Phase 1[T]	Newbuild	21	Nth&West	2005/06	Ardoyne
20 Carlisle Square	E.S.P.	1	Oaklee	2005/06	Cliftonville
60 Newington Avenue	E.S.P.	1	Oaklee	2005/06	Cliftonville
26 Thorndale Avenue	E.S.P.	1	Oaklee	2005/06	Cavehill
173 Cliftonpark Avenue	E.S.P.	1	Oaklee	2005/06	Cliftonville
18 Easton Crescent	E.S.P.	1	Oaklee	2005/06	Cliftonville
136-138 Antrim Road	Newbuild	8	Oaklee	2005/06	Cavehill
Total		291			

Financial Year – 2006/07

Scheme Name	Work Type	Units	Owner	Fin-Year	Location
Fairyknowe:whitewell	Newbuild	1	B.I.H.	2006/07	Upr.& Lwr.Whitewell
12 Tyndale Grove	E.S.P.	1	B.I.H.	2006/07	Ballysillan
1 Marsden Terrace	E.S.P.	1	Clanmil	2006/07	Cavehill
10 Castleton Gardens	E.S.P.	1	Filor	2006/07	Limestone
49 Westland Drive	E.S.P.	1	Filor	2006/07	Cavehill
Ardoyne Acquired Phase 6C	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2006/07	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquired Phase 6A	E.S.P.	2	Flax	2006/07	Ardoyne
Ardoyne Acquisitions Ph.5D	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2006/07	Ardoyne
201 Brompton Park Ph.5F	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2006/07	Ardoyne
2 Havana Walk Phase.5E	E.S.P.	1	Flax	2006/07	Ardoyne
Herbert Street Phase 2[Alp]	Newbuild	34	Flax	2006/07	Ardoyne
79 Torrens Crescent	E.S.P.	1	Fold	2006/07	Torrens
179-181 New Lodge Road[Alp]	Newbuild	8	Fold	2006/07	Ardoyne
Newington Acq. Phase 6A	E.S.P.	6	Newington	2006/07	Skegoniel
7 Wyndham Street	E.S.P.	1	Newington	2006/07	Torrens
14-20,20A Haliday's Road[Alp]	Newbuild	13	Oaklee	2006/07	Clifton
Milk Board:456 Antrim Rd	Newbuild	61	Oaklee	2006/07	Cavehill
Total		135			

North Belfast Housing Strategy

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development what reviews or evaluations of the initial North Belfast Housing Strategy were carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive during the implementation of the strategy, which ran from 2000 to 2007; and when these were published.

(AQW 27160/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive carried out an interim review of the 2000 to 2007 Strategy in 2006, at a point when five years of the strategy had elapsed. The review was consulted upon and led to the introduction of a new document 'North Belfast Housing Strategy - Priorities 2008 to 2012' which continued delivery of the original strategy.

The Housing Executive did not publish details of the review.

Housing Executive Properties: Gas in Donaghadee

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what plans there are to install domestic gas into Housing Executive properties in Donaghadee.

(AQW 27203/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that all of their dwellings in Donaghadee have gas or oil heating with the exception of a few cases where tenants opted to retain their solid fuel or Economy 7 systems in previous schemes. There are 26 dwellings in Donaghadee where oil systems are over fifteen years old and the Housing Executive plan to replace these with new gas systems in early 2014.

There will then be a rolling programme to replace remaining fifteen year old oil systems as they reach the end of their lifespan. The Housing Executive will also deal with any solid fuel or Economy 7 systems at Change of Tenancy, or when they fail.

Social Housing: Internet Connectivity

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of social houses without internet connectivity.

(AQW 27227/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available as the Housing Executive and Housing Associations do not collect this information about their tenants.

Social Housing Development Programme: Strategic Guidelines

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of the draft EQIA on the Social Housing Development Programme Strategic Guidelines, published in 2008, which refers to emerging evidence suggesting the policy of ring fencing was having a detrimental effect on meeting social housing needs elsewhere, to detail this evidence, including how and when it emerged.

(AQW 27250/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive annually reviews the delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) against the Strategic Guidelines. In doing so it examines the out turn of the SHDP over the previous 3 years.

In 2006 there were eight key Strategic Guideline policy target areas which are set out below.

Policy Target Area

- North Belfast *
- Redevelopment
- Rural *
- Supported
- Travellers *
- Housing Stress
- West Belfast *
- Londonderry *

The policy target areas highlighted with an asterisk in the table above were subject to "ring fencing" and had their annual programme requirement protected in line with their annual housing need.

The remaining available SHDP was then divided up across the Redevelopment, Supported and Housing Stress policy areas; apportioned in proportion with their need requirement.

The SHDP delivery out turn by strategic policy 2003/06 is detailed in Table 1.

In December 2006 the Housing Executive's Annual Review of the Strategic Guidelines identified that the impact of ring fencing had led to an emerging imbalance of programme delivery share - particularly against Rural and Housing Stress strategic targets.

This issue was also a problem across all Housing Executive Areas (particularly the Southern Area) as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1

Policy Area	03/04 Target	03/04 Output	04/05 Target	04/05 Output	05/06 Target	05/06 Output	Total 03/06 Target	Total 03/06 Output	Var. of 03/06 target/output
North Belfast *	250	300	250	158	250	298	750	756	+ 6
RDA	131	148	88	130	79	81	298	359	+ 61

Policy Area	03/04 Target	03/04 Output	04/05 Target	04/05 Output	05/06 Target	05/06 Output	Total 03/06 Target	Total 03/06 Output	Var. of 03/06 target/output
Rural*	150	86	150	88	150	22	450	196	254
Supported	222	457	176	208	157	233	555	898	+ 343
Travellers*	10	16	10	0	10	0	30	16	14
Housing Stress	342	111	431	228	459	507	1232	846	386
West Belfast*	275	343	275	414	275	321	825	1,078	+ 253
Londonderry*	120	65	120	90	120	60	360	215	145
Total	1,500	1526	1500	1316	1,500	1522	4500	4,364	136

Table 2

Area	Category	Av An Target	2003/04 Output	2004/05 Output	2005/06 Output	Tot Target 2003/06	Tot Output 2003/06	Var. of 03/06 output / target
Belfast	North Belfast	250	300	158	298	750	756	+ 6
	Redevelopment	60	77	101	64	180	242	+ 62
	Supported	52	145	50	57	156	252	+ 96
	Travellers	5	16	0	0	15	16	+ 1
	Housing Stress	133	17	76	272	399	365	34
	West Belfast	185	133	336	310	555	779	+ 224
Belfast Total		685	688	721	1001	2055	2,410	+ 355
North East	Redevelopment	10	31	0	0	30	31	+ 1
	Rural	27	2	2	0	81	4	77
	Supported	49	105	43	89	147	237	+ 90
	Travellers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Housing Stress	59	29	19	50	177	98	79
N E Total		145	167	64	139	435	370	65
South	Redevelopment	12	10	0	5	36	15	21
	Rural	59	31	55	12	177	98	79
	Supported	29	61	30	51	87	142	+ 55
	Travellers	3	0	0	0	9	0	9
	Housing Stress	80	24	65	6	240	95	145
South Total		183	126	150	74	549	350	199
South East	Redevelopment	18	30	29	12	54	71	+ 17
	Rural	44	39	10	10	132	59	73
	Supported	25	71	28	23	75	122	+ 47
	Travellers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Housing Stress	134	28	67	174	402	269	133
	West Belfast	90	210	78	11	270	299	+ 29
S E Total		311	378	212	230	933	820	113

Area	Category	Av An Target	2003/04 Output	2004/05 Output	2005/06 Output	Tot Target 2003/06	Tot Output 2003/06	Var. of 03/06 output / target
West	Redevelopment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Rural	20	14	21	0	60	35	25
	Supported	30	75	57	13	90	145	+ 55
	Travellers	2	0	0	0	6	0	6
	Housing Stress	4	13	1	5	12	19	+ 7
	West Bank	120	65	90	60	360	215	145
West Total		176	167	169	78	528	414	114
Grand Total		1500	1526	1316	1522	4500	4364	136

In 2007 the Housing Executive carried out a fundamental review of the Strategic Guidelines which confirmed that ring fencing, while largely achieving the objectives in the ring fenced area, had led to a growing imbalance in programme share against housing need in non ring fenced areas.

The Review of Strategic Guidelines (November 2008) recommended that "ring fencing" be removed from the Strategic Guidelines to introduce a more equitable sharing of limited new build programme based only on housing need. This policy change was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment in 2008 and received widespread consultation.

North Belfast Housing Strategy

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Northern Ireland Housing Executive carried out a final evaluation of the 2000-2007 North Belfast Housing Strategy; and if so, when this evaluation was (i) approved by the board; and (ii) published.

(AQW 27251/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has confirmed that there was no final evaluation of the 2000 to 2007 North Belfast Housing Strategy. Rather, an interim review was carried out in 2006, at a point when five years of the strategy had elapsed. The review was consulted upon and led to continuation of the strategy through a new document 'North Belfast Housing Strategy - Priorities 2008 to 2012'.

Social Housing Newbuilds: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what social housing new builds in North Down are planned by housing associations over the next five years.

(AQW 27283/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Table below details the social housing new builds that are currently programmed to be delivered within North Down over the period 2013/14 – 2015/16.

The Social Housing Development Programme is managed on the basis of a 3 year rolling programme. The Housing Executive is currently in the process of formulating the new draft Social Housing Development Programme for the period 2014/15 – 2016/17 which, subject to my approval, will be published on the Housing Executive's website early in 2014.

Association	Scheme Name	Units	Need Group
Clanmil	117A Donaghadee Road/7 Summerhill Park, Bangor	10	General Needs
Clanmil	South Circular Road, Extension, Bangor	4	General Needs
Habinteg	34-36 Bangor Road, Holywood	8	General Needs
Helm	22 Croft Road, Holywood	26	General Needs
Oaklee	Clifton Special Care School, Old Belfast Road	106	General Needs
Trinity	78 Rathgael Road, Bangor	6	General Needs
Total 2013/14		160	
Ark	North Down Older People, Ravara, Bangor	24	Frail Elderly
Clanmil	Corner of Faulkner Road/Clandeboyne Road, Bangor	54	General Needs
NIHE	Rathgill Greenfield, Phase 1 Site A (T)	100	General Needs

Association	Scheme Name	Units	Need Group
NIHE	Rathgill, Phase 2, Bangor (T) (Greenfield)	50	General Needs
Triangle	PSNI Site, 5 Millisle Road, Donaghadee	10	General Needs
Trinity	West Church, Bangor	18	General Needs
Total 2014/15		256	
Apex	Killoughey Road, Donaghadee	24	General Needs
Apex	Moss Road, Millisle, Phase 2	3	General Needs
Fold	122-124 High Street, Holywood	18	General Needs
Fold	High Bangor Road, Donaghadee	12	General Needs
Fold	Rathgael Road/Clandeboyne Road, Bangor	30	General Needs
NIHE	Kilclief Gardens, Bangor (T)	13	General Needs
Total 2015/16		100	

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.

North Belfast Housing Strategy

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the meeting of Northern Ireland Housing Council on 10 January 2008 and the Chief Executive's reference to the North Belfast Housing Strategy Review and 'the Strategy for 2007 to 2012', to detail (i) when this strategy was approved by the NIHE Board; (ii) the title of the strategy; (iii) when it was published; and (iv) why it is not available on the internet.

(AQW 27305/11-15)

Mr McCausland: An interim review of the 2000 to 2007 Strategy resulted in the completion of a new document entitled 'North Belfast Housing Strategy - Priorities 2008 to 2012', which continued delivery of the original strategy.

The Housing Executive has confirmed that the Board was not asked for approval of this continuation document, neither was it published and so is therefore not available on the internet.

Housing Executive Properties: Double Glazing in North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the estimated cost for installing double glazing to all properties owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in North Down.

(AQW 27325/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Since the Programme for Government announcement the Housing Executive has advised that the total cost of installing double glazing to their properties in North Down is in the region of £2.4million and is made up as follows:

- Schemes completed/still on site - £1.4m
- Schemes programmed for current and next year - £1m*

*this is subject to tendering and the estimate could change.

Housing Executive: Resident Parking

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the policy used by staff in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to deal with resident vehicle parking issues.

(AQW 27328/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they work closely with the Department for Regional Development (DRD) Roads Service to ensure that wherever feasible there are adequate car parking facilities within all of their housing estates. New car parking must be approved by the Planning Service and DRD Roads Service Development Control and Maintenance Sections. The Housing Executive may provide additional communal parking facilities where they are necessary, on condition that the completed facility will be adopted by DRD Roads Service. It is Housing Executive policy that additional parking facilities shall only be provided where more than 50% of the houses, likely to use the facility, remain in Housing Executive ownership.

Housing Executive tenants are advised when they are signing up for a new tenancy that if they want to park their car in their own garden they must first build a proper hard standing and arrange for a footpath or crossing which they will have to pay for. They must not start to do this work without first asking the local Housing Executive manager and obtaining permission from DRD Roads Service.

Finally, Housing Executive tenants are also advised that if they have a caravan, boat or any other vehicle they must not park it at or near their house in such a way as to cause nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours. The Housing Executive works with Mediation Services Northern Ireland to resolve tenant neighbour disputes which on occasion include issues around car parking.

Departmental Funding: DSD

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding his Department has provided to (i) the Consumer Council; (ii) Advice NI; (iii) the Citizens Advice Bureau; and (iv) the Utility Regulator, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27336/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has provided funding in each of the last five years as follows:

	1/4/2008 to 31/3/2009	1/4/2009 to 31/3/2010	1/4/2010 to 31/3/2011	1/4/2011 to 31/3/2012	1/4/2012 to 31/3/2013
Consumer Council	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Advice NI	£240,145	£246,381	£246,381	£706,296	£332,700*
CAB NI	£960,114	£1,081,313	£932,144	£685,898	£493,779*
Utility Regulator	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

*In addition to this funding Advice NI and CAB NI also benefited from funding to the Northern Ireland Advice Services Consortium (NIASC). From 1st October 2012 Advice NI, CAB NI became members of NIASC with funding allocated to the Consortium rather than to individual groups. Funding to the NIASC for the period 1/10/12 to 31/3/13 is £738,451.

DSD also provides funding for frontline advice services of approx £1.9 million through local councils who provide additional funding. Local councils then commission services and allocate funding from a range of advice providers including Advice NI and Citizens Advice Bureau. Details of specific allocations to these organisations by local councils are not available.

Housing Waiting List: North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of applicants on the housing waiting list for a property in North Antrim, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27341/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, the table below details the number of applicants on the waiting list by the Housing Executive District office areas of Ballymena, Ballymoney and Moyle, which cover North Antrim, since 2009.

District Office	31.03.09	31.03.10	31.03.11	01.05.12*	31.03.13	01.10.13
Ballymena	1,530	1,420	1,520	1,256	1,564	1,551
Ballymoney	497	439	496	390	481	468
Ballycastle	359	357	334	326	352	347

* Figures are as at 31 March each year, with the exception of 2011/12. Figures for that year were extracted on 1 May 2012 due to the implementation of the Housing Executive's new Housing Management System.

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.

Housing Executive Schemes: Ballymena, Ballymoney, Moyle

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development what Northern Ireland Housing Executive schemes are planned during this financial year, for each housing estate in the (i) Ballymena; (ii) Ballymoney; and (iii) Moyle council areas.

(AQW 27343/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that within the Ballymena, Ballymoney and Moyle council areas they have eight schemes planned in the 2013/14 agreed programme that fall within their Ballymena, Ballymoney and Ballycastle district office areas as follows:

Double glazing	Ballymoney 103 dwellings
	Ballymena 271 dwellings
External Cyclical Maintenance	Ballymoney 141 dwellings

Heating	Ballymoney 72 dwellings
	Ballymena 153 dwellings
	Ballycastle 159 dwellings
Kitchen replacement	Ballymoney 71 dwellings
	Ballymena 96 dwellings

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.

North Belfast Housing Strategy

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development whether a final evaluation, independent or otherwise, was carried out at the end of the second extended phase of the North Belfast Housing Strategy 2007-2012.

(AQW 27353/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has confirmed that it carried out no formal review, independent or otherwise, of the 'North Belfast Housing Strategy - Priorities 2008 to 2012'.

Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the process of the ring fencing of house building by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and (ii) what was ring fenced, in North Belfast.

(AQW 27354/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) The process of ring fencing was one of the mechanisms used by the Housing Executive for distributing the Social Housing Development Programme and directed new social housing into areas of particularly acute housing need.

When in operation, the Strategic Guidelines ring fenced five of eight policy areas as shown in the table below. The ring fenced areas were each allocated a targeted number of units.

Policy Area

North Belfast	Ring fenced
Rural	Ring fenced
Travellers	Ring fenced
West Belfast	Ring fenced
Londonderry	Ring fenced
Redevelopment	Not ring fenced
Supported	Not ring fenced
Housing Stress	Not ring fenced

- (ii) In North Belfast, the new development target was set at 250 units per annum.

Outsourcing of Functions: DSD

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27358/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development has taken the decision to outsource its Soft Services and this was previously advised in response to Assembly Question 26787/11-15. This decision was an operational one driven by a need to achieve efficiencies.

Subcontractor Payment

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 26664/11-15, to detail (i) the payment currently being withheld; and (ii) the measures being taken to ensure sub-contractors are paid.

(AQW 27361/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that there are no withheld monies on their current year five or "live" contracts. They advise that "Year 5" is the calendar year from 28 January 2012. They also advise that payment of domestic

sub-contractors and/or suppliers by main contractors is outside their control as the sub contractors are appointed by the contractors and the contractual and legal basis of that is between these two parties.

Girdwood Regeneration Scheme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Girdwood Regeneration Scheme.
(AQW 27382/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Masterplan Conceptual Framework for Girdwood Park was launched in May 2012 and represents an agreed plan for the shared development of this key strategic site in North Belfast. Since the withdrawal of Judicial Review proceedings in June of this year there has been substantial progress towards realising the vision for Girdwood.

Belfast City Council has been awarded EU Peace funding for the development of a Community Hub at the heart of the site which will provide high quality leisure and community facilities. My officials are working closely with the Council to develop the infrastructure for the whole site which will support the range of uses identified in the Masterplan Conceptual Framework.

Subject to confirmation of planning permission and final budget approvals, the construction of the Hub and infrastructure and the planned housing units will begin early in 2014.

Disability Living Allowance: Oral Appeals

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average waiting time for a Disability Living Allowance oral appeal in the last twelve months.
(AQW 27396/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Within the period 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013, the average waiting time for a Disability Living Allowance oral appeal from receipt of valid appeal until the allocated first date of hearing was 14.64 weeks.

Employment and Support Allowance: Oral Appeals

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average waiting time for an Employment and Support Allowance oral appeal, in the last twelve months.
(AQW 27398/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Within the period 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013, the average waiting time for an Employment and Support Allowance oral appeal from receipt of valid appeal until the allocated first date of hearing is 14.57 weeks.

Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals Upheld

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of Employment and Support Allowance appeals which have been upheld in the last twelve months.
(AQW 27399/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Chairman of The Appeals Service tribunal records whether the decision made on appeal was either more or less advantageous than a previous decision. A more advantageous decision may increase the allowance or direct that a new award be made.

There were 3,451 Employment and Support Allowance appeals resulting in a more advantageous determination within the period 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013.

Benefit Appeals Tribunals: Audio Recording

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 26668/11-15, when the project to test the arrangements and benefits of introducing audio recording in benefit appeals tribunals will commence; and to clarify whether it will be for all hearings, in all jurisdictions.
(AQW 27407/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The pilot project is at the preliminary planning stage and the scope has not yet been agreed therefore it is not yet possible to give a commencement date.

Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) appeal hearings have resulted in the original decision not to award ESA being overturned, in each of the last two years.
(AQW 27426/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Chairman of The Appeals Tribunal records whether the decision made on appeal was either more or less advantageous than a previous decision. A more advantageous decision may increase the allowance or direct that a new award be made.

The table below sets out the total number of decisions made by the Tribunal in 2011/12 and 2012/13 for Employment and Support Allowance cases and how many of these decisions were more or less advantageous to the appellant.

Year	Total number of Tribunal Decisions	More Advantageous Decision	Less Advantageous Decision
2011/12	6,318	2,193	4,125
2012/13	8,559	2,855	5,704

Housing-led Regeneration

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the housing led regeneration initiative, including (i) the number of areas under consideration for inclusion as pilot schemes; and (ii) the timescale for announcing the four pilot areas. **(AQW 27438/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: I launched the now renamed Building Successful Communities pilot programme on 28 October. Six areas have been selected to test this new initiative.

Five are in Belfast at Lower Oldpark/Hillview, Divis/Albert Street, Tiger's Bay/Mountcollyer, Andersonstown and Shankill/Brown Square plus one at Doury Road in Ballymena.

Housing Executive: Stock Transfer

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of areas being considered for stock transfer; (ii) the number of properties involved; (iii) the length of time an area may remain under potential stock transfer consideration; and (iv) the maintenance work that cannot be carried out while properties are being considered for stock transfer. **(AQW 27439/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The Stock Transfer Programme, overseen by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), will see the refurbishment of up to 2000 social homes over the next three years.

The proposed programme will take place in a number of phases:

- 1 the first phase of 702 properties in 18 locations commenced in September 2013,
- 2 the second phase of 976 properties in 22 locations commencing in March 2014 and
- 3 the third phase of 744 properties in 25 locations commencing in September 2014.

There is no limit on the length of time an area will remain under potential stock transfer consideration. All the areas identified in the proposed programme are due to progress through the stock transfer process in line with the phasing timetable outlined above.

It has been agreed, as part of the Stock Transfer protocol between the Department and NIHE, that properties included in proposed stock transfer schemes will be excluded from any planned maintenance schemes with the exception of essential health and safety works. The NIHE will continue to be responsible for response maintenance up to the date of transfer and, for example, may carry out adaptations subject to the tenant's needs and the cost and timescale of the scheme regarding the property. This should ensure an appropriate balance between addressing needs in a timely manner and ensuring value for money. To do otherwise would negate the purpose of taking forward these schemes as part of a multi element improvement programme that will see tenants getting the much needed improvements their homes require and a modern, decent home for the future.

Proposed Stock Transfer Programme

Proposed Phase 1:

- 8 units at Grant Avenue, Randalstown
- 72 units at Monkscoole House flats, Newtownabbey.
- 78 units at Victoria Parade, Duncairn Parade maisonettes and Dehra Grove flats, Belfast
- 61 units at Torr Way & Annadale Crescent bungalows, Inverary bungalows and Moyard bungalows, Belfast
- 112 units at Woodland and Beechwood Houses, Rushpark, Newtownabbey
- 90 units at Antrim Flats (Rathglynn, Rathkyle, Greenpark Dr, Seacash Dr, Edenvale Park, Seacash Lodge) and Devenagh Way Flats, Ballymena
- 136 units at Grange Phases 1 & 2, Ballyclare
- 37 units at Magowan House, Portadown and Clare House, Newry
- 44 units at Chestnut Place / Castlevue bedsits & maisonettes (& bungalows), Banbridge
- 64 units at Belvoir bedsit flats Moyle Walk / Kilwarlin Walk, Belvoir Park, Belfast

Proposed Phase 2:

- 70 units at Lendrick / Parker Street and Woodvale Phase 10, Belfast
- 120 units at Lenadoon/Dungloe, Carrigart Avenue and Suffolk Road flats, Belfast
- 30 units Antrim Rurals 90 units at Latharna House, Larne
- 159 units at Drumtara Phases 1-4, Ballymena
- 55 units at Kincora/Shancoole, Ballymena
- 90 units at at Wellington Green and Ferris Park Phase 2, Larne
- 54 units at Ackinduff / Drumreagh / Ivybank bungalows, Dungannon and Drumhillary rural bungalows, Armagh
- 82 units South Down bungalows and Newry / Mullaghbawn bungalows
- 66 units Wellington Street and Avenue Road, Lurgan
- 102 units Kilcooley Phase 1, Rathgill Phase 5 flats and Jubilee Court, Bangor
- 58 units Tonagh Phase 3 flats & maisonettes and Glenmore flats, Lisburn

Proposed Phase 3:

- 88 units at Cregagh/Woodstock and Northbrook Street, Belfast
- 116 units at Carncoole House and Abbotscoole House, Rathcoole
- 29 units at Neillsbrook 2, Randalstown
- 78 units at Abbeyville Park aluminium bungalows, Whiteabbey; Hollybush/ Jennings aluminium bungalows, Ballyclare; Camlin Gardens aluminium bungalows, Crumlin; Ballymoney aluminium bungalows and Drumadragh aluminium bungalows, Coleraine
- 86 units at Doury Road Phases 2 & 3 and Granville Drive, Ballymena
- 107 units at Curraghmore/Glebeview, Coleraine; Hazelbank, Coleraine and Columbia Park/Church Street, Limavady
- 24 units at Upper Glebe maisonettes, Coleraine
- 48 units at Clonmeen / Enniskeen bungalows, Lurgan and Parkview / Moody Park bungalows, Banbridge
- 30 units at Huntly / Dunbarton / Kiltarriff aluminium ungalows, Banbridge and Cloughrea aluminium bungalows, Bessbrook
- 16 units at Lurgan Rural Cottages and Castlereagh Rurals
- 50 units at Kilcooley Phase 1B, Bangor; Craig Gardens Manor, Lisburn and Glen bungalows, Newtownards
- 72 units at Kilbroney House, Cregagh

Conflict of Interest: Glasgow Housing Association

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of whether a potential conflict of interest exists in relation to the Chief Executive of Wheatley Housing Group, the parent company of Glasgow Housing Association, advising the Department and expressing an interest in taking control of his Department's social housing stock, and a director of Glasgow Housing Association being set to become the Director of Transformation at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

(AQW 27463/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Chief Executive of the Wheatley Housing Group is a member of the Expert Panel for the Social Housing Reform Programme. As such his opinion will be sought, along with those of the other panel members, to provide the Department with an assurance that any proposals for a future Northern Ireland Social Housing Model are appropriate, comprehensive and in line with best practice in social housing both nationally and internationally. Normal governance procedures will apply.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Strategic Investment Board (S.I.B) have confirmed that in relation to the appointment of the Director of Transformation, the person was recruited by the Strategic Investment Board (S.I.B) and will be an employee of S.I.B, placed in the Housing Executive. The successful candidate has stated in her job application that there were no conflicts of interest and will be asked to sign a Conflicts of Interest Register with SIB on the day she commences employment with them. In carrying out the role of Director of Transformation, the postholder will report to the NIHE Chief Executive and will be a member of the Chief Executive's Management Team. In this regard the postholder will have no links to Glasgow Housing Association in terms of their employment status other than as a previous employer.

The Programme has, and will continue to, engage with many stakeholders and housing experts as it progresses. Their views will be considered and, where appropriate, used to inform the development of proposals for a new Social Housing Model for Northern Ireland. However, you can rest assured that any decisions I make in relation to the new model will be in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland and not those of any individual or group.

Therefore in answer to your question I do not believe that a potential conflict of interest exists in relation to either of these appointments.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many people currently receive Employment and Support Allowance.
(AQW 27524/11-15)

Mr McCausland: At May 2013, there were 70,500 people in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance in Northern Ireland.

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.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many people currently receive Disability Living Allowance. (AQW 27527/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As at May 2013 there were 193,790* people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

* The Information provided is an Official Statistic. The production and dissemination of all Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Special Needs Management Allowance

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development why his Department has decided to cut the funding for the Special Needs Management Allowance. (AQW 27601/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In 1993 the Department introduced a payment known as Special Needs Management Allowance hereafter known as SNMA.

At that time it was Departmental policy to invest in housing which provided a permanent home for tenants, or equipped them with the life skills and confidence to move into permanent accommodation. Schemes that did not provide tenants with a permanent home were expected to ensure that its tenants received the necessary help and advice to enable them to move to more independent and appropriate housing and were required to have a strategy in place to enable move-on accommodation to be found.

SNMA was a cash limited source of funding paid to qualifying Housing Associations that attracted higher than normal management costs due to the intensive style of management required by vulnerable clients.

On 1 April 2003 the Supporting People Programme was introduced which provided new arrangements for vulnerable people living in supported accommodation.

The new policy marked a change of direction for the provision of housing accommodation with a focus on providing people with accommodation and housing support services to enable them to achieve independent living.

The new funding source combined a number of legacy funding streams available at that time including SNMA into a single funding stream known as the Supporting People Grant.

The change in direction of policy led to the Department examining the nature and policy intention of all its housing stock and determined that the majority of the schemes in receipt of SNMA were able to demonstrate that the policy intention was being achieved with the exception of Registered Care Homes.

The Housing Support Services Order NI 2002 and the Housing Support Services Regulations NI 2003 outlined the terms and conditions and eligibility criteria for accessing the new funding stream and all Registered Care Homes were excluded from accessing Supporting People grant from 1 April 2003 because Registered Care Homes, which provide twenty four hour board and care, as opposed to individual tenancies, were considered to be outside the scope of the Supporting People policy intention which was to enable people to live independently.

In 2009 the Department carried out a review of the continued payment of Special Needs Management Allowance. The review concluded that continued funding to Registered Care Homes from the supporting people grant was not delivering the Policy Intention to promote independent living.

On 30 March 2011 representatives from the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing (NIFHA) met with the previous Department for Social Development Minister and Director of Housing to discuss the continued payment of Special Needs Management Allowance. At the meeting the Director of Housing indicated to the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations the Department's intention to cease the payment of Special Needs Management Allowance from the Supporting People grant as continued payment of the allowance did not adhere to the original policy intent of the programme.

The intention at that time was to reduce funding by 10% in the 2012/2013 financial year and to cease payment from April 2014 to allow the Housing Associations and their Joint Management Partners sufficient time to prepare for the phasing out of the payment.

A high level task force was formed to include representation from DHSSPS, the Health Trusts, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and DSD officials to assist the housing associations through the transitional period and explore options on a scheme by scheme basis to minimise disruption to service users

Housing associations are working closely with the task group and departmental officials to bring forward individual plans to address the deficit to include;

- Remodelling schemes
- Reviewing the registration status of schemes

- Reviewing contracts with the relevant trusts
- Reviewing internal finance to absorb costs.

A great deal has been achieved to date and early indications are that service delivery can be maintained with appropriate transitional plans actioned and continued assessment of potential impact to service users monitored closely.

Plaque on Property Owned or Controlled by DSD

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development whether the plaque commemorating one of the perpetrators of the Shankill bombing is placed on property owned or controlled by his Department or its arm's-length bodies; and if so, what steps will be taken to remove the plaque.

(AQW 27605/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I have been advised that the property in question is not owned or controlled by my Department or any of its arm's-length bodies.

The Venue

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development whether his officials have explored all possible options to allow The Venue to remain in Derry, including some form of public-private ownership and management.

(AQW 27659/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has carefully considered all the options for the future of The Venue 2013 at Ebrington. We have sought to identify whether there is any private sector interest in operating the Venue after the end of this year. It is clear from the response to our efforts that there is no such interest.

The alternative is to commit public sector funding to retain The Venue. Officials in the Department have estimated that the annual costs of continuing to rent the structure would be in excess of £1.6 million. It is my assessment that there are many more cost effective ways in which my Department could contribute to securing the legacy of the UK City of Culture year in Londonderry than spending substantial sums on retaining the Venue.

Although my Department will not retain The Venue after the end of this year, we have committed funding to the provision of a venue for large scale events in the city. Earlier this year, I announced funding of £656,000 to the new recreational complex at St Columb's Park which will allow the main hall to be used as an entertainment venue capable of accommodating up to 2,000 people seated. When completed, this facility will offer a permanent venue capable of holding the kind of large scale events which we have seen during the UK City of Culture year.

Community Asset Transfer: Carrickfergus Borough Council

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) any organisations funded by his Department that have expressed an interest in managing or purchasing property owned by Carrickfergus Borough Council under Community Asset Transfer; (ii) the monetary value placed on each property by those interested organisations; and (iii) whether Carrickfergus Borough Council was consulted by those organisations prior to any expressions of interest.

(AQW 27693/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Community Asset Transfer Demonstration Programme closed to applications on October 18th 2013. This programme is being lead by Development Trusts NI, my Department's delivery partner on Community Asset Transfer. Under the programme no organisations funded by my Department have expressed an interest in managing or purchasing property owned by Carrickfergus Borough Council.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Independent Financial Review Panel

Mr Clarke asked the Assembly Commission to detail (i) how the panel for the Independent Financial Review Panel was selected; (ii) how many applied for the posts; (iii) the salary scale of those appointed; (iv) the length of contract for each appointed member; (v) any severance package available; (vi) how many hours a month do they meet; and (vii) what other roles each member of the panel holds.

(AQW 27286/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission):

Part (i)

The members of the Independent Financial Review Panel (IFRP) were selected through a public advertisement and a formal interview process.

Part (ii)

30 applications were received.

Part (iii)

There is no fixed salary. Remuneration for the role of the Chair of IFRP is £380 per day (£47.50 per hour). IFRP Members receive £320 per day (£40.00 per hour).

Part (iv)

The appointments of IFRP Chair and Members are for a term of 5 years under Section 4 of the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Part (v)

No severance package is set out in the Act.

Part (vi)

The frequency of the Panel's meetings varies. Details of meetings are contained in the Panel's Annual Reports which can be accessed on the IFRP website (www.ifrp.org.uk). Since its formation in July 2011, the Panel has met as follows:

- July 2011 to March 2012 (9 months): approx. 18 hours per month

During this period the Panel also held several informal meetings with MLAs each of which lasted approximately 1 hour.

- April 2012 to March 2013 (12 months): approx. 6 hours per month
- April 2013 to September 2013 (6 months): approx. 2.5 hours per month

Part (vii)

The following information is taken from the Panel Members' Register of Interests which is available on the IFRP website (www.ifrp.org.uk)

Patrick McCartan- IFRP Chair

Directorships: None

Remunerated employment, office, profession etc: None

Elected/Public Office:

- Member of the Board of Governors, St Columbanus College, Bangor, Co Down
- Member of the Board of Governors, Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock, Belfast

Alan McQuillan – IFRP member

Directorships: None

Remunerated employment, office, profession etc:

- Self Employed Management & Security Consultant
- Lead Assistant Boundary Commissioner for England and Wales covering the Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Elected/Public Office: None

DR Henrietta Campbell – IFRP member

Directorships: None

Remunerated employment, office, profession etc:

- Member of the Food Standards Agency

Elected/Public Office: None

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 8 November 2013

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Equality Commission Publication

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the Equality Commission's publication 'Trends in Community Proportions of Applications and Appointments to the Private and Public Sectors' (March 2012), which shows a lower success rate for Protestant applicants for jobs in the public and private sectors throughout the last two decades, for their assessment of its implications for the operation of our present equality laws.

(AQW 11927/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): As you are aware, equality legislation is in place to protect equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination on the basis of specified characteristics. We would advise anyone who feels they may have been unfairly treated to take further advice.

Equality Commission Publication

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what response their Department will be making to the Equality Commission's publication, 'Trends in Community Proportions of Applications and Appointments to the Private and Public Sectors' (March 2012), particularly in so far as it shows a lower success rate for Protestant applicants for jobs in the private sector throughout the last decade.

(AQW 11940/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The data contained in the publication does not indicate any reasons as to why success rates are lower. It should be noted though that the data used for this does not include internal vacancies or monitor declined offers.

Positive Relations Project

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Positive Relations Project will be funded after March 2013.

(AQW 21072/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Positive Relations Project currently receives funding under the Peace III Programme. Following agreement by the Special European Union Programmes Body to a request for an extension, the Positive Relations Project is due to come to an end in December 2013 with the period between now and the end of December being used primarily to wind up the project.

Good Relations Strategy

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the decision was taken not to publish the new good relations strategy at the same time as the Together: Building a United Community document.

(AQW 22912/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The new Good Relations Strategy is called 'Together: Building a United Community'.

Legal Case: OFMDFM

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 24828/11-15, to provide details of the case which was lost, including the reason why their Department was taken to court.

(AQW 25245/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The case in question concerned an application for judicial review brought by named individuals representing seven Evangelical Christian organisations against the making of the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation)

Regulations (NI) 2006. The Regulations make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education and public functions.

The legal challenge to the Regulations succeeded in one respect only, viz, defective consultation regarding the inclusion of the harassment provisions in the finalised Regulations. The court made an order quashing these provisions.

Suicide Prevention

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action their Department is taking on suicide prevention. (AQW 25641/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Recognising the differential which exists in suicide rates between deprived and non-deprived areas, the new Delivering Social Change Framework has a number of strategic actions to tackle poverty and social inclusion. The Executive's Social Investment Fund will assist communities to tackle issues linked to deprivation such as poor mental and physical health which may contribute to suicide and self-harm. Plans submitted by the Steering Groups of those zones are currently under consideration.

Junior Ministers also attend the Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention, chaired by the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. His Department has primary responsibility for suicide prevention and is currently undertaking a review of the Protect Life Strategy.

Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Health Pillar

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the Update on Progress with the Investment Strategy 2011-21 which was published on 24 July 2013, to break down the amount invested in each project under the health pillar. (AQW 25664/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Investment Strategy 2011-21 (ISNI) sets out that expected capital investment in primary care, hospitals, and public safety will be £943 million in the period 2011/12 to 2014/15 and £1,970 million in the period 2015/16 to 2020/21.

The Investment Strategy indicates in general terms how capital allocations will be spent, taking account of projects underway, those in the planning process and Programme for Government or departmental priorities. However, it is for each of the departmental Ministers to make final decisions about the use of allocated capital based on assessments of need and priorities. The Investment Strategy does not therefore record specific projects or ongoing expenditure as they are matters for the relevant departments.

The ISNI Delivery Tracking System (DTS) is a co-ordinated online reporting mechanism for projects being delivered under the ISNI programme and the information is publicly available at www.isni.gov.uk. Maintenance of DTS information on health projects is the responsibility of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and its associated bodies. The DTS currently lists 41 projects under the health pillar which are approved, in delivery or completed. (http://www.isni.gov.uk/projects_rslt.aspx?c=19&p=123,124,125).

Actual expenditure on ISNI projects under the health pillar is a matter for DHSSPS and other spending bodies.

Strategic Investment Board

Mr McQuillan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the work of the Strategic Investment Board. (AQO 4599/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Strategic Investment Board Limited Annual Review and Financial Statements 2012/13 was presented to the Assembly on 26 June 2013. This report covers the work of Strategic Investment Board (SIB) during the 2012/13 financial year, including principal activities and a review of results. The review also covers planned future developments in SIB activities. A copy of the Annual Review and Financial Statements 2012/13 has been placed in the Assembly Library. SIB is currently involved in the delivery of some 18 Programme for Government targets across 13 commitments.

SIB produces the Investment Strategy on behalf of the Executive and on 24 July we issued a Written Assembly Statement on progress with the Investment Strategy 2011-21 since its publication.

During the current financial year, SIB has continued to support the implementation of the Investment Strategy, provide support to major infrastructure projects and advise on effective management of property assets and business processes.

Investment Conference

Mrs McKevitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the extent to which the recent Investment Conference will bring the Executive closer to achieving the Programme for Government 2011-2015 commitments of 25,000 new jobs and £1 billion of investment. (AQW 27164/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The recent Investment Conference was an unprecedented opportunity to showcase Northern Ireland to an international audience of 121 international companies plus a further 14 key influencers from overseas governments.

We already know from the initial feedback and conversations that the strong messages carried by the Prime Minister and key speakers had a very positive impact on the entire audience and that our standing as a potential location for investment has been significantly enhanced.

As a result, the Investment Conference will have the potential to contribute to the delivery of key Programme for Government targets of promoting 25,000 new jobs, including 5,900 from inward investment, securing £1 billion investment and building a pipeline of opportunity for the next Programme for Government.

Invest NI's focus is now to convert the extensive positive and enhanced interest in our investment proposition into potential, and then firm, projects which will create high value-added jobs and contribute further to the rebalancing of our economy.

Anti-fraud Unit: OFMDFM

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether their Department has an anti-fraud unit; and if so, to detail its (i) annual budget; (ii) staff compliment; and (iii) successes to date.

(AQW 27177/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department does not have its own anti-fraud unit. The Department has a Service Level Agreement in place with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Central Investigation Service for the provision of services as and when required.

Together: Building a United Community

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the timescale for the delivery of the (i) ten shared education campuses; and (ii) ten shared neighbourhoods, under Together: Building a United Community; and how many sites have been identified for both schemes.

(AQW 27270/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The design groups specifically tasked with bringing forward proposals on location, timescale and cost, have not yet concluded their work.

We will be able to give more specifics on each programme once that design work is complete.

European Affairs: Public Awareness

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the work of their Department to raise public awareness of European affairs.

(AQW 27288/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: It is important that the public are fully aware of the work of this department in furthering our interests in Europe. To that end, we publish our European commitments and targets in our Programme for Government. We publish on an annual basis the Executive's specific European priorities and the work undertaken by all departments in addressing these.

It is also important that those organisations with a particular interest in drawing down European funding are aware of relevant opportunities. To that end, our department co-chairs with Belfast City Council the European Regional Forum with a view to enhancing European engagement among its different sectoral members.

Under the Barosso Taskforce, and in conjunction with the European Commission office in Belfast, a series of seminars planned in Belfast which will be accessible to interested parties. These seminars will promote wider regional discussion and engagement on EU policy issues in Innovation and Technology, Competitiveness and Employment, Social Cohesion and Climate Change and Energy.

OFMDFM retains a permanent office in Brussels through our Office of the Northern Ireland Executive. The office regularly welcomes a range of visitors including: MLAs; representatives of local government; business; the voluntary and community sectors; and academia. Through our various visit programmes, the office is able to brief representatives on contemporary issues of importance to the region.

Ministerial Code: High Court Ruling

Mr B McCrea asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, reflecting on the High Court Ruling of Mr Justice Treacy of 11 October 2013, which stated that the Minister for Health Social Services and Public Safety broke the Ministerial code and in light of the fact that the responsibilities of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister include standards in public life and machinery of government, including the Ministerial Code, whether they will make a statement to the Assembly on this issue.

(AQW 27307/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We have noted the judgement of the court that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety had no authority to act on the matter of a ban on blood donations without bringing it to the attention of the Executive Committee, and that in failing to do so, "the Minister breached the Ministerial Code and by virtue of Section 28A (10) of the 1998 (Northern Ireland) Act he had no legal authority to take a decision in breach of the Ministerial Code."

The interpretation and implications of this judgement will require careful scrutiny and, until such examination has been completed, it would not be appropriate for us to consider making any statement to the Assembly on the issue.

Tribunal Panels

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) how many applications for the post of Legally Qualified Member of Tribunal Panels have been submitted; and (ii) how many posts are available.

(AQW 27311/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission was established to enhance the independent process for the appointment of judicial office holders to courts and tribunals. As part of the devolution of justice arrangements in April 2010, we hold resourcing and sponsorship responsibility for the Commission. We have however no locus in judicial appointment matters and have referred the question to the Chief Executive Officer of the Commission to provide you with the relevant information.

Public Prosecution Service: Attorney General Review

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they can respond in terms of explaining the arrangement whereby the Attorney General is reviewing the Public Prosecution Service's handling of alleged withholding of information by Gerry Adams, and if not, to outline the reasons for this.

(AQW 27329/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We cannot respond on this issue for the following reasons. Firstly, the Public Prosecution Service is a non-ministerial department, and sub-section 42(1) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 requires the Director of Public Prosecutions to exercise his functions independently of any other person; secondly, the Attorney General is a statutory officer holder and, in accordance with sub-section 22(5) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, he also exercises his functions independently of any other person.

We understand that the Assembly Procedures Committee is currently conducting an inquiry to consider the extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General to participate in proceedings of the Assembly, and, in that context, has invited stakeholder views on whether, and how, the Attorney might be accountable to the Assembly for, inter alia, his relationship with the Public Prosecution Service.

Ombudsman's Findings

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 26815/11-15, what steps will be taken to ensure the Ombudsman's findings against a Department are communicated to the Department so that they can improve their services.

(AQW 27400/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Ombudsman is completely independent of OFMDFM and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Ombudsman reports are strictly confidential and are only shared by the Ombudsman with those individuals/organisations concerned, including departments where relevant.

The Ombudsman would send reports to departments that have received any recommendations.

Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28B

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many times have the powers under Section 28B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 been utilised.

(AQW 27401/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The referral of a Ministerial decision to the Executive Committee, in accordance with Section 28B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, is a matter for the Assembly and any request for information on any utilisation of this power should be referred to the appropriate Assembly authorities.

Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28C

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many times have the powers under Section 28C of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 been utilised.

(AQW 27402/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: All aspects of Executive business, including the processes by which the Executive reached a decision on any matter, are confidential.

Cooperative and Social Enterprise Hub

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on The One Plan objective of establishing a Co-operative and Social Enterprise hub.

(AQW 27435/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A funding application for the Co-operative and Social Enterprise Hub has been submitted for consideration under the Social Investment Fund (SIF). An economic appraisal of the project is currently being considered, along with other projects submitted by the Derry/Londonderry SIF Steering Group, by the department.

Programme for Government: Jobs in Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the Programme for Government 2011/15 target of promoting 1175 jobs in Derry in 2012/13 was not achieved.

(AQW 27446/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A cross departmental group was established by our department to monitor progress on jobs promotion as part of the One Plan and report through the Programme for Government monitoring processes. Recent analysis of data on jobs promoted/created in the city during 2012/13 by Ilex and departments has confirmed that this jobs promotion target was largely met at 1,170 jobs promoted.

Programme for Government: Jobs in Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the Programme for Government 2011/15 target of promoting 1670 jobs in Derry in 2012/13 will be achieved.

(AQW 27447/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We remain committed to doing all we can across government and with other stakeholders in this fragile economic climate to achieve these job targets.

Programme for Government: Jobs in Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the plans in place to deliver the Programme for Government 2011/15 target of promoting 1200 jobs in Derry in 2014/15.

(AQW 27448/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The jobs targets are part of the integrated approach to implementing the One Plan.

The One Plan Inter-departmental Co-ordination Group will continue to work across government and other stakeholders to deliver jobs promotion in the city. The economic climate remains fragile but initiatives such as the City of Culture, Investment Conference, provision of business friendly infrastructure and others will contribute to jobs in the area.

Victims and Survivors Service

Mr A Maginness asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the view expressed by the Victim's Commissioner, at the meeting of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 9 October 2013, that the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) is "not fit for purpose"; and whether they intend to take any actions to address these concerns.

(AQW 27464/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We take the Commissioner's concerns extremely seriously and have established a Programme Board to take action in relation to all matters raised. The Commissioner, the Chief Executive of the Victims and Survivors Service and OFMDFM officials and Special Advisers are represented on the Board. The Board met for the first time on 15 October 2013 and will meet fortnightly to oversee implementation of appropriate actions.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the October Monitoring Round statement, why no monies have been released for Social Investment Fund proposals; and what action they have taken to avoid in further delay to the implementation of this programme.

(AQW 27490/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Project proposals submitted by the nine Steering Groups continue to be subject to rigorous appraisal within the Department to ensure maximum impact in line with the programme objectives. Each of the Steering Groups submitted up to ten projects. Significant progress has been made on this; £80m remains ring-fenced for the delivery of area plans.

Culture Company: UK City of Culture

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of recent resignations from the Culture Company, what discussions will be held between ILEX, the Culture Company and the City Council to ensure a positive working partnership which will deliver a successful conclusion to the UK City of Culture year.

(AQW 27515/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Culture Company 2013 was established by, and is accountable to, Derry City Council. Issues regarding Board membership are therefore a matter for the Council.

An OFMDFM official chairs the City of Culture Oversight Group which includes all key stakeholders for the project. At its meeting of 24 October 2013, the Council and Culture Company representatives were reminded of the need to ensure the successful delivery of the remainder of the programme and the orderly wind up of the Company. The Oversight Group received assurance from the Council that plans were in place to ensure this was achieved.

Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation: Chairperson's Expenses

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the travelling and other expenses that the Chairperson of the Maze Development Corporation been paid since coming to office.

(AQW 27625/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Chairperson of the MLK Development Corporation has been paid £1,985.74 for travel and other expenses for the period 10 September 2012 to 31 October 2013.

For the same period, a further £8,414 travel and accommodation costs were paid directly by the MLK Development Corporation on behalf of the Chairman.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Gaelic Athletic Association Clubs: Funding

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the funding that Gaelic Athletic Association clubs have received from (i) her Department; and (ii) Arms Length Bodies, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27387/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I am taking your question to be seeking details of payments issued by (i) my Department and (ii) Arms Length Bodies to Gaelic Athletic Association Clubs. The below table details payments made by my Department directly and for the Joint Council Committees under the Axis 3 Measures of the Rural Development Programme during 2009 to 2013 to date.

Funding Year	(i) Grants & Subsidies	(i) Rural Challenge Programme 2009 (Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Programme)	(ii) Axis 3 Measures (RDP)	Total
2009	132.47	0.00	0.00	132.47
2010	123.94	3,348.75	0.00	3,472.69
2011	123.55	8,336.65	222,592.50	231,052.70
2012	91.01	0.00	5,707.50	5,798.51
2013	Not paid yet	0.00	1,142,383.41	1,142,383.41
Total	470.97	11,685.40	1,370,683.41	1,382,839.78

Farm Businesses: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farm businesses are located in the North Down constituency.

(AQW 27584/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As at 30th October 2013 the number of farm businesses located in the North Down constituency is 325.

This figure includes businesses claiming agricultural grants and subsidies as well as keepers of small numbers of farm animals who do not claim grants and subsidies.

Herds/Flocks Reduction: North Down and Ards

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the rationale for the reduction in herd and flock numbers in the North Down and Ards area from 178 to 123 in the last two years.

(AQW 27595/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: These figures relate to the numbers of herds/flocks made non-operational on the DARD APHIS livestock database system. The data indicates that less herds/flocks were made non-operational in 2012/13 when compared to 2011/2012.

DARD's database, the Animal and Public Health and Information System (APHIS), does not hold any information to explain the number of herds/flocks made non-operational in the financial year 2011/2012 (178) compared to the smaller number of herds/flocks made non-operational in the financial year 2012/2013 (123) in the Newtownards Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO) area.

A herd or flock is made non-operational at the written request of the keeper for example as a result of retirement. In addition, to support our rigorous approach to livestock traceability, if during the past 24 months there have been no moves to or from the herd/flock, no births recorded and there is no record of stock in the herd/flock, a herd/flock can be identified as "non-operational" by DARD.

The system enables a herd or flock-keeper to be identified as "non-operational" for one species but remain "operational" for another species.

APHIS does not record information on a constituency basis.

Herds/Flocks Made Non-operational

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many herds or flocks have been made non-operational in the last two years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 27596/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Information on herds / flocks is kept on the Department's database the Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS).

The table below provides the number of herds or flocks made non-operational in the north of Ireland in the past two financial years based on Divisional Veterinary Office areas. APHIS does not record information on a constituency basis.

Divisional Veterinary Office	Herds / Flocks Made Non-operational	
	2011-2012	2012-2013
Armagh	123	122
Ballymena	102	109
Coleraine	145	175
Dungannon	111	104
Enniskillen	86	125
Mallusk	83	94
Londonderry	57	59
Newry	233	307
Newtownards	177	123
Omagh	178	398
Total	1,295	1,616
Total for 2 years		2,911

Broadband: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to details the areas in North Down that are likely to benefit from the roll out of rural broadband.

(AQW 27620/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Within the overall list of 7,539 broadband 'not spots' there are a number of North Down post codes included. However the identification of specific areas that will fully benefit from the initiative will depend on the technical solutions available within the budget.

The 'Invitation to Tender' for the NI Broadband Improvement Project, which opened on 2 October 2013 will close on 6 November 2013. It is anticipated that a contract will be signed by the end of this year. At that point it will be possible to specify the exact areas which the technical solution will cover.

Beef Supply System

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the steps she is taking to achieve a fully integrated beef supply system.

(AQW 27639/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The red meat sector is a major contributor to the local economy. The Agri-food Strategy Board in its "Going for Growth" action plan points to significant developing opportunities for red meat in a wide range of export markets. The Action Plan states that for the sector to contribute strongly to the growth ambitions of the industry it must build sustainable and profitable business models focussed on delivering the needs of the market. It points to fragmentation in the primary production base and recommends further development of supply chain linkages to take full advantage of these opportunities.

I am aware that there is support for more integration within the red meat supply chain and I have seen successful examples of schemes and initiatives supported by my Department, that work this way. The Agri-food Strategy Board will oversee the implementation of the Going for Growth recommendations, and they have already reconvened a specific red meat sub-group to address the recommendations aimed at the sector. I look forward to seeing more detailed proposals of how the red meat supply chain should develop.

Recently, my Department consulted with industry on proposals for the new RDP 2014-2020. This consultation includes proposals for an Agri-Food Producer Cooperation Scheme where support is proposed to encourage greater cooperation between primary producers, food processors, retailers and the food service sector to help them make best use of available resources to identify and develop local markets, improve communications and develop efficient supply chains, leading to an increase in profitability and competitiveness.

Beef Supply System

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the impact that a fully integrated beef supply system will have on (i) young farmers choosing to enter the industry; and (ii) the future viability and profitability of the local beef industry.

(AQW 27640/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have outlined how my Department already supports the industry towards its goal of greater integration in the supply chain and the proposals to continue this support.

I have seen examples where a more integrated supply chain can deliver greater financial benefits to the producer, and if this can be achieved more widely it should attract young farmers into the sector. My Department can provide support through education and training to ensure that young people entering, or already in the industry, are equipped with the skills and knowledge to take advantage of opportunities and develop their farm businesses.

The Agri-Food Strategy Board's strategic vision for the industry is "Growing a sustainable, profitable and integrated Agri-Food supply chain, focussed on delivering the needs of the market". We will continue to work with the industry and other Departments to develop and deliver an action plan. The Agri-Food Strategy Board remains in place for two years to oversee the implementation, aimed at transforming the industry into an ambitious, outward looking and globally competitive sector. Furthermore it recognises an industry prepared to invest in the future and create new employment opportunities especially for our young people and graduates.

Asset Transfer: Surplus Land or Property

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the discussions she has had with her Executive colleagues in relation to asset transfer, specifically where surplus land and/or property held by her Department or Arm's Length Bodies has been identified.

(AQW 27660/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have not had any discussions with my Executive colleagues in relation to any asset transfers involving surplus land or property belonging to my Department or any of its Arms Length Bodies.

Lough Neagh Working Group

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the findings of the Lough Neagh Working Group; (ii) when she received the findings; and (iii) what action has been taken in relation to these findings.

(AQW 27844/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The report produced by the Lough Neagh Working Group is to be presented to the Executive, and is going through due process. The draft report was received during December 2012 and was shared with the Ministers for the Department of Environment, Department for Regional Development, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. Consideration is being given to additional consultancy work to complement the findings in the report before it is finalised.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Suicide Awareness Training Programmes

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the procurement procedure followed for the award of Suicide Awareness Training Programmes for the Sports and Arts Sectors, at a value of £60,000, as announced on 10 September 2013.

(AQW 27495/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): My Department recognises that Sport and Arts have a role to play in the promotion of mental wellbeing and awareness of suicide prevention.

Providers, specialising in suicide awareness and covering an urban and rural remit, were funded, via letter of offer, to pilot a programme to assist with the Department's commitment to increasing awareness of suicide prevention. The programme will be subject to a post-project evaluation to gauge the extent to which it has delivered against the Department's objectives in terms of mental wellbeing and suicide prevention. The outcome of this evaluation will inform any decision to commit further funding.

In addition, my Department is providing £500k per year, for the period 2012/13 to 2014/15, to the Irish Football Association, via letter of offer, for a Health Programme, part of which will address issues around suicide awareness.

Foyle Valley Plan

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the Foyle Valley Plan.

(AQW 27505/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I understand that the Foyle Valley Gateway Masterplan is a strategic approach developed by Derry City Council aimed at securing the sustainable, physical, social and economic regeneration of the Foyle Valley Gateway and its environs i.e. the Brandywell, Fountain, Bishop Street and Foyle Road areas of Derry.

I recently announced that my Department will invest at least £2 million towards the Daisyfield/Showgrounds element of the Foyle Valley Gateway Masterplan as part of City of Culture capital legacy projects in 2014/15.

The investment is being made under DCAL's top priority 'To Promote Equality and tackle Poverty and Social Exclusion', and on the basis of targeting public resources at sectors of greatest inequality in areas of greatest objective need.

Public Consultations: CAL

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail how many public consultations her Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27521/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have provided at Annex A the details of public consultations undertaken by my department in each year since 2007 to date and the number of responses received per consultation.

Annex A

Consultation	Year	Number of Responses received
The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport & Physical Recreation 2007 – 2017	2007	81
Proposals for an Ulster Scots Academy (prepared by the Ulster Scots Academy Implementation Group- USAIG)	2007	53
Salmon & Inland Fisheries Stakeholder Forum Consultation	2007	127
DCAL Guide to Making Information Accessible	2008	1
Proposed Subordinate Legislation Consultation Paper, Public Use of the Records (Management & Fees) Rules Northern Ireland	2008	23
DCAL Budget Consultation 2010 -2011	2010	414
Museums Policy for Northern Ireland	2010	27
DCAL Disability Action Plan 2010-2013	2010	2
DCAL Draft Budget Consultation 2011-2015	2010	8855
Cultural Awareness Strategy	2011	26
Revised Equality Scheme	2011	3
Salmon Conservation Measures in DCAL Jurisdiction.	2012	371

Consultation	Year	Number of Responses received
Draft Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language	2012	274
Draft Strategy for Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture	2012	139
Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) – Ulster Scots Academy development and research strategy and associated grant scheme	2012	9
Salmon Conservation Regulations consultation	2013	210
DCAL Disability Action Plan & Five Year Review	2013	6

Commonwealth Games 2014: Cycling

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the support provided to cycling ahead of the Commonwealth Games 2014.

(AQW 27536/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: From 1 April 2011 to date, Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, has provided funding totalling £378,193 to support cycling, including its preparation for the Commonwealth Games 2014.

Sport NI has also met with cycling's appointed coach for the Games, along with the NI Commonwealth Games Council and Sports Institute NI, to discuss cycling's preparation plans and areas of further support required, which will include anti-doping education.

Cycling Ireland, the Governing Body for the sport, has recently carried out a high performance review. On completion, this review will be used by Sport NI to determine future financial support, including for preparation for the Games. Discussions have also commenced between the Sports Institute NI, which receives funding from my Department, and Cycling Ireland, with regard to what targeted support can be provided for individual cyclists who will be competing in the Games.

Museums: Staff

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many curators/staff, with direct curatorial expertise, were employed by (i) the Ulster Museum; and (ii) the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum on 1 April 2003.

(AQW 27551/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The number of curators/staff, with direct curatorial expertise, employed by (i) the Ulster Museum; and (ii) the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum on 1 April 2003 is as follows:

	(i) Ulster Museum	(ii) Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
Curatorial Staff	23	13

Museums: Staff

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many staff were employed by (i) the Ulster Museum; and (ii) the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in (a) human resources; (b) finance; and (c) public relations on 1 April 2003.

(AQW 27553/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The number of staff employed by (i) the Ulster Museum; and (ii) the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in (a) human resources; (b) finance; and (c) public relations on 1 April 2003 is as follows:

	(i) Ulster Museum	(ii) Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
(a) HR	4	3
(b) Finance	5	4
(c) PR	1	0
Total	10	7

Cricket Strategy

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she would consider meeting with the Northern Cricket Union to discuss the formulation of a Cricket Strategy.

(AQW 27578/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Northern Cricket Union is a member of the National Governing Body for cricket, Cricket Ireland.

I understand that Cricket Ireland has employed a National Development Manager and a Development Officer with a specific remit to support the Northern Cricket Union. Therefore, in the first instance, assistance with the development of a regional strategy should be sought from Cricket Ireland.

However, following this process, the Northern Cricket Union may wish to contact Sport NI to further assist with the development of a regional strategy.

Museums: Staff

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many curators, or staff with direct curatorial expertise, were employed by the Ulster Museum in Belfast and at the Folk and Transport Museum in Cultra on (i) 1 April 2008; and (ii) 1 April 2013; and how many staff were employed by the Ulster Museum in Belfast and at the Folk and Transport Museum in Cultra responsible for (a) human resources; (b) finance; and (c) public relations on (i) 1 April 2008; and (ii) 1 April 2013.

(AQW 27707/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: By 2008 the organisational structure at National Museums had been centralised and therefore the staff numbers provided are not specific to its individual sites.

The number of curators and the number of (a) human resources; (b) finance; and (c) public relations staff employed by National Museums on (i) 1 April 2008; and (ii) 1 April 2013 is as follows;

(i) April 2008	National Museums
Curatorial	28
(a) HR	9
(b) Finance	8
(c) PR	0
Grand Total	45

(ii) April 2013	National Museums
Curatorial	16
(a) HR	8
(b) Finance	9
(c) PR	0.5
Grand Total	33.5

Museums: Staff

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans she has to increase the employment of staff with direct curatorial expertise at the Ulster Museum in Belfast and the Folk and Transport Museum in Cultra.

(AQW 27709/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: National Museums has been allocated a resource budget of £12.978m, which includes £10.6 million for staffing costs in the 2013/14 financial year.

National Museums recognises that its curatorial base has reached low levels and has identified a number of key posts it would prioritise for recruitment. It is the responsibility of the Trustees to prioritise their expenditure, within approved budgets, including increasing curatorial expertise at the Ulster Museum and the Folk and Transport Museum, to ensure they meet their statutory functions.

Department of Education

Schools: Definition of Bilateral

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for his Department's definition of a bi-lateral school.

(AQW 27094/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): There is no official or legal definition of a bi-lateral school. It is a term that is used by schools in their descriptions of themselves, but can mean different things for different schools.

It usually denotes some separation of pupils within the school (into bands or streams). Some schools that use this term use a partially selective admissions process for pupils, while others use non-academic criteria to admit pupils and stream them once they are in the school.

Schools: Spend since Closure

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 26329/11-15, how much has been spent in each school since its closure on (i) general maintenance; (ii) security; and (iii) other costs; and what plans are being considered for either the sale or lease of each school.

(AQW 27162/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There has been no general maintenance spend or other costs at any of the closed schools listed in the table below. However there has been security expenditure at Bridgehill PS and Lisnaskea HS as detailed below.

	Security in Place	Lisnaskea HS	Bridgehill PS	Drumlegagh PS
July 13	2 mobile patrols per day	£1,200	£1,200	£0.00
Aug 13	2 mobile patrols per day	£1,704	£1,704	£0.00
Sept 13	2 mobile patrols per day	£1,656	£1,656	£0.00
Estimated over 3 month period	Electricity for Night Lights and Security Alarm	£150	£150	£150
Totals		£4,710	£4,710	£150

For completeness you should note the following:

Drumlegagh PS amalgamated with Ardstraw PS with effect from 31 August 2012 and vacated the building. A reversionary clause transferred the Drumlegagh Primary School building back to the original owner.

Strabane Grammar School and Strabane High School amalgamated to form Strabane Academy on split sites in September 2011.

Lisnaskea High School and Devenish College amalgamated in September 2013 and vacated the Lisnaskea High School building.

Lisnaskea High School and Bridgehill PS are still in the ownership of the Board and valuations are currently being sought prior to going through Clearing House.

Schools: Development Proposals

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to list (i) the development proposals submitted within the last six months; (ii) the decisions taken on these proposals; (iii) the proposals still awaiting a decision; (iv) the number of teaching and other school posts that have been (a) lost; and (b) created as a result of these decisions; and (v) the number of (a) surplus places removed; and (b) additional places allocated, in each sector.

(AQW 27192/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

(i) - (iii) 34 Development Proposals (DPs) have been published during the period from 1 April 2013 to 14 October 2013. The 10 DPs on which I have taken decisions have all been approved and the remaining 24 are at various stages in the DP process. These are listed in Tables 1 & 2 below.

(iv) & (v) Table 3 below provides the current position in respect of posts lost/gained and reductions/increases in numbers of surplus places for the 10 approved DPs. The impact on surplus places is confined to mainstream classes in Primary and Post-primary schools.

Table 1 Decisions on Development Proposals

DP No.	School ref	School	Date published	Reason for DP	Decision	Date of Decision
287	5012646	Howard PS, Dungannon	18/04/13	Open - New Nursery Unit	Approved	21/08/13
218	1010063	Currie Primary School	25/04/13	Open - Speech & Language Unit	Approved	28/06/13
244 245 246	2310015 2316525	Belmont Special School & Foyle View Special School	07/05/13	Amalgamate	Approved	16/09/13
272	3046691	Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí	09/05/13	Open - New Nursery Unit	Approved	26/09/13

DP No.	School ref	School	Date published	Reason for DP	Decision	Date of Decision
290	5031301	Clontifleece Primary School, Warrenpoint	16/05/13	Close	Approved	20/08/13
239	4036285	The Good Shepherd Primary School	11/06/13	Decrease enrolment	Approved	07/10/13
240	4036480	St Kieran's Primary School	11/06/13	Decrease enrolment	Approved	07/10/13
219	1030194	Holy Cross Boy's Primary School	13/06/13	Decrease enrolment	Approved	21/08/13

Table 2 Development Proposals Not Yet Decided

DP No.	School ref	School	Date published	Reason for DP
236	4210262	Dundonald HS	16/04/13	Close
237	4210086 4210183	Newtownbreda HS & Knockbreda HS	16/04/13	Amalgamate
238	4250024	Priory College	16/04/13	Increase enrolment
288	5066553	Portadown Integrated PS	16/05/13	Increase enrolment
289	5036457	St Francis' PS, Aghaderg	16/05/13	Increase enrolment
273	3033313	St Bernard's PS, Glengormley	13/06/13	Increase enrolment
274	3036139	St MacNissi's PS, Glengormley	13/06/13	Increase enrolment
247	2036389 2032510	St Anne's Girls PS, Strabane Barrack Street Boys PS, Strabane	01/08/13	Amalgamate
245	4036081 4036134	St Lukes PS St Marks PS	05/08/13	Amalgamate
291	5420056 5230070 5230088	St Michael's Grammar School, St Mary's Junior High School St Paul's Junior High School Lurgan	02/09/13	Amalgamate
293	5016391	Bush Primary School	02/09/13	Open - Nursery Unit
294	5036504	St Patrick's PS, Dungannon	02/09/13	Open - Nursery Unit
243	4016002	Kilcooley Primary School	09/09/13	Decrease enrolment & Admission numbers
244	4011670	Clandeboye Primary School	09/09/13	Decrease enrolment & Admission numbers
277	3210233	Ballee Community High School	01/10/13	Close
275	3033311 3030625	Glenravel PS & St Mary's PS	07/10/13	Amalgamate

DP No.	School ref	School	Date published	Reason for DP
276	3032285	St Patrick's & St Joseph's PS Garvagh	07/10/13	Increase enrolment
247	4260281	Shimna Integrated College	09/10/13	Increase enrolment & Admission numbers
295	5036061	St Colman's PS, Annaclone	14/10/13	Increase enrolment
296	5230160	St Brigid's High School, Armagh	14/10/13	Close
297	5420268	St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	14/10/13	Increase enrolment
278 279 280	3210200 3210279	Monkstown Community School & Newtownabbey Community HS	14/10/13	Amalgamate

Table 3 Approved Development Proposals – Impact on Jobs and Surplus Places

DP No.	School ref	School	Date published	Reason for DP	Impact on Jobs	Impact on Surplus Places
287	5012646	Howard PS, Dungannon	18/04/13	Open - New Nursery Unit	Not yet implemented. Expect to employ one Nursery Teacher and one Nursery Assistant.	Not applicable.
218	1010063	Currie Primary School	25/04/13	Open - Speech & Language Unit	Implemented. Two additional teachers and two additional full-time assistants employed.	Not applicable.
244 245 246	2310015 2316525	Belmont Special School & Foyle View Special School	07/05/13	Amalgamate	Not yet implemented. Existing staff will remain until the Interim Board of Governors and Principal develop requirements for the staffing structure for the merged school. Classroom Assistant posts are appointed on the needs of an individual pupil and the classroom assistant post will follow the pupil.	Not applicable.
272	3046691	Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí	09/05/13	Open - New Nursery Unit	Implemented. One Nursery Teacher and one Nursery Assistant employed.	Not applicable.
290	5031301	Clontifleece Primary School, Warrenpoint	16/05/13	Close	Not yet implemented. Expect three teaching posts, one classroom assistant post and four non-teaching posts to be lost.	Closure will remove 81 places (the 2012/13 approved enrolment).
239	4036285	The Good Shepherd Primary School	11/06/13	Decrease enrolment	Not yet implemented. No impact on staff numbers.	Reduce surplus places by 480.

DP No.	School ref	School	Date published	Reason for DP	Impact on Jobs	Impact on Surplus Places
240	4036480	St Kieran's Primary School	11/06/13	Decrease enrolment	Not yet implemented. No impact on staff numbers.	Reduce surplus places by 125.
219	1030194	Holy Cross Boy's Primary School	13/06/13	Decrease enrolment	Not yet implemented. No impact on staff numbers.	Reduce surplus places by 116.

Outsourcing of Functions: DE

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Education whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27257/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently some operational functions performed by my Department which, it has long been recognised, should be performed by the Education and Skills Authority when established. The transfer of these functions to ESA, therefore, is part of a planned overall re-structuring of education administration, to be delivered through a single, regional delivery authority. This overall restructuring, according to the Full Business Case for ESA, will save £185m over 10 years.

Beyond the transfer to ESA of the Department's operational functions there are no further outsourcing plans at present.

Lisanelly Campus

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent to date on the Lisanelly proposal; and what is the planned expenditure by 31 March 2016.

(AQW 27260/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: To the end of the 2012/13 financial year £3.8m has been spent on the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus. The expected budget requirement for financial years 2013/14 to 2015/16 is £18.4m.

Curriculum: Science

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact of the removal of science from the primary school curriculum; and what consideration he has been given to its reinstatement.

(AQW 27296/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Historically, Science was a statutory standalone subject of the primary curriculum here. Today, whilst it is no longer a standalone subject, it has not been removed and science still remains a statutory element of the revised primary curriculum.

The revised primary curriculum contains a number of statutory 'Areas of Learning' and emphasises the development of the 'Cross-Curricular Skills' and the 'Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities'. Science and Technology (along with History and Geography) is one of the three contributory elements of the area of learning 'The World Around Us'.

The Statutory Requirements for The World Around Us are set out in four inter-related strands that connect learning across the three contributory elements. The inter-related strands are 'Interdependence', 'Place', 'Movement and Energy' and 'Change Over Time'. In fulfilling these statutory requirements schools and teachers are expected to provide a balance of experiences across Geography, History and Science and Technology and to connect these where possible.

One of the aims of the revised curriculum is to provide pupils with the skills and knowledge that our current and future employers are looking for. It is about inter-relating and transferring knowledge and skills throughout the subject areas. The flexibility of the revised curriculum allows schools and teachers to use their professional judgement to deliver the curriculum whilst taking into account the needs of pupils.

Statementing: Southern Education and Library Board

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education how many children are on a waiting list for statementing in the Southern Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 27302/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Southern Education and Library Board has advised that there are currently 84 pupils in the statutory 8 week period beginning with the date on which the proposed Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) was issued to the date on which the final Statement of SEN must be served.

DE: Recruitment

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 26875/11-15, given the significant under representation of Protestant applicants in each of the last two years, what steps he intends to take to ensure that in future years there is a broad spread of applications from all sections of the community.

(AQW 27331/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The NICS is an Equal Opportunities employer and all recruitment to the Civil Service (NICS), including DE, is regulated by the Civil Service Commissioners, who have a statutory duty to ensure that all appointments are made strictly on the basis of the merit principle in fair and open competition.

In compliance with Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, all proposed recruitment competitions are referred to the Equality & Diversity Branch, Department of Finance and Personnel for consideration as to whether it is appropriate to take positive affirmative action by including a 'welcome statement' in the job advertisement. Such a statement specifically encourages applications from people in an under-represented group.

Primate Dixon Primary School, Coalisland

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children who were unsuccessful in their application for a nursery place at Primate Dixon primary school, Coalisland, for enrolment in September 2013; and to outline what steps are being taken to allow the school to meet the increasing demand in the area.

(AQW 27367/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School Admissions process is a two stage preference based system. When applying for a pre-school place parents are encouraged to list a number of settings from across the range of providers in their chosen area in order to maximise the chances of securing a suitable place for their child. If a child is unplaced at the end of stage one of the process, parents are encouraged to list further preferences for consideration during stage two.

Primate Dixon Primary School received a total of 36 applications for September 2013 admission to their 26 place nursery unit. The Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) has advised that of the 10 children who were not admitted one child's parents did not identify further preferences for consideration during stage two and nine children were offered a place at an alternative setting chosen by their parents.

At the end of the Pre-School Admissions Process for 2013/14, the parents of all children in the Coalisland area who participated fully in the process received the offer of a funded place for their child. There is, therefore, currently sufficient pre-school provision in the area. The Department will continue to work with the SELB Pre-School Advisory Group (PEAG) in order to ensure that the level of provision remains sufficient to meet demand at a local level.

Schools: Newbuild in Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed new build in Holywood.

(AQW 27377/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There has been no change in the position since my response to your similar question on 20 September 2013. The South Eastern Education & Library Board identified a multi-schools project for Holywood as one of its top three priorities for major capital investment. However the project was not included in my January 2013 announcement due to the need for clarity on enrolments at Priory Integrated College and the potential to increase these above sustainable schools thresholds, as well as the potential for alliances with other secondary schools in relation to 6th form provision.

On 16 April 2013, the South Eastern Education and Library Board published Development Proposal proposing that the approved enrolment at Priory College, Holywood should increase from 450 to 600 with effect from 31 August 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter. Officials are currently compiling the information available and I expect to take a decision on this in the near future.

While Holywood Primary / Holywood Nursery / Priory Integrated College will be disappointed that they were not included in the capital investment announcement in January 2013, this in no way implies that they will not be considered for funding at a later stage within the on-going area planning process.

Holy Trinity College, Cookstown

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Education for an update on the progress of the new build for Holy Trinity College, Cookstown.

(AQW 27381/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Since I last wrote to you on 7 August 2013 concerning the proposed new build for Holy Trinity College, Cookstown, officials have been working with CCMS to confirm the appointment of the Project Manager who will procure a design team to take forward the new build.

The department has also secured resources to help CCMS and the school undertake the Economic Appraisal.

Education Bill: Consideration Stage

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what date he intends the Consideration Stage of the Education Bill to be debated in the Assembly.

(AQW 27410/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My aim is to have the remaining stages of the Education Bill completed in the coming weeks, so that the Education and Skills Authority can be established in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government. However, that requires the agreement of the Executive, which has yet to consider the further progression of the Bill.

Common Funding Formula: Financial Impact

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the financial impact of the proposed Common Funding Formula, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 27437/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

It is not possible therefore to project the levels of funding that will be available at individual school, pupil or Education and Library Board area in the incoming financial year.

It should be remembered that investment in schools is on the way up rather than on the way down. The ASB is set to increase by £15.8m next year and I have already announced my intention to inject an additional £30m into it over the next two years, targeted at social deprivation.

Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level as well as my final decisions on changes to the Common Funding Scheme.

Annahilt Primary School

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to clarify the future of Annahilt Primary School and to detail (i) the consultation process that his Department and the Education and Library Board have put in place; and (ii) what extra help has been given to the relevant Education and Library Board to help schools manage their transitions.

(AQW 27471/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) is the managing authority with responsibility for Annahilt Primary School (PS). The SEELB draft primary area plan proposes that a local area solution is explored as the school has a pattern of decreasing enrolment and there are a number of unfilled places in the local area.

- (i) Any significant change to the school's status would require the publication of a Development Proposal (DP) by the SEELB. Prior to the publication of a DP, the Board must consult with the Governors, staff and parents of registered pupils at the affected school. If, following that, a DP is published, there is a statutory 2-month period during which anyone who wishes can forward objections or comments to the Department of Education. At the end of the 2-month period, I decide on the DP taking account of all relevant issues and comments received. At present there is no DP for Annahilt PS.
- (ii) It is the responsibility of the relevant ELB to work with a school affected by a published and approved DP to manage the changes involved.

Graduate Teacher Scheme

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the 270 posts made available under the two year Graduate Teacher Scheme, how many primary schools currently receiving Graduate Teacher support will receive (i) additional; and (ii) reduced funds under the proposed changes to the Common Funding Formula.

(AQW 27480/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

It is not possible to project the levels of funding that will be available at individual school or pupil level in the incoming financial year. Therefore, it is not possible to say what the impact on the 158 primary schools currently receiving additional teaching support from the Delivering Social Change project will be.

It should be remembered that investment in schools is on the way up rather than on the way down. The ASB is set to increase by £15.8m next year and I have already announced my intention to inject an additional £30m into it over the next two years, targeted at social deprivation.

Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level as well as my final decisions on changes to the Common Funding Scheme.

Education and Training Inspectorate: Underachieving Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education (i) to outline the details of the project being undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate in supporting 20 underachieving schools; and (ii) to detail (a) the costs associated with the project; (b) the anticipated outcomes; (c) the process by which the schools were selected; and (d) the involvement that the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service had in devising the project and in its implementation.

(AQW 27511/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Support Programme for Schools in English and Mathematics.

The formal title of this programme is Promoting Improvement in English and mathematics.

Twenty schools have been identified where there is a gap between the number of pupils achieving five or more GCSE qualifications (or equivalent) at grades A*-C and those achieving five or more at grades A*-C to include English and mathematics.

The key aim of the programme is to improve literacy and/or numeracy outcomes for pupils in these schools and in so doing contribute to the range of programmes introduced by the Department of Education in support of the Programme for Government targets. The programme will identify the practice which has greatest impact on raising the pupils' achievement and, importantly disseminate this practice to other schools.

This is a two year programme which commenced in September 2013.

Schools have been selected using the following criteria:

- schools with a wide variation between the proportion of pupils achieving any five GCSEs at grades A* to C (or equivalent) and the proportion achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and mathematics;
- schools in the above category with a wide variation between the performance levels in GCSE English and GCSE mathematics;
- schools with a relatively high level of pupils entitled to free school meals;
- the school's enrolment, with preference being given to large(r) schools in order to maximise the impact of any intervention; and
- the local knowledge of the context of the school provided by the District Inspector

The project is led by four experienced ETI inspectors (two mathematics and two English each working half time on this project).

After an initial baseline visit by these specialist English/mathematics inspectors, the inspectors will maintain regular contact through providing tailored support for each school. They will sustain professional dialogue, challenge and support mostly through specialist visits over the period of the programme. During these visits the inspectors will:

- visit lessons and engage in improvement conversations with teachers, heads of department, co-ordinators in literacy and numeracy, senior leaders and pupils (as appropriate);
- conduct capacity-building and monitoring activities at middle and senior management level; and
- advise, support and challenge teachers, middle managers and senior leaders.

In addition, the inspectors will be supported by two experienced serving heads of department who will work as Associate Assessors, one for English and the other for mathematics, on a seconded basis from January 2014 until September 2015. The Associate Assessors will assist in the on-going work with the schools and provide them with advice on improvement on a regular basis.

In addition, the Associate Assessors will engage in work such as facilitating improvement dissemination seminars for these schools and where appropriate the wider education community.

A composite report will be published at the end of the programme to identify the practice in schools which has had the greatest impact on improving the provision and raising the pupils' achievements.

- (ii) (a) the costs associated with the project;

The initial costs will be the salary of the two full-time equivalent inspectors which is being provided by the Department of Education out of the budget for Literacy and Numeracy. The salary costs per inspector will be the equivalent of £87,500 per inspector per financial year, including additional costs such as superannuation. In addition, two serving practitioners will be seconded to work as Associate Assessors alongside the inspectors. The cost of these secondees will be in line with their existing salary costs at the time of their appointment on secondment to ETI.

- (iii) (b) the anticipated outcomes;

The intended improvement for individual schools will be informed by the baseline visits. Once these have been completed, the specific targets for improvement will be set for each school, according to context and individual need. The targets will include improved outcomes for the individual schools as measured by the number of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics.

One major outcome will be a composite report identifying the practice in the schools which had the greatest impact on improving the provision and on raising the pupils' achievement and, importantly, disseminating these strategies to other schools.

- (ii) (c) the process by which the schools were selected;

This has been identified in the response to part (i) of this reply (above).

- (ii) (d) the involvement that the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service had in devising the project and in its implementation.

The Curriculum Advisory and Support Service were not actively involved in devising this project nor in its implementation. This is a new dimension to the work of ETI and reflects one of the recommendations from the report issued by the Public Accounts Committee which stated ETI should give consideration to improving the link between the findings from school inspection and the dissemination of good practice.

The Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards were informed prior to the commencement of the project. All schools participating have received an initial visit outlining the nature and scope of the project and have been very positive about their involvement.

Education and Training Inspectorate: Complaints

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the number and type of complaints involving the Education and Training Inspectorate, in each of the last seven years.

(AQW 27512/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2006-2007, there were 5 complaints against ETI:

- 3 challenging inspectors' findings
- 1 regarding the conduct or attitude of an inspector
- 1 relating to the time since a certain school was inspected.

In 2007-2008, there were 6 complaints against ETI:

- 1 challenging inspectors' findings
- 1 regarding the conduct or attitude of an inspector
- 3 relating to perceived inconsistencies in reports
- 1 relating to the analysis of an inspection questionnaire.

In 2008-2009, there was one complaint expressing concerns relating to the experience of an inspection.

In 2009-2010, there were 8 complaints:

- 3 challenging inspectors' findings
- 3 relating to the conduct or attitude of an inspector
- 1 expressing concern relating to the experience of an inspection
- 1 expressing concern regarding the verbal report.

In 2010-2011, there were 3 complaints:

- 2 challenging inspectors' findings
- 1 regarding the conduct or attitude of an inspector.

In 2011-2012, there were 3 complaints, all challenging the inspectors' findings.

In 2012-2013, there were 3 complaints, all challenging the inspectors' findings.

Schools: Inspection Reports

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many schools achieved a satisfactory rating in their inspection report in each of the last seven years; and to list the schools that improved on their satisfactory rating in a subsequent inspection.

(AQW 27513/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The term satisfactory was only used in inspection reports from the period September 2008 onwards. In the period September 2008 to August 2013

147 schools were rated as satisfactory, 61 of these schools improved on their satisfactory rating in a subsequent inspection. It should be noted that a number of schools will not be due to have their follow-up inspection until a later date. Please see below a list of schools that have been found on inspection to be satisfactory, have had a follow up inspection and which have subsequently improved.

List of Schools which have improved their inspection outcome at the follow-up inspection.

Evaluated 'satisfactory' in 2008/2009 academic year	Location
Ballynahinch Primary School	Ballynahinch
Bunscoil Cholmcille	Derry
Christian Brothers School	Belfast
Cookstown High School	Cookstown
Craigbrack Primary School	Derry
Crievagh Primary School	Cookstown
Donaghey Primary School	Dungannon
Dromore Central Primary School	Dromore
Drumgor Primary School	Craigavon
Dungannon Primary School	Dungannon
Glengormley Integrated Primary School	Newtownabbey
Grange Primary School	Newry
Millington Primary School	Craigavon
Omagh Integrated Primary School	Omagh
Sacred Heart Primary School	Belfast
Saints & Scholars Int Primary School	Armagh
St Anthony's Primary School	Larne
St Mary's Primary School	Craigavon
St Oliver Plunkett Primary School	Omagh
St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School	Antrim

Evaluated 'satisfactory' in 2009/10 academic year	Location
Ballougry Primary School	Derry
Ballyoran Primary School	Portadown
Bleary Primary School	Craigavon
Brownlow Int College	Craigavon
Christ the King Primary School	Ballynahinch
Clea Primary School	Keady
Eglinton Primary School	Derry
Greenisland Primary School	Carrickfergus
Harding Memorial Primary School	Belfast
Holy Cross College	Strabane
Mullavilly Primary School	Tandragee

Evaluated 'satisfactory' in 2009/10 academic year	Location
St James' Primary School	Armagh
St Joseph's Primary School	Strabane
St Joseph's Primary School	Newry
St Mary's Primary School	Dungannon
St Mary's Primary School	Dungannon
St Patrick's College	Belfast
St Patrick's Primary School	Newry
St Rose's Dominican College	Belfast
St Teresa's Primary School	Armagh
Walker Memorial Primary School	Dungannon

Evaluated 'satisfactory' in 2010/11 academic year	Location
Ashlea Primary School	Derry
Avoniel Primary School	Belfast
Ballykelly Primary School	Limavady
Bangor Grammar School	Bangor
Glendermott Primary School	Derry
King's Park Primary School	Newtownabbey
Lurgan College	Craigavon
Oakgrove Integrated College	Derry
Portavogie Primary School	Newtownards
St Colman's High and Sixth Form College	Ballynahinch
St Joseph's College	Dungannon
St Joseph's Primary School	Belfast
St Mary's Primary School	Enniskillen
St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School	Belfast
St Patrick's Primary School	Newry
Taughmonagh Primary School	Belfast
Victoria Park Primary School	Belfast

Evaluated 'satisfactory' in 2011/12 academic year	Location
Downpatrick Primary School	Downpatrick
Drumduff Primary School	Omagh
Moy regional primary school	DungannonBottom of Form

Teachers: Compensation and Pre-claim Settlements

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Education to detail the amount paid in compensation and pre-claim settlements to teachers by (i) each Education & Library board; and (ii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, in each of the last five years. (AQW 27535/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The amount paid in compensation and pre-claim settlements to teachers by (i) each Education & Library Board; and (ii) the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, in each of the last 5 financial years is shown in the tables below:

Compensation

	08/09 £	09/10 £	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	Total £
BELB	0.00	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00	5,000.00	25,000
NEELB	31,448.70	2,500.00	0.00	116.16	63,000.00	97,064.86
SEELB	27,725.00	29,500.00	3,000.00	7,700.00	8,000.00	75,925.00
SELB	33,500.00	25,585.00	57,883.48	0.00	17,500.00	134,468.48
WELB	0.00	0.00	27,994.80	1,000.00	0.00	28,994.80
CCMS	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Pre-claim Settlements

	08/09 £	09/10 £	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	Total £
BELB	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NEELB	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
SEELB	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
SELB	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
WELB	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CCMS	0.00	37,000.00	2,500.00	0.00	50,000.000	89,500

Please note the information above is as supplied by each Education and Library Board and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

Priory Integrated College, Holywood

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Education when he will make a decision on the development proposal to increase the enrolment figures for Priory Integrated College, Holywood.

(AQW 27545/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Development Proposal No 238 to increase the approved enrolment at Priory Integrated College was published by the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) on 16 April 2013.

The statutory 2 month consultation period ended on 16 June. However on 25 June the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) advised my Department that it had not carried out the required consultation with schools in its area which may be affected by the 3 SEELB development proposals namely

- Knockbreda/ Newtownbreda High Schools;
- Dundonald High School; and
- Priory Integrated College, Holywood.

This consultation was initiated by BELB in the week commencing 9 September and ended on 30 September. A response from the BELB is expected imminently.

I will then make my decision on the proposal as soon as possible in order to provide clarity and certainty for the schools affected by the proposals.

Priory Integrated College, Holywood

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build programme for Priory Integrated College, Holywood.

(AQW 27546/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education & Library Board identified a multi-schools project for Holywood as one of its top three priorities for major capital investment. However the project was not included in my January 2013 announcement due to the need for clarity on enrolments at Priory Integrated College and the potential to increase these above sustainable schools thresholds, as well as the potential for alliances with other secondary schools in relation to 6th form provision.

On 16 April 2013, the South Eastern Education and Library Board published Development Proposal proposing that the approved enrolment at Priory College, Holywood should increase from 450 to 600 with effect from 31 August 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter. I expect to take a decision on this in the near future.

While Priory Integrated College / Holywood Primary / Holywood Nursery will be disappointed that they were not included in the capital investment announcement in January 2013, this in no way implies that they will not be considered for funding at a later stage within the on-going area planning process.

Holywood Nursery School

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build programme for Holywood Nursery School. (AQW 27549/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education & Library Board identified a multi-schools project for Holywood as one of its top three priorities for major capital investment. However the project was not included in my January 2013 announcement due to the need for clarity on enrolments at Priory Integrated College and the potential to increase these above sustainable schools thresholds, as well as the potential for alliances with other secondary schools in relation to 6th form provision.

On 16 April 2013, the South Eastern Education and Library Board published Development Proposal proposing that the approved enrolment at Priory College, Holywood should increase from 450 to 600 with effect from 31 August 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter. Officials are currently compiling the information available and I expect to take a decision on this in the near future.

While Holywood Nursery School / Priory Integrated College / Holywood Primary will be disappointed that they were not included in the capital investment announcement in January 2013, this in no way implies that they will not be considered for funding at a later stage within the on-going area planning process.

Education and Library Boards: Job Evaluation

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education (i) when his Department put in place a moratorium on the job evaluation process; (ii) how many posts in each Education and Library Board area have been impacted by the moratorium; and (iii) to outline the position of these posts for staff who would transfer under TUPE arrangements should the Education Bill receive Royal Assent. (AQW 27559/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

(i) The job evaluation moratorium was introduced on 27 November 2007, following the publication of a Public Accounts Committee Report into Job Evaluation in the Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

(ii)

BELB	14
WELB	51
NEELB	15
SEELB	38
SELB	19
Total	137

(iii) The Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team (ESAIT) advised that if the job evaluations of posts for staff who would transfer to ESA under TUPE arrangements has not taken place in the existing organisation prior to the establishment of ESA but a request for job evaluation has been acknowledged and agreed to by the management of the existing organisation, in accordance with the agreed Greater London Provincial Council Job Evaluation scheme, then in keeping with employees' terms and conditions and its TUPE obligations ESA would honour this request.

Education and Training Inspectorate: Underachieving Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education who will assess the effectiveness of the project being conducted by the Education and Training Inspectorate in 20 underachieving schools. (AQW 27560/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the intention to ask an inspectorate from another jurisdiction to undertake this evaluation.

School Enhancement Criteria

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to list the 16 schools which did not meet the School Enhancement criteria. (AQW 27561/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: On 18 October 2013 14 schools covering 16 SEP applications were informed that they had been unsuccessful under the School Enhancement Criteria. They are:

- St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel (2 Applications)
- Woodburn Primary School, Carrickfergus
- Loreto College, Coleraine
- Victoria College, Belfast (2 Applications)
- St Luke's / St Mark's, Twinbrook
- St Columbanus College, bangor
- St Mary's/ St Paul's/ St Michael's, Lurgan
- Coleraine Academical Institution
- Carrs Glen Primary School, Belfast
- Ligoniel Primary School, Belfast
- Seaview Primary School, Belfast
- Dominican College, Portstewart
- Clandeboye and Kilcooley Primary Schools, Bangor
- Thornhill College, Derry has not progressed on this occasion but is now being considered as a minor work scheme.

School Transport: Crumlin to Belfast and Lisburn

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how many children travel from Crumlin to schools in Belfast and Lisburn on transport funded by his Department; and to detail the cost over the last three years.

(AQW 27567/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have been advised by the North Eastern Education and Library Board and the South Eastern Education and Library Board that 1,143 children travel from Crumlin (using postcode BT29) to schools in Belfast and Lisburn on transport funded by my Department, and the cost over the last three years are as provided in the table below.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Total Cost	£757,555.79	£757,559.53	£794,764.39

Crumlin Integrated College

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the process, including the timelines, of the possible closure of Crumlin Integrated College.

(AQW 27568/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the responsibility of the relevant school managing authority, in the first instance, to consider education provision in its area and to bring forward development proposals to effect any significant change to a school.

In the case of Crumlin Integrated College, I understand that the North Eastern Education and Library Board is currently considering future provision in the area. My Department has no role in these considerations.

If the Board decides to close Crumlin Integrated College, it must adhere to the statutory Development Proposal process, as defined in Article 14 of the Education and Libraries Order (as amended). In doing so, the Board is required to consult directly with the Governors, staff and parents of the affected school as well as other schools likely to be affected by the proposal. After this, if the Board remains of the view that closure is the only option, it is required to publish a development proposal supporting its intent.

If a development proposal is published, the Board will notify my Department. At the date of publication, a 2-month consultation period will commence during which time anyone can make their views known to my Department. At the end of the 2-month period, I would take my decision on the proposal taking account of all pertinent facts and information.

There are no statutory timelines for completing the development proposal process. However, school managing authorities bringing forward development proposals are expected to do so well in advance of the proposed date of implementation so that any transitional or operational arrangements can be facilitated in a timely manner.

Crumlin Integrated College

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what criteria must be fulfilled for Crumlin Integrated College to remain open.

(AQW 27569/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As a Controlled Integrated School, Crumlin Integrated College is the responsibility, in the first instance, of the North Eastern Education and Library Board. It is a matter for the Board to consider the future viability of schools within the parameters set out in the Sustainable Schools policy.

Primary Schools: Foyle

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Education to list the primary schools in the Foyle constituency that are oversubscribed and have rejected the development proposals.

(AQW 27603/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have been advised by the Western Education and Library Board that the primary schools in the Foyle constituency that are oversubscribed for the 2013/14 school year are as provided in the list below.

- Ballougry Primary School
- Broadbridge Primary School
- Chapel Road Primary School
- Greenhaw Primary School
- Oakgrove Integrated Primary School

The Western Education and Library Board have confirmed that there were no Development Proposals published relating to increases in admissions or enrolment numbers in the Foyle constituency in the 2013/14 school year.

CCEA: A-level Chemistry Examination

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education whether problems occurred with this year's chemistry A-level multiple choice examination, and if so, to outline the nature of the problems and the action that the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment has taken.

(AQW 27626/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: No problems occurred with any of this year's CCEA Chemistry A level multiple choice examinations. CCEA has received no correspondence from centres raising any concerns regarding the results issued for the multiple choice element of A level Chemistry, summer 2013 series.

Schools: Fresh Drinking Water

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education whether every school is required to provide fresh drinking water free of charge to pupils throughout the school day.

(AQW 27633/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education (the Department) recognises that all pupils should have access to fresh drinking water, provided free of charge, throughout the school day. In line with this approach, the "Nutritional standards for school lunches," which were introduced by the Department in September 2007 and are compulsory in all grant-aided schools, require that "fresh drinking water, ie tap water, must be provided free every day" during the lunch break.

The "Nutritional standards for other food and drinks provided in schools" (for example, through breakfast clubs, tuck shops, vending machines) were also introduced in April 2008. These standards state that "Children and young people must have easy access at all times to free, fresh, preferably chilled water." The Department recommends that schools adhere to these standards in line with the whole school approach advocated in the recently launched Food in Schools policy.

Due to a gap in existing legislation, the "Nutritional standards for other food and drinks in schools are not mandatory at present in the controlled and maintained sectors where food and drink is provided by the school (rather than an Education and Library Board). The Department is taking forward an amendment to existing legislation to address this gap and ensure that the Nutritional Standards for Other Food and Drinks in Schools apply equally to all food provided by grant-aided schools in the school setting.

However, schools are encouraged to support children to drink water by, for example, providing children with water bottles and encouraging their use, or by providing access to chilled water, as this not only contributes to improved nutrition but can also help to tackle tooth decay and assist in improving concentration levels.

My Department and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety have commissioned the Public Health Agency (PHA) to produce a resource – 'School food: the essential guide' – which contains a series of practical guidance booklets designed to help schools improve pupils' nutrition and implement healthier eating and drinking practices. The guide includes a section on water provision which is available on the PHA and Department of Education websites.

School Councils

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to outline the guidelines on the appointment and/or election of school councils.

(AQW 27634/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department's (DE) school improvement policy recognises the importance of a greater focus on engagement within schools, particularly with pupils. However, DE does not wish to be prescriptive about the approach but rather wants to encourage all schools to find meaningful ways of giving pupils a voice and of listening and responding to the views of pupils.

The DE website contains information on school councils, which are one mechanism by which effective pupil participation can be achieved, and links to the Democra-School programme designed by the Commissioner for Children and Young People

(NICCY). The NICCY guidance provides information on steps that can be taken to involve pupils in school councils and is designed to support and encourage the development of meaningful school councils.

DE is currently preparing a circular that will provide further guidance for Principals and Boards of Governors on how to encourage pupil participation in decision making in schools and to identify ways to ensure the pupil voice is heard. The circular will include information and guidelines on best practice to help schools identify the method and degree of participation that will best suit the needs of their pupils.

Schools: Charges to Pupils

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to outline the guidelines on the practice of schools charging pupils for necessary educational resources, such as photocopies.

(AQW 27645/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Under the Common Funding Formula, the amount delegated to each individual school from the Aggregated Schools' Budget is known as "the formula allocation" and is expected to meet the day to day running costs of the school. The items of expenditure include printing and stationery. Annex A1 of the Common Funding Scheme for the Local Management of Schools, which is available on my Department's website, provides details of the expenditure areas which schools should meet from within their delegated budgets.

The legislation establishes the right to a free education for pupils enrolled in grant-aided schools and establishes that activities organised wholly or primarily during normal teaching time should be made available to such pupils regardless of the ability or willingness of their parents to meet the cost.

There are a few, limited exceptions to this principle such as schools being permitted to require parents to pay for items such as board and lodging on residential trips, individual tuition in the playing of a musical instrument or optional extras provided wholly or mainly outside school hours and which are not required to meet the Board of Governors' statutory duty to deliver the curriculum.

The parent must indicate his or her wishes with regard to the provision of an optional extra and his/her willingness to pay the charge before the optional extra is provided.

The Board of Governors of each grant-aided school is required to draw up and keep under review a statement of its policy in relation to charging and remissions arrangements.

Classroom Assistants: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of classroom assistants employed by each primary school in the North Down area.

(AQW 27691/11-15)

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

Table 1. Headcount of classroom assistants in North Down parliamentary constituency, 2013/14.

School Name	Postal Town	Headcount
Ballyholme Primary School	Bangor	15
Ballymagee Primary School	Bangor	13
Ballyvester Primary School	Donaghadee	2
Bangor Central Primary School	Bangor	15
Bloomfield Primary School	Bangor	17
Clandeboyne Primary School	Bangor	7
Crawfordsburn Primary School	Bangor	8
Cygnets House Preparatory Department	Bangor	1
Donaghadee Primary School	Donaghadee	16
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	Hollywood	7
Grange Park Primary School	Bangor	8
Hollywood Primary School	Hollywood	7
Kilcooley Primary School	Bangor	5
Kilmaine Primary School	Bangor	18
Millisle Primary School	Newtownards	7

School Name	Postal Town	Headcount
Rathmore Primary School	Bangor	14
St Anne's Primary School	Donaghadee	2
St Comgall's Primary School	Bangor	10
St Malachy's Primary School	Bangor	8
St Patrick's Primary School	Hollywood	9
Sullivan Upper Preparatory School	Hollywood	4
Towerview Primary School	Bangor	14

Source: South Eastern Education and Library Board, Cygnet House Preparatory Department, Sullivan Upper Preparatory School.

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Teacher Training

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to outline (i) the level of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) training currently available to teachers; and (ii) his Department's annual spend on training teachers on ASD.

(AQW 27737/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The education and library boards (ELBs) are responsible for providing autism-specific training in schools and all boards deliver a range of autism-specific training for school staff.

ELBs undertake a needs analysis, on an annual basis, of the training required by schools for the forthcoming academic year. School principals are responsible for determining the training needs of their teachers and school staff and they can avail of the wide range of courses on all aspects of special educational needs, including autism, offered by Boards.

In addition, the Middletown Centre for Autism provides a comprehensive range of training opportunities for those supporting children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) across all schools.

The training provided by the Centre is tailored to the needs of educational professionals and school staff. A range of sessions are specifically designed to the needs of staff in mainstream schools. In partnership with the inter-board ASD teams, the Centre also provides tailored whole school training for schools upon request.

The Department of Education (DE) provides annual block grant funding to the ELBs for the delivery of educational services. It is for each ELB to determine its annual spend on autism training for teachers from within the overall budget available to them.

In addition to block grant funding, DE has provided almost £18m since 2003/04 to fund autism services, including teacher training, delivered by the ELBs and the Middletown Centre for Autism.

Examinations

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Education to outline his rationale for changing modular exams at the end of the academic term to one time exams.

(AQW 27776/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Modular assessment is currently permissible here for both GCSEs and A levels.

For GCSEs, my policy is to allow schools to choose whichever assessment route they feel is most appropriate for their learners. In practice that can mean assessment at the end of January and / or June of the first and second year, depending upon the GCSE specification. For A levels, my policy is that assessment may be taken in June of the first and / or second year.

The consultation on the recommendations contained within the Fundamental Review of GCSEs and A levels is on-going until 20 December and I welcome comments on the details of those recommendations.

Buddy Bear School, Dungannon

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Education what departmental funding is available for the Buddy Bear School, Dungannon.
(AQW 27777/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education (DE) does not fund independent schools.

DE has, however, approved the Buddy Bear School as suitable for the admission of children with special educational needs under Article 26 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996. Education and Library Boards (ELBs) can, therefore, place a child in this school should a statutory assessment of the child's special educational needs (SEN) make such a recommendation.

If an ELB decides to place a child in Buddy Bear School, it is legally obliged to pay any fees in regard to attendance and may pay any fees in regard to boarding and transport.

Times Higher Education Article

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQWs 22500/11-15 and 22502/11-15 and in light of the article in the Times Higher Education of 31 October 2013 entitled 'Pro v-c cited his unwritten book in study', whether he will revisit the answers.

(AQW 27779/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My answer to AQWs 22500/11-15 and 22502/11-15 stated that I was not aware of any recent references that the Department had made specifically to the publication referred to in footnotes 4, 9, 10 and 87 of the Gallagher and Smith Main Report. That remains the position.

The answer explained that the Department did not hold a copy of this publication and concluded that "it appears to be out of print". This was an assumption made by my officials on the basis that a thorough online search for this book uncovered no trace of it. The fact that the research cited in the footnotes had not been published in the format described was only established as a result of an internal inquiry undertaken by Queen's University. My officials did not have access to this information at the time the answer was provided.

It remains the position that the Department does not hold any copies of this particular research. While of some relevance to the work commissioned by the Department, this research was not part of the terms of reference for the project and was therefore not supplied to the Department at the time of the report's publication.

Shared Education Project

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what are the minimum requirements for sharing in a shared education project.[R]
(AQW 27795/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There is no defined minimum requirement. However, evaluation of existing projects has identified good, effective practice in delivering shared education, and this will be reflected in the selection and assessment criteria for future projects.

Shared Schools: Anti-sectarian Work

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what anti-sectarian work will be required to be undertaken by shared schools.[R]
(AQW 27796/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The revised curriculum provides opportunities for pupils in all grant-aided schools to learn about issues such as sectarianism. These opportunities are provided through the Mutual Understanding in the Local and Wider Community element of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) Area of Learning at primary level and the Local and Global Citizenship element of the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning at post-primary level.

My Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy supports and underpins the curriculum in addressing sectarianism and discrimination relating to other Section 75 groups by educating children and young people to develop self respect and respect for others.

Down High School

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Education for an update on the plans for the new build of Down High School.
(AQO 4910/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Down High School was one of the 22 projects included in my announcement in January 2013 to be advanced in planning.

As Down High School is a controlled school responsibility for taking forward the project rests with the SEELB.

The project is currently at Economic Appraisal stage, and this was recently submitted to the Department by the Board. The Economic Appraisal is being considered by the Department's economists before being progressed to DFP for approval.

There are land purchase issues as the new site is currently in three separate ownerships. In addition, planning approvals will have to be renewed before the project can progress.

Common Funding Formula: Consultation Responses

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for an outline of the responses received during the recent consultation process on his proposed changes to the Common Funding Formula.
(AQO 4923/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: At the closing date of 25 October, over 11,000 consultation responses were received to the main consultation and over 3,000 responses were received to the tailored children's and young people's consultation.

Analysis of those responses is now underway. Clearly, with this volume that analysis will take some time but I will arrange for a consultation summary to be published on the DE website, shared with the Education Committee and placed in the Assembly Library in due course.

Education and Skills Authority: Cost

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education how much has been spent to date on establishing the Education and Skills Authority. (AQW 27859/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 26291/11-15 tabled by Danny Kinahan and published in the Official Report on 18 October 2013.

Common Funding Formula: Consultation

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education how many public consultation meetings have taken place, or are planned, in each of the Education and Library Board areas on the proposed changes to the Common Funding Formula. (AQO 4918/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Under legislation it is the role of the funding authority, in most cases the Education & Library Board, to arrange consultation with schools. Each board has taken a different approach to how it has planned its consultation and engagement.

Important as the consultation is to schools, schools are not the only interested parties. It was for that reason that, in addition to the ELB-led consultation, my Department organised and advertised two public consultation events, one in Omagh and one in Belfast.

A key measure of the effectiveness of any consultation is the response it generates. In the case of the consultation on the Common Funding proposals, the number of responses received – over 14,000 – speaks for itself.

Child Protection: DE

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for an update on his Department's responsibilities regarding child protection. (AQO 4919/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Information on the Department's statutory responsibilities and related child protection and safeguarding policies are available to all parents and other interested parties on the Department's website: www.deni.gov.uk

However, in answer your question; the Department's responsibilities in relation to child protection fall into three key areas:

- Arrangements for ensuring an appropriate response to child protection/safeguarding concerns;
- Pre-employment criminal record checks to ensure only suitable persons work with children; and
- Encouraging pupils to develop strategies to keep safe through the curriculum and other support.

Schools: Budgets

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education to outline how many primary and post-primary schools have built up budgetary surpluses in the past five years. (AQO 4920/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The latest 5 year financial period for which audited data is currently available is the period from April 2008 to 31 March 2013.

The number of primary and post primary schools with surpluses over the five years to 31 March 2013 is set out below:

Primary Schools

Financial Year	No. of Schools
2008/09	669
2009/10	677
2010/11	675
2011/12	654
2012/13	673

Post-Primary Schools

Financial Year	No. of Schools
2008/09	116
2009/10	109
2010/11	102
2011/12	96
2012/13	94

Individual school data for the Financial Years 2008/09 to 2011/12 may be found in the Funding Authority Schools' Outturn Statements which have been deposited in the Assembly Library. Outturn Statements for the 2012/13 Financial Year are not due in the Department until later in November after which they will be deposited in the library.

In relation to Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) Schools, for which the Department is the Funding Authority, VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other or in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools for which ELBs are Funding Authority. This means that the cumulative surplus (or deficit) figure of a VG/GMI school cannot be compared on a like-for-like basis with another VG/GMI school or an ELB school.

Education: Voluntary Provision

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the provision by voluntary organisations of education for young people who have chosen to leave the formal education system.

(AQO 4921/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The best place for children and young people to be educated is in school. It is recognised, however, that for some young people a school placement cannot be sustained and education outside the school environment may be necessary to meet their educational and other needs.

This is known as 'Education Otherwise Than At School' (EOTAS) and legal responsibility for this rests with the Education and Library Board (ELB) in which the young person resides. My Department provides funding to the Boards for EOTAS and it is up to them to decide how this is used to meet the needs of young people in their area. No EOTAS placement should be made without the involvement and agreement of the relevant ELB.

Boards can, as they have in the Belfast and South Eastern areas, enter into partnership arrangements with the community and voluntary sector as part of their EOTAS provision. In such cases, these settings are subject to inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate, however, all EOTAS settings are required to provide an effective education, and meet care and child protection standards, in line with mainstream schools.

Beyond EOTAS, if a parent decides to withdraw their child from the formal education system, they have a legal duty to ensure that, while their child is of compulsory school age, they receive an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have; and to satisfy the relevant Board that this is the case.

School Starting Age

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for an update on the introduction of a policy allowing flexibility on starting age at primary school.

(AQO 4922/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I recognise that we have the youngest school starting age in Europe and following a meeting with representatives from the Association of Teachers & Lecturers and associates, I agreed to look at options for introducing a degree of flexibility around the school starting age here.

My officials carried out a scoping exercise and presented me with an options paper which identified practice in other jurisdictions and potential ways forward.

I have directed officials to explore further options for adopting a process of limited deferral, which will allow parents to seek the deferral of their child starting school to the September after their fifth birthday.

I have instructed officials to complete this work as quickly as possible as I understand that it can be stressful for some parents when their child is due to start primary school.

Curriculum: Business Skills

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Education to outline the access pupils have to business skills via the current curriculum.

(AQO 4924/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Revised Curriculum is less prescriptive than previously and aims to better prepare pupils for life and work in the 21st century. The increased choices available under the Entitlement Framework allow each young person the best possible chance of following a suitable career pathway, whatever that may be.

Employability, including a broad range of business skills, is a key theme underpinning the Revised Curriculum which aims to prepare all our young people for all aspects of life and work and to enable them to develop as confident and articulate individuals, able to play their full part in society and our economy.

At primary level, under the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning, pupils develop effective personal learning strategies and an awareness of their own personal attributes, strengths and weaknesses and personal goals. In addition, they are given opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and personal qualities related to enterprise and entrepreneurship.

At post-primary level employability is covered under the Learning for Life and Work area of learning, with a focus on Work in the Local and Global Economy, Career Management and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. Young people are given the opportunity to reflect on their own skills and areas for self-development

In order to supplement discrete timetable lessons, my Department also provides annual funding to a number of organisations aimed at increasing pupils' engagement with the world of work. Many of these initiatives funded promote business skills including team-working, negotiating, communication, decision-making, budgeting, innovation and creativity.

Department for Employment and Learning

Student Support Entitlement

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment on the regulations governing the entitlement to student support which take into account the number of years a student has spent in Further and Higher Education and not the number of years the student has received support.

(AQW 27389/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department provides a range of financial help to assist individuals to undertake accredited courses at further education colleges. The relevant regulations do not, however, set specific criteria regarding the number of years a student has spent in further education or the number of years they have received student support.

Under higher education regulations students do have their student support entitlement administered on the number of academic years they study. It is Departmental (and indeed throughout the United Kingdom) policy that public funding for student support for higher education should be targeted, in the main, towards students entering higher education for the first time and that, by and large, students should only be funded for one undergraduate degree to honours level.

The rationale for applying this previous study policy is to target our already stretched resources more effectively at those students who have not had a chance to experience higher education. Therefore, even during academic years when a student is not in receipt of student support these are counted as years of previous study because the student has directly benefited from attending a publicly funded higher education institution.

Apprenticeships

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he has plans to make it easier for young people to gain access to apprenticeships and training centres without requiring sponsorship.

(AQW 27579/11-15)

Dr Farry: It is employers who create apprenticeships by recruiting suitable individuals and training them in line with their business needs. Training is both "on the job," in the business and "off the job," with a college or training provider. My Department funds the "off the job" training to allow the apprentice to gain a nationally recognised qualification. It is a cost effective way for a business to grow a loyal and productive workforce supported by my Department. Access to apprenticeships is through employment.

For those young people in the 16 and 17 year old age group who are unable to find employment, the Department provides a guarantee of a training place through the Training for Success programme. This training is aimed at equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to help them find employment or continue into full time further education.

In terms of future plans, I announced earlier this year that I was conducting a major "root and branch" review of Apprenticeships and Youth Training. Following a statement in the Assembly there will be a period of public consultation on our new policy proposals which are aimed at encouraging more businesses to employ apprentices. I will then do the same for our policy proposals on Youth Training.

Apprenticeships: Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of registered apprenticeships taken up in the Armagh city area in each of the last five years; and to outline the steps her Department is taking to encourage the provision and uptake of apprenticeships in this area.

(AQW 27589/11-15)

Dr Farry: There are currently 313 individuals on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme from the Armagh Local Government District. I have placed the detailed information you requested in the Assembly Library and on my Department's website at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/>.

I would encourage all businesses in Northern Ireland to consider employing a young person and then have them participate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. It is the business which creates the employment required for an apprenticeship and to raise the awareness of ApprenticeshipsNI among employers. My Department conducted an advertising campaign in January and August of this year and will repeat it again in January 2014, focusing on the benefits gained by employing an apprentice.

In Northern Ireland there are 8,998 apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, this represents about eleven apprentices per 1,000 workers. This is well below other developed economies in Europe such as Switzerland who have four times the equivalent number of apprentices in their workforce.

This is one of the reasons why I instigated the major review of our policies on apprenticeships and youth training in February this year. Key aspects of this review include: how to encourage SMEs to engage with apprenticeships; how to expand apprenticeships into other sectors, such as the professions; and the role of higher apprenticeships.

The outworking of the review, which will report through a series of high level strategic statements in the Autumn, is expected to result in future policy proposals which will culminate in more businesses offering apprenticeship opportunities across Northern Ireland, including Armagh city area.

Further Education: Students with Learning Disabilities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether consideration has been given to establishing a dedicated Further Education College for students with learning disabilities, built on the principle being delivered by Praxis Care in the Moving Up Project; and whether such a facility is within the scope of part-financing by the European Social Fund. **(AQW 27591/11-15)**

Dr Farry: All six further education (FE) colleges already have a range of provision in place for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whereupon all students can learn together, regardless of ability or disability. All colleges operate on a pan-disability approach and offer courses, support and assistance, based on need rather than specific categories of disability.

Funding for the establishment of, or capital provision at, FE colleges is not within the scope of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF) Programme. Priority 1 of the ESF Programme (2007-2013) directly helps to improve the employability of those groups experiencing difficulty in obtaining employment or maintaining sustained employment. The priority does not reserve funding for any particular participant group, but provides support for a broad range of individuals, experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, including people with disabilities, among others.

Youth Employment Scheme

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the Youth Employment Schemes supported by his Department. **(AQO 4926/11-15)**

Dr Farry: My Department has a comprehensive range of schemes to tackle youth unemployment, including the Executive's 'Pathways to Success' strategy, with a budget of over £25 million to March 2015 to promote young people's progress towards, and participation in, employment.

The Youth Employment Scheme (YES) has to date provided over 4,600 employer opportunities, 954 work experience placements and 763 skills development opportunities, with 616 young people securing employment.

Following a review, enhancements to increase uptake of YES by both young people and employers were implemented with effect from 30 September.

At September 2012 32% of Steps to Work programme participants aged 18 to 24 had moved into sustained employment for 13 weeks or more.

In November 2012, my Department also introduced 'First Start', to assist 1,700 young people who are unemployed to find and sustain employment before the end of March 2015. To date, 750 young people have started jobs under the First Start initiative.

The Collaboration and Innovation Fund, aimed at young people facing barriers to employment, is making good progress. 24 organisations will deliver projects until March 2015, engaging 6,100 young people with a diverse range of employability needs.

Projects will explore new approaches, through a broad range of provision including mentoring, vocational qualifications, personal development, motivational and life skills and employability skills.

In the last quarter, 603 young people commenced project activity, increasing the total number of participants to 1,187. Of the 234 participants completing their activity, 174 achieved positive outcomes: 72 progressed into education, 34 into employment and 68 into training.

Apprenticeships

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline his plans for apprenticeships. **(AQO 4927/11-15)**

Dr Farry: In February 2013, I announced a review of youth training and apprenticeships. Both reviews are currently underway.

The review of apprenticeships, which will be reporting its findings in December 2013, is focusing on how the model for apprenticeships in Northern Ireland can best meet the needs of the economy, encourage and support individuals into and along this alternative learning and career pathway; and facilitate and support the involvement of Northern Ireland businesses.

Stakeholder engagement has been central to the review process; through an expert panel I established at the start of the review, a series of stakeholder forums held in September, and a Call for Submissions which ran for one month, concluding on the 2nd October.

The publication of the review's findings will be followed by a formal public consultation process. Policy formulation and implementation will follow thereafter, culminating in the introduction of a revised model, to replace the existing arrangements.

In an associated development, prior to the review's launch, my Department introduced ICT and Professional Services higher level apprenticeships pilots; an engineering higher level apprenticeship pilot will be commencing imminently. The pilots, which have been developed specifically to meet employers' higher level skills needs, are supporting business growth, meeting the career aspirations of individuals and enhancing opportunities for social mobility.

Colleges: Budgets

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline how many Further Education Colleges have budgetary deficits or surpluses.

(AQO 4932/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department uses a historic cost surplus / deficit measure to determine the comparable position of each college. The most recent audited accounts for the six further education colleges are for the academic year ended 31 July 2012. These are available to view in the Assembly library.

These accounts showed four colleges, North West Regional College, South Eastern Regional College, Southern Regional College and South West College, reporting a surplus in their income and expenditure account. The remaining two colleges, Belfast Metropolitan College and the Northern Regional College, reported a deficit. Both deficits were planned and communicated with the Department in advance.

The accounts for the year ended 31 July 2013 are currently being audited and are due with the Department by the 30 November 2013. They will be laid at the Assembly library in December.

Skills Training

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of skills training for people interested in self-employment.

(AQO 4933/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides a comprehensive range of support for anyone unemployed or economically inactive who wishes to set up and establish their own business. My Department offers a number of practical route ways to self-employment that includes the European Social Fund and Steps to Work Programmes.

Priority 1 of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme, 2007-2013 entitled 'Helping People into Sustainable Employment', aims to reduce unemployment and economic inactivity by extending employment opportunities, including self employment for people who are out of work, especially those at a disadvantage in the labour market.

A small number of Priority 1 projects focus exclusively or mainly upon self employment, while the remainder assist participants to progress toward sustainable employment or training. Some current projects that promote self employment include the Exploring Enterprise and Women into Business Programmes and The Journey to Success project.

Steps to Work also provides support ranging from basic awareness of Self-Employment, participation on Invest NI's Regional Start Programme, through to the opportunity to avail of up to 26 weeks supported self-employment, where participants may retain their benefit entitlement while testing their business idea.

My officials work closely with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, through Invest Northern Ireland, which has a suite of programmes and advisory services available to potential and existing entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland. These include the Regional Start Initiative and programmes aimed at under-represented groups such as female entrepreneurs, young entrepreneurs and individuals Not in Education, Employment and Training and individuals living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.

The Regional Start Initiative is a programme designed to support locally focussed entrepreneurs with the key output being a commercial business plan that the entrepreneur can use to attract funds to the business.

Teacher Training

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the review of Initial Teacher Training.

(AQO 4934/11-15)

Dr Farry: Members are aware of my previous statements to the Assembly and my plans to review the teacher training infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

The Chair, Dr Pasi Sahlberg, and the four Panel members have now been appointed and are currently engaged in the first phase of this second stage of the review, which is to provide an overview of the most current developments in the field of initial teacher education provision which represents best practice internationally.

The next step will be for the Panel to compare what is considered best international practice with the current provision in Northern Ireland.

To progress this, the five teacher training providers have been invited to submit their views on this Review and put forward their vision of the structures necessary to create a world-class system of initial teacher education in Northern Ireland, which also enhances and improves sharing and integration within the sector. Other interested stakeholders will also be invited to put forward their views.

The Review Panel will use this information as background to conduct a series of in-depth interviews with each of the five providers, over the coming weeks.

Following this engagement, the Panel will examine and assess the options put forward by the providers and stakeholders against the best international practice and the information gathered in stage one of the review.

The final output will be a report setting out the options for the future shape of Initial Teacher Education infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

Youth Unemployment

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what impact the most recent unemployment rate for 18 to 24 year olds of 22.5 per cent, which is an increase of 1.4 per cent over the year, will have on his Department's approach to delivering Employment and Training Measures.

(AQO 4935/11-15)

Dr Farry: To clarify, the October 2013 Monthly Labour Market Report estimates that the unemployment rate for 18 to 24 year olds has increased by 1.4 percentage points over the year. The unemployment rate represents those economically active young people who are unemployed and not those in education. These figures are derived from the Labour Force Survey, and as the young unemployed are a subset of the overall sample, there is a larger sampling error associated with these estimates. While I would not want to underplay the levels of youth unemployment, this change over the year has not been statistically significant.

My Department is already reviewing programmes on offer to young people to assist them into employment as quickly as possible. A Post Implementation Review has been carried out on the Youth Employment Scheme and enhancements made to increase the participation of both young people and employers.

In terms of a Northern Ireland total, in September 2013 there were 17,373 under twenty-fives claiming benefit in September 2013, representing a decrease of 1.0% over the month and a decrease of 9.1% over the year. This is a real change which is not subject to sampling error.

Youth Unemployment

Mr McCartney asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration has he given to the introduction of guaranteed waged employment for young people who are unemployed for more than 12 months.

(AQO 4936/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department already has waged employment support in place.

Steps to Work, the Department's main adult return to work programme includes provision for subsidised waged employment, and assistance for those interested in self-employment. The programme is available to anyone who is aged 18 years or over and who is unemployed or economically inactive.

In November 2012 my Department, through the Steps to Work programme, introduced the First Start initiative. First Start will provide supported employment for a total of 1,700 young people before the end of the 2014/2015 financial year.

First Start encourages employers to offer jobs to the young long term unemployed with a view to the job, where possible, becoming permanent. For those young people who are unable to access a sustained job it will provide them with a positive work experience and a recent work history for their CV.

It offers waged opportunities, supported for 26 weeks, for young people aged 18 to 24 who have been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance for 6 months or more.

At 11 October 2013, 750 young people have started jobs under the First Start initiative.

My Department has also introduced an Enhanced Employer Subsidy as an element of the Youth Employment Scheme. The support is intended to enhance the young person's prospects of finding permanent employment by offering a period of subsidised work, complemented by mandatory training. Financial assistance for up to 52 weeks is available to employers in respect of 18-24 years old who are in receipt of a work focused benefit or have been economically inactive for 13 weeks or more.

All of these interventions occur earlier than 12 months and are designed to engage and provide the young unemployed with a job before they become detached from the labour market.

GCSE/A-level Review

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the discussions he has had with the Minister of Education following the publication of the Fundamental Review of GCSEs and A-Levels.

(AQO 4937/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Minister of Education provided me with advance copies of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, known as CCEA, Fundamental Review of GCSE and A Levels and the draft consultation documents prior to the launch of the current consultation.

Following his statement in the Assembly on 30 September, I wrote to the Minister to assure him that officials in my Department were considering the potential impact of the forty nine recommendations in the CCEA report across relevant aspects of my policies and operational functions.

I also confirmed I am content that officials in both Departments continue to work together to progress the recommendations contained within the CCEA review.

I will discuss the Review with the Minister of Education at our next regular bilateral meeting.

Senior management in both Departments discussed the report at their quarterly meeting on the 2 October. They agreed that the single most important issue was to ensure the comparability of our GCSE and A Level qualifications with those in other parts of the UK.

This will be a key theme in the implementation of the CCEA Review.

Youth Employment Scheme: Upper Bann

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people, aged between 18 and 24, have obtained permanent employment as a result of the Youth Employment Scheme in Upper Bann.
(AQO 4938/11-15)

Dr Farry: As a direct result of participating in the Youth Employment Scheme, 78 young people have entered permanent subsidised or unsubsidised employment from the Upper Bann constituency. In addition, 59 young people have secured six months temporary waged employment under the First Start initiative.

Skills and Employment Liaison Officer

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the work of Skills and Employment Liaison Officers in the North West.
(AQO 4939/11-15)

Dr Farry: In response to a request made in January 2013 by the Chair of the One Plan Skills Directorate, I agreed to fund a Skills and Employment Liaison Officer post in the city.

The post has four main objectives.

Firstly, to take forward the work of the Skills Directorate on a day-to-day basis.

Second, to develop a clear understanding of the skills development, employment opportunities and support in the city.

Third, to engage proactively with employers and the community to promote a better understanding of, and support for, those skills development and employment opportunities.

And finally, to assist businesses and the community to access relevant skills development and employment opportunities; including helping them to prepare training needs analyses and training action plans.

In carrying out these duties, the individual pays particular regard to the vision and mission of the One Plan, particularly its focus on ensuring that opportunities and benefits from regeneration are targeted towards the most deprived groups in the community.

Following an appropriate selection process, a suitable person from within my Department was identified to take on the role and she took up post at the beginning of July 2013.

I am pleased to be able to report positive feedback on her contribution to date.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Invest NI: Manufacturing and Engineering Companies in County Tyrone

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the manufacturing and engineering companies based in County Tyrone that are clients of InvestNI.
(AQW 26709/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The Manufacturing Sector includes a range of industries, one of which is Engineering. Therefore to answer the question, Table 1 contains the names of manufacturing businesses located in County Tyrone that have been supported by Invest NI between 1st April 2010 and 31st March 2013. The table also highlights those businesses, whose primary activity is engineering.

Table 1: Invest NI Manufacturing Customers Offered Support in County Tyrone (2010-11 to 2012-13)

Name	Engineering Sector
3D Steelwork Ltd	Y
A & E Upholstery	
A N IRWIN & SONS	
A.S. Ballantine Ltd	
A1 Power Systems Ltd	Y
Abfino	
Acheson & Glover Precast Ltd	
AES Distribution (NI) Ltd	Y
All Beverage Services Ltd	
ALUPLAS IRELAND LTD	Y
Anaconda Equipment International Ltd	Y
Ardbia Ltd	
Ardboe Coldstore Ltd	
Ardboe Manufacturing Company Ltd	
Ascot Signs	
Ashlock Door Systems Ltd	Y
Audio Innovation	
Augher Co-operative Agricultural & Dairy Society Ltd	
Autogen Manufacturing Ltd	Y
Autotank International Ltd	Y
AW Control Systems Ltd	Y
BA Engineering Ltd	Y
BA Kitchen Components Ltd	
Ballylurgan Co-op Agricultural Society Ltd T/a Ballylurgan Hardware	Y
Baronscourt Estate	
Benburb Bramleys Ltd	
Big Pot Co. Ltd	
Blackrock MFG Ltd	Y
BMI Trailers Ltd	Y
Boran-Mopack Ltd	
BPR CONTRACT FURNITURE	
Brocagh Precision Engineering Ltd	Y
Bruce Engineering Services (NI) Ltd	Y
Cabragh Engineering Ltd	Y
Caledon Precision Engineering Ltd	Y
CANAVAN JOINERY	
Capper Trading Ltd	
Carrick Cottage Dips	
Caterfreeze Products Ltd	Y
CBD Powerwashers Ltd	Y

Name	Engineering Sector
CDE Global Ltd	Y
CDEnviro Ltd	Y
Cherry Pipes Ltd	
Chieftain Trailers Ltd	Y
CK International Ltd	Y
Claddagh Art	
Clarke Road Contracts Ltd	
Classic Marble (Showers) Ltd	
Cloughbane Farm Foods Ltd	
CNC Components (U.K.) Ltd	
Colcon Engineering Ltd	Y
Comfizone Ltd	
Composite Design Ireland LLP	Y
Cooked Meat Solutions Ltd	
Coolchain Air Conditioning Ltd	Y
Cooneen Textiles Ltd	
Cooneen Watts and Stone Ltd	
Coote Engineering Ltd	Y
Copeland Ltd	Y
CRS (NI) Ltd	Y
D P L International Ltd	
Dea Gate Automation Ltd	Y
Decom Engineering Ltd	Y
Dernaseer Engineering Ltd	Y
Devine Memorials	
DMAC Engineering Ltd	Y
Donaghmore Brewing Company	
Donegal Rapeseed Company Ltd	
Donnell & Ellis Engineering Ltd	Y
Dragon Brand Foods Ltd	
Dunbia (Casings) Ltd	
Dunbia (Northern Ireland)	
Dungannon Electrical Engineering Ltd	Y
Eco Technologies International (NI) Ltd	Y
Ecoventi Technology Ltd	Y
Edge Innovate (NI) Ltd	Y
EHOS (Economy Heating Oil Solutions)	
Electro Mech Agri Ltd	Y
Elite Granite	
Elmgrove Foods Ltd	

Name	Engineering Sector
EM Automation Ltd	Y
EMS Environmental Marketing Solutions Ltd	Y
EMS Shredders Ltd	Y
En Place Foods (UK) Ltd	
Engineering Plastics Ltd	Y
Erin Grove Preservatives	
Essener Equipment Co	Y
EURO M-SPORT	Y
Eurofab Engineering Structures Ltd	Y
Eurokabin Ltd	Y
EUROSCROLL	Y
Eurosprings (Ireland) Ltd	Y
Eurotrack Systems Ltd	Y
Evolution Healthcare Ltd	Y
FABCON ENGINEERING	Y
Fabplus Ltd	Y
Fernagh Custom Made Sheds	
Fivemiletown & Brookeborough Co-Operative Agricultural & Dairy Society Ltd	
Foyle Food Group Ltd	
FSL Electronics Ltd	Y
General Cabins & Engineering Ltd	Y
Geo-Minerals GT Ltd	
Glen Fresh Foods Ltd	
Good4UFood and Drink Co. Ltd	
Grade-All International Ltd	Y
Greiner Packaging Ltd	
Grosvenor Shirts Ltd	
H2 ENGINEERING	Y
HarpScreen International Ltd	Y
Hawk Protection Ltd	
Hawkes Transport Ltd	
Heavenly Tasty Organics Ltd.	
HEGARTY'S (FITTED FURNITURE) LTD	
Herbst Machinery Ltd	Y
Hetal Heating Solutions Ltd	Y
Hilton Meats (Cookstown) Ltd	
Hurricane Garage Systems	Y
I-Innovations Ltd	Y
Integrated Timber Solutions Ltd	
Iona Waste Systems Ltd	Y

Name	Engineering Sector
Irish Manufacturing Services Ltd	Y
Island Turf Crafts Ltd	
J.M.G. Systems Ltd	Y
JD'S Catering Supplies	
JLM Composites Ltd	
JMAC Enterprises Ltd	
JMC Packaging Ltd	
Joseph Mackle Ltd	
JPM Trailers Ltd	Y
Karro Food Ltd	
Kestrel Hydraulics Ltd	Y
Keylite Roof Windows Ltd	
Keystone Lintels Ltd	Y
Kilbrae Furniture Ltd	
Killymoon Bespoke Living Ltd	
Kiverco Ltd	Y
KMC Engineering (NI) Ltd	Y
Lacomo Beauty Ltd	
Lakeland Dairies (N.I.) Ltd	
LC	Y
Lima Building Systems Ltd	
Linden Foods Ltd	
Lisnastraine Cavity Trays Ltd	Y
LJM Glassfibre Ltd	
Loch Rainbow Fisheries Ltd	
Loch Rainbow Fisheries Ltd	
Lucy Annabella Ltd	
M & K Quarry Plant Ltd	Y
Mainplant Ltd	Y
Mallaghan Engineering Ltd	Y
Marcona Distribution Ltd	
MAXWELL CONCRETE	
McAleer & McGarrity Ltd	Y
MCC Building Systems Ltd	
McCloskey International Ltd	Y
McColgans Quality Foods Ltd	
McCroly Engineering	Y
MCD Engineering Ltd	Y
McElroy Fish	
MCFAB ENGINEERING	Y

Name	Engineering Sector
McGeary Engineering Ltd	Y
McGirr Engineering Ltd	Y
McMullan & O'Donnell Ltd	Y
MCN Electronics Ltd	Y
McNeilis Workshop Machinery & Steel	Y
McQuaid Engineering Ltd	Y
MDE Controls Ltd	Y
MEADOWVALE ARCHITECTURAL JOINERY LTD	
METCO	
MHN Recycling Solutions	Y
MICHAEL NUGENT LTD	Y
Mid-Ulster Reproductions Ltd	
Mixtec Engineering Ltd	Y
MK Surface Treatment Ltd	Y
MNES Ltd	Y
Mo The Baker Ltd	
Morrow Foods	
Muldoon Transport Systems Ltd	Y
Mulmuf (Northern Ireland) Ltd	Y
Multec Engineering	Y
Naturelle Consumer Products Ltd	
Newpark Security Ltd	Y
Nikolov Contracts Ltd	
North West Of Ireland Printing and Publishing Company Ltd	
Northern Crusher Spares Ltd	Y
Northern Cryogenics Ltd	
Northern Engineering Ltd	Y
Northern Hydraulics Ltd	Y
O & S Doors Ltd	
Oddball Engineering	Y
O'Kane Plumbing & Electrics Ltd	Y
Omagh Aluminium Systems Ltd	Y
O'Neills Irish International Sports Company Ltd	
Origin Fresh	
P.M. Engineering Ltd	Y
Pathfinder Engineering Ltd	Y
Pearson-NI Ltd	Y
Petal Postforming Ltd	
PMG Electrics	Y
Pokertree Brewing Company	

Name	Engineering Sector
Porta-Fill International Ltd	Y
Precisionscreen NI Ltd	Y
Principal Cooling Ltd	Y
PVS Manufacturing Ltd	Y
Quarryfit Ltd	Y
QUINFRESH	
R & M Greenkeeper Ltd	
Rathgael Furnishings Ltd	
RecyCo	
Renewable Energy Manufacturing Ltd	Y
Riddell ATVs Ltd	Y
RockRoland	
ROCKS JOINERY	
Rocwell Natural Mineral Water Ltd	
RTC Direct Ltd	
Ruddy Engineering	Y
Ruskeel Products	Y
Ryansmith Ltd	
S & S PRODUCE	
Sandvik Construction Mobile Crushers and Screens Ltd	Y
Schiedel Chimney Systems Ltd	
SCL Exhausts Ltd	Y
Scotts Home Bakery	
Screenspares Direct Ltd	Y
Sean J Jordan Engineering Ltd	Y
Sean Nugent Engineering Ltd	Y
Seskinore Farm Meats	
Sharp Screening Products Ltd	Y
SMP Concrete Products	
Sollus Social Enterprises CIC	
Solo Technologies Ltd	Y
Spec-Drum Engineering	Y
SPERRIN ENGINEERING	Y
Sperrin Tube Supplies Ltd	Y
Spires Gallery Ltd	
SRS Ltd	Y
Starplan Furniture Ltd	
Steelweld Fabrications Ltd	Y
Summer Garden Salads Ltd	
Supermix Ltd	

Name	Engineering Sector
Supreme Stadium Ltd	
Susan Black Fashion	
Sweet Escape Beauty Products	
Tailored Image Ltd	
Taxi & Bus Conversion Ltd	Y
Telestack Ltd	Y
Terex GB Ltd	Y
Terramac Fabrication Ltd	Y
TES (NI) Ltd	Y
Tesab Engineering Ltd	Y
THE DESIGN YARD LTD	
The Fireplace Collection	
The McAvoy Group Ltd	Y
The Postcard Company Ltd	
TMC Dairies (N.I.) Ltd	
Topsters	Y
Trade Mouldings Ltd	
TRADE ROBES LTD	
Treanor Traditional Meats Ltd	
Triple Eight Proteins Ltd	
Trixter Developments Ltd	Y
Truck Dismantlers (NI) Ltd	Y
Turkington Engineering Ltd	Y
Turkington Livestock Systems Ltd	
Tyrone Fabrication Ltd	Y
Ultra Spreader International Ltd	Y
Vibe - Screed Ltd	Y
Vion Food Group	
Wall Effects Ltd	
Washingbay Sheds	Y
Waste Systems Ltd	
Weld-Tech Engineering Services Ltd	Y
Western Building Systems Ltd	
Whats On Your Wall	
Woodmarque Architectural Joinery Ltd	
Wylie Engineering Ltd	Y
Zespoke Design	

Note:

The disclosure of third party personal data such as sole traders who have received small amounts of assistance would breach the first and second principles of the Data Protection Act 1998; therefore, these names have been removed from the table.

G8 Summit 2013: Legacy

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, aside from the Investment Strategy, what is being done to maximise the legacy of the G8 Summit 2013.

(AQW 27004/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The announcement of the Economic Pact on 14 June, which included a commitment by the Prime Minister to support and attend an economic investment conference, and the successful delivery of the G8 Summit at Lough Erne, were important steps to promote our ambition for economic prosperity and capitalise on the long term economic potential of a G8 legacy.

Last week's Northern Ireland Investment Conference was an unprecedented opportunity to showcase Northern Ireland to an international audience of 121 international companies plus a further 14 key influencers from overseas governments.

We already know from the initial feedback and conversations that the strong messages carried by the Prime Minister and key speakers had a very positive impact on the entire audience and that Northern Ireland's standing as a potential location for investment has been significantly enhanced.

As a result, the Investment Conference will have the potential to contribute to the delivery of key 2011-15 Programme for Government targets of promoting 25,000 new jobs, including 5,900 from inward investment, securing £1bn investment and build a pipeline of opportunity for the next Programme for Government.

Invest NI's focus is now to convert the extensive positivity and enhanced interest in the Northern Ireland proposition into potential and then firm projects which will create high value-added jobs and contribute further to the rebalancing of our economy.

Jobs

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the percentage of new jobs created and existing jobs filled from (a) the south of Ireland; (b) United States of America; (c) Germany; (d) France; (e) Japan; and (f) all other countries, detailing those that amount to greater than three percent, for the most recent five years for which data is available; and (ii) her assessment of how these figures compare to those of Britain and the south of Ireland.

(AQW 27194/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) Invest NI currently only reports on the number of jobs that have been created through the Jobs Fund. The table below shows the jobs created through the Jobs Fund from its introduction on 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2013 based on the countries of origin specified in the question.

Country	Jobs Created	Percentage of Total Created
France	13	0.5%
Germany	0	0.0%
Great Britain	247	9.2%
Republic of Ireland	29	1.1%
Japan	0	0.0%
Northern Ireland	2,148	79.9%
United States Of America	171	6.4%
Other	81	3.0%
Grand Total	2,689	100.0%

Invest NI has developed new systems that will allow it to begin reporting on the number of jobs created across its full range of interventions from the start of the next financial year.

Invest NI currently reports on the basis of the jobs promoted by the companies it supports. The table below shows the jobs promoted by Invest NI in the last five full financial years (2008/09 to 2012/13) based on the countries of origin specified in the question.

Country	Jobs Promoted	Percentage of Total Promoted
France	925	2.9%
Germany	78	0.2%
Great Britain	3,207	10.1%
Republic of Ireland	1,008	3.2%
Japan	510	1.6%

Country	Jobs Promoted	Percentage of Total Promoted
Northern Ireland	20,151	63.4%
United States of America	4,265	13.4%
Other	1,645	5.2%
Grand Total	31,789	100.0%

- (ii) I am unable to compare percentage rates as none of Invest NI's competitors publish readily accessible comparable information.

Cooperatives

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what efforts her Department has made, and plans to make, to support the co-operative sector.

(AQW 27366/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Over the past five years Invest NI has offered financial assistance totalling £9,147,956 to local Co-Operatives and their subsidiary companies. Invest NI has also provided non financial assistance in terms of advice and support.

Invest NI is acutely aware of the issues facing local Co-operatives and will continue to actively engage with Co-operatives to support them in the development of their businesses.

Future development plans submitted to Invest NI for consideration for financial assistance will be assessed according to current procedures.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board: Flag Protests

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail all the representation made to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board outlining concerns regarding the flag protests.

(AQW 27369/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has received 11 pieces of correspondence from prospective visitors about the flags protests since December 2012.

Consumer Council: Review

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the total cost of the review of the Consumer Council, including a breakdown of the costs.

(AQW 27483/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The review of the Consumer Council cost £19,398 in total. This is comprised of £18,000 in consultancy fees and £1,398 in expenses.

Small Business Saturday

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she is aware of plans to hold a Small Business Saturday in December, in tandem with other parts of the UK.

(AQW 27510/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Small Business Saturday event being held on 7 December 2013 is being led by an independent national campaign supported by small businesses. It provides an opportunity for small businesses to raise their profile and to generate business by encouraging communities to support them at a key time in the shopping calendar.

I want to support all businesses, but as regards this initiative Invest NI is considering how they might contribute, taking into consideration their existing promotional and marketing activities.

Electricity: Renewable Sources

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the plans in place to ensure that, by 2020, 40 percent of electricity is generated by renewable sources.

(AQW 27528/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) is currently the main policy mechanism for incentivising renewable electricity generation and has successfully increased electricity consumption from renewables from 3 percent in 2005 to nearly 15 percent as of end September 2013. Support for renewable generation will continue through a feed in tariff when the NIRO closes in 2017.

My Department has also developed an Offshore Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan and a draft Onshore Renewable Electricity Action Plan (OREAP). Both plans aim to optimise the amount of renewable electricity generated from renewable sources in order to enhance security of supply, reduce carbon emissions and contribute to the 40 percent target by 2020.

The onshore plan is technology neutral, and as such, it is for the market to bring forward the most cost effective forms of renewable generation in the period to 2020.

Job Creation: Foreign Trade Missions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been created in the (i) Foyle; and (ii) West Tyrone constituencies as a result of their foreign trade missions.

(AQW 27550/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are two main elements to the overseas sales and marketing of Northern Ireland.

Overseas trade missions are designed to help Northern Ireland businesses grow and develop in export markets and, as such, they are primarily focused on the growth of sales rather than employment.

International investment missions focus on the international promotion of Northern Ireland and seek to engage key influencers, stakeholders and potential investors in foreign markets with a view to attracting new foreign investment to Northern Ireland. Given the nature of this process, which can often span a considerable period of time, it is not possible to establish any direct relationship between individual visits and specific employment-related inward-investments which may be secured at a later date.

The final decision on where to locate is a matter for each individual investing company and will be based on a number of contributing factors. However, it is encouraging that, in the last five full financial years, Invest NI's success in attracting international investment projects has resulted in promotion of 745 new jobs in Foyle and 460 new posts in West Tyrone.

PL1/13: Executive

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on PL1/13 and whether she has consulted, or intends to consult, the Executive ahead of issuing PL1/13, given her assertion that such matters should be issues for the Executive.

(AQW 27613/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Departmental officials are continuing to process Petroleum Licence application PL1/13.

My comments of 15th October to the Assembly related specifically to the issue of hydraulic fracturing. I stated that I recognised fracking as a novel and controversial issue and as such a matter for the Executive as a whole to decide on. This remains my position.

The enabling legislation under which DETI grants Petroleum Licences does not distinguish between conventional and non-conventional petroleum resources.

DETI is satisfied that the work programme proposed under PL1/13 targets conventional oil and gas; not shale gas/oil and accordingly is not a cross-cutting nor contentious issue requiring referral to the Executive.

Accordingly, in keeping with normal line of business, DETI officials will process the application through to approval (if this is the outcome) and notify myself and the ETI Committee of the decision.

Northern Ireland Events Company

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 27074/11-15, to detail (i) the individuals or parties that are being consulted; and (ii) the reasons for the consultation.

(AQW 27638/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department does not make public the outcome of an investigation by company inspectors into a private company and this includes the names of those mentioned in a report which in this case has not been formally submitted to the Department.

Consultations with individuals mentioned in a report is to confirm the accuracy of the inspectors' findings.

Milk Cup

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the steps her Department is taking to secure the future of the Milk Cup following the decision by the Dairy Council to withdraw its sponsorship.

(AQW 27672/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The tournament Chairman has stated that planning for the 2014 tournament is already well underway and that the tournament will definitely go ahead.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) continues to support the Northern Ireland Milk Cup through the new Tourism Event Funding Programme for Established International Events.

Under this new scheme the Northern Ireland Milk Cup event can secure 1-3 year funding following successful economic appraisal of an agreed business plan, following which a letter of offer will be issued. The letter of offer is subject to annual review, will include objectives and Key Performance Indicators, and will be based around the key principle of showing tourism growth and sustainability over the 3 year period.

Although it is anticipated that the Northern Ireland Milk Cup will apply for funding for next year's event, no submission has yet been received. The organisers have been in direct contact with NITB and have indicated that they will be applying for support.

Energy: Community Energy Strategy and Support

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the steps she has taken to develop (i) a community energy strategy; and (ii) community energy support, similar to that in Scotland.

(AQW 27686/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) announced its response to its Onshore Wind Call for Evidence, Part A (Community Engagement and Benefits) and Part B (Costs) on 6 June 2013. They also issued a Call for Evidence on community energy on 6 June, ahead of creating a Community Energy Strategy which they hope to publish in December 2013.

Communities and Renewable Energy: A Study, commissioned by DETI, DOE and DARD, was published on 8 October 2013. The Departments plan, as recommended by the report, to consider the DECC work on its Community Energy Strategy and actions arising from its response to its Onshore Wind Call for Evidence with a view to formulate and consult on a draft action plan to support communities and renewable energy.

Councils: Small Businesses and Independent Traders

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she plans to ensure that the new local councils will engage with small businesses and independent traders when exercising their new economic powers.

(AQO 4955/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Local Councils already work closely with existing SME's and traders in their local areas. I understand many councils are developing community plans and economic plans for the new council areas. Invest NI are assisting with these plans to ensure a coordinated approach is adopted to enterprise and small business development when the new Councils come in to operation.

Invest NI also continues to work closely with Councils in providing advice and support to a wide business base, including local traders, through its dedicated Business Support Team.

Department of the Environment

Driving Licences

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment whether the regulations controlling the issue of driving licences is the same in Northern Ireland as Great Britain.

(AQW 26753/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 are largely identical to the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations 1999 (the GB Regulations). Some very minor differences do exist, mainly due to the fact that the regulations arise from differing bodies of primary legislation and to account for different procedures here and in Britain. For example;

- (a) the GB Regulations contain savings in respect of Group M (trolley vehicles used for the carriage of passengers). No similar provision exists in the NI Regulations, primarily as the NI licence is valid for a maximum period of 10 years, whereas the GB licence is valid until the holder is aged 70 years. As the trolley bus service in Northern Ireland ceased operation in 1968, there was no necessity to include such a provision in the NI Regulations;
- (b) the GB Regulations permits the driving of tractors by persons aged 16 (the minimum age is normally 17) but only where the driver has "passed a test prescribed in respect of category F, or where he is proceeding to, taking or returning from such a test". In Northern Ireland, however, a 16 year old may drive a tractor, with or without a trailer before undertaking a category F test, provided that he is engaged in agricultural operations and is not driving on a road restricted to a speed of 30 miles per hour or less. This provision was made to accommodate the extensive agricultural community in Northern Ireland;
- (c) the GB Regulation 56 corresponds to NI Regulation 45, in relation to holders of large good vehicles (LGV) drivers' licence and passenger-carrying vehicles (PCV) drivers' licence where the holder of the licence is disqualified by order of a court. In these regulations, where such a case arises, the Secretary of State (in GB) or the Department (in NI) may order the holder to be disqualified from holding a full LGV or PCV licence for a period that the Secretary of State or Department determines. In addition to a statutory right of appeal against this further disqualification, a person in GB may have their case examined by the Traffic Commissioner. In Northern Ireland, this provision does not exist; and

- (d) there are no equivalent in the NI Regulations to GB Regulations 81 (service personnel) and 82 (Northern Ireland Licences) as these both relate to the GB traffic commissioners, which do not exist in Northern Ireland.

In all significant areas, such as the regulations relating to physical fitness to drive, the NI regulations mirror those in Great Britain.

Taxis: Single-tier System

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether there has been research completed on the operation of one tier taxi systems in other jurisdictions before its implementation locally.

(AQW 26995/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Taxis Act (NI) 2008 was introduced and passed by the Assembly specifically to create a more professional taxi industry in Northern Ireland, with a clear focus on improving passenger safety & customer service and reducing illegal taxi activity.

The 2002 Taxi Review, which informed the original 2005 Proposals for Public Consultation that led, ultimately, to the Act included consideration of the experience of how taxis are regulated in other jurisdictions, particularly in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and the Netherlands. This helped ensure that the policy proposals consulted upon were evidence-based, focused on outcomes, forward-looking and joined-up and that they meet Northern Ireland's requirements. At that time, most taxi regulation systems throughout the world, including those in the UK and Ireland, appeared to be based on some form of two-tier structure, so there was not the opportunity to consider a single tier system in practice at that stage.

The initial consultations on the formulation of the Taxis Bill in 2005 put forward the options of single tier licensing, or making a more substantial distinction between public and private hire (along the lines of the regime in Britain which the Department examined). The responses to the consultation indicated that the two tier system in Belfast worked poorly in practice and was unsustainable: the tiers overlapped and there was confusion amongst the public, making the system difficult to enforce.

During scrutiny of the Bill, officials advised the Environment Committee that evidence during public consultations indicated this lack of clear distinction between the tiers in Northern Ireland, compared to Britain – where private hire vehicles are very distinct from public hire vehicles, for instance around roof signs and taximeters (many private hire vehicles have them in Northern Ireland). There had therefore been a blurring of distinction, leading to public confusion. The Department and the Environment Committee accepted this view and proceeded with a single tier option in the Bill. The Bill passed all stages of the Assembly processes without division and became the Taxis Act (NI) 2008.

The Department's policy position in relation to single tier has consistently been supported by clear majorities in public consultations (most recently by 84% in the 2011 consultation) and by the Consumer Council, Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) and Disability Action.

Single tier licensing will support and consolidate taxi operator licensing, which was introduced on 1 September 2012. Moving to a one tier system will mean that consumers will find increased availability of taxis to use, offer them greater choice in which taxis they can choose to use and help to reduce confusion around what activities classes of taxis are permitted to undertake. It will also enable DVA to take more effective enforcement against illegal taxi activities which is an issue those in the taxi industry as a whole are very concerned about.

Wind Turbines: Planning Applications in County Londonderry

Mr Cree asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the progress on any planning applications for wind turbines in the Binevenagh and Downhill areas of County Londonderry.

(AQW 27350/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There have been 21 applications for wind turbines and wind farms in Binevenagh and Downhill areas. Of these, 16 have been approved, 3 refused, and 2 applications are pending.

Of the first pending application, further information for the Environmental Statement was requested in July 2013. The applicant has sought an extension to this deadline.

Of the second pending application, an Environmental Statement to accompany the application was received on 30th September 2013 and processing is ongoing.

Natural Assets

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has considered measuring the value of local natural assets.

(AQW 27395/11-15)

Mr Durkan: NIEA is currently working in partnership with other Government Departments, businesses, NGOs and other stakeholders to develop an approach to measuring local natural assets.

By 31 March 2014 NIEA intend to publish a framework document signposting a practical and integrated approach to valuing our environmental assets and the contribution they make to our economy and the health and well being of our society.

Planning Application: A/2009/0400/F

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW/26580/11-15, whether his Department met on 24 June 2010 and overruled this lawful decision and issued a letter to the applicant on 28 June 2010 accepting withdrawal of this retrospective planning application.

(AQW 27481/11-15)

Mr Durkan: At an internal meeting held on 24 June 2010 a shortfall in the fee received in respect of this application was discussed. While procedurally a decision should not issue where it is evident that a fee, or part of a fee, is outstanding, the application remains deemed refused in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations: Judicial Reviews

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how many Judicial Reviews have been initiated against his Department for alleged failure to apply the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations or Habitats Regulations, in each of the last five years; (ii) how many of those Judicial Reviews his Department successfully defended; (iii) the legal costs incurred by his Department in each case; (iv) the costs his Department was liable to pay to successful applicants; and (v) the costs that his Department was able to recover from unsuccessful applicants.

(AQW 27485/11-15)

Mr Durkan: To ensure accuracy and robustness of information the Department can only provide information for the last 3 years.

Judicial Reviews lodged in this 3 year period have been extracted where the Department's alleged failure to apply EIA or Habitat Legislation has been put forward as grounds for review. 12 judicial reviews have been taken on these grounds, 2 decisions have been upheld, 3 have been withdrawn, 4 are currently ongoing, 1 case has been settled and 2 decisions have been quashed. The Department has collated the detail and costs as of October 2013 laid out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Judicial Reviews Due to EIA Grounds 2011-13

Judicial Review	Planning Office	Litigation Reference	Date Commenced	EIA/ Habitat grounds for JR	Status	Cost
Enagh youth Forum Re: Gasification Plant, Derry	Northern	LIT 37470/2013/KB	25/04/2013	EIA	Ongoing	£0
Belfast Office Properties Re: Permission granted for retail development at Castlebawn N'Ards	SPD	LIT 36416/2013/KJB	04/02/2013	EIA	Ongoing	£3,264
River Faughan Anglers Ltd RE: Permission granted for the retention of extension to site office, extension to vehicle maintenance shed and improved wash out facilities, Glenshane Road, Drumahoe (Chambers Site)	Northern	LIT 35931/2012/JMacE	01/12/2012	EIA	Ongoing	£3,791
Sandale Developments Ltd (2) Re: replacement secondary school (under consideration), Termon Road, Carrickmore	Western	LIT 34077/2012	01/07/2012	EIA	Decision Upheld but appeal lodged	£4,684
National Trust JR Re: Permission granted for golf resort.	SPD	LIT 33426/2012/KJB	08/05/2012	EIA	Decision Upheld	£10,165
Harrison & other Re: 3 wind turbines permitted, Dumlady Road, Dundonald	Downpatrick	LIT 32882/2012/IW	27/03/2012	EIA	Withdrawn by applicant	£55,142

Judicial Review	Planning Office	Litigation Reference	Date Commenced	EIA/ Habitat grounds for JR	Status	Cost
Musgrave Retail Partners NI Limited Re: Supermarket permitted at Lineside, Coalisland	Western	LIT 35241/2012/GH	01/11/2012	EIA	Withdrawn by applicant	£0
James Joseph Woods, RE 40 Dernalea Road Armagh re interconnector Re: O/2009/0792/F	SPD	LIT 32534/2012	28/02/2012	EIA	Ongoing	£58,150
Milhench Harrison Ltd Re: Permission granted under Y/2010/0127/F Erection of 3no 80Kw wind turbines. Hub height 25m rotor diameter 18m. (amended location within site).	Downpatrick	LIT 33380/2012	03/05/2012	EIA	The case was settled and announced to the Court on 19 November 2012 - the Notice Party bought the Applicant's property and DOE paid a contribution to the Applicant's costs of the Judicial Review.	£0
William Donnelly, Re: Variation of condition to remove rock from site, K/2008/0995/F & K/2011/0476/F	SPD	LIT 33530/2012	17/05/2012	EIA	Both Decisions Quashed	£0
Donald Martin Melrose and Belfast City Airport Watch Re: extension to Belfast City Airport Runway	SPD	LIT 27964/2011/KJB	01/01/2011	EIA	Withdrawn by applicant	£220,711
Sandale Developments Ltd (3) Re: permission granted for housing under K/2008/0452/O	Western	LIT 30815/2011 & LIT30453	07/11/2011	EIA	Decision Quashed	£3,000
					Total	£358,907

Public Consultations: DOE

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment to detail how many public consultations his Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27526/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The details requested are set out in the table attached in Appendix 1.

DoE Consultations carried out since 2007.

2007/08

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of responses
EPD	Amendments to the Conservation Regulations	Environment Policy	26
EPD	Annual Special Protection Order (Irish Hare)	Environment Policy	0
EPD	Review of the Wildlife Order	Environmental Policy	80
EPD	Amendments to the Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) in Electrical and Electronic Equipment	Environmental Policy	0

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of responses
EPD	Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007	Environmental Policy	0
EPD	Review of sites responsible for exporting metal packaging waste	Environmental Policy	0
EPD	Implementation of the Batteries and Accumulators Directive 2006/66/EC	Environmental Policy	5
EPD	Quality of Bathing Water (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008	Environmental Policy	13
NIEA	The Pollution Prevention & Control (Industrial Pollution and Radiochemical Inspectorate) Charging Scheme (NI) 2008	Fees and Charges under the PPC Regulatory Regime	5
NIEA	Water Matters “ Have your say”	Consultation on significant water management issues for river basin management plans	23
NIEA	Sperrin Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Designation proposal	33
NIEA	Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan	Public consultation on contents of draft AONB management plan	5
NIEA	Designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)	Designation consultation - Established in accordance with EC Directive on Conservation of Natural Habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive)	4 sites declared approx 100 responses received – precise figure not readily available
NIEA	Designation of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI's)	Designation Consultation - Statutory requirement under the Environment Order	132 sites declared Several hundred responses received – precise figure not readily available
EPD	The Waste Management (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2008	Environmental Policy	4
EPD	The Waste Management Licences (Consultation and Compensation) Regulations 2008	Environmental Policy	7
EPD	REACH(Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals)	Environmental Policy	UK-wide consultation – no information on number of UK-wide consultees
PPD	Small Scale Renewable Energy (Microgeneration) Permitted Development Rights	Public consultation on the provision of permitted development rights for microgeneration development associated with dwelling houses and with the curtilage of a dwelling house	25
PPD	Draft Addendum to Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7: Residential Extensions and Alterations	Planning Policy	23

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of responses
PPD	Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 18 'Renewable Energy' [& Accompanying Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance]	Planning Policy	90
PPD	Environmental Impact Assessment of Reserved Matters Applications	Public consultation is to obtain views on the Department's proposals for amending the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (NI) 1999 to take account of two judgements of the European Court of Justice in May 2006	15
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Electronic Delivery of Certificates of Motor Insurance	Public Consultation	6
Driver & Vehicle Agency	Driver Certificate of Professional Competence – further implementation arrangements	Public Consultation	7, including 3 representative organisations
Driver & Vehicle Agency	Introduction of Compulsory Basic Training for Motorcyclists and a Motorcycle Instructor Register	Public Consultation	12 including 3 representative organisations
Driver & Vehicle Agency	Reintroduction of Taxi Driving Test and Periodic Training for Taxi Driving Licence Holders	Public Consultation	35
LGPLD	Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007	Full Public	7
LGPLD	Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007	Full Public	3
LGPLD	Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007	Full Public	2
Marine Division/ NIEA	Proposals to introduce in NI Phase II of New Fees Structure for Licences under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, Part II, (Deposits in the Sea)	Public Consultation	3
Finance & Business Planning	Disability Action Plan 2007-2010	Targeted consultation	1
Finance & Business Planning	Guide to Making Information Accessible	Targeted consultation	0
LPD Southern Area Planning Office	Banbridge Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015: Publication of Draft Plan Revision	Public Consultation	1

2008/09

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
PPD	Application of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations to the Review of Mineral Permissions	Public consultation to obtain views on the application of the 1999 EIA Regulations with modifications to the review of old mineral planning permissions	11
PPD	Amendments to the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992	Public consultation to obtain views on the introduction of a statutory rule to amend the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.	20
PPD	Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside	Planning Policy	320
PPD	Transposing the "Mining Waste Directive" (2006/21/EC) in Northern Ireland	Public consultation on transposing EC Directive into NI legislation.	11
EPD	The Waste Management Strategy Regulations (NI) 2009	Environmental Policy	7
EPD	The Landfill Allowance Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2008	Environmental Policy	7
EPD	Prohibition of the Use of Leadshot Regulations	Environment Policy	32
EPD	Annual Special Protection Order (Irish Hare)	Environmental Policy	2
EPD	Amendment to the Dangerous Wild Animals Order	Environmental Policy	9
EPD	Waste Battery Collection and Recycling Provisions	Environmental Policy	3
EPD	Revision of the Waste Electrical and Electronic (WEEE) Regulations 2006	Environmental Policy	1
EPD	Draft Regulations and Guidance implementing Directive 2004/35/EC on Environmental Liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of Environmental Damage	Environmental Policy	24
EPD	The Waste management Licensing (Amendment) Regulations 2009	Environmental Policy	7
EPD	Transposition of the Groundwater Daughter Directive (2006/118/EC)	Environmental Policy	13
EPD	REACH(Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals)	Environmental Policy	UK-wide consultation – no information on number of UK-wide consultees
EPD	Environmental Noise Directive-consultation on Action Plans	Environmental Policy	8
EPD	Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (NI) Regulations 2009	Environmental Policy	10
NIEA	FEPA Fees	Fees and charges under the FEPA regulatory regime	6
NIEA	Northern Ireland Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (Exact wording) MANAGING STORMWATER – a strategy for promoting the use of sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) within Northern Ireland, September 2011	Consultation on proposed policy.	31

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
NIEA	Abstraction and Impoundment Licensing Fees and Charges	Consultation on Fees and Charges under the Abstraction and Impoundment regulatory regime.	27
NIEA Built Heritage Directorate	Listed Buildings Grant-aid review	Public consultation on changes to the NIEA Listed Buildings Grant-aid Scheme.	26
NIEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping study and SEA Assessment report for River Basin Management plans	Consultation on the proposed environmental effects of the river basin management plans	14
NIEA	Draft river basin management plans 2008	Public consultation on the draft plans	78
NIEA	Consultation on Financial Provision for Waste Activities in Northern Ireland	Environmental Policy	7
NIEA	Review of waste licensing charges under the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 and European Communities Act 1972	Proposed increase to waste licensing charges to enable NIEA to fully recoup its costs in the range of regulatory activities it has to undertake in relation to licensed waste facilities.	5
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	"Learning to Drive"	Public Consultation	13
PNRD (now Marine Division)	Proposals for additional designations under the Shellfish Waters Directive	Environmental Policy	15
LGPD	The Draft Local Government (Contracts and Compulsory Purchase) Bill	Full (Dec 08- Mar 09)	14
LGPD	New Local Government Pension Scheme 2009	Full Public	38
Finance & Business Planning	Guide to Making Information Accessible	Targeted consultation	2

2009/10

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
EPD	Annual Special Protection Order (Irish Hare)	Environmental Policy	1
EPD	Proposals for the recast of the WEEE and RoHS Directives	Environmental Policy	0
EPD	Regulations for the recast of WEEE and RoHS	Environmental Policy	0
EPD	Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) Regulations 2010	Environmental Policy	0
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill	Environmental Policy	48
EPD	Proposals for a Waste Bill	Environmental Policy	31
EPD	The Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010	Environmental Policy	39

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
EPD	The Private Water Supplies (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2009	Environmental Policy	16
EPD	Air Quality Standards Regulations(NI) 2010	Environmental Policy	3
EPD	Pollution Prevention &Control Charging Scheme (District Councils)2010	Environmental Policy	8
EPD	Pollution ,Prevention and Control(Amendment) Regulations(NI) 2009	Environmental Policy	6
NIEA	Revised draft enforcement policy	Operational Policy	29
NIEA	Regulatory Charging Policy 2010-2013	Environmental Policy	10
LPD Northern Area Planning Office	Magee Design Guide (Draft)	Planning Policy	9
NIEA	The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Pollution and Radiochemical Inspectorate) Charging Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2009 and the Radioactive Substances (Fees and Charges) Scheme (NI) 2009	Fees and Charges under PPC and RSA Regulatory Regime	6
NIEA	Review of application fees for consent to discharge to Waterways and Underground Strata under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.	Review of fees and charges for discharge consents under the Water Order regulatory regime	Carried out as part of overall NIEA Charging Policy.
NIEA	Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Designation proposal	46
EPD	High Hedges Bill	Environmental Policy	105
EPD	Stage One consultation on the transposition of the revised Waste Framework Directive	Environmental Policy	13
PPD	Reform of the Planning System in Northern Ireland: Your chance to influence change	Public Consultation on the Department's proposals for the reform of the planning system in Northern Ireland in the medium to longer term. Included draft EQIA at strategic level.	264
PPD	Draft Addendum to Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7: Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas	Planning Policy	89
PPD	Proposed PD Rights for Microgeneration Development	Public consultation on proposals for microgeneration permitted development associated with non-domestic land uses, that is, land uses that are not associated with dwellinghouses.	45
PPD	Proposed changes to Non-Householder Permitted PD Rights	Public consultation to obtain views on the Department's proposals to extend existing and introduce additional categories of Non- householder permitted development rights.	51

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
PPD	Proposed changes to Householder Permitted PD Rights	Public consultation to obtain views on the Department's proposals to extend existing householder permitted development rights.	37
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Drink Driving Limit in Northern Ireland, Penalties and Police Powers to Detect Drink Drivers	Public Consultation	89
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Graduated Fixed Penalty, Financial Penalty Deposit and Immobilisation Schemes	Public Consultation	12
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Definition of "Significant Personal Injury" under the 5th Motor Insurance Directive	Public Consultation	5
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	The Third EC Directive on Driving Licences	Public Consultation	18
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Amendment of Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 to increase maximum width of certain trailers	Public Consultation	9
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Amendment of the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 to control retrofitting and refilling of air conditioning systems used in motor vehicles	Public Consultation	5
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Retrofitting of Mirrors on Heavy Goods Vehicles	Public Consultation	4
Driver & Vehicle Agency	Consultation on Driver CPC Scheme – Improvements to Administrative Arrangements	UK wide Public consultation	34
Driver & Vehicle Agency	Real Weight Requirements for driving test vehicles	Public consultation	3, including 2 representative organisations
LGPD	The Draft Local Government (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 (the 2010 Order)	Full (Dec 09-Mar 10)	18
LGPD	The Local Government (Contracts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010	Full (Nov 09-Jan 10)	7
LGPD	Establishment of Transition Committees in Statute	Full (Apr 09- May 09)	48
LGPD	Proposals for Severance Arrangements for Councillors	Full (Apr 09-May 09)	43
LGPD	Draft local Government (Finance) Bill	Full (Jul 09-Oct 09)	28

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
LGPD	Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2010	Full Public	6
LGPD	Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (NI) 2010	Full Public	9
PEPG (now Marine Division)	Marine Strategy Framework Directive – legal framework for implementation	Public Consultation	20
Finance & Business Planning	Guide to Making Information Accessible	Targeted consultation	0
EPD	EU Emissions Trading Scheme Charging Scheme Northern Ireland	Full (Nov 09 – Feb 10)	2

2010/11

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
PPD	Planning Fees in Northern Ireland: Proposals for Change	Public consultation on proposed changes to structure and level of planning fees.	47
PPD	Consultation on the Planning (EIA) Regulations (NI) 2012	Public consultation to obtain views on the specific amendments to the 1999 EIA Regulations described within the paper.	29
PPD	Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 16: Tourism	Planning Policy	69
PPD	Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 23: Enabling Development [& Accompanying Draft Best Practice Guidance]	Planning Policy	60
PPD	Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 24: Economic Considerations	Planning Policy	133
PPD	Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 2 Natural Heritage (Revised) [& Accompanying Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance]	Planning Policy	50
PPD	Draft supplementary planning guidance: Building in Tradition – A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside	Supplementary Planning Guidance	26
EPD	Introduction of Restrictions on the Landfilling of Certain Wastes	Environmental Policy	19
LPD Northern Area Planning Office	Magee Design Guide (Draft)	Planning Policy	9
LPD Northern Area Planning Office	Historic City Street Conservation Area Draft Guide	Planning Policy	11
EPD	Meeting EU Landfill Diversion Targets	Environmental Policy	18
EPD	Proposal to amend the Landfill Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003	Environmental Policy	19

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
EPD	Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) Regulations 2010	Environmental Policy	5
EPD	Implementation of the RoHS Directive 2011/65/EU	Environmental Policy	0
EPD	A New Recycling Policy	Public consultation	23
EPD	Draft Site Waste Management Plans Regulations	Public consultation on proposed site waste management regulations	14
EPD	Consultation on The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010	Environmental Policy	28
EPD	The Water Framework Directive (Priority Substances & Classification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011	Environmental Policy	15
EPD	Ozone Depleting Substances Regulations(NI)2011 and the associated Ozone Qualifications Regulations 2011	Environmental Policy	8
EPD	Pollution, Prevention and Control Charging Scheme (District Councils) 2011	Environmental Policy	4
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Preparing a Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010-2020	Public Consultation	2,010
Transport Regulation Unit	Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010-Exemptions and Scope	Public consultation on proposals for vehicles that will fall within the scope of the Goods Vehicle Act and those vehicles that will be exempt according to their construction or function.	25
Transport Regulation Unit	Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010-Licensing of Operators and Enforcement Powers	Public consultation on proposals contained in the Licensing of Operators Regulations and the Enforcement Powers regulations.	10
EPD	Stage Two consultation on the transposition of the revised Waste Framework Directive	Environmental Policy	17
EPD	The Waste Regulations (NI) 2011	Environmental Policy	17
EPD	Environmental Better Regulation White Paper	Environmental Policy	19
NIEA	Enforcement Policy	Operational policy	8
NIEA	Criteria for Listing. A consultation on proposed revisions to: Annex C of Planning Policy Statement 6. April 2010	Planning Policy	20
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Signs and Warning Lights on School Buses Consultation	Public Consultation	14
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Exception in NI from the EU Drivers' Hours Rules for Reservists	Public Consultation	4

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Consultation on proposed regulations requiring replacement tyres on motor vehicles to comply with European noise limits	Public Consultation	4
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Proposed amendments to Construction and Use (C&U) and Public Service Vehicle Regulations on bus and coach construction and to C&U Regulations regarding NI Prison Service vehicles and MOT emissions booklet	Public Consultation	1
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Consultation on proposed amendments to the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations to provide for conspicuity markings on heavy goods and DVA enforcement vehicles and to Lighting/Construction and Use Regulations to allow the use of blue lamps/sirens on emergency vehicles	Public Consultation	5
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Proposed Passenger and Goods Vehicles (Community Recording Equipment Regulation) Regulations (NI) [2011] giving effect to EC Regulations to enable installation of digital tachographs on light vehicles	Public Consultation	3
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Consultation of the future of Bus Operator Licensing	Public Consultation	430
PNRD (now Marine Division)	A Northern Ireland Marine Bill – Policy Proposals	Environmental Policy	41
LGPD	District Councillors' Allowances and Multiples Mandates	Full (Oct 2011 – Dec.2011)	13
LGPD	Local Government Reform Policy Proposals	Full (Nov.2010-Mar 2011)	77
LGPD	The Draft Local Government Best Value (Exclusion of Non-Commercial Considerations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011 and Associated Guidance	Full (Sept 2011 – Oct 2011)	11
LGPD	Draft Regulations and Guidance under Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Bill – Financial Administration	Full (Dec 10- Feb 11)	14
LGPD	Draft Regulations and Guidance under Part 2 of the Local Government Finance Bill – Grants to Council	Full (Dec 10- Feb 11)	13
LGPD	Draft Regulations under Part 3 of the Local Government Finance Bill – Payments to Councillors etc.	Full (Dec 10- Feb 11)	17
LGPD	Local Government Pension Scheme (Councillors) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2011	Full Public	14
PEPG (now Marine Division)	Marine Policy Statement – draft for consultation	UK-wide Public Consultation	8 (out of 125 UK)
PEPG (now Marine Division)	Marine Licensing under the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009	Public consultation	30

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
LPD Belfast Area Planning Office	Malone Conservation Area Boundary Review and Design Guide	Planning Policy	24
Finance & Business Planning	Guide to Making Information Accessible	Targeted consultation	0
Finance & Business Planning	Disability Action Plan 2007-2010 (Revised)	Targeted consultation	1
Finance & Business Planning	Equality Scheme 2011-2016	Full public consultation	5
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division (VPB)	Consultation on Taxi Operator Licensing	Public Consultation	219 (representing 2941 views)

2011/12

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
EPD	Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy 2006 -2020 Addendum and Delivery Programme	Environmental Policy	17
EPD	Strangford Lough Byelaw	Environmental Policy	16
EPD	Spring Traps Approval Order	Environmental Policy	8
EPD	Invasive Species Strategy	Environmental Policy	29
EPD	Enabling Legislation National Parks	Environmental Policy	234
DVA	Access to Driver Licensing Records	Public consultation on granting controlled access to Driver Licensing Records	6
EPD	Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) Regulations 2012	Environmental Policy	7
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act – Fixed Penalty Notices	Environmental Policy	25
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act – Litter	Environmental Policy	19
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act – Gating Orders	Environmental Policy	16
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act – Noise & Statutory Nuisance	Environmental Policy	23
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act – Dog Control Orders	Environmental Policy	31
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act – Nuisance Parking and Abandoned Vehicles	Environmental Policy	13
EPD	Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act – Defacement Removal Notices	Environmental Policy	14
EPD	Proposals for a Charge on Single Use Carrier Bags	Environmental Policy	64
EPD	Review of and consultation on the Identification of Bathing Waters in Northern Ireland 2011	Environmental Policy	22

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
Transport Regulation Unit	Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010- Goods Vehicle Operator Fees	Public consultation on proposals contained in the Licensing of Fees Regulations.	17
LPD Northern Area Planning Office	Historic Street Conservation Area Draft Guide	Planning Policy	11
LPD Northern Area Planning Office	Clarendon Street Conservation Area Draft Design Guide	Planning Policy	6
Transport Regulation Unit	Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010- Transitional Arrangements	Public consultation on proposals for transitional provisions to be introduced for existing operators to facilitate a staged introduction to meet the full requirements of the Goods Vehicle Act .	17
EPD	High Hedges Fee Regulations	Environmental Policy	88
EPD	High Hedges Act - Guidance	Environmental Policy	31
EPD	Consultation on the Waste Management Duty of Care Code of Practice	Environmental Policy	17
EPD	Environmental Governance in Northern Ireland Discussion Document	Environmental Policy	54
EPD	Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (Amendment)Regulations (NI) 2012	Environmental Policy	3
EPD	Pollution, Prevention and Control (Amendment) Regulations(NI) 2011	Environmental Policy	4
EPD	Pollution Prevention and Control (Amendment)(No 2) Regulations (NI) 2011	Environmental Policy	10
PPD	Draft Policy HS 3 (Amended) Travellers Accommodation	Planning Policy	22
PPD	Supplementary Planning Guidance - Policy PED 8: 'Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses'	Supplementary Planning Guidance	16
PPD	Planning NI Customer Satisfaction Survey 2010/11	Customer satisfaction questionnaire issued to all planning customers (3,324) who had a decision issued on a planning application during 2010/11	1032
LPD Northern Area Planning Office	Clarendon Street Conservation Area Draft Design Guide	Planning Policy	6
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Reform of the L and R Driver Schemes and on Graduated Driver Licensing	Public Consultation	688

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	The EC Roadworthiness Directive – Proposed Changes to the MOT Test	Public Consultation	9
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Fire Extinguishers in Motor Vehicles	Public Consultation	5
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Proposal on Possible Exemption of Certain Categories of Historic Vehicles from MOT Testing	Public Consultation	15
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Consultation on implementing EC Regulations 1071/2009, 1072/2009 and 1073/2009 on road transport operations and on new fitness and finance requirements for Own Account operators	Public Consultation	12
PPD	Consultation on Demolition and Development	Public consultation to obtain views on the specific amendments described within the paper	26
RSVRD (VPB)	Consultation on Taxi Vehicle Licensing, Powers of Seizure	Public Consultation	47 (representing 2979 views)
RSVRD (VPB)	Consultation on Courtesy Transport licensing	Public Consultation	135 (representing 135 views)
RSVRD (VPB)	Consultation on Maximum Fare and Taximeter regulations	Public Consultation	32 (representing 3637 views)
NIEA	Proposed restructuring and revision of application fees for discharge consent under the water (Northern Ireland) order 1999 for single domestic dwellings	Review of restructuring and revision of application fees and charges	17
NIEA	Lagan Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Informal consultation on designation	15
LGPD	Guidance on Councillors' Allowances	Full (Oct 11- Dec 11)	11
LGPD	Local Government Pension Scheme(Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2012	Full Public	5
PPD (now Marine Division)	Draft NI Marine Position Paper	Public Consultation	24
Finance & Business Planning	Guide to Making Information Accessible	Targeted consultation	1
Finance & Business Planning	Disability Action Plan 2011-2014	Targeted consultation	1
EPD	The draft Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013	Environment Policy full public consultation	5
EPD	Draft Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Policy Guidance	Consultation to obtain views on revised draft of local air quality management policy guidance for district councils and relevant statutory authorities	7

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
EPD	Consultation on UK Air Quality Plans for the Achievement of EU Air Quality Limits for Nitrogen Dioxide	Environmental Policy	4

2012/13

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
EPD	Consultation on Revising the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy	Environmental Policy	46
EPD	Proposed Snares Order	Environmental Policy	17
EPD	Draft Strategy for Marine Protected Areas	Environmental Policy	30
DVA	Proposed Amendment to Driving Licence Fees	Public consultation on proposed Statutory Rule amending driver licensing fees	7
EPD	The Draft Single Use Carrier Bags Charge Regulations (NI) 2012	Environmental Policy	37
EPD/Marine Division	2012 Review of Shellfish Water Designations Under The Shellfish Waters Directive; and The Protection of Shellfish Waters Beyond 2013	Environmental Policy	26
NIEA	Review of Regulatory Charging Policy 2010-2013	Environmental Policy	4
NIEA	The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions – NIEA) Charging Scheme (NI) 2012	Fees and Charges under the PPC Regulatory Regime	1
NIEA	The consolidated Greenhouse Gas Emissions Charging Scheme (NI) 2013	Fees and Charges under the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme Regulations 2012	0
NIEA	Consultation on the timetable of the work programme for the production of the second cycle of river basin management plans.	Under the Water Framework Directive the Department is required to issue a time table for the production of the plans and a statement on the consultation to be carried out, by the 22 December 2012	6
EPD	The draft Waste (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013	Environmental Policy	26
EPD	The Controlled Waste and Duty of Care Regulations (NI) 2013	Environmental Policy	20
EPD	Noise Mapping Action Planning, Technical Guidance for Roads, Railways and Airports	Environmental Policy	5
EPD	Pollution, Prevention and Control Regulations (NI) 2012	Environmental Policy	5
EPD	Pre-consultation seeking views on the need for Northern Ireland Climate Change Legislation	Pre-consultation	59
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Road Traffic (Drink Driving) (Amendment) Bill and Additional Measures to tackle drink and drug driving in Northern Ireland	Public Consultation	40

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
PPD	Consultation on Proposed Changes to Permitted Development Rights for Agricultural Buildings and Plant	Public consultation to obtain views on proposals to increase the permitted size limitation of agricultural buildings from 300m ² and to 500m ² and to provide for the installation alteration or replacement of structures to house anaerobic digestion plant on agricultural units subject to the same ground area limitation of 500m ²	37
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Mutual Recognition of Penalty Points Between Northern Ireland and Ireland	Public Consultation	10
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Proposal for Mandatory Wearing of Helmets on Quadricycles	Public Consultation	9
RSVRD (VPB)	Consultation on Special Occasion and Novelty Vehicle Licensing	Public Consultation	13 (representing 1869 views)
RSVRD (VPB)	Consultation on Taxi Operator Licensing Fixed Penalties	Public Consultation	17 (representing 1920 views)
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Consultation on Goods Vehicle Operator Licensing Fixed Penalty	Public Consultation	10
Marine Division/ NIEA	Marine Strategy Framework Directive Consultation UK-wide consultation led by DEFRA	Public Consultation	9 Northern Ireland specific responses. (77 responses for whole UK)
Marine Division	Statement of Public Participation	Public Consultation	3 written responses received following oral responses gathered from 70 delegates representing a wide cross section of interest groups and organisations at a public stakeholder event on the Statement.
PPD (now Marine Division)	Draft NI Marine Litter Strategy	Public Consultation	26

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
LGPD	Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013	Full Public	15
LGPD	DFP – Public Service Pensions Bill - Policy consultation	Information note to employers in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland)	Responses sent directly to DFP
LGPD	Review of Local Government Staff Commission	Full 12 week Public Consultation	33
Finance & Business Planning	Guide to making Information Accessible	Targeted Consultation	3
SPD	Consultation on Proposed Modification of Planning Agreement with George Best Belfast City Airport	Public Consultation	1310
Marine Division	Consultation on Rathlin Island European Marine Site Management Scheme	Public Consultation	12

2013/14

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Amending Directive 2012/36/EU - Consultation on Further European Changes to Driving Licences and Driving Test Requirements	Public Consultation	6
Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division	Consultation the carriage and consumption of alcohol on public service vehicles	Public Consultation	26
EPD	Policy Options on a Bill to Introduce Recycling Targets	Public Consultation	28
EPD	Draft Northern Ireland Waste Prevention Programme	Public Consultation	Ongoing – 2 to date (closes 11 December 2013)
RSVRD (VPB)	Consultation on single tier taxi licensing	Public Consultation	291
RSVRD (VPB)	Consultation on Taxi Driver Test and Periodic Training	Public Consultation	220 (representing 2317 views)
Driver & Vehicle Agency	Consultation on Improvements to the ADI / AMI schemes in NI	Public Consultation	11, including 7 representative organisations
PPD	Planning Fees in Northern Ireland: Review of Planning Fees and Funding	Public consultation on proposed changes to planning fees.	25
PPD	(Draft) Supplementary Planning Guidance to PPS 18 'Renewable Energy': Anaerobic Digestion	Public Consultation	7
PPD	Revised Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 15 'Planning and Flood Risk'	Public Consultation	Ongoing (Consultation Closes 10 January 2014)

Business Area	Name of Consultation	Type of Consultation	Number of Responses
PPD	'Living Places': An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland (Draft)	Public Consultation	Ongoing (Consultation Closes 31 October 2013)
EPD	Proposals for an Environmental Better Regulation Bill	Public Consultation	22
EPD	Consultation on the Draft Controlled Waste (Seizure of Property) Regulations (Northern Ireland)	Public consultation	7
EPD	Consultation on the Introduction of Restrictions on the Landfilling of Food Waste	Public Consultation	Ongoing (Closing Date 3rd December 2013)
LGPD	Consultation on proposed scheme design for the Local Government Pension Scheme (NI) 2014	Full Public	40
LGPD	Consultation on severance arrangements for councillors and the draft Local Government (Severance payments for councillors) Regulations (NI) 2013	Full Public	33
EPD	Implementation of the Recast Directive 2012/19/EU on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment	Public Consultation	9
EPD	Consultation on Draft Regulations for Implementation of the Recast Directive 2012/19/EU on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment	Public Consultation	Ongoing (Closing Date 1st November 2013)
EPD	Industry Noise Action Plan	Public Consultation	1
EPD	PPC(IE)Part A Guidance	Targeted Consultation	1
FBPD	Guide to Making Information Accessible	Targeted Consultation	2

Planning Application: Z/2012/1387/F

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment (i) for an update on planning application Z/2012/1387/F; (ii) what additional information his Department has requested in relation to this planning proposal; (iii) whether an Environmental Impact Assessment has been, or will be, carried out on this proposal; and (iv) when he intends to make a decision on this planning application.

(AQW 27616/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) & (ii) On 30th May 2013 the Department requested further environmental information in the form of the Addendum to the Environmental Statement. Issues to be addressed in the Addendum include; air quality impact assessment; natural heritage surveys; revised landscape proposals; impact on navigational aids and landing systems; wastes accepted/ indicative amounts/ source/ capacity; potential impact of sources of ignition and proximity to bulk LPG storage vessels at Calor Gas; and annotation of noise attenuation levels and machinery and plant on plans.

The Department agreed to an extension to submit the Addendum to allow the submission of a Health Impact Assessment, and are waiting for the submission of this further environmental information. The date for the submission is 31st March 2014.

- (iii) The planning application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement.
- (iv) On receipt of the Addendum to the application the Department will be required to re-advertise, re-issue consultations, and issue neighbour re-notifications. On completion of this process I will be in a position to make a decision.

MOTs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of car MOT tests completed in each of the last three years. **(AQW 27648/11-15)**

Mr Durkan: The number of car MOT tests completed in each of the last three financial years (1 April -31 March) is set out below.

Private Car Vehicle Tests 2010-11 to 2012-131

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Full Test	641,320	677,078	678,086
Retest	135,301	144,769	141,391
All Tests	776,621	821,847	819,477

Note: Figures are the latest DOE/DVA Official Statistics.

Tyres

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of firms that have been refused licences to bale tyres, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27650/11-15)

Mr Durkan: No firms have been refused a licence to bale tyres in the last 3 years.

Tyres

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of firms that have applied for and successfully obtained licences, for dealing with waste tyres, that have been either subject to criminal investigations for illegal dumping or have been found guilty of illegally dumping waste rubber products locally or in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 27651/11-15)

Mr Durkan: 2 operators applied for and successfully obtained licences for dealing with waste tyres that have been prosecuted under Article 4, Waste Management and Contaminated Land Order 1997. 1 Operator is currently under investigation.

Wind Farms: Environmental Impact Assessment

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of the Environment how many of the wind farms that have received approval by the Planning Service have had an independent Environmental Impact Assessment carried out, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27665/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In the last five years my Department has approved 57 wind farms (i.e. applications of more than 2 turbines). Of these, 39 have been accompanied by Environmental Statements. These were submitted by the applicant as the onus is on the developer to demonstrate the environmental acceptability of the project.

Department of Finance and Personnel**Civil Servants: Flights**

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to 20843/11-15, how many flights were booked for civil servants outside the Travel Management Contract.

(AQW 21494/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The information requested is included in the table below:

Flights Booked for Civil Servants Outside of the Travel Contract by Calendar Year (Excluding DEL)

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
39	61	76	44	42

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has historically collated the required information by financial year and, as it is not available in another format, it is shown in the separate table overleaf.

***DEL Flights Booked Outside Of The Travel Contract By Financial Year**

2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
436	415	442	237	40

*Prior to the introduction of the new NICS wide contract on 1 November 2010 DEL had a policy of booking flights directly with low cost carriers as this represented value for money and avoided travel agent fees for each transaction. DEL only availed of the travel management contract when booking transatlantic flights.

The flights recorded as booked outside of the contract from 1 November 2010 relate to last minute Ministerial travel and travel for Departmental staff engaged in the European Social Fund programme who have their travel arrangements booked by Proteus, which provides technical and administrative assistance to the Department.

Exports

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the proportion of manufacturing exports to (a) the south of Ireland; (b) United States of America; (c) Germany; (d) France (e) Japan; and (f) other countries; and if there are countries in the other category that amount to greater than 3 percent, to detail each country and indicate the proportion of Gross Value Added these exports account for; and for her assessment of how these figures compare to those of Britain and the south of Ireland.

(AQW 27195/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Regional Trade Statistics (RTS) series provides information on the exports of goods from regions of the UK to other countries. The Central Statistics Office, Ireland, publishes broadly similar data based on information collated by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Information is presented for 2011, the latest year for which figures on total Gross Value Added (GVA) for Northern Ireland are currently available.

Table 1 presents the value and proportion of Northern Ireland exports for the requested destinations and all other countries with a share of exports greater than three percent, and the proportion of NI GVA for which they account. Tables 2 and 3 present comparable data for Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Manufacturing exports from Northern Ireland account for approximately one-fifth of our total gross value added (GVA); this is in line with the UK average. There is a much higher contribution to the Republic of Ireland's GVA from its manufacturing exports (63%).

The US is the largest market for exports for both the UK and the Republic of Ireland while the Republic of Ireland is our biggest market for exports, accounting for more than a third (37%) of our exports in 2011.

It is well established that economies benefit from external trading. It is for this reason that the Executive's Economic Strategy focuses on export led economic growth, in order to achieve its overarching goal of improving the economic competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy.

Table 1: Value of export of goods for selected countries and proportion of GVA for which they account (Northern Ireland) 1

	£m	% of total exports	% of total GVA
Ireland	2,229	37.2%	7.46%
United States of America	477	8.0%	1.6%
Germany	241	4.0%	0.8%
France	319	5.3%	1.1%
Japan	33	0.5%	0.1%
All other countries (including those listed below)	2,698	45.0%	9.0%
Those other countries accounting for more than 3% of exports:			
Canada	524	8.7%	1.8%
Total Exports	5,996	100.0%	20.1%
NI Total GVA	29,870		100.0%

Note: Figures may not add due to rounding. Source: HMRC, ONS

Table 2: Value of export of goods for selected countries and proportion of GVA for which they account (Great Britain) 1

	£m	% of total exports	% of total GVA
Ireland	13,462	5.2%	1.1%
United States of America	35,085	13.6%	2.7%
Germany	28,528	11.1%	2.2%
France	20,640	8.0%	1.6%
Japan	4,209	1.6%	0.3%

	£m	% of total exports	% of total GVA
All other countries (including those listed below)	155,416	60.4%	12.1%
Those other countries accounting for more than 3% of exports:			
Netherlands	17,093	6.6%	1.3%
Belgium	12,382	4.8%	1.0%
Italy	9,075	3.5%	0.7%
Spain	8,500	3.3%	0.7%
China	8,259	3.2%	0.6%
Total Exports	257,341	100.0%	20.1%
GB Total GVA	1,280,319		100.0%

Source: HMRC, ONS

Table 3: Value of export of goods for selected countries and proportion of GVA for which they account (Ireland) 1,2

	£m	% of total exports	% of total GVA
United States of America	18,615	23.2%	14.5%
Germany	5,677	7.1%	4.4%
France	4,359	5.4%	3.4%
Japan	1,542	1.9%	1.2%
All other countries	50,196	62.4%	39.1%
Those other countries accounting for more than 3% of exports:			
Belgium	11,740	14.6%	9.1%
Great Britain	10,644	13.2%	8.3%
Switzerland	3,204	4.0%	2.5%
Netherlands	2,767	3.4%	2.2%
Spain	2,737	3.4%	2.1%
Italy	2,637	3.3%	2.1%
Total Exports	80,389	100.0%	62.6%
Ireland Total GVA	128,381		100.0%

Source: 'Trade Statistics December 2011' Central Statistics Office, Ireland

- 1 Export figures relate to the value of sales whereas GVA is defined (in broad terms) as turnover minus the cost of purchases.
- 2 The sterling value of exports from Ireland are based on the HMRC exchange rate for the period: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/exrate/exchangerates-1112.pdf>

Utility Regulator: Appointment to Board

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, to detail (i) any advice he was given regarding the appointment of Non-Executive members to the board of the Utility Regulator in relation to potential conflicts of interest; (ii) whether any issue arose in relation to one of the candidates relating to a potential conflict of interest; and (iii) if so, was that person appointed. (AQW 27234/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In reaching his decisions on these appointments, I understand that my predecessor as Minister was informed by the interview panel of their assessment of the potential for conflicts of interest in relation to all of the candidates deemed as suitable for appointment.

Utility Regulator: Appointment to Board

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail any communication received from the Chairman or the Utility Regulator's Office expressing concern about a potential conflict of interest relating to one of the candidates appointed to the board of the Utility Regulator; and to detail any decision he has made in relation to this issue.

(AQW 27236/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The selection panel for the recent competition was made up of the Permanent Secretary of DFP, the Chair of the Utility Regulator and a nominee from the Public Appointments Commission. At the end of the selection process, the panel agreed its assessments for each suitable candidate and the agreed candidate summaries were presented to the then Minister.

One of the issues addressed by the panel in relation to every candidate was that of potential conflicts of interest. The then Minister considered this matter and decided that any potential conflicts of interest were manageable.

Utility Regulator: Appointment to Board

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in regard to the appointment of positions on the Board of the Utility Regulator, (i) where the first two candidates appointed in ranking order; and (ii) if not, why was a position offered to a candidate lower down in the ranking order.

(AQW 27239/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In relation to the recent competition, it was decided that the panel should present an unranked list of all those candidates who were considered suitable for appointment. My predecessor then selected for appointment the three candidates he considered to have the skills, experience and knowledge that best met the needs of the Board.

Outsourcing of Functions: DFP

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27292/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Whilst there are currently no firm proposals to outsource any functions undertaken by my Department I am committed to evaluating all appropriate options when spending decisions are made to ensure that we achieve both high standards of service delivery and value for money in our public services.

Utility Regulator: Oversight

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he is satisfied that there are adequate reporting structures and oversight of the Utility Regulator and how its superintendence of compliance by System Operator for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Electricity with their licence conditions can be made transparent and sufficient.

(AQW 27317/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Utility Regulator is ultimately accountable, through its board, to the NI Assembly in respect of all its activities. However, its oversight of the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) and Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) is framed by the requirement, set out by the relevant EU directives, for national regulators to discharge their functions in a manner that is transparently independent of government.

In respect of monitoring compliance with licences, compliance reports were provided by both NIE and SONI in June of this year. The Utility Regulator is currently reviewing these compliance reports.

Completion of this process may result in amendments to the compliance plans which will be published as required by the licence. I believe this will provide appropriate transparency.

Land Law

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail any plans to bring forward legislation relating to land law.

(AQW 27348/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The recommendations in the Northern Ireland Law Commission's Report on Land Law have been accepted and work is ongoing on a draft Land Law Bill. The target date for introduction is 2014/15. However, the Bill will deal with a diverse range of complex legal issues and we would wish to ensure that the provisions in the Bill are fully worked through. The target date may, therefore, have to be revised.

Narrow Water Bridge

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what progress has been made on funding for the Narrow Water Bridge.

(AQO 4895/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: DFP has not received formal notification of any new funding proposals and is not in a position to provide additional funding, to the project, above that already committed.

Public Prosecution Service: Staff

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of staff working at the Public Prosecution Service. (AQW 27424/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The total number of staff working in the Public Prosecution Service currently stands at 564 which equates to a full-time equivalent of 535.7.

NAMA

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the position of the Northern Ireland Representative on the National Asset Management Agency Northern Ireland Advisory Committee is remunerated, including (a) by whom; and (b) on what basis.

(AQW 27451/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As I'm sure the Member knows, I am not responsible for NAMA or any of its Committees.

Funding Applications: Single Online Portal

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 15049/11-15, for an update on the progress of developing a single online application portal allowing organisations to apply for the various streams of Government funding. (AQW 27484/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: A Grant Application and Monitoring system has been procured to support the administration of the Social Investment Fund within OFMDFM. Phase 1 was implemented in July 2013. This enables approved projects to be entered by the OFMDFM team for monitoring and reporting purposes. Two further phases are planned to be implemented in November 2013 and March 2014. Phase 2 will enable external contract holders to enter financial projections and quarterly updates of performance using a web interface, while Phase 3 will enable citizens to view grant allocations and progress in their area.

Grant application and management requirements to support schemes administered by DFP EU Structural Funds and DSD Grant Management are also being investigated to establish if the implemented system can also support these requirements.

Agrifood Loan Scheme

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail whether the Agri-Food Loan Scheme will be available during November 2013.

(AQW 27486/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Agri-food Loan Scheme will roll out on a phased basis and it is expected that the first phase of this will open for applications in November.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) what progress is being made in the 'releasing of value' from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners; (ii) how this value compares to the anticipated income; and (iii) how the difference, is in value impacting on budgetary planning.

(AQW 27488/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The releasing of value from Belfast Harbour Commissioners is a matter for the Regional Development Minister and is not a matter for the Department of Finance and Personnel.

The Executive has allocated £20 million to DRD through in-year monitoring rounds this year to reflect the fact that an actual cash transaction from the Harbour Commissioners will not be made in the 2013-14 financial year.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail how much funding allocated to the Social Investment Fund has been surrendered as part of the in year monitoring or otherwise since the fund was created.

(AQW 27489/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive set aside £80 million for the Social Investment Fund as part of its 2011-15 Budget. To date £16.2 million Resource and £25 million Capital has been returned for reallocation since the Fund was created.

Vacant Domestic Dwellings

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of vacant domestic dwellings in each district electoral area of the North Down Borough Council area.

(AQW 27538/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Information on the number of vacant domestic dwellings in each district electoral area of the North Down Borough Council area is not available as information is collated at District Council and Ward area.

At 30th September 2013 a total of 804 domestic dwellings in the North Down Borough Council area were recorded as vacant.

Programme for Government: Addressing Regional Imbalances

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action his Department is taking to deliver the Programme for Government commitment on addressing regional imbalances.

(AQW 27541/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As suitable measures are outside the remit of my Department, no such action is being undertaken.

European Funding: Community Groups

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action his Department is taking to maximise the level of European funding drawn down by community groups.

(AQW 27557/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department sponsors the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), and works closely with it to ensure that community groups across Northern Ireland have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from, current and upcoming, European funded PEACE and INTERREG programmes.

Under the current programmes, this has largely been facilitated under the PEACE III local action plans, which to date have been awarded funding of approximately €100 million in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of the Republic of Ireland.

Stormont Estate: Bus Service

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has any plans to introduce a bus service within Stormont Estate for visitors to Parliament Buildings, given the lack of parking arrangements.

(AQW 27573/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I have no plans to introduce a bus service within Stormont Estate for visitors to Parliament Buildings.

Office Accommodation: Foyle

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many offices are available in the Foyle constituency; and what is the square footage of 'Grade A' office space.

(AQW 27609/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not hold the information requested.

Occupational Health Service

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 26752/11-15, (i) how many medically trained staff are employed in the Occupational Health Service; (ii) whether, and how, they identify themselves to General Practitioners and Consultants when seeking personal and confidential medical records relating to members of the public; and (iii) to detail (a) for how long; (b) where; and (c) how such sensitive information is stored.

(AQW 27740/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There are seven medically trained staff employed in the NICS Occupational Health Service (OHS).

The medical staff always identify themselves when seeking personal and confidential medical records relating to members of the public from General Practitioners or Consultants. This is carried out by denoting themselves in written letters as Medical Advisers to the specific area for which they are providing medical advice e.g. Medical Adviser to the NI Driver and Vehicle Agency. Medical information about a member of the public is only requested from their General Practitioner or Consultant with the individual member of the public's written consent to do so.

Information relating to members of the public is only held by OHS for the purposes of providing a medical opinion. The length of time will be dependant on the processing time and ranges from weeks for routine cases to a number of months for more complex cases.

Such information is held securely by OHS in accordance with the DFP Policy on the Handling of Sensitive Information and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The OHS is based in Lincoln Building, 27-45 Great Victoria Street, Belfast. Once the medical recommendation has been made, the case-file is returned to the requesting authority.

The information is held in secure cabinets within the OHS facility in Lincoln Building.

Rates Collection

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the projected (i) domestic; and (ii) non-domestic rates collection for 2013/14.

(AQW 27798/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Land & Property Services has a target to collect £1,145 million income from rates (net of refunds) by 31st March 2014. There are no separate targets for domestic and non-domestic properties.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Legal Proceedings: Costs and Compensation

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much (i) his Department; (ii) its arm's-length bodies; and (iii) each Health and Social Care Trust, have spent on legal proceedings in each of the last five years, broken down by (a) costs; and (b) compensation.

(AQW 27285/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I will answer these two questions together.

Expenditure relating to legal proceedings for my Department, each HSC Trust and my Department's ALBs is provided in the following tables.

Costs	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £	2009/10 £
Department of Health Social Services & Public Safety	1,594,668	712,689	621,112	531,693
Health & Social Care Board	1,272,108	2,142,484	2,372,748	1,800,140
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	5,343,750	5,295,500	5,030,987	4,002,252
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	2,274,061	2,678,519	2,201,237	2,020,411
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	2,041,050	2,596,928	1,502,710	1,474,991
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	2,613,289	2,120,041	1,865,576	1,582,251
Western Health & Social Care Trust	2,008,240	3,209,191	1,858,085	1,385,765
NI Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust	49,406	125,094	119,401	78,297
Arms Length Bodies	274,950	213,555	365,842	369,173
Totals	17,471,522	19,094,001	15,937,698	13,244,973

Compensation	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £	2009/10 £
Department of Health Social Services & Public Safety	0	0	0	0
Health & Social Care Board	5,480,833	4,232,115	11,741,892	2,251,251
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	7,426,362	5,087,019	8,366,198	2,577,952
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	2,286,936	2,063,115	1,422,346	3,447,582
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	954,123	4,810,815	1,710,869	823,327
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	3,489,315	1,816,298	1,082,579	1,190,592
Western Health & Social Care Trust	1,666,270	2,274,642	1,481,758	1,385,043
NI Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust	38,750	58,112	90,088	30,667
Arms Length Bodies	161,123	170,515	408,085	276,633
	21,503,712	20,512,631	26,303,815	11,983,047

Expenditure relating to the 2008/09 financial year is not available.

Outsourcing of Functions: DHSSPS

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27355/11-15)

Mr Poots: A key objective for my Department is to operate as efficiently as possible using the resources allocated by the Executive. In line with generally accepted practice elsewhere in the public sector in Northern Ireland, the Department has outsourced some of its corporate functions to NICS shared services arrangements, such as IT and HR services.

The Department has no current plans to outsource other departmental functions, but given continued financial challenges, it would be my intention to keep this under review.

Care Homes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the timetable for the consultation and decision process for the possible closure of care homes.

(AQW 27415/11-15)

Mr Poots: The views of residents, families, staff and the wider public are central to the revised process I initiated on potential changes to statutory residential care. I want this to be an inclusive and transparent process in order to give every opportunity for people to share their views, and for those views to be heard, the new process includes two periods of public consultation

The first period of public consultation will be underway in the very near future with comments invited on the criteria outlined in the Health and Social Care Board's consultation document 'Making choices: Meeting the current and future needs of older people'. The purpose of the criteria is to enable the evaluation of statutory residential care homes and it is intended that, once finalised, the criteria will be applied at a local level by Trusts to identify proposals for change. There will then be a further period of public consultation on any such proposals for change mid-Summer 2014.

Care Homes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if all consultation responses will be taken into account regarding the possible closure of care homes.

(AQW 27416/11-15)

Mr Poots: The views of residents, families, staff and the wider public are central to the revised process I initiated on potential changes to statutory residential care. I want this to be an inclusive and transparent process in order to give every opportunity for people to share their views, and for those views to be heard, the new process includes two periods of public consultation

The first period of public consultation will be underway in the very near future with comments invited on the criteria outlined in the Health and Social Care Board's consultation document 'Making choices: Meeting the current and future needs of older people'. The purpose of the criteria is to enable the evaluation of statutory residential care homes and it is intended that, once finalised, the criteria will be applied at a local level by Trusts to identify proposals for change. There will then be a further period of public consultation on any such proposals for change mid-Summer 2014.

Care Homes: Pinewood

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has assessed the health and wellbeing impact, the proposed closure of Pinewood Residential Care Home has had on residents.

(AQW 27417/11-15)

Mr Poots: On 3 May I stopped existing Trust consultations involving proposals to reduce the number of statutory residential care homes for older people. There are, therefore, no current proposals to close Pinewood.

Under the revised process which I initiated there are several stages to work through before any decisions are made on the future of individual statutory residential homes. This includes two periods of public consultation – the first of which will commence in the very near future - as well as ongoing liaison with residents and staff. While it is therefore inappropriate to speculate on the future of individual homes, I am clear that, throughout the process, the health and wellbeing of residents is paramount and I expect the HSC to take appropriate steps to ensure that resident's health and wellbeing is protected.

Care Homes: Pinewood

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many residents have left Pinewood Residential Care Home by their own choice, in each of the last 5 years.

(AQW 27418/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not collected centrally and was requested from the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. In the last five years, no-one requested to leave Pinewood Residential Home for another residential unit.

Care Homes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail if the consultation into the closure of care homes will take into account that a non admissions policy has been in place at Pinewood Residential Care Home.

(AQW 27419/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSC Board are undertaking a public consultation, which will be launched in the very near future, on proposed criteria for change as outlined in 'Making Choices: Meeting the current and future needs of older people'.

The Board is inviting comments on four criteria including 'Care Trends' which will consider admission rates. It is proposed that this criterion will not only consider admissions to statutory residential care homes – some of which have been subject to non

admission policies – but also admissions to independent sector residential care homes, thus enabling the assessment of all admissions to residential care.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Development Proposals

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any development proposals as well as possible moves of services and staff being planned within the South Antrim constituency.

(AQW 27420/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has recently provided an update to me on its plans to identify suitable accommodation to house its Senior Management Team on the Antrim Hospital site. As part of the Trust's Improvement Plan, it was considered imperative that all of the Trust's Senior Management Team should be as close as possible to the clinical teams and Bretten Hall was identified as the best location. The Trust has been working closely with the Business Services Organisation (BSO) and has offered alternative accommodation to enable some BSO staff, currently located in Bretten Hall, to relocate to other Trust property.

The Trust has also advised me of developments in respect of the following service areas:

Mental Health

Following public consultation, a decision was taken at the Trust Board meeting in September to replace the Moylinney dementia residential unit with a new supported living facility for people with dementia in the Newtownabbey locality. The new scheme will be a purpose designed facility based on best practice principles in meeting the needs of people with dementia. The timeframe for closure of the current facility, which is not fit for purpose, will be determined by the needs of those people who currently reside there.

The Antrim Community Mental Health Team will be relocated from Holywell Hospital into Antrim town in order to provide a more accessible and more appropriate location.

Primary & Community Care and Older People's Services

The Trust is currently working on a supported living scheme to replace Greenisland residential home. The home has now closed and residents are currently living in Joymount residential home whilst work is underway.

Community Teams in Carrickfergus have been moved into Carrick Health Centre over the last number of weeks. This is a policy direction within the Trust whereby Community Teams are being brought together to allow for closer integration. It is anticipated that this model will be replicated in other localities across the Trust, as opportunities for shared accommodation arise.

Public Consultations: DHSSPS

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many public consultations his Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27427/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has carried out 121 public consultations since 2007. The nature of these consultations and the number of responses received have been set out in the table below.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Public Consultations January 2007 to September 2013

Completed	Title	No of Responses
2007	Child Protection Consultation Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland	47
2007	Child Protection Consultation Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order	N/K
2007	Looked After Children Consultation Care Matters in Northern Ireland – A Bridge to a Better Future	52
2007	Proposals for changing the methodology used for the production of inpatient waiting time information in Northern Ireland	2
2007	Raising the age of sale for tobacco products	68
2007	Fit Futures Implementation Plan	20
2007	The Future of Pathology Services in Northern Ireland	289
2007	Improving Services for Major Trauma	47
2007	Complaints in the HPSS	91

Completed	Title	No of Responses
2007	A draft strategy for addressing sexual violence in Northern Ireland "Hidden Crimes, Secret Pain"	35
2007	Cross Border GP Out of Hours Services	1
2007	Families Matter:-Supporting Families in Northern Ireland	70
2007	Consultation on first draft of HSS Reform (NI) Order 2007	41
2008	Consultation on Review of Public Administration in health and social care	221
2008	Improving Stroke Services in Northern Ireland	485
2008	Service Framework for Cardiovascular Health and Wellbeing	68
2008	Responsible Officers Consultation	n/k
2008	The ASD Strategic Action Plan was issued for public consultation	459
2008	NI Personality Disorder	28
2008	Delivering the Bamford Vision - 2008 Review of mental health and learning disability policy	102
2008	Termination of Pregnancy Guidance Consultations	86
2008	Performers List System for General Medical Practitioners	11
2008	Proposals for changing the methodology used for the production of outpatient activity information in Northern Ireland	n/k
2009	Looked After Children Consultation Standards for Leaving Care Services in Northern Ireland	37
2009	Adoption and Looked After Children Consultations Vetting Requirements in Adoption, Fostering and Private Fostering	19
2009	Regulation of the sunbed industry in Northern Ireland	52
2009	IRMER Consultation	2
2009	Strategy for Health Social Care Bereavement Services in Northern Ireland	41
2009	Minimum standards for dental care and treatment in Northern Ireland	7
2009	Service Framework for Respiratory Health and Wellbeing	73
2009	A Legislative Framework for Mental Capacity and Mental Health Legislation in Northern Ireland	76
2009	Standards for Leaving Care Services in Northern Ireland	37
2009	Consultation to Reform the Model of Regulation for Social Care Workers in NI	90
2009	Introduction of Compulsory Registration for Social Care Workers With The Northern Ireland Social Care Council	61
2009	A Legislative Framework for Mental Capacity and Mental Health Legislation in Northern Ireland	76
2009	Reform of the Medical Advisory Structures	15
2009	Governance Arrangements for Research Ethics Committees	23
2009	ABI Consultation	47
2009	The Controlled Drugs (Supervision of Management & Use) Regulations NI 2009	6
2009	Proposals for changing the methodology used for the production of completed inpatient and outpatient waiting time information in Northern Ireland	3
2009	School Nursing and Health Visiting Review	49
2009	Proposals for Fire Safety Reform	35
2010	Looked After Children Consultation Standards for Kinship Care in Northern Ireland	13

Completed	Title	No of Responses
2010	Looked After Children Consultation Standards for Young Adult Supported Accommodation Projects in Northern Ireland	35
2010	Proposals to strengthen sanctions against retailers who sell tobacco products to children and young people under 18 years of age	64
2010	Draft tobacco control regulations removing displays of tobacco products at point of sale and banning sales of tobacco products from vending machines	1013
2010	Skin cancer prevention strategy and action plan	29
2010	Service Framework for Cancer Prevention, Treatment and Care	77
2010	Consultation on an Equality Impact Assessment for new Mental Capacity Legislation	36
2010	Standards for Kinship Care in Northern Ireland	13
2010	Standards for Young Adult Supported Accommodation Projects in Northern Ireland	35
2010	Confidence in Care Programme - Consultation on the role of Responsible Officers: Closing the Gap in Medical Regulation	n/k
2010	SLT Action Plan	33
2010	Consultation on Improving Dementia Services in Northern Ireland - A Regional Strategy	56
2010	Consultation on an Equality Impact Assessment for new Mental Capacity Legislation	36
2010	Review of Joint Appointments	8
2010	Termination of Pregnancy Guidance Consultations	33
2010	Consultation on proposals for changing (i) the methodology and source of data used to collect and compile official inpatient and day case admission information in Northern Ireland and (ii) the format and content of the annual publication entitled 'Hospital Statistics'	3
2010	Mental Health and Nursing Framework	18
2010	Nursing and Midwifery Strategy	44
2010	Proposals to introduce The Fire & Rescue Services (Emergencies) (NI) Order	13
2011	Child Protection Consultation Targeted Consultation - the draft Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (Membership, Procedure, Functions and Committee) Regulations (Northern Ireland)	27
2011	Tobacco control strategy for Northern Ireland	123
2011	A Fitter Future for All: An Obesity Prevention Framework for Northern Ireland	81
2011	Consultation on regulation of sunbed industry	27
2011	New Strategic Direction for Alcohol & Drugs Phase 2 (2011-16) – A Consultation Document (January 2011)	105
2011	Consultation on Proposals on the Introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing for Alcohol in Northern Ireland (Joint DSD/DHSSPS)	258
2011	Quality 2020	46
2011	Minimum Standards for Childminding & Day Care for Children Under Age 12	63
2011	Review of Death Certification in Northern Ireland	24
2011	DHSSPS Personal and Public Involvement Consultation Scheme	23
2011	Service Framework for Mental Health and Wellbeing	72
2011	Review of development needs of pharmaceutical staff in hospital practice	16
2011	Disability Strategy	40
2011	A Draft Policy for Developing Advocacy Services – A Guide for Commissioners	46
2011	Consultation on developing eye care partnerships in NI	100

Completed	Title	No of Responses
2011	Budget 2010 Consultation	22
2011	A public consultation on guidance to accompany the Fire Safety Regulations (NI) 2010	n/k
2011	Consultation on Disability Action Plan	12
2011	Consultation on Departmental Equality Scheme	9
2011	Consultation on Equality Action Plan	9
2011	Policy for Car Parking Provision and Management in the Health & Social Care Sector	44
2012	Child Protection Consultation Consultation on Departmental Guidance to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)	35
2012	Consultation on a Ten Year Breastfeeding Strategy for Northern Ireland	38
2012	"Fit and Well – Changing Lives 2012 - 2022"	141
2012	Review of Maternity Services in Northern Ireland	132
2012	Regional Review of Consultant-led Hospital Dental Services	38
2012	Learning Disability Service Framework	75
2012	Service Framework for Older People	38
2012	Generic Standards for Service Frameworks	28
2012	A 10 Year Strategy for Social Work In Northern Ireland: 2010 - 2020	48
2012	Consultation on Proposals for New Arrangements for Pre-registration Pharmacy Training in Northern Ireland	14
2012	Mental Health Private Hospitals Legislation	21
2012	CAMHS Service Model	35
2012	Consultation on the Review of HSC Student Bursaries	44
2012	Consultation on the Appointment of Consultants (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	8
2012	changes to Children's statistics publication	6
2012	Amendments to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (NI) 2007	2
2012	Proposals to increase employee contribution rates in Firefighters Pension Schemes	1
2012	A public consultation on guidance to accompany the Fire Safety Regulation (NI) 2010	15
2013	Child Protection Consultation Targeted Consultation on a Proposed Amendment to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (Membership, Procedure, Functions and Committee) Regulations (Northern Ireland)	13
2013	A Review of Publicly Funded Fertility Services in Northern Ireland	28
2013	Minimum Standards for Children's Homes	29
2013	Minimum Standards for Independent Healthcare Establishments	28
2013	Revised Service Framework for Cardiovascular Health and Wellbeing	23
2013	Amendments to the Post Qualifying Framework for Social Workers Sections 10 and 18(b) of the HPSS (NI) Act 2001	35
2013	Consultation on the NISCC (Social Care Workers Prohibition) and Fitness of Workers Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012	13
2013	Draft cross-departmental Autism Strategy and Action Plan	126
2013	Who Cares? The Future of Adult Care and Support in Northern Ireland	185
2013	Consultation on treatments available through General Dental Services	232

Completed	Title	No of Responses
2013	Proposes Consolidation of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident in Northern Ireland Regulations	37
2013	Consultation on the transposition into Northern Ireland Law of Directive 2011/24EU:Patients rights on cross-border health care	13
2013	Clinical Excellence rounds for 2011/12	1
2013	Termination of Pregnancy Guidance Consultations	53
2013	Capitation Formula 2008-09	493
2013	withdrawal of Hearing aid statistics publication	1
2013	National Statistics Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Content and Source used to compile Official Hospital Theatres Activity Information	2
2013	Sector specific guidance to support the Fire Safety Regulations (NI) 2010	1
2013	A public consultation on amendments to the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2007 to ensure compliance with Workplace Pension Reform	2
2013	Amendments to the New Firefighters' pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2007 to ensure compliance with Workplace Pension Reform	2
2013	District Nurse Review	29

Medical Services: Non-UK Citizens

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26866/11-15, how much has been recovered from the relevant sources for medical services provided to non-UK citizens, in each of the last five years. (AQW 27491/11-15)

Mr Poots: Available data indicates that the income recovered for medical services provided to non-UK citizens is as follows:

2008/09	£689k
2009/10	£921k
2010/11	£772k
2011/12	£736k
2012/13	£576k

Paediatric Cardiac Surgery

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26353/11-15, who led him to believe that "an independent assessment" had taken place. (AQW 27494/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these three questions together.

I have no further comments to make on the question of the "independent assessment" as my previous answer has clarified this matter. My Department's position is that the prudent application of the principle that precautions should be applied in respect of this service remains in place. The current risk profile is a matter for the Belfast Trust to keep under review and to inform the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and my Department of any change in the profile. My overriding concern is for the safety of these very vulnerable children and in obtaining the best possible treatment and care for them. I am aiming to make my final decision on the future arrangements for this service as soon as possible.

Paediatric Cardiac Surgery

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26353/11-15, to outline his Department's current position on the decision taken, following discussions between the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency and the Department, to include all children below the age of one. (AQW 27500/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these three questions together.

I have no further comments to make on the question of the "independent assessment" as my previous answer has clarified this matter. My Department's position is that the prudent application of the principle that precautions should be applied in

respect of this service remains in place. The current risk profile is a matter for the Belfast Trust to keep under review and to inform the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and my Department of any change in the profile. My overriding concern is for the safety of these very vulnerable children and in obtaining the best possible treatment and care for them. I am aiming to make my final decision on the future arrangements for this service as soon as possible.

Paediatric Cardiac Surgery

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26353/11-15, whether he has asked the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to review their current risk profile.
(AQW 27501/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer these three questions together.

I have no further comments to make on the question of the “independent assessment” as my previous answer has clarified this matter. My Department’s position is that the prudent application of the principle that precautions should be applied in respect of this service remains in place. The current risk profile is a matter for the Belfast Trust to keep under review and to inform the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and my Department of any change in the profile. My overriding concern is for the safety of these very vulnerable children and in obtaining the best possible treatment and care for them. I am aiming to make my final decision on the future arrangements for this service as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the rural services in which the Northern Health and Social Care Trust invested the £3.713 million it received from the Health and Social Care Board for mental health services in 2012-15.
(AQW 27517/11-15)

Mr Poots: As the Health and Social Care Board allocates funding to Health and Social Care Trusts against service commissioning priorities, rather than on a rural and town basis, the information requested is not available.

Examples of mental health services commissioned to date in this CSR period by the HSCB for the Northern Locality are:

- Psychology and Cognitive Behavioural Services
- Resettlement of Patients from long Stay hospitals
- Community specialist supported living schemes
- Emergency Department psychiatric liaison and self harm services
- Voluntary Sector Vocational and Social Support Services
- Development of service user advocacy services
- Bereavement Support for Families affected by suicide
- Domiciliary Support and direct Payments
- Mental Health Early Intervention Services
- Specialist Services for people with personality disorder
- Mental Health Recovery Training and facilitation.

These services will be available to people from across the Trust population both rural and towns.

GP Practices: Removal of Patients

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what guidelines are provided to GP practices on the removal of patients from their practice lists who live outside the allocated geographic catchment radius; and whether their removal is lawful.
(AQW 27529/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contracts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 a GP Practice has the right to remove a patient from their Practice list if they have reasonable grounds for doing so. Moving outside the Practice’s catchment area is regarded as a reasonable ground for removal of a patient from a Practice list. A Practice’s catchment area is specified in its Contract with the Health and Social Care Board.

Multiple Sclerosis Specialist Nurses

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the support, services and treatments available to patients from a Multiple Sclerosis specialist nurse in each Health and Social Care Trust.
(AQW 27534/11-15)

Mr Poots: All patients in Northern Ireland diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis have access to the specialist MS nursing service.

This specialist MS nursing support delivers a range of treatments and services including information for newly diagnosed patients, advice regarding disease modifying therapy, initiation and monitoring of disease modifying therapy, referral to Allied Health Professionals and voluntary agencies and liaising with a patient's GP.

In addition the MS nursing service provides home visits, ward visits, assessments for new treatments and a telephone advice line. The service will also support patients who have progressive MS and are not eligible for disease modifying therapy. Patients can also access the service to assist in preparing benefit claims.

Furthermore the service undertakes clinical audits, nursing research and the education of Trust staff. In summary, the specialist MS nursing service provides information, support and advice for any aspect of the disease.

Macular Degeneration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what strategies are in place to improve the awareness, early detection and treatment of macular degeneration.

(AQW 27543/11-15)

Mr Poots: As part of the implementation of my Department's Eyecare Strategy "Developing Eyecare Partnerships: Improving the Commissioning and Provision of Eyecare in Northern Ireland" a Task Group has been established to examine a regional approach to the development of integrated care pathways for long-term conditions to include macular degeneration.

A significant amount of work has already been completed in respect of macular degeneration and the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board and Public Health Agency continue to work with relevant stakeholders to explore opportunities for ensuring that processes are in place to minimise delays in diagnosis of macular disease.

The HSC Board has invested significant funding that allow for the diagnosis and ongoing treatment of patients with macular disease (including wet Age Related Macular Degeneration, Retinal Vein Occlusion and Diabetic Macular Oedema). The HSC Board and Public Health Agency have also supported the timely availability of new treatments in Northern Ireland and current expenditure on macular services is estimated at £10.5m with specialist services being provided from both Belfast and Western Trusts for the population of Northern Ireland.

The HSC Board and Public Health Agency established a Regional Macular Services Group which includes representation from the Board, Public Health Agency, Belfast and Western Trusts as providers of specialist ophthalmology services and the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) in Northern Ireland. Emanating from this Group, specific actions that have been put in place include the introduction of a training programme for community optometrists in the early identification of macular disease and an agreed process for rapid referral in to the macular service.

The Public Health Agency, as part of the smoking cessation campaign, has highlighted that smoking is a risk factor in eye diseases such as Age Related Macular Degeneration. In addition, RNIB has recently rolled out a national 'Spot the Signs' Campaign in Northern Ireland which highlighted the messages about macular disease and provided awareness of macular degeneration including adverts in the media and poster campaigns.

Autism: Newry and Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what resources have been invested to support people diagnosed with autism and their families in the Newry and Armagh constituency, in each of the last three years; and to outline his Department's policies for assisting these families and the charities that support them.

(AQW 27558/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not available in the format requested.

Autism is a spectrum disorder; therefore, support services for individuals and their families are based on assessed need. In addition to core health and social care services available to the local population, the Southern HSC Trust has confirmed that individuals and families living with autism have access to ASD specialist team services, if required.

Investment in ASD- specific children's services in the Southern Trust over the last three years has been £309K. This rose to £358K in the current year to help develop adult autism services and support.

The Trust values its partnerships with ASD community and voluntary organisations; examples of support services include sport and recreational activities, and personal development programmes for young people and adults living with autism.

Autism services are underpinned by a range of DHSSPS policies and strategies including the ASD Action Plan with development of the Regional ASD Network. My Department is now leading on a cross departmental Autism Strategy, as required by the Autism Act 2011.

Firefighters: Recruitment

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the recent recruitment of firefighters, (i) how many of the 87 conditional offers of employment resulted in permanent positions; (ii) to detail the reasons given to those who did not receive conditional offers; and (iii) of the 15 who were wholetime/retained, how many gained a permanent position.

(AQW 27564/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) & (iii) Of the 87 offers of employment 72 were conditional subject to satisfactory criminal record checks. This process is still ongoing and it is not yet possible to confirm how many of the 72 conditional offers will result in permanent positions. The remaining 15 offers of employment were made to Wholetime Firefighters who are already subject to NIFRS' policies and procedures and therefore they have been confirmed in post.
- (ii) Each application was assessed on its own merits and conditional offers were not made to applicants for a range of reasons:
- Did not meet the essential criteria at the short-listing stage as per the Personnel Specification.
 - Did not pass the physical aptitude tests.
 - Were unsuccessful at Interview.
 - Failed Numeracy and Literacy tests.
 - Failed medical

Physiotherapists: Prescription of Medicines

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will hold discussions with the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy to determine whether advance practice physiotherapists can independently prescribe medicines, given that this is now the case in England.

(AQW 27565/11-15)

Mr Poots: The DHSSPS is very keen that this work is progressed to implementation to ensure we utilise this opportunity to best effect.

- Planning Meetings led by the DHSSPS AHP Lead Officer are planned for late November to take this forward.
- It is a year since the announcement that Ministers across the four counties had agreed amendments to legislation that would enable physiotherapists and podiatrists to independently prescribe. Those legislative changes have now been made and came into force on the 20 August 2013.
- The amendments to legislation - The Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2013 - were laid before Parliament on 29 July and came into force on 20 August.
- <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/1855/contents/made>
- The local Northern Ireland Regulation changes will now also follow.
- Alongside this, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) are published their prescribing standards for approval of education programmes and for individual prescribers.
- This will allow new education programmes to be commissioned through our DHSSPS AHP educational commissioning process and I hope will be available in 2014. These discussions are currently ongoing.
- Training will be required in the first instance for those therapists who are qualified as supplementary prescribers and then for a further cohort to undertake the full Non Medical Prescribing Independent Training.
- Numbers of staff identified for training will need to ensure the proposed new prescribing care pathways models are viable and sustainable and include staff numbers for future services needs.
- On completion of training there will be the first annotations on the HCPC register to allow the first prescriptions written by independent prescriber physiotherapist and podiatrists.
- The Department also expects that existing HSC Non medical prescribing support structures/networks will recognise the widening of the range of Professions involved in IP and that representation within those structures will be extended to include representation from Physiotherapy & Podiatry.
- The DHSSPS also requests very robust governance are in place to ensure patient safety.
- In order for this role to progress to be utilised to best effect and ensure service readiness for implementation, it will require intensive planning and preparation from the professional managers, Trusts and support and professional direction from the HSCB/PHA.
- This is a tremendous opportunity for physiotherapists and podiatrists to influence and redesign services to improve clinical outcomes and patient experience.
- This development embraces the strategic direction of travel as detailed in TYC that services should be reflected in the Board commissioning of services and Trusts modernisation and reform agenda.
- One of the added benefits will be increasing capacity across the system and reduce delays for clients in accessing appropriate interventions.

Legal Fees: DHSSPS

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on legal fees in the last 5 years.

(AQW 27602/11-15)

Mr Poots: The total cost for legal fees is not readily identifiable. Broader figures incorporating legal fees, witness travel expenses and data dispatch costs are available, and for each of the last four years are set out in the table below.

2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
£1,594,668	£712,689	£621,112	£531,693

Expenditure relating to the 2008/09 financial year is not available.

Consultants: Hours Worked

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26748/11-15, whether he will request that Health and Social Care Trusts keep records of the consultants who opt out of the European Working Time Directive. (AQW 27606/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Working Time Regulations (NI) 1998 requires all employers to maintain up to date records of workers whom they employ who have agreed to opt out of the European Working Time Directive. In light of the responses from HSC Trusts to AQW 26748/11-15 the Department is issuing a reminder to HSC Trusts of the need to comply with the regulations.

Consultants: Hours Worked

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26748/11-15, if no records are kept by the Health Service of the private hours worked by consultants, how he can satisfy the public that the primary loyalty of consultants is to the Health Service and that its patients are given priority. (AQW 27607/11-15)

Mr Poots: Consultants are required to disclose details to their employer of all their activities, including their private practice commitments as part of the annual job planning process.

A Code of Conduct for Private Practice is also in place which recommends standards of best practice for HSC consultants who are doing private practice work. It sets out a number of important principles, including:

- where there is a conflict of interest between HSC work and private practice, programmed HSC work should be given precedence over private work;
- Consultants are asked to ensure that (except in emergencies) private work does not conflict with HSC activities included in their job plan; and
- Private work including, on call duties, should not be scheduled during times at which they are scheduled to be working in the HSC.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Hospital Beds

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail any forward projections on the impact of winter pressures on available beds in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) what information he has which justifies the closure of beds at the Dalriada Hospital; and (iii) to list all the bed closures being introduced by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. (AQW 27608/11-15)

Mr Poots: These are matters for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust has advised as follows.

- (i) The Northern Trust has an acute escalation/winter plan which includes provision for the opening of up to 14 additional beds to deal with winter bed pressures.
- (ii) Dalriada Hospital currently provides 32 beds, 20 general rehabilitation and 12 regional multiple sclerosis respite beds. Occupancy has averaged 71% since April 2013, which equates to an average usage of 23 beds. This level of occupancy is due to a reduction in demand for beds in this facility and decrease in the use of the multiple sclerosis beds by other Trusts. The Northern Trust is currently discussing with local GPs a new model of medical support which is intended to better optimise the use of the beds, putting greater emphasis on patients reaching their full rehabilitation potential and reducing the length of time they need to stay in these types of beds before returning to their own homes. The Trust believes a revised complement of 26 beds will meet the current demand, but will keep the situation under review.
- (iii) Inver House currently provides 18 beds and the Robinson Hospital 25 beds. The new model of medical support and maximisation of the rehabilitation process described at (ii) has also been negotiated for these sites and the Northern Trust believes that a revised complement of 16 beds in Inver House and 21 beds in the Robinson Hospital will meet current demand.

Patients: Treatment outside Northern Ireland

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been sent to Great Britain for treatment for mental health difficulties, in each of the last five years; and to detail the cost in each of these years. (AQW 27617/11-15)

Mr Poots: Details of the numbers of patients and the costs of their care and treatment for mental health outside of Northern Ireland are only available for the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.

The figures include adults, children and young people and cover the full range of mental health conditions.

HSCB Funded Mental Health Treatment (Patients travelling outside of NI for Treatment)

FY	Number of Patients	Cost of Treatment
2011/12	40	£ 6,923,990
2012/13	38	£ 6,585,151
Totals	78	£ 13,509,141

Adoption Bill

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will introduce the Adoption Bill. (AQW 27624/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is my intention to introduce new adoption legislation in the current mandate. I hope to publish the draft Adoption and Children Bill, which is currently being drafted, for consultation in early 2014, with a view to introduction in the Assembly in late 2014/early 2015.

Royal Hospital for Sick Children

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he agrees with the assessment of the Minister of Finance and Personnel in relation to wards within the Royal Children Hospital when he described them as "surroundings that, I am ashamed to say, are far from fit for purpose". (AQW 27630/11-15)

Mr Poots: I fully agree with my Executive colleague, the Minister for Finance, that the existing Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children is known to be in poor condition. This was one of the main drivers for my Department's bid for funding for replacement facilities. I therefore welcome the Executive's allocation of £15.5m funding to enable construction to begin next year on a new £250m Children's Hospital at the Royal Victoria Hospital site in Belfast. This will be a new, state of the art, regional hospital to care for sick children from all over Northern Ireland.

Patients: Treatment outside Northern Ireland

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the departmental processes or procedures for assessing or inspecting facilities for patients who have to travel outside Northern Ireland for medical treatment. (AQW 27631/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have been advised by the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board, as Commissioner of services for, that there are a number of ways in which a patient can be transferred for treatment outside Northern Ireland.

Where a patient is transferred for treatment elsewhere, through the Extra Contractual Referral (ECR) Process, the provider is chosen by the local consultant using his or her clinical judgement. While the HSC Board expects such referrals to be to an NHS provider within the United Kingdom, the Board will consider consultant requests for non NHS providers where there is a clear clinical rationale for doing so. The consultant is clinically responsible for the choice of provider and this is usually done in the context of ongoing relationships between local clinicians and their counterparts elsewhere.

For patients transferred outside Northern Ireland as part of a waiting list initiative aimed at reducing waiting times, the HSC Board maintains a list of providers. To be placed on this list, providers must submit details of capacity, governance processes and regulatory arrangements. In the UK, statutory regulatory authorities undertake the registration and inspection of independent sector hospital facilities. The HSC Board uses the reports produced from their inspections to assess / assure that the facilities proposed to treat patients are properly registered and meet minimum standards. In the Republic of Ireland there is no statutory registration and inspection legislation relating to Independent Sector hospital provision. The HSC Board therefore seeks assurances about provider facilities and standards from recognised accreditation bodies e.g. Joint Commission International (JCI) where the provider has been accredited voluntarily.

As part of the tender process to select providers from the Board's lists under the waiting list initiative, Trusts will scrutinise the qualifications of medical staff and satisfy themselves that the facilities proposed are suitable for the work being undertaken. This can involve visits to facilities and/or further assurance relating to diagnostic arrangements or specialist equipment.

Patients may also transfer for treatment under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for highly specialist services which are unable to be provided in Northern Ireland. Specialist providers will primarily be tertiary or quaternary recognised national centres of excellence and be able to demonstrate compliance with all recognised national standards and guidelines specific to the service provided. The views of local clinicians in determining the placement of an SLA are also taken in account as a strong clinical relationship between the specialist centres and the local service is essential in supporting continuity of care for patients.

Where an individual seeks treatment in another country under S2 (E112) mandated treatment or the EU Directive on Cross Border Healthcare (Article 56), the provider is chosen by the individual patient, not the HSC Board and the patient is responsible for ensuring the provider is appropriate.

Legal Aid Certificates

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money was recouped from the National Health Service as a result of Legal Aid certificates.

(AQW 27636/11-15)

Mr Poots: Unfortunately my Department does not hold this information.

Autism: Applied Behaviour Analysis

Mr Douglas asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to introduce Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatment for children with autism, following his address at the 3rd Quart Conference at Queen's University, Belfast in September 2013.

(AQW 27669/11-15)

Mr Poots: I recognise that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA. However, it is not appropriate for me, as Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, to endorse one specific treatment approach over another for autism or any other condition. The decision in relation to the most appropriate interventions to meet an individual's assessed needs falls within the remit of clinicians who take account of current best practice guidance and the evidence base.

NICE: Fertility Guidelines

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on his Department's review of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines on fertility, which were published in 2013.

(AQW 27680/11-15)

Mr Poots: The applicability of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline on fertility to Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland is currently being considered by my Department and a decision on this will be reached as soon as possible.

Health Care and Day Care Centres in Banbridge

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 15198/11-15, for an update on the construction of the Health Care and Day Care Centres in Banbridge.

(AQW 27685/11-15)

Mr Poots: Enabling works for Banbridge Health & Care Centre and Day Care Centre were completed at the end of August 2012. The site has been secured in preparation for the appointment of the main contractor.

The tenders for the project have been received and assessed. Confirmation of the Preferred Bidder was made on 8th August 2013.

Following successful appointment of a Contractor, it is anticipated that they will be on site by the end of November 2013 with completion of the building by July 2015 and the commencement of services from this date.

Care Homes: Respite Beds

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26992/11-15, (i) how many beds are available for respite in each of the homes listed; (ii) how many of these beds can be booked up to two weeks in advance; (iii) on how many occasions in the last year have beds been booked in advance; (iv) what this represents as a percentage of the number of requests for beds; and (v) to outline any plans to increase provision.

(AQW 27690/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Trust has advised that respite beds are provided on the basis of assessed need and not requests. There are 69 beds available for respite in the homes listed (excluding Pinewood). In addition there are 5 beds available for respite in Pinewood, a number of which can be pre-booked.

Due to this level of availability in and the need to ensure value for money there is no pre-booked system in operation with the independent sector. However, the beds in Pinewood, which can be pre booked, have all been booked in advance.

There are no specific plans for increased respite provision. The Trust currently provides a significant level of respite in the Ballymena area, using both Trust and independent providers.

Department of Justice

Human Trafficking: Review of Case

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to Saulius Petraitis, Vitalijus Petraitis and Audrius Sliogeris, who were convicted of abduction and rape in 2009, whether there are plans to review the case to establish whether there was an element of human trafficking.

(AQW 27406/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): As Justice Minister, I would not wish to comment on an individual case; prosecution and sentencing are matters for the Public Prosecution Service and judiciary, respectively.

However, in terms of the law, where, after a person has been convicted of an offence, new evidence comes to light that the person may have committed another offence, it may be possible to prosecute the person for this second offence. However, attempting to prosecute using the same facts with a different offence is likely to fall foul of the double jeopardy rule.

It is not usually possible to prosecute a person retrospectively for an offence that did not exist at the time of the alleged misbehaviour or to apply retrospectively a maximum punishment established in later legislation.

In the present case, the judge took account in sentencing of the men's knowledge of a plan for financial gain; however, as noted in the judge's sentencing remarks, the trafficking aspects were mainly focused on a fourth man who was not before the court.

Domestic Violence

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to outline the steps his Department is taking to combat domestic violence.

(AQW 27436/11-15)

Mr Ford: The "Tackling Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan April 2012 to September 2013" has been extended until publication of the new joint Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy in 2014.

The Action plan, led by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and my Department, identifies the key actions which will be taken to address the needs of all victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence and to bring perpetrators of these dreadful crimes to justice. Government departments, agencies, voluntary and community groups are all involved in delivering on the actions.

While my Department has involvement in all strands of the Action plan, it has key responsibility for taking forward the actions within Strand 3 - Protection and Justice. The Action Plan can be accessed at <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/tackling-domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abuse-action-plan.pdf>.

Sexual Offences Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26599/11-15, from the figures provided and shown in the same format, how many cases have a historical element relating to allegations dating back ten years or more.

(AQW 27442/11-15)

Mr Ford: The provision of this information would require a manual review of the individual charges associated with each case which could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Sham Marriage Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases involving offences of, or connected to, alleged sham marriages are currently in the court system, broken down by court division.

(AQW 27443/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no specific offence relating to a sham marriage. Defendants involved in such cases may be charged with a range of offences such as:-

- assisting Unlawful Immigration;
- assisting illegal entry to the UK; or
- seeking to obtain leave to enter/remain by deception.

At 22 October 2013 there were 27 live cases in the court system with charges relating to these alleged offences, 21 of which are connected to a marriage.

The table below shows the number of cases by court division.

Court Division	Number of Cases
Antrim	6
Ards	1

Court Division	Number of Cases
Belfast	13
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1
Total	21

Sexual Offences Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions made in cases involving sexual offences, in each of the last three years, broken down by (i) Magistrates; and (ii) Crown Courts, and shown per court division.

(AQW 27445/11-15)

Mr Ford: Offences under the sexual offences classification may be prosecuted under various pieces of legislation. The table below gives the number of convictions for sexual offences by court division and court type, for 2007, 2008 and 2009. These are the most recent three years for which the information requested is available.

Number of convictions for sexual offences, 2007 - 2009

Court Division	Court Type					
	2007		2008		2009	
	Crown	Magistrates'	Crown	Magistrates'	Crown	Magistrates'
Londonderry	13	39	15	29	15	39
Belfast	27	105	42	85	27	84
Craigavon	17	24	8	30	4	33
Antrim	12	44	12	32	17	31
Fermanagh & Tyrone	7	69	13	49	4	52
Armagh & South Down	4	28	16	18	2	24
Ards	27	33	18	32	16	34
Total	107	342	124	275	85	297

Note:

- 1 Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.
- 2 The figures provided relate to convictions for all classifications of the offences specified.
- 3 Figures for Magistrates' Courts include Youth Courts.
- 4 Figures for 2007 and 2008 are not directly comparable with those for 2009, as there were changes to crime classification groupings between 2008 and 2009.

Human Trafficking

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Justice to detail the reasons for trafficking, as outlined by known victims.
(AQW 27468/11-15)

Mr Ford: The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the framework for identifying victims of human trafficking. Since 1 April 2009 a total of 114 potential victims of human trafficking have been referred to the NRM. Of these, at 25 October, 37 had received a conclusive grounds decision confirming them to be victims of human trafficking.

The reasons for trafficking in these cases include forced labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. There are also cases in which there has been trafficking but the exact reasons for the trafficking has not been established. Of the 114 potential victims who have been referred to the NRM, over half have been in relation to trafficking for sexual exploitation.

In order to inform and improve its response to human trafficking, including effective policy development, the Organised Crime Task Force has commissioned research to build up a profile of victims and potential victims of human trafficking who have been recovered in Northern Ireland. This will include data on the types of exploitation involved as well as recruitment methods, routes and methods of entry into Northern Ireland, signs of ongoing coercion and the nature and location of accommodation of those who were the subject of human trafficking.

Sham Marriage Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many convictions have been secured for offences of, or connected to, sham marriages, shown by court division, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27496/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no specific offence in relation to sham marriages. Offences connected to sham marriages may be prosecuted under a range of legislation. Conviction datasets held by my Department do not record any information on the nature and circumstances of the offences that would allow the identification of offences connected to sham marriages.

Prison Service: Release of Prisoner

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the recent conviction of Kenneth Douglas at Belfast Crown Court and given these offences were committed whilst on parole, will he order an investigation into the decision to release, including if the criteria for parole were fully met; and to detail the monitoring that was in place to ensure compliance with the terms of parole.

(AQW 27502/11-15)

Mr Ford: A Review of the case management arrangements for Kenneth Douglas has already been completed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

Mixed Committal: Costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the costs incurred in respect of the Mixed Committal of MRJ Murray, LP Murray, K Murray, W McDonagh, and by association, KM Toye, which resulted in the ruling of 31 March 2010 by District Judge John Meehan at Dungannon Magistrates Court including (i) Legal Aid for solicitor and counsel; (ii) prosecution costs; (iii) judicial cover; (iv) court costs; and (v) any other associated costs.

(AQW 27503/11-15)

Mr Ford: The estimated costs of the mixed committal resulting in the ruling of 31 March 2010 by District Judge (Magistrates' Court) John Meehan are given in the table below.

Cost Type	Estimated Cost £
(i) Legal Aid	45,015
(ii) Prosecution	1,591
(iii) Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs)	1,567
(iv) Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation)	240
Total	48,413

Sexual Offences Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26599/11-15, from the figures provided, how many of the defendants are remanded (i) on bail; and (ii) in custody.

(AQW 27556/11-15)

Mr Ford: The following tables detail the number of defendants remanded on bail or in custody for each case noted in AQW/26599/11-15. Information is provided from the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS) as at 4 October 2013.

Table 1 –Magistrates' Court and Crown Court Cases

Division	Magistrates' Court Defendants				Crown Court Defendants			Total
	Bail	Custody	Other	Total	Bail	Custody	Total	
Antrim	18	4	6	28	27	4	31	59
Ards	13	9	18	40	20	2	22	62
Armagh & South Down	14	6	11	31	11	7	18	49
Belfast	51	12	42	105	85	15	100	205
Craigavon	20	6	11	37	8	7	15	52
Fermanagh & Tyrone	17	5	20	42	23	3	26	68
Londonderry	19	3	22	44	19	5	24	68

Division	Magistrates' Court Defendants				Crown Court Defendants			Total
	Bail	Custody	Other	Total	Bail	Custody	Total	
Grand Total	152	45	130	327	193	43	236	563

Note:

The Other category includes defendants due to appear in court on foot of a summons who are not on bail or in custody. Defendants may have more than one active case and there may be more than one defendant in a case. Each defendant is counted against each case.

Table 2 –County Court Appeal and Court of Appeal Cases

Division	County Court		Court of Appeal		Grand Total
	Bail	Custody	Bail	Custody	
Antrim	0	0	1	0	1
Ards	0	0	1	3	4
Armagh & South Down	0	0	0	1	1
Belfast	5	0	3	0	8
Craigavon	0	0	0	1	1
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1	0	1	0	2
Londonderry	2	0	0	0	2
Grand Total	8	0	6	5	19

National Crime Agency

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice to detail the estimated financial and social cost of the decision to block the establishment of the National Crime Agency.

(AQW 27575/11-15)

Mr Ford: The National Crime Agency was established on 7 October. Its remit extends to Northern Ireland but its powers are limited. Civil recovery is confined to non-devolved cases and, in those cases it has powers to progress, it may only tackle assets in this jurisdiction. Its operational powers do not extend to the devolved arena. It is too early to quantify the financial impact of these restrictions but their impact will be monitored. There will be an additional burden on the PSNI.

In terms of social cost, the absence of a fully functioning NCA in Northern Ireland will have an impact on the fight against serious and organised crime which will impact on communities.

I will continue to work towards the extension of the NCA's remit to Northern Ireland, with appropriate accountability mechanisms.

National Crime Agency

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice whether he will facilitate discussions between his Department, the Home Office and local political parties to ensure that the National Crime Agency is fully established.

(AQW 27576/11-15)

Mr Ford: Exchanges with political parties and the Home Office have taken place for several months and are ongoing.

Parades Commission

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice whether he is aware of any meetings held between Parades Commissioners and/or officials and representatives of the Republic of Ireland government, in the last twelve months.

(AQW 27577/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Parades Commission is not accountable to me. I would not, therefore, be formally advised of the meetings they hold.

Prisoners: Nutrition

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice whether a nutritionist is consulted on the provision of food across the prison estate; and what measures are in place to ensure all prisoners receive a nutritional meal.

(AQW 27582/11-15)

Mr Ford: In June 2013, a detailed analysis of the Prison establishments' menus was carried out by dieticians from the South Eastern Trust.

The findings indicated that it was possible to achieve an average of 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables daily on all weeks and sites with the exception of one week out of three in Hydebank Wood where there was a deficit of a half portion. All of this is subject to the inmate making the right menu choices from the various options offered.

Consideration is being given to introducing new lighter lunch options such as soup and improved vegetarian meals with increased fruit and vegetables.

Prisoners also have a choice of healthy options which they can purchase from the Prison Tuck Shop.

Prison Service: STORM

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant AQW 27207/11-15 and AQW 26970/11-15, whether he will apply to have prison staff trained via the Public Health Agency, and if not, if funding will be provided for prison staff who are training in STORM procedures.

(AQW 27592/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are currently no plans to have Prison Service staff trained in STORM. As previously explained, other training and assessment models will be considered as part of the planned review of the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy.

Prison Service: Access to Prisons for Research

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27086/11-15, and given the response of the Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service to Professor Phil Scraton, whether he is satisfied access to prisons for research is restricted purely to allow careful management so that there is a balance between opening up prisons and managing any disruption to the routines and regimes, and not to prevent independent findings.

(AQW 27593/11-15)

Mr Ford: Up to seventeen different bodies have statutory or discretionary rights to access prisons in Northern Ireland for inspection or scrutiny purposes. In addition the Prison Service grants access to independent researchers to assist them in their efforts to enhance the prison regime and to achieve better outcomes for prisoners and the public. Given the levels of scrutiny already in place, it is entirely appropriate that when considering research options that the correct balance is struck between opening up prisons and managing potential disruption to the prison regime.

Legal Aid Certificates

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Justice to detail how much money was recouped (i) by the Compensation Recovery Unit as a result of civil Legal Aid certificates; and (ii) from the National Health Service as a result of Legal Aid certificates.

(AQW 27635/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department does not record this information. The Compensation Recovery Unit, which is part of the Department for Social Development, does not distinguish between those monies recouped from legally aided cases and those that are privately funded.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to specialist staff such as doctors and nurses bound by the provisions of the Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct 2013, in particular 2.10, which does not allow specialist staff to be accompanied by a person acting in a legal capacity at any stage of the disciplinary process and given that case law has established that the right to practise one's profession is a civil right within Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights, to clarify whether this aspect was considered during the drafting process; and for his assessment of the reasonableness of this provision.

(AQW 27654/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Professional Code of Conduct clearly states at paragraph 1.1 that it applies to all prison grade managers and staff in the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

Prison staff are Northern Ireland Civil Servants and as the Northern Ireland Civil Service Disciplinary Code also states that employees undergoing the internal disciplinary process should not be accompanied by a person acting in a legal capacity I think the inclusion of this provision in the new Prison Service Code of Conduct is right and proper.

You will also wish to note that nurses and doctors who work in prison establishments are not employees of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

Criminal Justice Inspection Reports

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27010/11-15, to detail the main obstacles in implementing reform to bring the Northern Ireland Prison Service facilities in question up to standard; and whether he is confident that outstanding matters will be mostly, if not entirely, addressed by the target date of April 2015.

(AQW 27655/11-15)

Mr Ford: On 21 October 2013 I updated the House on progress to implement the recommendations from the Owers Report, including setting out the plans to provide a bespoke infrastructure and regime for female prisoners. At that time I noted that reform of the Northern Ireland Prison Service must be delivered within current financial restrictions.

Work is ongoing to secure the necessary approval and funding for a number of projects including the provision of step down facilities for female prisoners approaching release and a new female prison.

I anticipate that eighteen of the recommendations from the Owers Report will have been signed off by the Prison Reform Oversight Group as complete by December. This represents steady progress and, with a clear pathway for implementation in place, I am confident the reform programme will deliver by April 2015.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the rationale behind the decision by the Northern Ireland Prison Service not to specifically define, or sufficiently inform prison staff, of the types of offences that may lead to the invoking of disciplinary procedures in the new 2013 Code of Conduct, given that such detail is contained in the 1995 Code of Conduct and Discipline, the NI Civil Service Handbook and is available to prison service counterparts in Great Britain and the Isle of Man.

(AQW 27656/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW/27299/11-15.

Sexual Offences Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant AQW 26599/11-15, from the figures provided, how many defendants in the cases shown have previous convictions for similar offences on record.

(AQW 27657/11-15)

Mr Ford: This information cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost as it would require a check of each individual record. However, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS) shows 65 defendants, including those appealing a conviction, as having at least one previous conviction for a sexual offence in Northern Ireland since 2007, the first full year that records are available on ICOS.

Legal Aid: Payments to Law Firms

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he will conduct a comprehensive forensic review of the amount of Legal Aid paid to legal firms operating, per court division, to establish the level of payments and/or requirement by jurisdiction.

(AQW 27658/11-15)

Mr Ford: I do not propose to conduct a review along the lines requested. I have instead asked my Officials to develop an improved approach to forecasting legal aid expenditure as soon as possible. The information held by the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission is not broken down by court division and this information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mixed Committals

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the ruling of 31 March 2010 by District Judge John Meehan at Dungannon Magistrates Court, in respect of the Mixed Committal of MRJ Murray, LP Murray, K Murray, W McDonagh and, by association, KM Toye, and given the circumstances which led to this, the content therein, and the waste of time and resources, whether he plans to dispense with Mixed Committals in favour of such matters being moved straight to Crown Court for consideration prior to trial.

(AQW 27701/11-15)

Mr Ford: I refer to the response provided to the Member on 15 May 2013 to AQW/22357/11-15. My existing plans for the abolition of the use of oral evidence and cross-examination of witnesses at committal will effectively abolish mixed committals.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to 1.6 of the Code of Conduct 2013 in terms of specialist staff such as Nursing Officers, to detail the arrangements in place for appropriate input from medical professionals in relation to interviews and disciplinary hearings where the alleged misconduct appears to involve professional failings or inadequacy; and to clarify whether Nursing Officers will have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative aligned to the nursing profession, if requested.

(AQW 27703/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW/27654/11-15.

Prisoners: Strip-searching

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27009/11-15, in relation to searches as a result of specific intelligence, how many were carried out in the past twelve months, and of these, how many resulted in a banned item being recovered.

(AQW 27704/11-15)

Mr Ford: From 1 September 2012 to 30 September 2013 there were 24 full body searches of female prisoners at Hydebank Wood. Four of these searches resulted in a banned item being recovered.

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships: MLAs

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27099/11-15, to provide the names of the four MLAs that sit on Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP); and to detail how much each has claimed for (i) meeting expense payments; and (ii) travel expenses relating to PCSP business.

(AQW 27710/11-15)

Mr Ford: Policing and Community Safety Partnerships came into effect on 1 April 2012. The names of the four MLAs who sit on Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and the expense payments they have received are set out below.

	2012/2013 Expense payments	2012/13 Travel Expenses	2013/14 Expense payments	2013/14 Travel Expenses
Trevor Clarke	£900	£206.05	£120	£105.95
William Irwin	£360	£63.70	-	-
Paul Frew	-	-	£240	£20.80
Paul Girvan	£780	£100.10	£240	£41.60

Domestic Violence

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice what action his Department is taking to reduce domestic violence against men.
(AQW 27787/11-15)

Mr Ford: The 'Tackling Violence at Home' strategy for addressing domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland and the associated action plans are gender neutral and recognise that domestic violence occurs right across our society.

The "Tackling Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan April 2012 to September 2013" has been extended until publication of the new joint Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy in 2014.

The Action plan, led by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and my Department, identifies the key actions which will be taken to address the needs of all victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence and to bring perpetrators of these dreadful crimes to justice. Government departments, agencies, voluntary and community groups are all involved in delivering on the actions.

While my department has involvement in all strands of the Action plan, it has key responsibility for taking forward the actions within Strand 3 - Protection and Justice. The Action Plan can be accessed at <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/tackling-domestic-and-sexual-violence-and-abuse-action-plan.pdf>.

Department for Regional Development

Blue Badge Scheme: Veterans

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has any plans to extend the Blue Badge Scheme for veterans to those injured in service before 2005, and if not, how he would distinguish between those injured (i) prior to; and (ii) after 2005.

(AQW 25691/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I recently announced my intention to amend my Department's Blue Badge Regulations to ensure service personnel, in receipt of specified benefits under The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), are automatically entitled to a Blue Badge in Northern Ireland.

AFCS provides compensation for any injury, illness or death incurred during service on or after 6 April 2005, and the War Pension Scheme compensates service personnel for any injury, illness or death which occurs up to this date. My Department's Blue Badge Regulations already include automatic eligibility to a Blue Badge for recipients of the War Pension Scheme - Mobility Supplement.

As the Blue Badge Regulations can only tie in with the Ministry of Defence's policies and procedures concerning their Schemes, there is no need for any further amendment of the Regulations at this time.

Blue Badge Scheme: Veterans

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has any plans to extend the Blue Badge Scheme for veterans to those injured in service before 2005, and if not, how he would distinguish between those injured (i) prior to; and (ii) after 2005.

(AQW 27075/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my response to AQW 25691/11-15 in which he asked this same question.

Cycle Lanes: South Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the location and extent of cycle lane provision in South Antrim. (AQW 27223/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As the Member may be aware, a cycle lane is a lane marked on a carriageway, usually 1.5 to 2 m in width, whereas a cycle track is part of a footway delineated for use by cyclists. The table below provide details of cycle lanes and cycle tracks provided by my Department in the South Antrim area:

Location	Length
Castle Road/ Ballygrooby roundabout, northern hard shoulder.	755m
Castle Road/ Ballygrooby roundabout, southern hard shoulder	640m
Staffordstown Road, Randalstown	710m
Toome link road to bridge.	170m
Roguary Road, Cloghogue to Loughbeg.	340m
Ballymena Road Antrim, Outside Junction 1	2730m
Greystone Road, Antrim	2200m
A6 Randalstown Road, Antrim	540m
A6 Castle Road, Antrim	2860m
A6 Castle Road, at Ballygrooby	370m
Newpark Road North, Antrim	17m
Ballycraig Road, Muckamore	690m
Greystone Road Roundabout, Antrim	110m
Lower Greystone Road, Antrim	318m
Footpath from Fountain Street to Kilbegs Walk	860m
Footpath from Kilbegs Walk to Old Steeple Road.	430m
Old Steeple Road, Muckamore from Seacash to Steeple Road.	87m
Old Steeple Road, Muckamore at Steeple Road.	25m
Steeple Road Link Road, Muckamore, north east footway	63m
Bridge Road, Newtownabbey to boundary with East Antrim	100m

Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to allow a staff member of Translink or a trade union representative to be a representative of The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

(AQW 27324/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have received no such proposals from the NITHC Board to change the composition of the Board of the NITHC.

Outsourcing of Functions: DRD

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27357/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is continually reviewing the most effective and efficient operation of its functions across roads, transport and water and this has included the outsourcing of several elements of those functions. These include:

- Two Design, Build, Finance and Operate (DBFO) contracts for the construction, operation and maintenance of motorway and trunk roads;
- the enforcement of parking restrictions and car park management
- outsourcing to a specialist contractor elements of road condition surveys;
- a contract to provide additional design services for the purposes of managing fluctuating workloads and to call on specialist assistance in non-core areas of work; and
- Rathlin Ferry services.

Looking forward, a new specialist transport planning service comprising the development and operation of a transport modelling system, with supporting specialist transport modellers and planners, will be outsourced and is expected to be in place in 2014.

Signage: Bilingual Road Signs

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the role that his Department will take in the removal of English language signs and the replacement with, and erection of, new bilingual English/Irish signs for use on roads in the Down District Council area; and to detail the costs involved.

(AQW 27370/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has no plans to provide bi-lingual traffic signs and therefore there will be no costs to the Department.

Unadopted Roads: Inquiry Recommendations

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the progress made on implementing the Ten Recommendations contained in the Inquiry into Unadopted Roads.

(AQW 27373/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Good progress has been made on implementing the recommendations from the Committee for Regional Development's Inquiry into Unadopted Roads.

I have met with representatives of the Law Society, the Construction Employers Federation and the National House Building Council to discuss the report and its recommendations.

Officials have engaged with stakeholders, and I have indicated to the Committee I hope to be in a position to provide a further substantive response to its recommendations by the autumn of this year.

Link Road from Coolnagard Housing Development to Dromore Road, Omagh

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to construct a link road from the Coolnagard Housing development to Dromore Road, Omagh.

(AQW 27374/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Omagh Area Plan 1987 – 2002 makes reference to development land between Kelvin Road and the Old Dromore Road, and states that development of the lands should take place around a local distributor road provided as an integral part of the development.

To date, part of the road has been constructed by the developer between Kelvin Road and the Coolnagard housing development. The remaining section, linking the existing development to the Old Dromore Road, will also be developed and is to be provided in conjunction with further development which has been determined under planning application K/2007/0368/F, approval for which issued on 12 September 2012.

Donaghadee Harbour

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has for the future of the harbour at Donaghadee.

(AQW 27375/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I propose to transfer Donaghadee harbour to local authority control under RPA and my Department has recently written to Ards Borough Council setting out this proposal and seeking the views of the Council.

Ballynahinch Bypass

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development why he did not make a bid to the Department of Finance and Personnel for funding for the Ballynahinch Bypass for 2014/15.

(AQW 27458/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The primary purpose of the 2014/15 Capital Budget Exercise was to identify projects that could start on site in 2014/15, and allocate funds accordingly. The development of Ballynahinch By-pass is not sufficiently advanced to allow commencement of construction in the next financial year.

I expect however, to have the resources necessary to publish draft statutory orders in 2014/15 with a view to making those Orders in 2016/17, subject to satisfactory completion of the process.

Street Lighting Scheme: Bleary, County Down

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reason for the delay in delivering the new street lighting scheme in Bleary, County Down.

(AQW 27469/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The delay in completing the first phase of the scheme at Bleary Road, Bleary, County Down was due to problems experienced by the contractor in getting electrical equipment delivered. The contractor has now taken delivery of this equipment and expects to have the first phase of the scheme completed within two weeks. The second phase of the scheme will start shortly thereafter.

Bus Lanes: Belfast City Centre

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the success of the new Belfast city centre bus lanes in reducing traffic congestion.

(AQW 27473/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The aim of the Belfast on the Move project, which introduced the new Belfast city centre bus lanes, was to make the city centre more accessible to everyone including those using sustainable forms of transport – public transport, cycling and walking.

Since the completion of the works the level of congestion in the city centre has reduced and traffic flows have improved. There appears to have been no obvious impact on journey times through the city centre. Traffic on the Westlink has increased by around 4000 cars per day (5%) which indicates that through traffic is now utilising strategic routes.

A key objective of the project was to provide greater opportunity for people to use public transport for their journeys instead of the private car. This has been supported by significant investment in new trains and buses providing an attractive alternative for the travelling public. As a result Metro passenger numbers have increased considerably, with an additional 178,000 passengers in the period April to September 2013 compared to the same period last year. In addition passenger numbers have increased on Ulsterbus by 164,000 and on NI Railways by 820,000. Overall Rail and Bus journeys are expected to exceed 80 million this year based on current trends.

In addition, bus-based park and ride facilities serving Belfast have also increased (up on average by 15% for October 2012 compared to 2011) and there has been no decrease in the number of people using my Department's car parks in the city centre which shows that people are still travelling into the city centre for work, shopping and leisure.

My Department is currently carrying out a range of surveys to assess the impact of the Belfast on the Move project on public transport, traffic flows, use of Park & Ride facilities and car parking. The results of these surveys will be available early next year. We will examine these results carefully to identify and address any issues as necessary.

Cycling Group

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development who has been appointed to the new cycling group; and when are the first meeting of the group will be held.

(AQW 27507/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: From 1 November 2013, I have established a Cycle Policy Unit in my Department, tasked with better co-ordinating all cycle issues and working with other interested stakeholders to develop robust and sustainable strategies.

I have instructed officials to give careful consideration as to how the existing skills and experience within the Department can best be incorporated into the new unit. I have asked for staffing structures to be completed and posts filled as a matter of urgency, so I can then consider what additional resources need to be allocated to the new unit.

I am keen to see the new unit fully staffed within a short time and a series of meetings arranged with all stakeholders to ensure all cycling issues are progressed in a more coherent and coordinated manner.

Cycle Path between Lisburn and Belfast

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how he plans to promote and increase awareness of the cycle path between Lisburn and Belfast, particularly among commuters who travel between these two destinations.

(AQW 27508/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department through its Travelwise Northern Ireland initiative seeks to raise the awareness of and promote the use of all cycle infrastructure, including the cycle path between Lisburn and Belfast, as a realistic and sustainable option for commuters and others.

At the beginning of August I published an Action Plan in support of the Active Travel Strategy. It brings together walking and cycling initiatives to be delivered by Government Departments, local authorities and interested stakeholders during the period 2012-2015. The Action Plan includes details on the promotion by Travelwise in partnership with Lisburn City Council of the cycle path between Lisburn and Belfast as well as other cycle paths in the Council area.

In addition and as part of Bike Week activities during 2012/13 Travelwise and Lisburn City Council launched a series of on-line cycle route maps including the Lagan Towpath.

Public Consultations: DRD

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how many public consultations his Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received.

(AQW 27523/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below sets out the number of public consultations undertaken each year since 2007, detailing the type and name of each consultation, and the number of responses received.

	Issue/type of consultation (Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)/policy/legislations/other)	Consultation name	No. of responses received
Financial Year 2007/08			
1.	Legislation	Airports (Sale of Aircraft) Order	3
2.	Legislation	Penalty Fares (increase) Order 2008	12
3.	Legislation	Donaghadee (Harbour Area) Order 2008	7
4.	Legislation	Cross Border (Railway Services) Working Time Regulations 2008	12
5.	Policy	Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS) Draft Action Plan 2007-2009	14
6.	Policy – NICS wide consultation lead by OFMdfM	Disability Action Plan 2007	5
Financial Year 20087/09			
7.	EQIA	NI Concessionary Fares Scheme; free fares for people aged 60-64	30
8.	Legislation	The Water Supply - Water Fittings Regulations (NI) 2009	12
9.	Legislation	The Water Supply – (Water Quality) Amendment Regulations (NI) 2009	14
10.	Legislation	Cross Border Services Working Time Regulations	12
11.	Policy	Guidance on Port Master Plans for Sea Ports	32
12.	Policy	Draft Social and Environmental Guidance for the Water & Sewerage Industry	29
13.	Policy & EQIA	Setting Local Speed Limits	55
14.	Targeted consultation	Regional Development Strategy (RDS) Review pre-consultation stakeholder meetings	274
15.	Targeted consultation aimed at key environmental groups and NIEA to enable key environmental issues to be identified and discussed	RDS strategic environmental assessment scoping	11
Financial Year 2009/10			
16.	Legislation	Railways Infrastructure Access and Management and Licensing of Railway Undertakings (Amendment Regulations)	15
17.	Legislation	Donaghadee Harbour Order	6

	Issue/type of consultation (Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)/policy/legislations/other)	Consultation name	No. of responses received
18.	Legislation	River Bann Navigation Order	12
19.	Legislation	Level Crossing Order	4
20.	Legislation	Train Driving Licences and Certificates (Amendment)	4
21.	Legislation	The Airport (Sale of Aircraft) Regulations Order	6
22.	Policy	ATS Action Plan 2009-12	36
23.	Policy	Rathlin Island Policy	15
24.	Policy	Belfast Rapid Transit	36
25.	Policy & EQIA	Restricted Zones Access Permits	22
26.	Strategy	Regional Transport Strategy Discussion document	38
Financial Year 2010/11			
27.	Legislation	Roads(Functions of District Councils)Bill	17
28.	Legislation	Belfast International Airport(Control over Land) Order	14
29.	Legislation	City of Derry (Control over Land) Order	8
30.	Legislation	Coleraine (Transfer of Harbour Undertaking) Order	10
31.	Legislation	Rail Passenger Rights and Obligations (Exemption) Regulations	10
32.	Policy	Cross Border/Spatial Strategies	21
33.	Policy	Review of Financial Assistance for Domestic Properties not Served by a Watermain	48
34.	Policy	Policy Proposals for a Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill	29
35.	Policy	Stakeholder Workshop on the Consultation on UK Aviation Strategy	8
36.	Policy	Disability Action Plan	4
37.	Policy	Equality Scheme 2011 – 16	8
38.	Policy	Building an Active Travel Future for NI	34
39.	Policy & EQIA	Public Transport Reform Consultation	194
40.	Policy & EQIA	Draft EQIA and Departmental Spending & Savings Plans	81
41.	Strategy & EQIA	Regional Development Strategy Review	129
42.	Strategy & EQIA	Regional Transportation Strategy – Consultation Document	355
43.	EQIA	Bi-lingual Traffic Signs	101
Financial Year 2011/12			
44.	Policy & EQIA	Belfast Rapid Transit Proposals	192
45.	EQIA	Policy to permit Rail Journeys to be purchased using half fare smart passes only.	7
Financial Year 2012/13			
46.	Legislation	Road Races (Amendment) Bill	871
47.	Legislation	Railways (Safety Management) (Amendment) Regulations	3
48.	Legislation	Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations & Rail Vehicle Accessibility (Application for Exemption Orders) Regulations	15
49.	Policy	Future Railway Investment A Consultation Paper	119

	Issue/type of consultation (Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)/policy/legislations/other)	Consultation name	No. of responses received
50.	Policy	Aviation Policy Framework -Stakeholder Event	9
51.	Policy	Disability Action Plan	7
52.	Policy	Accessible Transport Strategy draft Action plan 2012 -15	23
53.	Policy & EQIA	Review of the Door 2 Door scheme	39
54.	Policy & EQIA	Taxis in Bus Lanes	70

SmartPass

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development why holders of the Half Fare SmartPass are not entitled to 50 percent off the standard adult return fare on scheduled bus and rail services.

(AQW 27532/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Since the inception, in 2002, of free travel under the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme, pass holders for both free and half fare travel must obtain a single ticket for each leg of their journey by bus or train. This requirement is based on audit advice and aims to minimise the risk of fraud or waste due to the return portion of a subsidised journey either being used by an ineligible passenger, or not used at all.

I recognise that some people with disabilities may find it difficult to meet the cost of half of a single fare. I have said previously, should the Executive provide more resources for the Concessionary Fares Scheme in future budget rounds, consideration could be given to extending free travel to current holders of the disabled half-fare Smartpass.

Penalty Charge Notices: Appeals

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the process for appealing a Penalty Charge Notice once the initial appeal has been turned down.

(AQW 27585/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) are issued and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Traffic Management (NI) Order 2005.

Where the recipient of a PCN has written to the Parking Enforcement Processing Unit within the first 28 days of the PCN issue and the challenge has not been accepted, the legislation provides a formal process for the registered keeper of the vehicle to be issued with a Notice to Owner document.

Representations against the issue of the PCN can be made on this document and returned to the Parking Enforcement Processing Unit within 28 days. If the representations are accepted, the PCN will be cancelled. Where the representations are not accepted, the registered keeper will be notified of the decision and will receive a form to appeal the decision to the independent Traffic Penalty Tribunal.

Roads: Capital Expenditure on Maintenance

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the capital expenditure allocated to road maintenance, per mile, in the (i) Armagh city ; (ii) Banbridge; and (iii) Craigavon areas, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27590/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the miles of road network and my Department's capital expenditure on structural maintenance in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council areas, for the last three financial years, are provided in the table below:

Capital Expenditure On Structural Maintenance

Council Area	Miles of Road Network	Financial Year		
		2010/11 (£'000)	2011/12 (£'000)	2012/13 (£'000)
Armagh City	1,083	3,557	6,299	5,708
Banbridge	634	2,455	2,990	3,095
Craigavon	525	3,078	3,596	3,803

The funding available for road maintenance in a financial year will be distributed to the four Roads Service Divisions on the basis of need, using a range of weighted indicators tailored to each maintenance activity. Officials use these indicators when

apportioning budgets across Council areas to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of available funds across Northern Ireland.

Cycling

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps his Department is taking to encourage bicycle usage. (AQW 27597/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Action Plan for Active Travel which I published at the beginning of August lists many new cycling initiatives to be delivered by Government Departments including my Department, local authorities and interested stakeholders during the period 2012 -2015.

Another very recent initiative undertaken by my Department is The Active School Travel Programme. This will provide a programme of cycle and walking skills training to pupils in 180 schools across Northern Ireland over a three year period. The objective of this programme is to encourage school pupils to adopt cycling and walking as their main mode of transport to and from school.

My Department since 2003 has provided infrastructure measures implementing over 220km of cycle lanes and in 2013/14 hopes to provide a further 4.8km to encourage cycling.

I am establishing a new cycling unit within my Department, which could consider new cycling infrastructure schemes along with supporting cycling events to complement the existing National Cycle Network. This unit will also focus on the needs of cyclists to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport.

Cycle Lanes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the location of cycle lanes. (AQW 27598/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the locations of cycle lanes are set out in the table below:

Council Area	Location
Belfast City Council	A2 Sydenham By-Pass
	A2 Belfast Road
	Ravenhill Road
	Springfield Road
	Ormeau Embankment
	A55 Knock Road
	Hawthornden Way
	High Street
	Belmont Road
	Upper Arthur Street
	Alfred Street
	East Bridge Street
	Cromac Street
	Ballysillan Road
	Joy Street
	Shankill Road
Belfast City Council	Crumlin Road
	Donegall Road
	Lisburn Road
	Upper Lisburn Road
Belfast City Council	Grand Parade
	Castlereagh Road
	Annadale Embankment

Council Area	Location
	Stranmillis Embankment
	Albertbridge Road
	Cregagh Road
	Woodstock Road
	Beersbridge Road
	Holywood Road
	Cupar Way
	Amelia Street/Brunswick Street
	Apsley Street
	Glengall Street
	Newtownards Road
	University Square
	Anne Street
	Victoria Street
	Donegall Square South
	Howard Street
	Chichester Street
	East Bridge Street
	University Street
	Park Road
Derry City Council	Foyle Embankment
	Branch Road
	Buncrana Road
	Collon Lane
	Glengalliagh Road
	Northland Road
	The Branch
Derry City Council	Victoria Road
	Crescent Link
	Culmore Road
	Dungiven Road
	Glenshane Road
	Racecourse Road
	Woodside Road, Newbuildings
	Drumahoe Road
Fermanagh District Council	Cherrymount Link, Enniskillen
Lisburn City Council	Chapel Hill (out bound)
	Queensway McKinstry Road to Grand Street.
	Wallace Ave (out bound)

Council Area	Location
North Down Borough Council	A2 Tillysburn to Holywood
	Abbey Street, Bangor (Bus Station to Dufferin Avenue)
	Ballycrochan Road Bangor
	Bexley Road Bangor
	Newtownards Road Bangor (Abbey Street to Abbey Hill Drive)
	A2 Belfast Road Bangor
	Silverbirch Road Bangor
	Crawfordsburn Road Bangor
Castlereagh Borough Council	A55 Upper Knockbreda Road
	Woodstock Road / Cregagh Road
Newtownabbey Borough Council	Bridge Rd, Newtownabbey
	O'Neill Road / Station Road
Carrickfergus Borough Council	High Street (contra flow)
Newry & Mourne District Council	Armagh Road Newry (Fiveways to Canal Street)
	Kilmorey Street Newry (Greenbank Indust Estate to River Street)
	A2 Dual Carriageway (Newry to Warrenpoint, both directions)
	Armagh Road, Newry(@ A1 dual carriageway)
	A1 Belfast Road, Newry (Corcreechy Road to Buckshill Road)
	Knockcree Avenue Kilkeel (Mourne Esplanade to Greencastle St)
	Mourne Esplanade Kilkeel (Harbour Road to Manse Road), both directions
	Sheppard's Way Newry (Armagh Road to Tandragee Road)
	Tandragee Road, Newry (at new roundabout to Carnbane Industrial Estate)
Ards Borough Council	Abbot Drive Newtownards (Movilla Road to Bowtown Road)
	Movilla Road Newtownards (Old Movilla Road to Abbott Drive)
	A20 Southern Distributor (Portaferry Road to Blair Mayne North)
	Killinchy Street Comber (Ballydrain Road to Cherryvalley Line)
	Newtownards Road Comber (Copeland Link to Darragh Road)
	A21 Dual Carriageway (Ards to Comber, Southbound)
Down District Council	Dundrum Road Newcastle (Murlough to town centre)
	Castlewellan Road Newcastle (Town Centre to Corrigs Road)
	Belfast Road Downpatrick (New Bridge Street to Business Park)
Armagh City & District Council	A28 Newry Road, (Ashley Park to Edenaveys Road Inc part of Link Road to Greenfield Drive)
	A29 Moy Road, (Ent to Spires Retail Park to Drumcairn Road inc Drumcairn Road up to Abbey Park)
	Main Street Blackwatertown, (River Blackwater to ent of P.S).
	Main Street Killylea, (Ent to P.S to Ent of Church of Ireland)
Banbridge District Council	Lurgan Road, Banbridge (Banbridge Academy to Seapatrick Road)
Craigavon Borough Council	A50 Gilford Road, Portadown (from 30mph signs to Moyallon PS)
	B2 Mullahead Road, Portadown (Gilford road to Knock Bridge)
	A27 Lurgan Road, Portadown (Seagoe Hotel to Batchelors Walk)
	A50 Carrickblacker Road, Portadown (advisory on both sides)

Council Area	Location
	A27 Bridge Street, Portadown (across Bann Bridge, including under bridge)
	Eastway Lurgan (from factory entrance to Ballynamoney Roundabout)
	A3 Portadown Road, Lurgan (Roundabout 1 to Old Portadown Rd
	Pinebank, Lurgan (Roundabout 1 to Beech Path)
	A76 Lough Road, Lurgan (Silverwood Road to Railway Station)
	Portadown Bann side / towpath (Bann Bridge to Knock Bridge)
	Craigavon off road network including City Park, Kernan, Mandeville, Knockmenagh, Drumgor, Legahory, Moyraverty, Monbrief & Tullygally
Coleraine Borough Council	A2 Downhill to Millennium Bridge Coleraine
	Millennium Bridge, Coleraine
	A2 from Millennium Bridge, Coleraine to Portstewart
	A2 from Millennium Bridge to Windy Hall via Lodge Road Roundabout to Council Boundary
	C91 Mountsandel Road, Coleraine from Lodge Road Roundabout to Loughan
	A29 Atlantic Road, Coleraine from Coleraine to Ballysally Roundabout
	Lever Road/Heatherlea Avenue, Millbank Avenue, Portstewart
	A2 Portstewart to Portrush Black Rock
	A2 Croc-Na-Mac to Dunluce Road, Portrush
	B17 Bushmills Road Roundabout/Cloyfin Road to Coleraine
	A29 Greenmount Roundabout to U391 Dunderg Road, Macosquin
	B119 Sea Road Hezlett House to Castlerock
Limavady Borough Council	A37 Broad Road from Greystone to By-pass
	A37 Limavady By-pass Broad Road via Seacoast Roundabout to Ballykelly
	U270 Edenmore Road from 30mph Speed Limits to Greystone
	C570 Greystone Road from B68 Irish Green Street to A37 Broad Rd
	U272 Scroggy Road from Greystone to Ballyquin
	B68 Ballyquin from Scroggy Road to County Park
	A37 Limavady By-pass from Greystone to Ballykelly
	B201 Windyhill Roundabout to Dowland Road
Moyle District Council	A2 Bushmills from Diamond via Train Station along B145 Ballaghmore Road to Portballintrae
	A2 Whitepark Road, Lisnagogue Village to School
Antrim Borough Council	A6 Randalstown/Castle Roads, Antrim from Castle Gardens to Ballygroobey Roundabout
	Newpark to Old Steeple Road, Antrim via Ballycraig Road, Greystone Road Roundabout
	Greystone Road, Carntall Gardens, Craigmore Park and Kilbride Gardens
	A26 Ballymena Road, Antrim from Kilbegs Roundabout to Townparks Roundabout
	Staffordstown Road, Randalstown from Moneynoick Road to Mount Shalgus Lane
	B18 Roguery Road, Toomebridge from Cloghogue Road to Loughbeg Road
Ballymoney Borough Council	A26 Frosses Road, Ballymoney from 260 metres east Kirk Road to Semicock Road
	A26 Frosses Road, Ballymoney at junction with Seacon Road
	Seymour Street, Ballymoney

Council Area	Location
	Rodeing Foot, Ballymoney
	Meetinghouse Street, Ballymoney
	Armour Avenue, Ballymoney from Rodeing Foot to park entrance
	Intermediate Road, Ballymoney
	Raceview Avenue / Drive, Ballymoney
Ballymena Borough Council	A42 Broughshane Road, Ballymena from Ecos Roundabout to Knockan Road
	A42 Galgorm Road, Ballymena from Old Galgorm Road to Church Road, Gracehill
	A26 Larne Road Link, Ballymena from Larne Road to Crebilly Road
	Crebilly Road, Ballymena from Larne Road Link to Ballykeel 2
	A26 Ballee Road West, Ballymena from Ballee Roundabout to Pennybridge Industrial Estate
Larne Borough Council	A8 Belfast Road from Pound Street to Old Belfast Road
	Millbrook Roundabout

Ferry Service: Strangford Lough

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the proposed cost of a new ferry to service the Strangford crossing.

(AQW 27599/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The cost of the new ferry for the Strangford Lough Ferry Service is estimated to be in the region of £5.5-£6 million. Details of the actual capital cost of the vessel will be available early in 2015, when a tender competition to award a ship building contract has been completed.

Maze/Long Kesh Site: Access

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in providing adequate and improved access to the Maze site; and whether any new measures be in place in advance of the 2014 Royal Ulster Agricultural Society Balmoral Show.

(AQW 27604/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation (MLKDC), under the auspices of OFMDFM, is responsible for the development of the site and associated roads infrastructure.

This year's Balmoral Show, held on 15-17 May 2013, emphasised the need for new roads infrastructure to support the development of the site. This is the responsibility of the MLKDC and representatives have had discussions with my Department about new road links to the site.

My officials also attended two 'Post Balmoral Show' review meetings held on 20 June 2013 and 20 September 2013, at which all aspects of the management of the traffic routes to the site and car parking within the site was reviewed. It is, however, the responsibility of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, as event organisers, to prepare the Event Management Plan for next years show.

I am aware the MLKDC has a development plan setting out proposals for road links from the M1 motorway, however, to date, the precise details have still to be determined and no planning application has been made. I am also aware that a business case for permanent roads infrastructure links to the Maze/Long Kesh site has recently been completed by the MLKDC and submitted to OFMDFM for approval.

My Department's experience is that the processes and timeframes for the development of new roads can be time-consuming and complex. The processes involve the identification of a preferred option, the preparation of a design and an environmental impact assessment, an application for planning permission, the acquisition of land, procurement and then construction.

My officials are working with MLKDC and OFMDFM to assist in expediting the development of their proposals and I met with Kyle Alexander OBE (Chief Executive), Terrence Brannigan (Chairman) and Neil McIvor (Director) of MLKDC as recently as 29 August 2013, to hear their updated proposals for the development of the site.

Train Station: Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 27293/11-15, when the consultation report will be published.

(AQW 27643/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As reported in the response to AQW 27293/11-15, the economic appraisal is being progressed to look at all costs and benefits and the funding scenarios. Once the economic appraisal is completed and all relevant information is available, the consultation report will be published.

Train Station: Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 27293/11-15, whether Translink are taking forward economic appraisals on all four options for a new train station in Derry.

(AQW 27644/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink is in the process of preparing an economic appraisal which will consider the various options identified by the feasibility study and public consultation exercise and establish a preferred option, taking account of the monetary and non-monetary benefits of each option.

Road Bonds

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26961/11-15, to detail (i) the listed developments where the bond has transferred to a developers representative or administrator due to a contractor no longer trading; and (ii) the names of those who are now the developers representative of administrator.

(AQW 27652/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that my Department's Roads Service neither transfers, nor permits, the transfer of Article 32 surety monies. Where a contractor is no longer trading, the bond, secured by a cash deposit or with a financial institution, is used to fund the works required to adopt the road.

My Department does not receive information regarding the trading position of a developer or his representatives. When it becomes clear a developer is no longer trading, my Department completes the statutory process required under the Private Streets (NI) Order 1980 to allow the repairs to be undertaken at a development. Once remedial work is completed to an adoptable standard, the costs will be recovered from the bond.

Train Passenger Numbers

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the annual number of passengers that boarded a train at each stop between Derry and Great Victoria Street, since 2008.

(AQW 27670/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below shows the number of passengers boarding and alighting at the various stations/halts on the NIR network. The table covers the last full 5 financial years including 2008/09.

Translink record the full passenger flows through a station to provide a more accurate assessment of the use of a station. There are stations which would have far more passengers using it as an origin rather than as a destination and vice versa, therefore passenger flows is considered the preferred measurement. I would add that the source of this information is Translink ticketing system and the figures also include a percentage uplift to cover journeys made which are not recorded through the machines such as commuter cards, school passes, etc. It is important that this caveat is noted in referring to these figures.

Station	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13*
Mossley West	126,807	117,717	130,147	144,222	160,868
Antrim	274,268	255,393	278,711	270,444	302,383
Ballymena	472,955	452,057	484,303	525,001	572,418
Cullybackey	64,367	48,400	66,040	73,216	84,959
Ballymoney	265,234	218,389	269,961	294,867	318,678
Coleraine	651,581	590,840	669,403	699,802	691,922
Sub-total	1,855,212	1,682,796	1,898,565	2,007,552	2,131,228
Castlerock	77,181	77,865	87,470	88,924	47,649
Bellarena	19,798	20,577	34,008	30,969	15,356
Londonderry	346,988	341,803	382,123	398,300	206,916
Sub-total	443,967	440,245	503,601	518,193	269,921
Total	2,299,179	2,123,041	2,402,166	2,525,745	2,401,149

* Derry~Londonderry to Coleraine Line closed due to engineering work 29 July 2012 - 31 March 2013.

Passenger flow statistics are available for the other stations on the line from Whiteabbey through to Great Victoria Street (see below). Traveller to and from Londonderry can therefore use any of these rail stations. However the statistics will also include passengers travelling on the Larne, Bangor and Newry/Dublin lines. Unfortunately it is not possible to easily isolate the Derry~Londonderry line passengers from these stations.

Station	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13*
GVS	4,114,572	3,831,643	3,795,766	3,863,661	4,054,433
City Hospital	341,760	325,437	334,318	349,342	388,932
Botanic	763,173	756,460	805,976	827,896	924,515
Central	1,923,351	1,878,133	1,938,708	2,052,010	2,277,588
Yorkgate	171,137	180,882	233,588	265,614	279,082
Whiteabbey	246,622	243,033	240,210	241,575	272,797
Belfast Area Sub-total	7,560,615	7,215,588	7,348,566	7,600,098	8,197,347

Train Station: Derry/Londonderry

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made on the upgrade to the Derry~Londonderry Train Station.

(AQO 4897/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has completed an initial feasibility study which has identified four options for further consideration:-

- 1 Refurbish the existing station
- 2 A new Ebrington Station
- 3 Relocate to the original Waterside Station
- 4 A new 'Waterside Link' Station

A consultation on the location of the proposed new station has been recently finalised and local people and interested groups have expressed their preferences. As is normal with any capital project Translink is required now to develop an Economic Appraisal considering the options available to it. This has to be approved by my Department and DFP. For the project to go forward this Economic Appraisal must demonstrate the cost to benefit ratio for the preferred option and the Department securing the required funding in a future budget settlement. I did put forward a bid for this project in the recent Capital funding exercise commissioned by DFP but it was not met. Translink has advised me that the Economic Appraisal should be with my Department before the end of this year.

It is also worth pointing out that, despite the procurement difficulties that have arisen and which I have referred to previously, plans are being progressed for Phase 2 of the Coleraine to Londonderry track relay due to start during the budget period. This is my first priority and it is hoped to complete this project during 2016. The delay in the project will mean that this will be a first call on rail funding in 2015/16.

A recent survey of customer satisfaction at Rail Stations demonstrates that there are a number of other rail stations (such as Lurgan or Ballymena) where the current rating is lower than for Londonderry station.

Transport Hub: Belfast

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the feasibility study of the Belfast Transport Hub project.

(AQO 4904/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Great Victoria Street station has one of the largest footfalls on any single site in Northern Ireland but its facilities are outdated. I am therefore excited about the prospect of a new Transport Hub based in Great Victoria Street in Belfast.

On 14 October, I announced further plans about the new Transport Hub that will bring even more benefits to those choosing to use our growing public transport services network. The project has an approved Strategic Outline case. The project team is currently undertaking a procurement exercise to appoint an Integrated Design Team early in 2014. The Team will initially produce a Master Plan of the new Transport Hub and surrounding lands which will allow for full public consultation towards the end of 2014. A stakeholder plan is under development to ensure engagement at appropriate levels with all interested parties.

Provisional development of the business case for the Transport Hub is continuing. The formal Outline Business Case is due to be completed for early 2015.

Assuming the appropriate approvals for funding and planning are achieved, the aspiration is to start construction in 2016.

Our focus is now on the next Comprehensive Spending Review to secure funding as needed. The project has great potential in addressing the growing Public Transport demand, creating opportunities for land development and for creating a gateway to

Belfast and Northern Ireland with potential tourism, business and job benefits. It also throws up opportunities for community regeneration in the area.

The result will be the delivery of a signature transport facility that will bring benefits to passengers across Northern Ireland as well as visitors from the Republic of Ireland and beyond.

The growth in numbers using public transport particularly on rail means we now must think ahead about the capacity needed to deal with this demand.

Cycling: Safety

Ms Fearon asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to improve cycling safety in rural and urban areas through the provision of better infrastructure.

(AQO 4905/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am fully committed to promoting and supporting safer cycling for cyclists of all ages in both urban and rural areas. There have been significant developments in the provision of cycling facilities across Northern Ireland, which have mainly been stimulated by investment by my Department despite the pressures on public funding.

This investment has involved utilising a range of measures, such as road safety engineering, traffic calming and enhancement of the pedestrian and cycling network. Particular measures such as dedicated cycle lanes, toucan crossings and advance stop lines at traffic signal controlled junctions are widely used to help improve safety for cyclists.

During the incoming year, my Department is providing £4.3million to fund active travel Demonstration projects in Belfast, Londonderry, Craigavon and Strabane. More recently, I have also committed some £50,000 for my Department to undertake a Feasibility Study into a cycle/ pedestrian footbridge over the River Lagan close to the gasworks site.

In addition, from 1 November 2013, I have established a Cycle Policy Unit in my Department, tasked with better co-ordinating all cycle issues and working with other interested stakeholders to develop robust and sustainable strategies.

Compensation Claims: DRD

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he has taken to reduce the number of negligence compensation claims received by his Department.

(AQO 4907/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Article 8 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 places a duty on my Department to maintain all public roads in reasonable condition. In recognition of its duty of care, my Department has established a set of Maintenance Standards for Safety, which are designed to ensure a consistent service level and a safe highway, while offering value for money, are based on best practice, research and consultation with both the public and other professional bodies and Industry.

Essentially, the Safety Standards and procedures currently in operation establish frequencies for road inspections base upon traffic volumes and specify response times for the repair of defects. Inspection frequencies vary between daily cycles for motorways to four monthly cycles for carriageways carrying low volumes of traffic. Response times specified for the repair of defects are dependent on the severity of the defect and range from one calendar day to routine inclusion in the next work programme, for that particular route. These systems and procedures are recognised and accepted by the courts as being robust, given the finite level of funding available.

Surface defects, which are identified outside of these inspection regimes, will be dealt with according to the above standards and remedial work arranged as necessary. If it becomes apparent the relevant response time cannot be met, or is not appropriate, my Department has the option of installing signs to warn road users of a possible danger.

When defects or problems arise due to the actions of a third party, my officials will request they (if identifiable) take the necessary steps to rectify the situation. If they do not cooperate, or do not carry out the works to the required standard, my Department may carry out whatever work is necessary to restore the road condition in the interests of safety. Subsequently my Department may seek to recover costs, if possible.

There are a range of factors which can influence how many claims are received by my Department, including periods of prolonged wintery weather which can have a particularly damaging affect on the condition of the road network and lead to an increase in the number of defects to be repaired and claims arising from those defects. However, my Department thoroughly investigates all public liability compensation claims made against it arising out of alleged negligence. A robust defence is made where the Department can provide evidence to demonstrate that there has been no negligence on its part, nor a breach of any statutory duty. In addition, any suspected fraudulent claims are always referred to the PSNI for further investigation and potential prosecution.

Craigantlet Proposals

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development when he will publish his decision on the alternative proposals for the Craigantlet roundabout improvement scheme.

(AQO 4908/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As you will be aware, I instructed my Department's Roads Service to consider all the alternative proposals put forward by local residents.

It is likely a consultation exercise will be required, to gauge the views of the local community, as well as the wider North Down travelling public, on the advantages and disadvantages of the options under consideration.

I would not, therefore, expect to be in a position to make any decision until this process is completed.

Transport Hub: Belfast

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his plans for a new Transport Hub in Belfast. (AQO 4909/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Great Victoria Street station has one of the largest footfalls on any single site in Northern Ireland but its facilities are outdated. I am therefore excited about the prospect of a new Transport Hub based in Great Victoria Street in Belfast.

On 14 October, I announced further plans about the new Transport Hub that will bring even more benefits to those choosing to use our growing public transport services network. The project has an approved Strategic Outline case. The project team is currently undertaking a procurement exercise to appoint an Integrated Design Team early in 2014. The Team will initially produce a Master Plan of the new Transport Hub and surrounding lands which will allow for full public consultation towards the end of 2014. A stakeholder plan is under development to ensure engagement at appropriate levels with all interested parties.

Provisional development of the business case for the Transport Hub is continuing. The formal Outline Business Case is due to be completed for early 2015.

Assuming the appropriate approvals for funding and planning are achieved, the aspiration is to start construction in 2016.

Our focus is now on the next Comprehensive Spending Review to secure funding as needed. The project has great potential in addressing the growing Public Transport demand, creating opportunities for land development and for creating a gateway to Belfast and Northern Ireland with potential tourism, business and job benefits. It also throws up opportunities for community regeneration in the area.

The result will be the delivery of a signature transport facility that will bring benefits to passengers across Northern Ireland as well as visitors from the Republic of Ireland and beyond.

The growth in numbers using public transport particularly on rail means we now must think ahead about the capacity needed to deal with this demand.

Department for Social Development

Double Glazing Contracts

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development when the Double Glazing Window Framework contracts will be awarded; and how many contractors will be appointed. (AQW 26868/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive has advised that formal letters of award were issued on 4 November 2013 to the successful contractors, following the completion of the secondary competition stage of the procurement. Their Board has approved the award of three "contract lots" to the following firms:

- Bann Ltd
- Dixons Contractors Ltd
- PK Murphy Construction Ltd

Double Glazing Contracts

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what is the timetable for allocating the contracts for the double glazing scheme. (AQW 26979/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that formal letters of award were issued on 4 November 2013 to the successful contractors, following the completion of the secondary competition stage of the procurement. Their Board has approved the award of three "contract lots" to the following firms:

- Bann Ltd
- Dixons Contractors Ltd
- PK Murphy Construction Ltd

Housing Executive Properties: Insulation in North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what action can be taken to fix substandard insulation in Housing Executive properties in the Bangor area.

(AQW 27085/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they are currently completing a research project on cavity wall insulation across a sample of their stock. When this is complete the Housing Executive will carry out an evaluation of the results to determine if there is substandard insulation within their properties and will develop an action plan as required.

At the same time some Housing Executive properties in Bangor have been included in an External Cyclical Maintenance scheme and these properties will have their cavity wall insulation checked as part of the scheme. The consultant has been briefed and initial survey results are anticipated in mid December.

Double Glazing Contracts

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development which companies were awarded contracts for the Northern Ireland Housing Scheme window replacement scheme.

(AQW 27229/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that formal letters of award were issued on 4 November 2013 to the successful contractors, following the completion of the secondary competition stage of the procurement. Their Board has approved the award of three "contract lots" to the following firms:

- Bann Ltd
- Dixons Contractors Ltd
- PK Murphy Construction Ltd

Response Maintenance Contracts: Gateway Review

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development when the results of the independent Gateway Review into the management of Response Maintenance Contracts will be published.

(AQW 27230/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised they anticipate that the review should be completed by early December 2013.

Social Housing Newbuilds

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding for social housing new builds his Department has awarded to housing associations, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27282/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the total Housing Association Grant which was paid to Housing Associations for provision of new social housing spend in each of the last three years was as follows:-

2010/11	£113.1m
2011/12	£87.2m
2012/13	£75.8m

Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building in North Belfast

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development to detail area in the North Belfast constituency which was covered by the ring fencing of social house construction when it was in operation.

(AQW 27306/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The attached map* shows the strategy area (coloured blue). Suitable housing sites were in limited supply within this boundary so that, in order to address the chronic shortage of housing, the Bawnmore, Mill Road and Longlands areas were identified as potential overspill areas to meet this need. This overspill area is coloured red.

The area covered by the 'ring fencing' includes both these areas.

*A copy of the map is available from the Assembly Library

Tenants: Antisocial Behaviour

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many housing tenants have had their tenancy terminated as a result of anti-social behaviour, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27310/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Table 1 provides details of the number of Housing Executive tenants who had their tenancy terminated as a result of anti-social behaviour for four of the years in question. The Housing Executive has advised that they are unable to provide figures for 2012/13 as their new Housing Management System was being implemented at that time and reporting was suspended.

Table 1

2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
43	54	62	51

Table 2 provides details of the number of Housing Association tenants who had their tenancy terminated as a result of anti-social behaviour in each of the last five years.

Table 2

2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
15	25	31	24	30

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.

Housing Executive Properties: Insulation in North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what plans his Department has to address the substandard insulation found in some homes in North Down.

(AQW 27326/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I would refer the Member to the answer I gave in AQW 27085/11-15.

Tenants: Antisocial Behaviour

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the policy used by staff in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to deal with anti-social behaviour from tenants.

(AQW 27327/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Community safety is a quality of life issue which impacts on all of society, individually and collectively. The Housing Executive first launched its Community Safety Team in 2000 and the effectiveness of the organisation in addressing Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) has improved year on year.

The Housing Executive has a well-developed system for tackling ASB based on a written strategy, currently being updated, which sets out their objectives and priorities. These objectives have been aligned with those set out in the Department of Justice community safety strategy, Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities. The Housing Executive has also produced and published a 40 page Statement of Policy and Procedures on ASB which details the services it provides and the procedures it uses to investigate and remedy reported incidents of ASB.

The Housing Executive's use of standardised ASB documentation facilitates a consistent approach by the Executive's staff across the whole organisation. The Statement of Policy and Procedures on ASB provides the foundation stone of the Housing Executive's competency-based staff training programme. This programme is delivered to all front line housing staff with a role in tackling ASB.

In addressing ASB, the Housing Executive employs an incremental and proportionate approach at all times. It works with the perpetrator through a range of interventions in an attempt to keep the individual in their home, while at the same time addressing the ASB. However, if the individual fails to respond to offers of assistance and the ASB continues, or if the ASB is of such a serious nature that the Housing Executive must take immediate action, then it will use the legal powers available to it to ensure that the victims of ASB are protected and the unacceptable behaviour is stopped.

The Housing Executive's non statutory interventions include warning letters, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, mediation, and community support. In addition, the Housing Executive is one of the founding partners and participants - along with PSNI and local councils - in the ASB forums which meet to discuss ASB in nearly every council area. They also have 65 Neighbourhood Officers who contribute to making their estates cleaner and safer places to live. The Housing Executive also contributes funding to various schemes, for example the 4 Tier Scheme in Antrim and Newtownabbey and a number of night time warden schemes to address crime and the fear of crime on its estates.

Housing Executive legal interventions can take a number of forms, up to and including repossession of a property.

Most of the Housing Executive's interventions, statutory or non statutory, are based firmly on the principle of partnership working. ASB is not an issue which can be dealt with by one statutory agency working in isolation. It requires the intervention of all the relevant government bodies working closely with the community to deliver real results, so working together with other groups and agencies forms the core of their ASB strategy. The Housing Executive's unique contribution to these collaborative efforts is its staff's experience of community safety issues and their knowledge of grassroot concerns.

A cost analysis of the Housing Executive's ASB services in 2010/2011, in which the organisation's ASB unit costs were compared with other UK services using the Housemark Benchmarking methodology, placed the Housing Executive in the Upper Quartile of services examined.

To further support current policy, I will, in the near future, be publishing proposals for new legislation to help the Housing Executive and other social landlords to deal with anti-social behaviour.

Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the occupancy rates for Northern Ireland Housing Executive houses in North Antrim.

(AQW 27342/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, the table below details the current number of stock and the number of voids in their District Office areas of Ballymena, Ballymoney and Ballycastle which cover North Antrim.

	Awaiting Imminent Relet	Difficult to let *	Undergoing Major repairs Improvements/ Decanting	Pending Demolition	Squatters/ SPED
Ballymena	3	32	36	3	
Ballycastle	0	2	2	0	
Ballymoney	1	1	4	0	
Totals	4	35	42	3	

* Under Rule 68 of the Housing Selection Scheme a property is deemed to be difficult to let if it meets the following criteria: -

- 1) It has been void for at least four weeks; and
- 2) No eligible Applicants have applied for it.

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.

Housing Executive Spend

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development how much the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has spent in each constituency in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27344/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, the table attached shows the Housing Executive spend over the last three years by District Office where the expenditure is managed directly at District level. For some expenditure items, however, the information is shown at Area or Headquarters level, as some programmes are managed at this level and a breakdown by District is not readily available. The table includes expenditure on the following:-

- Social Housing Development Programme
- Land and Property
- Capital Improvements (includes adaptations for disabled persons extensions)
- Private Sector Grants
- Warm Homes (includes Boiler Replacement)
- Accommodation
- Loan Charges
- Maintenance
- Supervision & Management
- SPED Purchases
- Public & Private Sector
- Miscellaneous

2010/11 Gross Spend £k		2011/12 Gross Spend £k		2012/13 Gross Spend £k	
327,574	HQ	312,622	HQ	260,443	HQ
53,919	Belfast Area	40,394	Belfast Area	39,831	Belfast Area
5,579	Belfast 1 (West)	5,586	Belfast 1 (West)	5,291	Belfast 1 (West)
4,718	Belfast 2 (East)	6,438	Belfast 2 (East)	4,808	Belfast 2 (East)
4,322	Belfast 3 (West)	4,167	Belfast 3 (West)	2,312	Belfast 3 (West)

2010/11 Gross Spend £k		2011/12 Gross Spend £k		2012/13 Gross Spend £k	
8,827	Belfast 4 (North)	9,152	Belfast 4 (North)	9,043	Belfast 4 (North)
8,079	Belfast 5 (Shankill)	6,973	Belfast 5 (Shankill)	4,980	Belfast 5 (Shankill)
3,445	Belfast 6 (North)	3,985	Belfast 6 (North)	4,491	Belfast 6 (North)
27,534	Belfast 7 (South)	10,319	Belfast 7 (South)	6,851	Belfast 7 (South)
3,521	Belfast Grants	3,473	Belfast Grants	3,185	Belfast Grants
595	Belfast Hostels	721	Belfast Hostels	796	Belfast Hostels
38,219	South East Area	37,925	South East Area	27,982	SE Area
5,418	Bangor	5,481	Bangor	2,933	Bangor
6,135	Newtownards	7,068	Newtownards	8,672	Newtownards
6,076	Castlereagh	8,516	Castlereagh	4,521	Castlereagh
6,482	Lisburn 1	8,862	Lisburn 1	8,527	Lisburn 1
2,064	Dairy Farm	3,022	Dairy Farm	4,325	Dairy Farm
4,872	Downpatrick	5,067	Downpatrick	4,684	Downpatrick
3,984	South East Grants	4,877	South East Grants	4,034	South East Grants
111	South East Hostels	253	South East Hostels	29	South East Hostels
33,327	South Area	28,297	South Area	19,378	South Area
4,286	Banbridge	3,476	Banbridge	2,263	Banbridge
7,346	Newry	6,442	Newry	5,095	Newry
3,750	Armagh	4,343	Armagh	3,947	Armagh
5,791	Lurgan	5,123	Lurgan	7,429	Lurgan
3,768	Portadown	5,120	Portadown	3,981	Portadown
4,337	Dungannon	4,339	Dungannon	2,955	Dungannon
5,418	Fermanagh	5,276	Fermanagh	3,799	Fermanagh
4,650	South Grants	4,648	South Grants	3,304	South Grants
0	South Hostels	0	South Hostels	0	South Hostels
24,767	North East Area	17,633	North East Area	23,166	North East Area
5,326	Ballymena	7,326	Ballymena	7,098	Ballymena
5,181	Antrim	4,357	Antrim	5,315	Antrim
5,516	Newtownabbey 1	3,552	Newtownabbey 1	5,770	Newtownabbey 1
2,729	Newtownabbey 2	3,983	Newtownabbey 2	3,376	Newtownabbey 2
1,977	Carrickfergus	2,773	Carrickfergus	3,013	Carrickfergus
1,995	Larne	3,416	Larne	2,186	Larne
711	Ballycastle	1,360	Ballycastle	944	Ballycastle
1,869	Ballymoney	3,099	Ballymoney	2,810	Ballymoney
4,617	Coleraine	4,429	Coleraine	6,273	Coleraine
4,162	North East Grants	3,899	North East Grants	2,673	North East Grants
48	North East Hostels	72	North East Hostels	44	North East Hostels

2010/11 Gross Spend £k		2011/12 Gross Spend £k		2012/13 Gross Spend £k	
35,977	West Area	25,420	West Area	23,167	West Area
5,840	Waterloo Place	5,917	Waterloo Place	4,008	Waterloo Place
3,523	Waterside	4,114	Waterside	3,429	Waterside
5,031	Collon Tce	4,359	Collon Tce	4,667	Collon Tce
2,707	Limavady	2,634	Limavady	3,308	Limavady
1,502	Magherafelt	2,812	Magherafelt	2,014	Magherafelt
3,233	Strabane	3,329	Strabane	2,618	Strabane
4,168	Omagh	3,615	Omagh	3,232	Omagh
1,662	Cookstown	1,889	Cookstown	1,925	Cookstown
3,890	West Grants	7,327	West grants	7,126	West Grants
-31*	West Hostels	18	West Hostels	0	West Hostels

* Minus spend on West hostels reflects the impact of revised service charges levied to all hostels in 2010/11. (£31k) is a net figure although not all hostels in the West Area are in negative position.

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.

Disability Living Allowance: Appeals Upheld

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of Disability Living Allowance appeals which have been upheld in the last twelve months.

(AQW 27397/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Chairman of The Appeals Service tribunal records whether the decision made on appeal was either more or less advantageous than a previous decision. A more advantageous decision may increase the allowance or direct that a new award be made. There were 1,277 Disability Living Allowance appeals resulting in a more advantageous determination within the period 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013.

Public Consultations: DSD

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how many public consultations his Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27429/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has conducted 131 public consultations from 2007 to date. The consultations are outlined in the attached table. I have attached the number of responses received for each consultation (where available).

Year	Consultation Issue	Number of Responses Received
2006/2007	Liquor Licensing and Registration of Clubs Law	59
2006/2007	Betting and Gaming Law	397
2006/2007	Londonderry City Centre Public Realm	28
2007/2008	Omagh Town Centre Masterplan	32
2007/2008	Ballymena Masterplan	Not Available
2007/2008	Flexible Retirement and Pension Provision	0
2007/2008	Pension Bill – Equality Impact Assessment	3
2007/08	EQIA Initial Screening – Relocation of Newtownards SSO and JobCentre	Not Available
2007/08	EQIQ Screening Exercise – “Outreach Services for Older People”	Not Available
2007/08	Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Barracks, Belfast - Draft Masterplan	908

Year	Consultation Issue	Number of Responses Received
2007/08	Child Maintenance Bill EQIA	2
2007/08	Social Fund a new approach	7
2007/08	Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the Mesothelioma Bill	0
2007/08	Pensions (No. 2) Bill – Equality Impact Assessment	2
2008/09	Armagh City Centre Masterplan	Not Available
2008/09	Development of Curran Street, Portadown	19
2008/09	Marine Gardens Bangor	692
2008/09	Dungannon Masterplan	20
2008/09	Antrim Masterplan	57
2008/09	Downpatrick Masterplan	45
2008/09	Larne Masterplan	Not Available
2008/09	Lisburn masterplan	Not Available
2008/09	Carrickfergus masterplan	321 + a petition
2008/09	Craigavon Masterplan	Not Available
2008/09	Strabane Masterplan	Not Available
2008/09	Clondermot Outline Business Case for integrated development of site	365
2008/09	EQIA Initial Screening – Relocation of Downpatrick SSO and JobCentre	Not Available
2008/09	Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Barracks, Belfast - Draft Equality Impact Assessment	16
2008/09	Belfast City Centre Westside Regeneration Masterplan - draft report	29
2008/2009	Belfast City Centre Northside Urban Village Regeneration Framework	29
2008/09	Warm Homes	49
2008/09	Social Security (Equalisation of State Pension Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 - Equality Impact Assessment	2
2008/09	Housing Benefit Supporting People into work – the next stage of HB Reform	13
2008/09	Flexible Retirement and Pension Provision - Next Steps	0
2008/09	Workplace Pension Reform: Completing the Picture	1
2008/09	The use of Default Options in Workplace Personal Pensions and the use of Group Self Invested Personal Pensions for Automatic Enrolment	0
2009/10	Proposed withdrawal of National Statistics publications: Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-up Series Northern Ireland, Pensioners Income Series Northern Ireland and Individual Incomes Series Northern Ireland	7
2009/10	Newtownards masterplan	24
2009/10	Bangor Masterplan	43
2009/10	Ballyclare & Glengormley Masterplan	18
2009/10	Newry Town Centre Masterplan	52

Year	Consultation Issue	Number of Responses Received
2009/10	Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future A Consultation Paper on a Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland	237
2009/10	21st Century Welfare	6
2009/10	Social Fund Debt, Credit and low income households	2
2009/10	Disability Living Allowance Reform	40
2009/10	Support for Mortgage Interest Call for Evidence	7
2009/10	National Insurance credit changes	3
2009/10	The interaction of the deferral of State Pension with certain income related benefits	4
2009/10	When should the state pension age should increase to 66? A Call for evidence.	1
2009/10	Private Rented Sector Strategy	43
2009/10	Mortgage Rescue Scheme	23
2009/10	Consultation on Housing Amendment Bill	43
2009/10	House Sales Scheme	14
2009/10	Access and Mobility Study for Belfast City Centre -draft report	12
2009/10	Bank Square, Belfast - design proposals for Public Realm Scheme	33
2009/10	EQIA – Implementation arrangements for the Strategic Business Review	Not Available
2009/10	EQIA Initial Screening – Decant of Newcastle SSO staff during Jobs & Benefits Office construction	Not Available
2009/10	EQIA Initial Screening – Relocation of Downpatrick SSO and Jobcentre	Not Available
2009/10	EQIA Initial Screening – Relocation of Corporation Street SSO and Gloucester House JobCentre	Not Available
2009/10	Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the closure of Cookstown Medical Examination Centre	Not Available
2009/10	Physical Regeneration Concept masterplans	Not Available
2010/11	Andersonstown Road	35
2010/11	Magherafelt Masterplan	78
2010/11	Coleraine masterplan	59
2010/11	Cookstown masterplan	22
2010/11	Limavady Masterplan	9
2010/11	Draft Regeneration and Housing Bill (RPA)	36
2010/11	Liquor Licensing and Registration of Clubs Law	102
2010/11	Licensing of Pavement Cafes	45
2010/11	Business Improvement District (BIDSs)	37
2010/11	Concordat for Relationships with Voluntary and Community Sector	23

Year	Consultation Issue	Number of Responses Received
2010/11	Preparing for automatic enrolment Regulatory differences between occupational and workplace personal pensions A call for evidence	1
2010/11	Automatic enrolment earnings thresholds review and revision 2012/2013	0
2010/11	Meeting future workplace pension challenges: improving transfers and dealing with small pension pots	0
2010/11	EQIA on the NI Welfare Reform Bill.	27
2010/11	Child Maintenance Green Paper "Strengthening Families", promoting Parental responsibility: the future of Child Maintenance	11
2010/11	Bereavement Benefit for the 21st Century	5
2010/11	Universal Credit: Welfare that works	10
2010/11	A State Pension for the 21st Century	2
2010/11	Equality Impact Assessment "Proposals for a Pensions Bil	5
2010/11	Queen's Quay, Belfast - Draft Masterplan	10
2010/11	Fuel Poverty Strategy	51
2010/11	Policy to Support Owner Occupiers in Redevelopment Areas	15
2010/11	Glen Rd Development Framework	20
2011/2012	Proposed changes to Department for Social Development National Statistics Benefit Publications	3
2011/2012	Albertbridge /Templemore Junction Scheme	0
2011/2012	Sunday Trading Law	514
2011/2012	Betting and Gaming Law	239
2011/2012	Liquor Licensing and Registration of Clubs Law	258
2011/2012	Liquor Licensing and Registration of Clubs Law	102
2011/2012	Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework Consultation	72
2011/2012	Liquor Licensing and Registration of Clubs Law	2,537
2011/2012	Work Capability Assessment review – Call for Evidence Year 2	3
2011/2012	Personal Independence Payment: Assessment thresholds and consultation	21
2011/2012	The Child Support Maintenance Calculation Regulations 2012	1
2011/2012	The Child Support Management of Payments and Arrears (Amendment)	1
2011/2012	DLA Reform and Personal Independence Payment: completing the detailed design	14
2011/2012	Supporting Separated Families: Securing Children's Futures	4
2011/2012	Automatic enrolment earnings thresholds review and revision 2013/2014	0
2011/2012	Supporting automatic enrolment: A call for evidence on the impact of the annual contribution limit and the restrictions on transfers on the National Employment Savings Trust	0
2011/12	Enniskillen Masterplan	19
2011/12	East Coast Masterplan	59

Year	Consultation Issue	Number of Responses Received
2011/2012	Social Fund Reform Project – Londonderry	Not Available
2011/2012	Social Fund Reform Project – Newry	Not Available
2011/2012	Social Fund Reform Project – Belfast	Not Available
2011/2012	Social Fund Reform Project – Coleraine	Not Available
2011/2012	Social Fund Reform Project – Enniskillen	Not Available
2012/2013	Work capability Assessment – Informal consultation on accounting for the effects of cancer treatments.	3
2012/13	Quality standards in workplace defined contribution pension schemes: Call for evidence	0
2012/13	Personal independence payment – further consultation on the moving around activity	13
2012/13	Triennial Review of Pensions Bodies: Call for Evidence	1
2012/13	The Single Tier Pension: a simple foundation for saving	0
2012/13	Draft Pensions Bill	3
2012/13	Fundamental Review of Houses in Multiple occupation	50
2012/13	Reviewing Support for Repair and Improvement in the Private Housing Sector	24
2012/13	Consultation on Housing Strategy	90
2012/13	Consultation on Interdepartmental Review of Housing Adaptations Services	58
2012/13	Work Capability Assessment review – Call for Evidence Year 3	279
2012/13	Maximising Incomes and Outcomes – a Plan for Improving the Uptake of Benefits	31
2012/13	Provision of Discretionary Support 2013: A consultation on the service design.	32
2012/13	Library Square, Belfast – Public Realm Scheme	29
2012/13	BT1 Gateway, Belfast – Site Development Proposal	14
2012/13	Ballymoney Masterplan	45
2012/13	Discretionary Support Policy	18
2013/14	Work Capability Assessment Review Call for Evidence consultation	48
2013/14	Street Trading and Pedlars' Law	56
2013/14	Draft Regulations for Business Improvement Districts in NI	25
2013/14	Persons Own Home	15
2013/14	Colin Town Centre - Poleglass	607
2013/14	Travellers Design Guide	12

Housing Waiting List: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of applicants on the housing waiting list in North Down, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27431/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not routinely collate data by Parliamentary Constituency. However, the table below provides details of the number of applicants on the waiting list in each of the last five years within the Housing Executive's Bangor District Office area which covers North Down:

Year ending 31 March	Applicants
2009	1,930
2010	1,885
2011	1,884
2012	2,197
2013	2,414

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.

Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the occupancy rates for Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties in North Down; and for his assessment of how they compare with the Northern Ireland average.

(AQW 27432/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, the table below details the current number of stock and the number of voids in their Bangor District Office area which covers North Down and how they compare to the overall Northern Ireland average.

District Office	Awaiting Imminent Relet	Difficult to let *	Under-going Major repairs Improvements/ Decanting	Pending Sale	Pending Demolition	Squatters/ SPED	Total	Gross Housing stock
Bangor	7	7	7	5	5	2	52	2,658
							2%	
NI Total	168	347	584	96	515	39	1,749	88,243
							2%	

* Under Rule 68 of the Housing Selection Scheme a property is deemed to be difficult to let if it meets the following criteria

- 3) It has been void for at least four weeks; and
- 4) No eligible Applicants have applied for it.

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.

Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties, in each council area, proposed for demolition; and whether such proposals are in keeping with Northern Ireland Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan 2013 – 2018.

(AQW 27440/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table attached details the number of Housing Executive properties, in each Council area, proposed for demolition: -

Council Area	Location	Number of NIHE properties to be demolished
Belfast	Upper New Lodge	185
Belfast	24/54 Fortwilliam Parade	16
Belfast	Village	23
Belfast	Lawnbrook	143
Belfast	Ballysillan Avenue	8
Belfast	Lenadoon	55
Belfast	Hopewell	24

Council Area	Location	Number of NIHE properties to be demolished
Antrim	218 Donore Crescent	1
Antrim	361 Firmount Crescent	1
Ballymena	164-166 Dunclug Park	3
Ballymena	Doury Road	18
Ballymena	Dunclug	16
Larne	22-24 Seacliff Road	2
North Down	1A Kilclief Gardens	24
Ards	Rathmullan Drive (shops/Flats)	7
Lisburn	2-12 Tonagh Avenue	6

Any Housing Executive dwellings approved for demolition must go through an appraisal process. The demolition option will have been selected due to a cost/ benefit assessment of factors such as low/ no demand, the need to address dereliction/ vandalism/ Health & Safety risk and their impact on adjacent stock, and the possibility or otherwise of reinstating properties and the level of associated investment required to do so. Demolition proposals also require my Department's approval.

The recently launched Empty Homes Strategy considers a range of policies and actions that will attempt to tackle the wider issue of long term empty properties, but it is anticipated that efforts will be concentrated on properties which are privately owned.

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.

Housing Executive: Direct Labour Organisation

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development how many workers, from collapsed contractors, have been transferred into the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Direct Labour Organisation since January 2013.

(AQW 27452/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that 219 staff have transferred into their Direct Labour Organisation since January 2013.

Housing Executive: Belfast Response Maintenance Areas

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the Belfast Response Maintenance areas that are now being operated by the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO), which were tendered for by DLO as part of the Framework.

(AQW 27455/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) does not tender for any Housing Executive contracts.

Housing Executive: Belfast Response Maintenance Areas

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development when the Belfast Response Maintenance areas will be re-awarded following the Framework mini-competition in August 2013.

(AQW 27456/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they have concluded the evaluation of the secondary competitions and they hope to make contract awards as soon as possible.

Housing Executive: Reduced Requirements

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the reduced requirements of £23 million for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Grant in the 2013/14 October Monitoring Round.

(AQW 27461/11-15)

Mr McCausland: £23 million has been declared at the October Monitoring Round. The majority of this relates to the Housing Executive's maintenance budgets and is mainly caused by delays in issuing new contracts for planned maintenance and double glazing. Also, delays in Welfare Reform implementation have resulted in a forecast impairment on rental income of £5m not being required.

Housing Grants: Rejections

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications or requests for housing grants have been rejected since 1 April 2012.

(AQW 27462/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that 1,555 Preliminary Enquiries have been cancelled since 1 April 2012 and 56 applications submitted for consideration under Exceptional Circumstances were also refused.

Homelessness: Upper Bann

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are registered as homeless in Upper Bann in each of the Housing Executive Offices.

(AQW 27466/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the number of people registered as homeless in Upper Bann in each of their District offices are as follows:

Banbridge	73
Lurgan	48
Portadown	58

Housing Benefit: Underoccupancy Penalty

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the number of households that will be affected by the under occupancy penalty.

(AQW 27467/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that based on the information available to them at present, and the proposals for the scheme that were put in place in Great Britain, 32,735 households in Northern Ireland would be affected by reductions in Housing Benefit: 26,469 are in Housing Executive accommodation and 6,266 in Housing Association accommodation.

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.

Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition in North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the timescales for any proposed demolition of Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties in North Antrim.

(AQW 27474/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised as follows: -

Doury Road, Ballymena: Timescales for any proposed demolition cannot be confirmed until consultation with the local Development Group, residents and private landlords has been carried out and the acquisition of privately owned dwellings has been completed.

Dunclug, Ballymena: Demolition has been approved for three dwellings, however, a contract has to be awarded before demolition can proceed. There is also a proposal to demolish a further 16 properties, however, an Economic Appraisal still has to be completed which will need approval from the Housing Executive Board and my Department.

Social Housing Newbuilds: North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to outline plans for social housing new builds in North Antrim.

(AQW 27475/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Table below details the social housing new builds that are currently programmed to be delivered within North Antrim over the period 2013/14 – 2015/16.

The Social Housing Development Programme is managed on the basis of a three year rolling programme. The Housing Executive is currently in the process of formulating the new draft Social Housing Development Programme for the period 2014/15 – 2016/17 which subject to my approval will be published on the Housing Executive's website early in 2014.

Year	Association	Scheme/Location	Units	Need Group
2013/14	Fold	St Patrick's MOD Phase 2, Ballymena	2	General Needs
	Triangle	North East Area Muckamore Resettlement, Cushendall Road, Ballymena	5	Learning Disabilities

Year	Association	Scheme/Location	Units	Need Group
2014/15	Apex Housing	Queen Street, Ballymena	25	General Needs
	Clanmil	Frail Elderly Rathmoyle Replacement	28	Frail Elderly
	Trinity	St Mary's Primary School, Phase 1, Larne Road, Ballymena	46	General Needs
2015/16	To be confirmed	Balnamore, Ballymoney	3	General Needs
	Trinity	St Mary's Primary School, Phase 2, Larne Road, Ballymena	30	General Needs

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.

Rent Arrears: North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants in North Antrim that are in rent arrears.

(AQW 27476/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, the table below details the number and percentage of Housing Executive tenants that are in rent arrears as at 6 October 2013 for their District Office areas of Ballymena, Ballymoney and Ballycastle, which cover the North Antrim area.

	No of tenants	% of tenants
Ballymena	739	28%
Ballymoney	368	25.6%
Ballycastle	230	28.3%

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.

Double Glazing Schemes: North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the planned double glazing schemes in the North Antrim area including the timescales for completion.

(AQW 27477/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the planned double glazing schemes in the North Antrim area are:

Ballymoney	103 dwellings
Ballymena	271 dwellings

The Housing Executive Board has approved the procurement of double glazing contracts and the Housing Executive will now proceed to formally award these contracts. However, until a contractor is appointed the Housing Executive cannot offer a definitive timescale and likely onsite date at this time.

Temporary Accommodation: North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in North Antrim are registered as living in temporary accommodation.

(AQW 27478/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, the table below details the number of people at 23 October 2013 who were placed in temporary accommodation by the Housing Executive in their District Office areas of Ballymena, Ballymoney and Ballycastle which cover North Antrim area.

NIHE District Office area	NIHE Hostels	Voluntary Sector Hostels	Private Sector Temporary Accommodation
Ballymena	7	14	44

NIHE District Office area	NIHE Hostels	Voluntary Sector Hostels	Private Sector Temporary Accommodation
Ballymoney	0	0	4
Ballycastle	0	0	8

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.

Social Housing Stock: North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the social housing stock levels in North Antrim, broken down by bedroom numbers; and (ii) the current levels of vacancy and demand for each property type.

(AQW 27493/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, in relation to (i) Table 1 attached details the current Housing Executive stock levels and levels of vacancy in their Ballymena, Ballycastle and Ballymoney District Office areas, that cover North Antrim and Table 2 details the Housing Association Stock and Vacancies in North Antrim. In relation to (ii) Table 3 details the Waiting List at 1 October 2013, by number of bedrooms required.

Table 1 – Housing Executive Stock and Vacancies – North Antrim: -

District	Status	One Bed	Two Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	>5 Bed	Total
Ballymena	Occupied	369	906	1261	112	4	2652
Ballymena	Void	12	20	48	5	1	86
Ballycastle	Occupied	108	235	441	29	1	814
Ballycastle	Void	1	1	3			5
Ballymoney	Occupied	34	593	769	41	1	1438
Ballymoney	Void	1	2	9			12
Total		525	1757	2531	187	7	5007

Table 2 - Housing Association Stock and Vacancies - North Antrim: -

No. of Bedrooms	Total stock	Vacancies
1 Bed	485	23
2 Bed	227	2
3 Bed	197	4
4 Bed	17	1
5 Bed	1	0
6 Bed	1	0

Table 3 – Waiting List at 1 October 2013, by number of bedrooms required

	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	5-bed	6-bed	Totals
Ballymena	961	368	155	55	12	0	1,551
Ballycastle	210	85	37	13	2	0	347
Ballymoney	278	119	54	12	4	1	468
Total	1,449	572	246	80	18	1	2,366

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.

Rent Arrears

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development what was the average level of rent arrears per hundred properties, in each Housing Executive district, in January (i) 2010; (ii) 2012; and (iii) 2013.

(AQW 27514/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as, since the implementation of the Housing Executive's new housing management system in July 2011, the Housing Executive has advised that arrears are reported on by designated Accounts business unit. Therefore, Table 1 attached provides details of the average level of rent arrears per hundred properties in each Housing Executive District in January 2010, whereas Table 2 provides the information by Housing Executive Area at January 2012 and 2013.

Table 1- January 2010

NIHE District	Arrear Per 100 Dwellings
Belfast 1	£18,826
Belfast 2	£22,434
Belfast 3	£11,078
Belfast 4	£25,498
Belfast 5	£19,594
Belfast 6	£19,067
Belfast 7	£19,925
Bangor	£21,445
Newtownards	£15,257
Castlereagh	£21,953
Lisburn Antrim St.	£14,139
Lisburn Dairy Farm	£22,625
Downpatrick	£15,194
Banbridge	£10,357
Newry	£8,058
Armagh	£8,497
Lurgan/Brownlow	£8,889
Portadown	£12,738
Dungannon	£9,846
Fermanagh	£8,745
Ballymena	£10,303
Antrim	£11,372
Newtownabbey 1	£14,280
Newtownabbey 2	£15,927
Carrickfergus	£16,271
Larne	£14,493
Ballycastle	£9,624
Ballymoney	£8,027
Coleraine	£12,510
Waterloo Place	£8,424
Waterside	£23,548
Collon Terrace	£15,563
Limavady	£16,543
Magherafelt	£13,556
Strabane	£12,901
Omagh	£7,879
Cookstown	£11,444

Table 2 – January 2012 & January 2013

	Jan 2012 Arrear	Jan 2013 Arrear
	Per 100	Per 100
Belfast Area	£20,401	£21,490
South East Area	£17,964	£18,283
South Area	£9,055	£8,147
North East Area	£14,985	£14,993
West Area	£13,484	£12,526

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.

Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of Employment and Support Allowance appeals over the last two financial years.

(AQW 27518/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The cost of an Employment Support Allowance (ESA) appeal cannot be provided as resources within The Appeals Service (TAS) are allocated across a wide range of benefit appeals and a number of variables influence the cost.

However the table below sets out the total annual expenditure within TAS in the financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13:

Financial year	Annual spend £
2011/12	5,970,147
2012/13	6,913,955

Disability Living Allowance: Appeals

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of Disability Living Allowance appeals over the last two financial years.

(AQW 27520/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The cost of a Disability Living Allowance (DLA) appeal cannot be provided as resources within The Appeals Service (TAS) are allocated across a wide range of benefit appeals and a number of variables influence the cost. However the table below sets out the total annual expenditure within TAS in the financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Financial year	Annual spend £
2011/12	5,970,147
2012/13	6,913,955

Double Glazing: Roe Mill Gardens, Limavady

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development when the double glazing scheme will begin at Roe Mill Gardens, Limavady.

(AQW 27533/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The NIHE Board has approved the procurement of double glazing contracts and the Housing Executive will now proceed to formally award these contracts. However, until a contractor is appointed the Housing Executive cannot offer a definitive timescale and likely onsite date.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development, given the range of high and low rate mobility payments, as well as high, middle and lower rate care component payments available to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) recipients, what percentage of people entitled to DLA fall into each category, as of April 2013.

(AQW 27566/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table below shows the number and percentage of claimants that fall into each component of Disability Living Allowance at April 2013.

DLA Components	DLA Claimants	% of DLA Claimants
Higher Rate care only	2,920	1.5%
Higher rate care and higher rate mobility	33,870	17.4%
Higher rate care and lower rate mobility	18,720	9.6%
Higher rate mobility only	8,000	4.1%
Lower rate care and higher rate mobility	14,370	7.4%
Lower rate care and lower rate mobility	3,910	2.0%
Lower rate care only	11,780	6.1%
Lower rate mobility only	3,020	1.6%
Middle rate care and higher rate mobility	41,050	21.1%
Middle rate care and lower rate mobility	45,660	23.5%
Middle rate care only	10,900	5.6%
Total	194,200	100.0%

The Information provided is an Official Statistic. The production and dissemination of all Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessments

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to Limited Capability for Work Assessments, how many ESA113 forms have been issued to GPs by ATOS Healthcare since the inception of Employment and Support Allowance. (AQW 27600/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Employment Support Allowance was introduced on 27 October 2008. Atos have been providing Medical Support Services to the Social Security Agency since June 2011. From June 2011 to 26 October 2013 Atos have issued 84,061 ESA 113 forms to GPs.

Housing Executive: Vacant Homes

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of vacant homes owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, or other public sector bodies, that are not currently in a condition suitable for habitation. (AQW 27610/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they have 622 vacant properties that are currently not suitable for habitation. There are also 213 vacant Housing Association properties that are not suitable for habitation.

Homes for a Pound Scheme

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the suitability of Northern Ireland for a 'Homes for a Pound' scheme, similar to that operated by Liverpool City Council. (AQW 27611/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department continually monitors housing initiatives, such as the 'Homes for a Pound' scheme, across other jurisdictions to determine their suitability for adoption in Northern Ireland. In my Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland 'Facing the Future', I have already outlined a wide range of proposals and actions I want to take here to restore a balanced housing market, providing households with a range of good quality housing choices at a price they can afford.

These include increasing access to affordable housing, developing further innovation in the funding of new social housing, improving standards in the private rented sector, bringing more empty homes back into use and taking a housing-led approach to regenerating communities.

Many of these proposals and schemes are currently being developed and implemented and there will be a need to evaluate their success and the value for money they are delivering to the public purse, before adopting any further initiatives.

Temporary Accommodation: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in North Down are registered as living in temporary accommodation. (AQW 27619/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate data by Parliamentary constituency. However, the Housing Executive has advised that at 29 October 2013 they had placed 32 people in temporary accommodation within their Bangor District Office area which covers the North Down area.

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.

Development Trusts NI

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what resource provision has been made for Development Trusts NI since it was established; and how this funding has been spent.

(AQW 27677/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Development Trusts NI was established in 2010. My Department has provided the organisation with funding since October 2012, as a delivery partner in taking forward the Programme for Government commitment on Community Asset Transfer. For the period 1st October 2012 to 31st March 2015 a total of £262k has allocated with £87k spent to date. This has been used for salaries and running costs associated with the project.

Development Trusts NI

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development to explain the departmental oversight arrangements in respect of Development Trusts NI.

(AQW 27678/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Development Trusts NI are being grant funded by my Department, as a delivery partner in the development and implementation of a new policy framework for Community Asset Transfer. The organisation is subject to the same oversight and monitoring arrangements as all other grant funded organisations, as outlined in the contract for funding.

On a quarterly basis Development Trusts NI is required to submit a progress report to my Department. This is reviewed to ensure that the grant is being managed effectively and efficiently, for the purposes specified in the contract, and to assess the extent to which objectives are being met. Payments are also subject to financial verification.

Housing Executive Properties and Land: Strabane

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Social Development for a breakdown of the money spent on Housing Executive (i) properties; and (ii) land in Strabane town, in each of the last five years, broken down by housing estate.

(AQW 27684/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by housing estate. However, the table attached details the expenditure by the Housing Executive's Strabane District Office in each of the last five years. The Housing Executive has also advised that their ground maintenance spend is profiled regionally and monitored on a contract basis. The contract covers four Districts and a breakdown by District is not available.

Work Category	2008/09 £k	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k	2011/12 £k	2012/13 £k
Capital Schemes	1,151	241	452	77	86
Revenue schemes	910	1,324	431	1,310	446
Response Maintenance	1,253	1,390	1,473	1,669	1,261
Total	3,314	2,955	2,356	3,056	1,793

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.

Community Asset Transfer: Council Properties

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development whether predecessor Councils have been consulted on which of their buildings might be transferred to new management or ownership under Community Asset Transfer.

(AQW 27694/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Community Asset Transfer can only take place following consultation with and the approval of the asset owner. Under the Community Asset Transfer Demonstration Programme, organisations interested in acquiring an asset must show evidence of consultation with the asset owner in order to be eligible under the programme. They also have to provide evidence of support from at least one public sector body for the proposed transfer.

Community Asset Transfer: Council Properties

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the properties owned by (i) Carrickfergus Borough Council; (ii) Larne Borough Council; and (iii) Ballymena Borough Council, in which interest has been expressed to take over their management or ownership under Community Asset Transfer.

(AQW 27695/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Community Asset Transfer Demonstration Programme, led by Development Trusts NI, closed to applications on October 18th 2013. Under the programme no expressions of interest were received for managing or taking ownership of property owned by Carrickfergus Borough Council, Larne Borough Council or Ballymena Borough Council.

Housing-led Regeneration

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development why none of the six pilot areas in the Housing Regeneration Programme are in Derry.

(AQW 27758/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The six areas chosen for the Building Successful Communities pilot were selected on the basis of the criteria set out last year in my housing strategy: Facing the Future, which was subject to public consultation.

In order to determine the areas for inclusion, my Department first selected areas of deprivation that are either Neighbourhood Renewal Areas or Areas at Risk. Indicators that reflect social housing market failure and the need for regeneration were then considered i.e. void stock, low or medium projected housing need and vacant land in the Housing Executive's ownership that could be utilised to develop new housing.

The six pilot areas were considered to be those that both scored among those most in need according to the regeneration indicators, and that required additional intervention above that already planned or existing. To enable this approach to be fully tested the pilots also cover a range of contexts such as higher and lower population and differing housing problems.

At this stage none of the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas or Areas at Risk in Londonderry scored highly enough to be considered as a pilot area. However, if this pilot is successful, I can assure you that I will give consideration to extending the approach across Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Public Transport: MLAs

Mr McKay asked the Assembly Commission if they are considering any plans to encourage MLAs to use public transport instead of claiming for mileage.

(AQW 27487/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission has no current plans to encourage MLAs to use public transport instead of claiming mileage. However, if it would be helpful, our Environmental Services Manager and I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this or any other queries you may have in relation to the Assembly's environmental policies.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 15 November 2013

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Programme for Government: Delivery Plans

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will publish the delivery plans for the Programme for Government.

(AQW 17810/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): Accessible, online Delivery Plans are published on the Executive's website. In addition, all Assembly Committees are provided with departmental Delivery Plans through normal business proceedings.

Chief Executives: Waterways Ireland/Loughs Agency

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will announce the appointment of the Chief Executive of (i) Waterways Ireland; and (ii) The Loughs Agency.

(AQW 22444/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: On 19 June 2013, NSMC appointed Dawn Livingstone as Chief Executive of Waterways Ireland at its Inland Waterways meeting. This appointment was announced on 19 June 2013 in the Joint Communiqué of that meeting.

On 26 April 2013 the Chief Executive of the Loughs Agency, Mr Derick Anderson, advised of his intention to retire. The two sponsor departments and the Loughs Agency Board are working together to identify his successor and the NSMC will be asked to approve the preferred candidate when identified. An interim Chief Executive is in place pending the conclusion of the recruitment process.

Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse: Support Service

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why there has been a delay in awarding the tender for the Support Service for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.

(AQW 23072/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In January 2012, arrangements were put in place for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse to make full use of the counselling support services provided by Lifeline. Lifeline's professional counselling services are freely available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by telephone and in confidence on 0808 808 8000.

A contract was awarded to Contact NI on 12 June for services comprising three elements:

- Firstly, counselling for victims and survivors who are not in crisis – including for those referred by Lifeline counsellors to a specialist counselling service such as Addiction NI or Nexus and awaiting an appointment with the specialist provider.
- Secondly, caseworker support to assist individual victims and survivors in relation to benefits, housing, personal finance, debt management, education, liaison with victim support and searching for personal records.
- Thirdly, a co-ordinator who will ensure the provision of seamless support to victims and survivors, including responding to referrals and enquiries, organising non-crisis counselling, making referrals to the caseworker service, making follow-up service calls to victims and survivors and tracking referrals.

These are bespoke services, designed and created especially for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse. They are over and above what is currently available through the mainstream health, social services and justice provision.

These services came into effect on 1 August.

OFMDFM Funding: Breaches of Company Law

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether a breach of company law, by failing to file accounts, precludes an organisation from receiving funding from their Department.

(AQW 23347/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Failure to file accounts does not preclude an organisation from receiving funding from the Department.

International Relations Strategy

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given the trade and educational links being actively pursued with the BRIC countries, for their assessment of the need to develop an international relations strategy.

(AQW 23791/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are increasing our efforts to build relationships with the world's leading economies. This overseas work is starting to pay dividends and we aim to continue to meet influencers and business representatives to promote trade, tourism, inward investment, education, university and government links.

In order to capitalise on these opportunities we will be bringing a draft International Relations Strategy to the Executive in due course.

Children and Young People: Delivery of Strategy

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the need for a statutory duty on Departments to cooperate on children's budgeting to help the delivery of the Executive Strategy for Children and Young People.

(AQW 27271/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Through the Children and Young People's Strategy, the Executive has committed to making a real change in the lives of our children and young people. The Executive recognises that a co-ordinated approach with departments and agencies working together is critical to tackling the deep-seated problems which many of our children face.

With the establishment of Delivering Social Change (DSC), we have put in place a comprehensive delivery framework which will co-ordinate action between departments in order to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages, improve children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities and break the long-term cycle of multi-generational problems. The announcement of an additional £26 million for the initial six signature programmes last year and the more recent announcement of an additional £1.6 million reflect the importance the Executive attaches to tackling these issues.

In recognition of the need for a cross-cutting approach, Delivering Social Change is led by the DSC Ministerial Sub-Committees for Children and Young People and the DSC Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion which are led by Junior Minister Bell and Junior Minister McCann and include all Executive Ministers.

In addition, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is taking forward a co-ordinated, cross-sectoral approach to the planning and delivery of children's services on the ground. These approaches offer a real opportunity to significantly improve outcomes for children and young people.

We are aware that there are likely to be significant difficulties in attempting to disaggregate or ring-fence expenditure on children within budgets generally. However we are currently assessing the possibility of running a pilot to track expenditure on children's budgets in a very specific area for a limited period to assess the approach before considering wider application. We believe this will represent a practical approach to progressing the aims of the Children and Young People's Strategy as well as improving children's lives.

Police Stations

Mr D McIlveen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what assistance their Department can offer to community groups seeking to purchase disused police stations in order to retain the buildings within the community.

(AQW 27380/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM regeneration powers apply to the former military sites we manage and do not extend to disused Police Stations.

The Department provides funding for community groups through a number of programmes for various activities. These schemes are by way of open application and are dependent on meeting the published criteria.

Public Consultations: OFMDFM

Mr Ross asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how many public consultations their Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27428/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The consultations undertaken by OFMDFM since 2007 and the number of responses received are as follows:

Year	Type of consultation	Details	Number of responses received
2007	Workshops with groups of marginalised, hard to reach children	Collating the views of Children and Young People	No records available.
Jul - Sep 2007	Public	Consultation on implementing EU equality obligations under the Gender Goods and Services Directive	243
2007	Public	Public Authorities Reform	22
2007 - 2008	Public	Programme for Government	In excess of 9,500 responses
2008	Public	Draft equality impact assessment carried out at a strategic level on the Programme for Government and the Budget and Investment Strategy	334
May - Aug 2008	Public	Review of Civic Forum	60
Aug 2008	Public	Consultation on Strategy for Victims and Survivors	44
Dec 2008	Public	Disability Discrimination (Transport Vehicles Regulations)	27
2009	Workshops, Conference and On-line Questionnaire all aimed at Children and Young People	Review of 2008-11 Action Plan taking account of UN 2008 Concluding Observations	In excess of 400 children and young people consulted at events – Approx 25-30 Children's groups provided written responses after the events
2009	Open Public & Invitational	Sustainable Development Strategy	66
Aug 2009	Public	Consultation on a Victims and Survivors Service	29
2009	Open public consultation	Consultation on establishing an Older Peoples Commissioner	80 written responses received; over 400 people participated in consultation events.
2010	Interested Parties / Public	Consultation on Budget 2010	69
2010	Public	Public Assemblies, Parades and Protests	410
June 2010	Sectoral	"World Cafe" Discussion for Women's Groups and Organisations	4 events were held and a total of 104 people took part.
2010	Open Public, Invitational and Sectoral	Sustainable Development Implementation Plan	35
Aug 2010 - Oct 2010	Public and Sectoral	Consultation on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration	288 written consultation responses.
Dec 2010 -Feb 2011	Public	Consultation on the Child Poverty Strategy 2010	49 written responses were received. Reports were also compiled on four children's events which consulted over 90 children and young people and on ten focus groups with (a total of 64) parents.

Year	Type of consultation	Details	Number of responses received
Dec 2010 - Feb 2011	Online at OFMDFM website. Four focus groups with children and young people.	Consultation on the Play and Leisure Implementation Plan	41 written responses & 93 children and young people consulted in 4 public events
2011	Public	OFMDFM Equality Scheme	10 written responses were received.
Mar 2011	Public and sectoral meetings	Historical Institutional Abuse taskforce consultation	33 written responses received.
2011-2012	Strategic Investment Fund Consultation	Consultation on proposals for Social Investment Fund	A total of 597 were engaged in the consultation by the closing date of 23rd December 2011. In relation to this, a total of 328 responses were formally submitted to the Department during the consultation period.
2011-2012	Open Public, Invitational and Sectoral	Programme for Government 2011-15	432
April - Aug 2012	Public	Consultation on Disability Strategy	95
September 2012	Racial Equality Strategy and Minority Ethnic Development Fund – in Derry and Belfast	To allow sectoral representatives a chance to suggest shape and delivery of the MEDF and to comment upon content of a revised Racial Equality Strategy.	6 individual responses, one co-ordinated response from 13 groups and representatives* and 20 groups attended. * the sector tends to present a unified response from a number of groups.
June and Oct 2012	Two half-day Delivering Social Change Public Consultation events	Key Stakeholder Workshops	The first event was held in Belfast and the second in Craigavon. The overall (combined) number of people who attended both events was approximately 115.
Oct - Dec 2012	Sectoral	Consultation on implementation of the European Court of Justice judgement on gender neutrality in the pricing of insurance premiums and benefits	13 written responses
2012-13	Sectoral	Minority Ethnic Development Fund	6 individual responses, one co-ordinated response from 13 groups and representatives on 20 groups attended.
Dec 2012 -Mar 2013	Public	Consultation on "Towards a Childcare Strategy"	A total of 65 written responses were received from statutory and voluntary sector organisations, day care providers and individuals. In addition, 6 public consultation events were held.
Mar - May 2013	Public	Consultation on the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Rules	15 written responses received.
2013	Workshops with organisations working with children and young people	Review of Draft Child Rights Indicator Framework	The workshop did not seek individual responses. The discussions at each workshop were summarised and fed into the development of the child rights indicator framework

Year	Type of consultation	Details	Number of responses received
2013	Workshops with organisations working with children and young people	Consultation on response to UNCRC	Approx 140 children and young people consulted.

Victims and Survivors Service: Funding

Mr A Maginness asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, considering the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) Scheme 6 (Financial Assistance) programme is currently budgeted to support 1,750 applications and for the period 2012-13 and VSS received over 2,500 applications for financial assistance, what action they intend to take to address the funding shortfall. (AQW 27465/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In order to address additional demands resulting across a number of schemes throughout the Victims and Survivors Programme (VSP) the Department submitted a bid in the October Monitoring round. We are pleased to confirm that this funding has been secured.

Special Advisers: Termination of Appointment

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have terminated the appointment of any of the Special Advisers in their Department since the Civil Service (Special Advisers) Act 2013; and if so, when the appointments were terminated. (AQW 27492/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department does not comment on individual personnel matters.

UK Diplomatic Cables

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what access their Department has to UK diplomatic cables. (AQW 27679/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our Department has access to UK diplomatic cables.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office sends telegrams on condition that a mailbox with the appropriate security level is provided for their receipt and that they are distributed to officials as appropriate within departments, respecting the security classification.

Children and Young People: Safeguarding

Miss M McIlveen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps their Department is taking to safeguard children and young people. (AQO 4889/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The establishment of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland in September 2012 demonstrates the Executive's commitment to ensuring that children grow up in a safe environment.

It represents the outworking of a commitment in the Safeguarding Children cross-departmental statement on the protection of children and young people.

Safeguarding Children, which was developed by our Department on behalf of the Executive, is an important and wide ranging statement on the protection of children which is indicative of the high priority the Executive gives to the issue of child protection and the safeguarding of children.

It contributes to achieving the outcomes in the Executive's Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People and in particular to the outcome of all children and young people 'living in safety and stability'.

In addition, our Department is specifically working to identify opportunities for cross-departmental actions in relation to child internet safety. This includes undertaking a gap analysis involving six departments. This seeks to identify current actions being taken by these departments to address child internet safety, including any gaps as well as future actions they are considering. That work is due to be completed shortly.

Planning Appeals Commission

Mr Wells asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many planning appeals have been reopened since 2010 after a Decision Notice was issued by the Planning Appeals Commission; and under what circumstances does the Planning Appeals Commission have the authority to reopen the consideration of a planning appeal after it has held the hearing and issued a Decision Notice. (AQW 27800/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body. Given its status, we have asked its Chief Commissioner to provide a response directly to you.

Childcare Strategy

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when a final childcare strategy will be published.
(AQO 4887/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Junior Minister Bell and Junior Minister McCann recently launched Bright Start – the Executive's Programme for Affordable and Integrated Childcare. Bright Start is an important first step towards a comprehensive and sustainable Childcare Strategy. Over the coming months we want to test how well our key first actions perform and we want to listen further to everyone with an interest in the Strategy. A more substantive strategy will be developed during the first year of operation under the strategic framework.

VAT: Hospitality Sector

Mrs McKeivitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions have they had with their Westminster counterparts on the need for a Value Added Tax reduction for the hospitality sector, following the news that the Irish Government is to retain the 9 per cent VAT rate.
(AQO 4888/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: This issue was debated in the Assembly on 10 September 2012 and a Motion was passed which called on the Executive to pursue the case with HM Treasury for a reduced rate of VAT for tourism related products and services here.

Following this, the former Finance Minister wrote to the Exchequer Secretary, David Gauke MP, on this basis and he responded on 16 October 2012.

Social Investment Fund

Mr D Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Social Investment Fund.
(AQO 4891/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Strategic area plans were received by the Department on 28 February 2013. Each zone submitted economic appraisals for up to ten projects within their area plans. These are currently being considered as part of a comprehensive appraisal process. We anticipate making further announcements on this shortly.

Social Investment Fund

Lord Morrow asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Social Investment Fund.
(AQO 4892/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Strategic area plans were received by the Department on 28 February 2013. Each zone submitted economic appraisals for up to ten projects within their area plans. These are currently being considered as part of a comprehensive appraisal process. We anticipate making further announcements on this shortly.

Executive Office: China

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they envisage the Executive Office will open in China.
(AQO 4893/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We announced our intention to open an Executive Office in Beijing during a statement made to the Assembly on 3 June 2013, following meetings with senior government officials whilst in Beijing.

The Chinese Government has confirmed its commitment to developing a productive relationship with us and a presence in China would help to promote positive actions in China.

Officials have been in discussion with the appropriate government and diplomatic bodies and we hope to have an office in operation next year.

Together: Building a United Community

Mr McCarthy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress they are making in implementing the commitments in Together: Building a United Community to ensure that good relations considerations are mainstreamed into the revised arrangements under the Review of Public Administration.
(AQO 4894/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Good progress is being made in beginning the process of implementing the commitments in the Together: Building a United Community Strategy.

Design teams are taking forward the headline actions, through a co-design phase with other statutory, voluntary and community groups, and will be bringing forward proposals in the near future.

The design teams are aware of the revised arrangements under the Review of Public Administration. Our officials have been liaising with officials from the Department of the Environment, and will be examining closely the best way to ensure good relations considerations are mainstreamed into the revised arrangements.

Our continuing support for the District Councils Good Relations Programme will also ensure the issue of good relations remains at the forefront of all Councils' considerations.

Programme for Government 2011-15

Mr P Ramsey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the progress of each of the programmes in the Programme for Government 2011-15 in addressing regional imbalance.

(AQW 27933/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Achieving balanced sub-regional growth is a cross-cutting principle embedded in our Programme for Government, guiding our efforts to rebuild and rebalance the economy.

In addition, there are a number of specific commitments in the Programme for Government that contribute directly to the achievement of this principle. These include commitments to:

- Develop the One Plan for the regeneration of Derry/Londonderry, incorporating the key sites at Fort George and Ebrington;
- provide financial and other support across government to ensure the success of the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture 2013;
- progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5%;
- develop a strategic plan for the Agri-food sector;
- bring forward a £13 million package to tackle rural poverty and social and economic isolation;
- advance the relocation of the Headquarters of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to a rural area;
- upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line;
- invest over £500 million to promote sustainable modes of travel; and,
- deliver at least 30 schemes to improve landscapes in public areas to promote private sector investment in our towns and cities.

Progress on delivering against our commitments has been positive to date. The latest available information on progress against all of our Programme for Government Commitments has been shared with the OFMDFM Assembly Committee and will be available at:

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/work-of-the-executive/pfg-budget-economic-strategy/pfg/strategic-online-report-2011-2015.htm>.

Car Parking Spaces: OFMDFM Spend

Mr McKay asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the measures their Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27951/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department does not incur any costs in relation to car parking spaces.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Single Farm Payments

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of farms that have been inspected more than once in relation to Single Farm Payments, broken down by area, in each of the last eight years.

(AQW 27873/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): In accordance with the rules governing the administration of the Single Farm Payment (SFP) Scheme, my Department must carry out land eligibility on-the-spot checks on at least 5% of applicants each year. These checks, which verify the eligibility of claims under scheme rules, are selected from the total SFP claim population either at random or by the use of risk criteria.

In addition to these land eligibility checks, DARD is also required to check at least 1% of SFP applicants to ensure that the Cross-Compliance requirements are met. The Cross-Compliance checks are carried out by 3 Competent Control Authorities namely the NI Environment Agency in respect of the environmental SMRs, DARD Veterinary Service in respect of the animal related SMRs and DARD Service Delivery Group in respect of GAEC and the Food and Feed Law and Placing of Plant

Protection Products on the Market SMRs. Each Competent Control Authority selects applicants to be inspected in respect of the area of Cross-Compliance falling under its control again using a random and risk methodology.

The figures shown below represent those farm businesses that have had more than one inspection in any calendar year on separate dates within that year. For example, a land eligibility inspection and a cross compliance inspection on separate dates within the same year has been counted as a multiple inspection and is included in the figures. However, a land eligibility and cross compliance inspection carried out on the same day and by the same inspection team has not been included. Likewise two separate cross compliance inspections completed on separate dates i.e. NIEA and Veterinary are counted and included in the figures.

County	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Antrim	96	148	153	115	126	114	98	94
Armagh	49	62	111	89	95	85	86	81
Down	119	130	136	133	139	138	115	119
Fermanagh	34	84	64	73	61	89	72	68
Derry/Londonderry	87	88	79	95	78	86	86	82
Tyrone	118	147	143	148	155	151	134	119

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Milk Cup

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the steps her Department is taking to secure the future of the Milk Cup following the decision by the Dairy Council to withdraw sponsorship.

(AQW 27671/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Responsibility for the funding of events, including the Milk Cup, lies in the first instance with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

However, Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, will be meeting with the organisers of the Milk Cup in due course to discuss potential support in future years.

Netball

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support has been provided to netball, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27753/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, has provided total funding of £433,000 directly to Netball over the last three financial years, up to 31 March 2013. The details are as follows:-

Financial Year	Exchequer Funding	Lottery Funding	Total
2010/11	£129,591	-	£129,591
2011/12	£149,652	-	£149,652
2012/13	£123,757	£30,000	£153,757
Grand Total			£433,000

In addition, Sport NI, through the Active Communities programme, invests in a netball coach post based in the Down/Newry and Mourne District Council areas which equates to a pro-rata investment of £136,000 over the period 2010-2015.

Netball

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether additional support will be provided to netball.

(AQW 27755/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Further to the support to netball outlined in AQW 27753/11-15, I can confirm that Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, will provide investment totalling of £542,160 of Lottery Funding to the Governing Body of netball, Netball NI, for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2017. The purpose of this investment is to improve athlete performance. In addition, Sport NI will provide £104,000 Exchequer Funding to Netball NI during 2013/14 under the Athlete Investment Programme, Coaching Legacy Programme and International Events Programme.

Further Exchequer Investment of £488,000 is planned for the development of the National Badminton Centre at Lisburn Racquets Club, with work is due to take place in 2014/15. Netball NI is located in the Centre and is also likely to benefit from this investment.

Windsor Park Stadium

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the progress of the redevelopment of Windsor Park Stadium.

(AQW 27764/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The IFA IST tenders were returned on 23rd September 2013 and are currently being assessed with regard to compliance to budget and specification. In addition DCAL are working with the IFA to be assured that appropriate governance and accountability structures are in place.

Provided that these issues are resolved and that significant delays around any legal challenges are avoided, then the Windsor Park development can remain on programme.

Car Parking Spaces: DCAL Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the measures her Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27823/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In the last 4 years, DCAL reduced its car parking dependency by some 67%, from 128 to 42 spaces. The 42 spaces are reviewed on an annual basis and allocated in accordance with the Department's essential user policy.

DCAL also arranged for Translink to visit the Department's two principal sites in Belfast – Causeway Exchange and PRONI – to encourage a greater number of its staff to use public transport. When attending business meetings in the greater Belfast area, staff are encouraged to avail of public transport and use the Translink smart-link travel cards held by the Department's facilities unit.

Hollywood Library

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of members of Hollywood Library, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27916/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The number of active members of Hollywood Library in each of the last three years is as follows:

	01-Apr-2011	01-Apr-2012	01-Apr-2013
Hollywood Library	2,606	3,006	3,029

Civil Service Posts: DCAL

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many Civil Service posts existed in her Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 27945/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information requested in respect of DCAL is contained in the tables attached at Annex A. The data provided reflects the position at 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 by local Council area, expressed as Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

Vacancies are included in the tables and recorded by grade level. For completeness, the tables include Industrial and Senior Civil Service (SCS) posts. The Department has no grade 6 posts.

Annex A

DCAL Posts By Grade And District Council – 1 Jan 2012

District Council	Grade Level (includes grades analogous to General Service)								Total ¹
	Indu- strial	AA	AO	E02 / EO1	SO	DP	G7	SCS	
Ballymoney	5	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	8
Belfast	0	17.42	47.32	53.95	60.62	34.42	21.72	6 ²	241.45
Craigavon	0	1.27	3	3	1	0	0	0	8.27

District Council	Grade Level (includes grades analogous to General Service)								Total ¹
	Indu- strial	AA	AO	E02 / EO1	SO	DP	G7	SCS	
Down	5	0	0.6	3	1	0	0	0	9.6
Fermanagh	6	0	0.5	4	0	0	0	0	10.5
Moyle	7	0	1	4	1	0	0	0	13
Total (rounded)	23	19	53	70	64	34	22	6	291

1 excludes statisticians on loan from DFP's NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

DCAL POSTS BY GRADE AND DISTRICT COUNCIL – 1 JAN 2013

District Council	Grade Level (includes grades analogous to General Service)								Total ³
	Indu- strial	AA	AO	E02 / EO1	SO	DP	G7	SCS	
Ballymoney	9	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	12
Belfast	0	15.42	46.06	54.5	56.44 ⁴	46.18	22.81	6	247.41
Craigavon	0	1.27	3	3	1	0	0	0	8.27
Down	5	0	0.6	2	1	0	0	0	8.6
Fermanagh	5	0	0.5	4	0	0	0	0	9.5
Moyle	4	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	9
Total (rounded)	23	17	52	69	59	46	23	6	295

2 excludes 1 Grade 3 seconded at the time to NI Policing Board

3 excludes statisticians on loan from DFP's NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

4 excludes 1 Staff officer on outward secondment

Salmon Fishing

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many salmon have been caught in the rivers leading from Lough Neagh, in each of the last two years, broken down per quarter of year.

(AQW 28072/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The salmon catch data retained by the Department derives from anglers annual returns for the salmon carcass tagging scheme. Annual salmon catch data for the main Lough Neagh tributaries, for the last two years for which records are complete, are detailed in the table below.

River	2011	2012
Ballinderry	1	0
Blackwater	7	2
Upper Bann	7	9
Maine	49	38
Moyola	10	6
Sixmilewater	6	5

This information is not held on a quarterly basis but all salmon were taken during the fishing season from 1 March to 31 October.

Department of Education

Phoenix Integrated Primary School

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 27020/11-15, what is the timeline for a decision on the approval of the business case.

(AQW 27706/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The Department has concluded its consideration of the business case and the school authority has been notified of the Department's approval to proceed with the procurement of the works.

Ballyclare Primary School

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to outline the plans for the building and improvements of Ballyclare Primary School. **(AQW 27735/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education & Library Board identified a new build for Ballyclare Primary School as one of its priorities for major capital investment.

While Ballyclare PS will be disappointed that it was not included in my capital investment announcements, this in no way implies that it will not be considered for funding at a later stage within the on-going area planning process. The reality is that many schools are in need of investment and are competing for limited capital funding.

I will continue to examine the case for capital investment across the estate and proposals for Ballyclare PS will be considered with other priorities as part of any future capital announcement.

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Down

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the location of each Autism Spectrum Disorder unit in South Down; and (ii) the number of pupils who attend each unit.

(AQW 27738/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South-Eastern and Southern Education and Library Boards have advised that the location of units dedicated solely to supporting pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and the number of pupils who attend these units, in South Down, are as follows:

Unit	Number of Pupils
Kilkeel Primary School (Autism Specific Class)	7
Cumran Primary School, Downpatrick (Two units)	11

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Educational Experience

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education (i) how E-Learning can increase inclusion and participation for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); and (ii) what steps his Department is taking to improve the educational experience of both pupils with ASD and their teachers.

(AQW 27739/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that there are many ways in which e-learning can increase inclusion and participation for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

E-learning has consistently been shown to deliver substantial gains in the education of pupils with ASD due to their congruence with particular strategies of individualised learning as well as more inclusive/participative activities.

Some of the most beneficial uses of e-learning for pupils with ASD are outlined below:

- to open and maintain social and educational links between pupils with ASD in different schools;
- to help pupils to develop life skills;
- to allow pupils who are unable to attend school to maintain contact with staff and peers and to continue to access some aspects of the curriculum during their period of absence;
- to provide an alternative and/or additional medium for pupils to obtain information about a school prior to starting the school. For example, some schools have enabled pupils to have virtual tours of the school helping pupils to become familiar with the school setting;
- to enhance communication of pupils with ASD and provide greater motivation to communicate with staff and peers using augmentative and/or visual applications;
- to use the natural visual strengths of pupils with ASD to develop their creativity for example, through design, software development, story writing, video-making, music and art.

With regard to part (ii), responsibility for the provision of services and support for children and young people with ASD rests with the education and library boards.

Although there may be some variation between boards in relation to the specific detail of service support, the following provision forms part of the boards endeavours to improve the educational experience of both pupils with ASD and their teachers.

1 Assessment and diagnosis

Boards' autism services work in partnership with health colleagues in relation to the identification of children and young people with ASD through local multi-disciplinary assessment arrangements. This facilitates effective partnership working between education and health practitioners.

2 Training

Boards provide a comprehensive training programme to staff in mainstream schools to build capacity to support children with ASD. Training is delivered in nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools across all key stages.

In addition, specialist training is provided to teachers and classroom assistants who work directly with children who have ASD. Programmes cover developing social skills, promoting life skills or applying behaviour principles to help with the teaching and management of pupils with ASD in classroom and school settings. Cluster group training is also provided for teachers who work in specialist settings such as autism-specific learning support classes within mainstream schools.

3 Individual pupil support

This includes:-

- setting autism-specific targets in individual educational plans;
- planning for pupils going through significant transitions;
- follow up support for pupils or their teachers/assistants or parents to help sustain and monitor progress or revise strategies during periods when the child is experiencing increased difficulties;
- engagement with parents to increase the consistency between school and home in relation to appropriate strategies; and
- support from classroom assistants to meet the needs of specific pupils.

4 Specialist provision in the primary and post-primary sectors

Although most children and young people access support and provision in mainstream school, more specialist provision can be accessed in autism specific classes attached to mainstream and special schools.

5 Links with other bodies

The Inter-board ASD Service links with the Middletown Centre for Autism in planning and delivery of specialist training to schools. Middletown's outreach staff provide intensive support for a number of children with complex difficulties. Advice and guidance is delivered to children through support in their home, school and community, direct support in their school placements or through a whole school approach.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Pupil Awareness

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to make children aware of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

(AQW 27748/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department recognises the vitally important contribution which schools make in raising awareness in children and young people of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and a number of measures are in place in this regard.

Through the revised curriculum, opportunities are provided for children and young people to develop the knowledge and skills to deal with issues such as drug and alcohol abuse. At primary school this is provided through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Area of Learning and, at post-primary school, through the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning.

The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) receive funding to enable them to provide a range of training and support to teachers and schools which can include training in relation to drugs and alcohol abuse. In addition, the funding allocated by my Department to the ELBs and the Youth Council for youth provision may be utilised, as part of an overall youth development programme, to support drugs and alcohol awareness sessions for young people where these are deemed appropriate.

The Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS), which is directly funded by the Department, provides professional counselling to children and young people at vulnerable times in their lives, including those experiencing difficulties as the result of drug and alcohol abuse. It is available to all post-primary schools. In addition, information for pupils developed through the i-Matter programme is issued to all post primary schools and includes information on 'drugs, alcohol and smoking' and details or sources of further information and help.

The Department has provided drugs guidance for schools and all grant-aided schools are required to include, in their prospectuses, a statement of the school's policy on education in relation to the misuse of drugs and alcohol. The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has been commissioned by the Department to review and update the current drugs guidance for schools. It is intended that this work, which will commence during 2013/14, will be completed during 2014/15.

Shared Education: Consultation

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education, in relation to his statement of 22 October 2013 on shared education, (i) how communities are being consulted on whether they want shared or integrated education models; (ii) whether parents' views are canvassed; (iii) if so, how the views are canvassed; and (iv) what weight is given to parents' views compared with the views of Principals and Boards of Governors. [R]

(AQW 27797/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Local support and the confidence of parents will be critical to the implementation of any new shared and integrated models. It is therefore for school managing authorities to engage with parents as well as the wider community to make the case for change and highlight the educational benefits of such proposals.

It will be a matter for the school managing authorities to determine the most appropriate means of obtaining the views of the main stakeholders.

Any firm proposal will then be incorporated into the area planning process and area plans will be widely consulted upon. I have publicly encouraged communities to let their views be known particularly on shared and integrated models that could result in sustainable provision in an area where schools are currently unviable.

Throughout the process all views are considered and decisions are based on the educational merits of a proposal.

Schools Enhancement Programme

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education which schools applied for the School Enhancement programme and met the criteria but were not listed for funding in his recent announcement.

(AQW 27811/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There were 70 applications from schools for funding under the School Enhancement Programme (SEP) which is designed to enable the refurbishment or extension of existing schools.

I announced recently that 51 schools have been informed that their applications have been successful at the first stage of assessment. The schools have been asked to prepare economic appraisals as part of the next stage of the assessment process. Unfortunately, 16 applications did not meet the criteria against which the projects were judged.

Decisions on funding will be made when the economic appraisals for the selected projects have been assessed. It is anticipated that those decisions will be made in the New Year. The scale of the potential investment in the SEP underlines my continuing commitment to improving the schools estate.

Schools: Boards of Governors

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the timescale for the reconstitution of schools' Boards of Governors.[R]

(AQW 27812/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The timescale proposed for the reconstitution of school Boards of Governors is set out below.

Schools & education stakeholders notified	June 2013
Governor recruitment campaign	October 2013 to June 2014
Consultation with existing DE & ELB Governors	November 2013 to June 2014
Consultation with existing Boards of Governors	
Consultation with Sectoral Interests	
Consultation with new applicants	
Transferor nominations to controlled schools	January to March 2014
Trustee nominations to maintained schools	
Election of Parent and Teacher Governors	
Appointment of ELB & DE Governors	January to June 2014
Completion of any outstanding appointments	September to December 2014
Induction training for new Governors	

Current arrangements for the reconstitution of school Boards of Governors may be subject to change due to the Education Bill which amends the procedures for making governor appointments.

Car Parking Spaces: DE Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27825/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Department of Education staff have access to car park spaces in a number of locations – Rathgael House, Waterside House and Forestview. However, the Department does not incur any expense as these are provided through DFP Properties Division as part of the Government Estate.

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education how his Department will engage with the Child Sexual Exploitation inquiry, given that schools and youth clubs could present the best opportunity to increase resilience among children and young people against abuse and grooming.[R]

(AQW 27841/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have agreed in principle to the Education and Training Inspectorate enjoining the expert led Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry. I wished to see the Terms of Reference before formally agreeing to the Department's involvement. I have now received the Terms of reference, am currently considering them and will respond to the Health Minister in due course.

Teachers: Accumulated Leave Entitlement

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Education who is responsible for the administration and payment of teachers accumulated leave entitlement during periods of maternity leave and long term sickness absence.

(AQW 27860/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Teachers' accumulated leave entitlement during periods of maternity leave and long term sickness absence is administered by their employer/employing authority. In respect of teachers paid through the Department's Teachers' Payroll System, the Department will, on instruction from the relevant employer/employing authority, effect any payment required. This is the responsibility of the individual employer for teachers in the Voluntary Grammar Sector.

Integrated Education

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what work his Department is doing with Atlantic Philanthropies and the Office of the First and deputy First Minister to put in place an additional funding programme to support integrated education.[R]

(AQW 27875/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently no plans for the Department of Education to work with Atlantic Philanthropies and the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister to consider an additional funding programme to support integrated education.

Integrated Education

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether he will make it a priority for his Department to bring forward guidance on integration that schools and communities may wish to explore and to ensure that integrated education is encouraged in the guidelines on the development of Area Plans.[R]

(AQW 27877/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education has already produced a document entitled "Transformation – An Information Pack for Schools". The purpose of this pack is to explain what is meant by integrated education (i.e. the education together of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils) and transformation, identify key issues which are likely to arise and how they might be addressed. The pack also outlines the legal and administrative processes and requirements and provides details of the various sources of advice and assistance available.

The need to encourage and facilitate integrated education is already recognised in the area planning process. The Terms of Reference for the area planning work state that it should take account of the Good Friday Agreement and the statutory position in relation to integrated education. They also include an explicit objective to "identify realistic, innovative and creative solutions to address need, including opportunities for shared schooling on a cross sectoral basis".

Also, the NI Council for Integrated Education is represented on the steering group established to support the Department in taking forward work to co-ordinate and oversee the continuing development of the area planning process and the area plans.

Schools: Cycle Parking

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what action he is taking to support the provision of cycle-sheds and bicycle parking facilities at schools.

(AQW 27880/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Many schools in the north of Ireland already have cycle parking facilities provided at the request of the school and in line with initiatives such as the Travelwise 'Safer routes to school' initiative and to comply with the relevant DOE Planning Service parking standards.

The Department is currently revising the secondary school section of the Schools Building Handbook. This revision includes a new section relating to the provision of cyclist facilities including cycle storage and the site layout designed to allow safe access for cyclists. When the revision has been finalised an update will be published on the Departments website

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education how he will ensure that (i) the Education and Training Inspectorate are fully informed on the Child Sexual Exploitation inquiry as well as learning and applying the lessons learnt from the inquiry at the earliest opportunity; and (ii) his Department is advising staff working in schools and the Youth Service on equipping children and young people to avoid and deal with predators. [R]

(AQW 27918/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have agreed in principle that the Education and Training Inspectorate enjoin the Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry and wished to see the Terms of Reference before formal agreement. I am now considering the Terms of Reference. The ETI already work with the other inspectorates involved in the Inquiry and are informed of progress with the Inquiry.

Safeguarding all children is a priority within education. The framework for staff in schools and the youth service to prepare children and young people to protect themselves from all forms of harm and promote resilience is in place through the personal development strands of the relevant curricula. I will ensure that all learning from the Inquiry is applied across the education sector to ensure that the current arrangements are as robust and effective as possible.

Civil Service Posts: DE

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Education how many Civil Service posts existed in his Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 27946/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of full time equivalent (FTE) Civil Service posts as at 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013, broken down by local Council area was as set out below.

Grade	1 January 2012			1 January 2013		
	North Down	Derry	Castle-reagh	North Down	Derry	Castle-reagh
AA (and Analagous Grade)	30.44	18.5	0	28.40	18.44	0
AO (and Analagous Grade)	64.8	52.57	0	64.91	54.46	0
EO II (and Analagous Grade)	65.42	23.93	0	66.85	23.96	0
EO I (and Analagous Grade)	46.96	10.68	0	47.38	10.08	0
SO (and Analagous Grade)	71.84	4	1	75.13	3	1
DP (and Analagous Grade)	75.95	3	0	88.39	2	0
G7 (and Analagous Grade)	34.1	1	2	37.61	1	2
G6 (and Analagous Grade)	61	0	0	60	0	0

CCEA: A-level Chemistry Examination

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 27626/11-15, to place a list in the Assembly library, anonymised as necessary to protect individual identities, of the final marks given to all CCEA A-level chemistry candidates in the summer 2013 series multiple choice paper.

(AQW 28033/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment has provided the following information.

Table 3 below shows marks achieved in AS Units 1 and 2 multiple choice sections and Table 4 (below) shows marks achieved in A2 Units 1 and 2 multiple choice sections, both from the summer 2013 examinations series.

Table 3: Number of candidates achieving each mark in the multiple choice element of units AS1 and AS2.

Mark Achieved	AS Unit 1 Multiple Choice Number of candidates	AS Unit 2 Multiple Choice Number of candidates
10	269	238
9	400	462
8	365	439
7	257	357
6	182	247
5	111	182
4	61	105
3	31	69
2	14	24
1	3	6
0	1	1
Total number of candidates	1694	2130

Table 4: Number of candidates achieving each mark in the multiple choice element of units A21 and A22

Mark Achieved	A2 Unit 1 Multiple Choice Number of candidates	A2 Unit 2 Multiple Choice Number of candidates
10	244	38
9	286	247
8	197	375
7	111	283
6	65	137
5	32	59
4	15	17
3	11	6
2	2	1
1	2	1
0	0	1
Total number of candidates	965	1165

Education Bill

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what areas of the Education Bill have yet to be agreed by stakeholders and political parties.

(AQW 28069/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Bill completed its Committee Stage on 8 April. Having considered the Committee's report, including the views of stakeholders, the main areas of concern appear to relate to the autonomy of schools in relation to governance and employment matters.

I propose to bring forward amendments at Consideration Stage that will address the outstanding concerns, whilst reflecting the Heads of Agreement issued by the First Minister and deputy First Minister in November 2011.

Key Stage 1: Baseline Assessment

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to introduce baseline assessment at the beginning of Key Stage 1.

(AQW 28097/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The current arrangements allow teachers to use a range of assessment

techniques that suit the nature of the work being assessed and the purpose of the assessment, including assessment for "baseline" purposes.

In the first year of Key Stage 1, teachers are required to assess and report on the Cross-Curricular Skills. While this should be done with reference to the Levels of Progression (LoPs), they do not have to assign a numerical level. It should be noted that these skills will also have been assessed in the Foundation Stage and that non-statutory progression frameworks are available to assist teachers in this process. This is intended to provide the first element of a coherent framework within which the progress of an individual pupil and/or a cohort can be monitored.

Teachers are also required to assess and report to parents on a pupil's progress in the Areas of Learning and the Other Skills (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities). This assessment should be carried out in accordance with the school's own assessment policy, giving them the flexibility to suit the needs, interests and abilities of their pupils.

Department for Employment and Learning

Public Consultations: DEL

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how many public consultations his Department has carried out since 2007, broken down by issue; and to detail the number of responses received per consultation.

(AQW 27525/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): A total of 42 public consultations have been undertaken by my Department since 2007 and a total of 1,447 responses were received. I have placed a detailed breakdown of responses in the Assembly Library and on the DEL website on <http://www.delni.gov.uk/>.

Youth Unemployment

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his proposals to address youth unemployment.

(AQO 4947/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Executive's Pathways to Success strategy is comprehensive evidence based approach that underpins my Department's ongoing efforts to combat the scourge of youth unemployment. Within the Pathways to Success strategy there are a range of key programmes, in particular, the Collaboration and Innovation Fund (CIF) that is specifically designed to address youth unemployment. It will help young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training through a broad range of provision including mentoring, vocational qualifications, personal development, motivational and life skills and employability skills.

Collaboration and Innovation Fund

Over £9.2 million will be made available to 24 organisations from the community, voluntary and educational sectors to help over 6,100 unemployed young people from December 2012 to March 2015.

The Pathways for Young People Allowance is available to eligible young people participating on Collaboration and Innovation project activity. The Pathways allowance is designed to ensure that there are effective incentives in place for eligible young people participating on provision funded by my Department. Young people could receive a minimum of £10 or a maximum of £25 per week depending on hours attended. Parents of CIF participants that are 16-17 years old will also receive child benefit at the appropriate rate.

Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS)

LEMIS is an initiative designed to help and assist unemployed people in the community overcome those issues that may be preventing them from finding and keeping a job. The service is provided by local community employment organisations in the Belfast area, Derry, Strabane, Newry & Mourne, Moyle and Cookstown District Council areas.

In addition to these areas, LEMIS is also available on an outreach basis throughout Northern Ireland to individuals with a common employability barrier to employment, i.e. young people (16-24 years) not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), people that are homeless, ex-offenders/ex-prisoners, people with a history of drug/alcohol misuse and care leavers. Employment Advisors will travel to meet clients with a common employability barrier in their local area.

To provide additional support to the Pathways to Success Strategy, in November 2012, LEMIS re-focused its referral process with a greater emphasis being placed on recruiting young people that are NEET.

The Pathways for Young People Allowance is also available to eligible young people participating on LEMIS. The Pathways allowance is designed to ensure that there are effective incentives in place for eligible young people participating on provision funded by my Department. Young people could receive a minimum of £10 or a maximum of £25 per week depending on hours attended. Parents of LEMIS participants that are 16-17 years old will also receive child benefit at the appropriate rate.

Learner Access and Engagement (LAE)

The LAE programme provides opportunities for non-statutory organisations (mainly, but not necessarily, voluntary and community groups) to provide learner support for adults through a contractual arrangement with a FE College. The learner support will be targeted at adults, aged 19+, who are 'hard-to-reach', not in work, who hold no more than one qualification at level 2 or above, and who may have barriers to learning, to encourage them to undertake suitable further education to help prepare them for employment or further learning.

Similarly, the LAE NEET Pilot Programme (also known as the Community Based Access Programme) enables learners aged 16 to 18, who are not currently in employment, education, training, nor Essential Skills (ES) provision, and who hold no more than one qualification at level 2 or above, to acquire learner support to enable them to progress from entry level/ level 1 to level 2 ES provision into mainstream FE or other government-funded training programmes.

Both the mainstream Learner Access and Engagement Programme, and the LAE NEETS Pilot Programme, commenced in September 2013.

Community Family Support Programme (CFSP)

The initial CFSP pilot is a 'Pathways to Success' initiative designed to focus on the needs of 44 disadvantaged families from January to June 2013 in the targeted areas of Belfast (West & East), Strabane, Cookstown and Newtownabbey.

The CFSP was originally designated as a signature project (Pathways to Employment for Young People) for Delivering Social Change in October 2012. I have been able to secure additional resources to enable the pilot to be up-scaled and rolled out across Northern Ireland. The intention is to replicate the original model and increase the target number of families participating on the programme to 720. The programme has a funding allocation of £4m for October 2013 – March 2015.

Steps to Work (StW)

StW is my Department's main adult return to work programme, the aim of which is to assist people to find and sustain employment. StW is a flexible programme which offers opportunities for subsidised employment, work experience, qualifications, training and assistance for those interested in self-employment. The programme is available to anyone who is aged 18 years or over (16 in the case of lone parents) and who is unemployed or economically inactive, irrespective of whether or not they are in receipt of benefit.

In November 2012, First Start, a 26 weeks waged initiative, for young people aged 18 to 24 who are unemployed for 6 months or more was added to the programme.

More recently, the StW programme has been flexed to support the delivery of the Youth Employment Scheme through the introduction of a Work Experience and Skills Development Strands.

Training for Success (TfS)

Through its TfS programme, the Department offers a guaranteed training place for all unemployed 16-17 year olds who do not wish to remain in, or are not able to benefit from, mainstream education or further education. (The guarantee is extended for young people with a disability or from an in-care background up to the ages of 22 and 24 respectively. The programme is delivered through four components:

- (i) Skills for Your Life – a programme of up to 52 weeks training to address the personal and development needs of young people who have disengaged from learning and/or have significant obstacles.
- (ii) Skills for Work Level 1 – a programme of up to 52 weeks training to help young people gain skills and vocationally related qualifications level 1 to be able to gain employment, an apprenticeship, or into further education
- (iii) Skills for Work Level 2 – To ensure that those who have been assessed as being capable of achieving a vocationally related qualification at level 2, but who have not yet secured employment are prepared for future progression to employment as an Apprentice.
- (iv) Skills for Work Level 3– This is a progression only route for young people who have completed the level 2 programme and who have not been able to find work but who are still within the 16-17 guarantee.

The Department provides a Pre-Entry Training Support referral for school-leavers with learning, or other disabilities. Clients are referred, after parental/ guardian consent, by the Department's Careers Advisers to contracted specialist support providers specialising in disability and learning support; these include Disability Action, the Cedar Foundation, Sensory Learning Support and Ulster Supported Employment. This process aims to ensure that support needs and training are identified and put in place as soon as possible after commencement of training.

All TfS participants receive a non means-tested Educational Maintenance Allowance of £40 per week, assistance towards the costs of travel and, where applicable, childcare and lodgings. Specialist Support funding of up to £1,000 annually can be accessed for participants requiring help with their training. An enhanced training fee is also payable to a Training Supplier in order to provide significant additional input of resources such as specialist equipment.

Youth Employment Scheme

The focus of the Youth Employment Scheme that I announced in July 2012 is on early intervention for young people aged 18 to 24. It is a voluntary scheme offered through local Jobs and Benefits Offices from the point of claim. The specific aim of the intervention is to help young people gain work experience, develop additional skills and achieve recognised relevant qualifications.

Young people are able to avail of work experience to enhance their employability skills and prospects of employment while at the same time claiming unemployment benefit.

This initiative seeks to build a covenant between employers, government and young people through which each will make a commitment to addressing personal, social and economic development in a new and innovative way. Other jurisdictions in Britain and Ireland have put measures in place to address youth unemployment but none match the scale of intervention provided in Northern Ireland. The elements of the Youth Employment Scheme are as follows:

Work Readiness Assessment

Building on the work the Employment Service already delivers, an initial detailed diagnosis of need is carried out and recommendations made on how to address any employability and job search skills gaps identified.

Skills Assessment

Young people will also be offered further careers advice from a qualified Careers Adviser, where appropriate, to identify possible further training opportunities.

Gaining Experience

A Work Experience Programme lasting 3 to 8 weeks offers opportunities for young people to experience the world of work. Participation is voluntary and young people retain benefit entitlement and will be given opportunities to further develop employability skills and trial particular types of work.

Skills Development Strand

A longer work experience opportunity including skills training is also available. Young people can obtain additional relevant qualifications during a 6 month period of work experience. Participants receive £45 per week in addition to their benefit entitlement.

Employment Opportunities

Employers that can offer full time jobs to young people are able to avail of an enhanced employer subsidy of £5,750 a year. They must provide training to allow the young people to develop their skills and gain relevant qualification while in employment.

A Post Implementation Review has resulted in some revisions and these are effective for participants joining the scheme from 30th September 2013. The details of the revisions are as follows:

- participants on Work Experience will receive the equivalent of their benefit plus £15.38 per week;
- a payment of £250 will be made to a young person that completes their training and achieves a qualification under the Skills Development strand of the Youth Employment Scheme;
- the Skills Development and Enhanced Employer Subsidy elements will continue to be promoted primarily to employers within the Jobs Growth Sectors opportunities. However, where an opportunity is offered outside these sectors where there is a clear prospect of a job outcome these will not be refused; and
- Steps to Work Lead Contractors will be engaged to source training for employers offering Skills Development opportunities and will administer these placements on behalf of the Department.

I trust that you will agree that the approach taken to address youth unemployment across Northern Ireland is both extensive and comprehensive to take account of the importance that both the Executive and I attach to overcoming youth unemployment.

Car Parking Spaces: DEL Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27826/11-15)

Dr Farry: All car parking spaces used by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) are leased and managed by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). DEL does not operate outside this arrangement and so does not incur any direct expenditure on car parking.

The Department is fully supportive of DFP's commitment to achieve a reduction year on year in the number of leased car parking spaces provided to all departments by surrendering the stipulated number of car parking spaces each year.

The Department encourages the use of public transport as an alternative to using cars through its participation in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Translink Annual Commuter Travelcard Scheme which allows staff to apply for an advance of salary to purchase an annual Translink Commuter Travelcard at a discounted rate. Repayments are spread across twelve months and deducted directly from salaries.

The Department also supports the NICS Cycle to Work Scheme which enables staff to buy a bicycle. Monthly payments are made through a salary sacrifice arrangement. When requested and where accommodation is available, lockers and / or shower facilities have been provided.

Disability Employment Service

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the current position of the Disability Employment Service. (AQW 27897/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Disability Employment Service is an integral part of my Department's Employment Service. Its specific role is to support and assist people with health conditions and disabilities to progress towards, move into and stay in employment.

In doing so, the Disability Employment Service provides a range of programmes and services including Work Connect, Workable, Access to Work, Job Introduction Scheme and the Condition Management Programme. It also has a team of Occupational Psychologists who work directly with clients with disabilities and who also play a key support role with the Employment Advisers working in the Jobs and Benefit offices and JobCentres.

A strategic review of the Disability Employment Service is currently being undertaken. To inform this review, an overarching Disability Employment Strategy is being developed. A working group has been established to take the work on the strategy forward, with membership comprising of officials from the Disability Employment Service and a number of key representatives from local disability organisations. This is testament to the very positive relationship and partnership working that exists between my Department and the disability sector.

The direct involvement of the disability organisations will enable my Department to gain a deeper insight into the specific employment related needs of people with disabilities. In addition, a number of user engagement events have been scheduled throughout Northern Ireland, to ensure that the views of people with disabilities are also considered as part of the development of this strategy.

The Disability Employment Service will continue to play a key role, working with key partners and stakeholders to ensure that people with disabilities are provided with the tailored support and assistance they need to help them achieve their employment goals.

Research Conduct

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assurances he can give to the general public and university undergraduates that the invention of a book is not acceptable behaviour under any Code of Good Conduct in Research. (AQW 27939/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department is a signatory to the Concordat for Research Integrity which sets out how the research community should deal with any alleged misconduct in a transparent, fair and robust manner.

It is up to higher education institutions to handle any allegations of misconduct and to monitor, and where necessary improve, the suitability and appropriateness of the mechanisms in place to provide assurances over the integrity of research.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Petroleum Licences

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the final deadline by which each company currently in possession of a petroleum licence must commence drilling in order to retain their licence. (AQW 27615/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The terms of a Petroleum Licence, including the Licensee's obligation to carry out the specified work programme, are set out in the **Petroleum Production Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987** as amended by the **Petroleum Production (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010**. Unless my Department in any particular case decides otherwise, the Licensee must fulfil the work programme within the Initial Term of five years in order that the Licence may continue into the Second Term for a further five years. The work programmes of all four current petroleum licences in Northern Ireland specify that, subject to obtaining all the necessary permissions, the company must drill an exploration well in the Initial Term, i.e. by the following dates:

PL1/10 InfraStrata plc and partners	3 March 2016
PL2/10 Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd	31 March 2016
PL3/10 Rathlin Energy Ltd	14 February 2016
PL5/10 Providence Resources plc	21 February 2016

Where a licence contains a 'drill or drop' work programme, as is the case for PL1/10, PL2/10 and PL5/10, the Licensee must inform the Department before the end of Year Three that it intends to drill an exploration well or the Licence will terminate at the end of Year Three, unless the Department exercises its discretion under paragraph (2) of Clause 2 of the Petroleum Production (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

Energy Prices

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the policy levers within her Department which affect energy prices.

(AQW 27790/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Strategic Energy Framework (SEF) sets the direction of energy policy in Northern Ireland for the period 2010 through to 2020. The SEF includes a section on affordability and, in particular, recognises the importance of assessing the impact of new policy and projects on energy costs.

Energy policy covers a wide spread of issues including those associated with gas, electricity, sustainability, and security of supply. It also has to manage, to best effect, binding legislation and targets emanating from Europe which impact on energy costs.

The Utility Regulator also has an important role to play in relation to energy costs. It is the case that retail energy prices are largely driven by wholesale energy costs which are set on global markets, and retail tariff reviews and price controls for the electricity and gas sectors in Northern Ireland are set by the Utility Regulator.

Energy Prices

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the action she has taken to deal with increasing energy prices.

(AQW 27791/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has no role in the regulation or setting of energy prices which are mainly driven by wholesale costs set on global markets. Retail tariff reviews and regulatory price controls for the gas and electricity sectors are matters for the Utility Regulator.

I am of course concerned about energy price increases and the impact on both domestic and business consumers, hence my Department works with the Regulator and the energy sector to improve competition and provide options for consumers to reduce bills by switching supplier.

The Utility Regulator reports that there are currently five active suppliers in the domestic electricity market in Northern Ireland. There is also competition in the Greater Belfast gas market and within the large industrial and commercial sector of the gas market outside Belfast, which will be fully opened from April 2015.

I also await the outcome of the of the ETI Committee review of electricity policy and pricing, including any recommendations the Committee may make.

Electricity Interconnectors

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the current status of (i) the Moyle Interconnector; and (ii) a proposed second North/South Interconnector.

(AQW 27792/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Moyle electricity interconnector is currently operating at 250 megawatts transfer capacity which is around 50% of its full capacity. Mutual Energy Ltd, owners of the Interconnector, is actively pursuing an "interim" repair which should restore it to full capacity by mid-2014. Work is also underway on a longer term repair which should be in place by 2017, and will require two new low voltage cables to be laid alongside the existing Moyle cables.

The NIE planning application for a second North South interconnector was referred to the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) by the Department of Environment (DOE) in March 2012. The enquiry was adjourned pending submission of a revised environmental statement by NIE. This was submitted to the DOE in April 2013 and a new public consultation was launched in September 2013. It is now a matter for the DOE to complete the public consultation phase and make arrangements for resumption of the PAC enquiry.

Mobile Infrastructure Project

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Mobile Infrastructure Project.

(AQW 27808/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The contract for the Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) is being fully administered, resourced and managed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. DETI therefore has no direct involvement in its implementation.

DCMS does however keep DETI informed of progress on an ad hoc basis and is advising that two nominal sites have been identified in the North Antrim constituency for the location of mast infrastructure to address mobile not-spots.

The project supplier Arqiva and its sub-contractor, Harlequin, have been conducting further searches to identify the optimum siting of mast equipment in the nominal locations and are reporting that the response from the local community and site providers has been positive.

More details on the project in general can be found on the DCMS website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-it-easier-for-the-communications-and-telecoms-industries-to-grow-while-protecting-the-interests-of-citizens/supporting-pages/improving-mobile-coverage>.

Car Parking Spaces: DETI Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the measures her Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27882/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment does not own or rent any parking spaces and therefore has no expenditure for them.

The buildings and any associated parking spaces occupied by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment are part of the NICS government estate and are owned and managed by Department of Finance and Personnel.

Northern Ireland Electricity: Investigation

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the input that her Department has had in the investigation into Northern Ireland Electricity's capitalisation practice which has been referred to the Competition Commission following the rejection of the Utility Regulator's price control.

(AQW 27930/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department submitted a response to the Competition Commission following the Utility Regulator's referral of the Northern Ireland Electricity price control determination.

This submission has been published on the Competition Commission website and can be accessed at: http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/assets/competitioncommission/docs/2013/northern-ireland-electricity-price-determination/130604_department_of_enterprise_trade_and_investment.pdf

Jobs Fund

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the success of the Jobs Fund since it was introduced by InvestNI.

(AQO 4945/11-15)

Mrs Foster: From its launch in April 2011 to 31st March 2013, the Jobs Fund promoted a total of four thousand, five hundred and sixty seven new jobs throughout Northern Ireland and created two thousand, six hundred and eighty nine jobs.

This represents performance 5.4% above the promoted jobs target and 12.2% above the created jobs target during the first two years of the scheme.

Office Accommodation

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there is a shortage of the high quality office accommodation required to attract new investors.

(AQO 4946/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The availability of suitable office space is an important part of our investment proposition.

I am conscious that concerns have been raised over the current level of availability of high quality office accommodation and the potential impact it might have on Northern Ireland's attractiveness as an investment location.

However Invest NI considers that the current level of availability of Grade A office space is not negatively affecting its ability to secure investment projects.

Job Creation: Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the measures her Department can take to provide job creation opportunities in Armagh City and District.

(AQO 4948/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My department and Invest NI continue to work with companies across Armagh City and District to help them grow and create new employment opportunities.

Between 2008 and 2013, Invest NI made over seven hundred offers of assistance worth nearly £8 million to companies in the Armagh area, generating total investment in the district of £46 million. This has contributed towards the promotion of six hundred and ninety seven new jobs in companies such as John Mackle, Tayto and John Woods.

In November 2011, I launched the Boosting Business campaign which provides a range of support both financial and advisory, to help businesses cope with the impact of the downturn. A key element of the campaign is the Jobs Fund which aims to help boost employment creation in the shorter-term. As of 31st March 2013, there were twelve Jobs Fund business investment projects at various stages of development across the Armagh district which should lead to the creation of one hundred and thirty nine new jobs, fifty eight of which were already in place. The Fund had also provided support to fourteen young people who were not in education, employment or training to set up their own business and had assisted a further four residents in the district's Neighbourhood Renewal Areas to establish their own businesses.

Another significant recent initiative has been the European Union's Local Economic Development measure, where Invest NI has been working closely with Armagh City and District Council and the South East Economic Development group to progress fifteen initiatives to support local business in the Armagh area. These initiatives have a total value of £3 million and it is hoped that ultimately they will help lead to further job creation across the area.

I would like to assure you that we will continue to do all we can to help encourage new employment opportunities in Armagh and across Northern Ireland.

Energy: SME Assistance

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance is available for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in relation to the management of energy resources.

(AQO 4949/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI provides a range of support for SME businesses to assist with the management of energy resources to help reduce operating costs. This support includes technical advice, free energy efficiency audits, action plans and project management support to help businesses to implement the most cost effective energy resource saving opportunities.

Invest NI also provides funding for the Energy Efficiency Loan Fund in Northern Ireland which is managed and delivered by Carbon Trust. The Loan Fund offers interest-free loans from £3,000 to £400,000 to Northern Ireland businesses to help them install more energy efficient or renewable technology.

Tourism

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what opportunities she had to promote local tourism during her recent visit to South Africa.

(AQO 4950/11-15)

Mrs Foster: During my visit to South Africa in September, I hosted a networking event in Johannesburg for thirty top South African tour operators. I also gave interviews to key media representatives, highlighting the great success that Northern Ireland is currently enjoying and promoting Northern Ireland as a compelling holiday and business travel destination.

I also attended a Northern Irish Connections reception where I met over one hundred Diaspora from or affiliated with Northern Ireland including university alumni, sports networks, and business and tourism contacts.

Flights: Germany/Belgium

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what actions she has taken in the last twelve months to secure direct flights to Germany and Belgium.

(AQO 4951/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department is in regular dialogue with airlines and Northern Ireland's airports, to help bring new air services to Northern Ireland and to promote demand for existing services. This includes the potential for new routes to important business and inbound tourism markets in mainland Europe. However, while under development, these discussions are of a commercially sensitive and confidential nature.

Energy: Price Freeze

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether it is possible to freeze local energy prices.

(AQO 4952/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Wholesale energy prices are set on international markets. Agreement of tariffs is a matter for the Regulator. My Department cannot direct the Regulator to implement a freeze on prices. In setting tariffs, the Regulator must consider the impact that a freeze would have on the commercial viability of suppliers who would remain exposed to volatility in wholesale energy prices. Any significant change in wholesale energy prices could also result in large tariff increases for consumers at the end of the price-freeze period.

Small Business Saturday

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what she is doing to promote Small Business Saturday.

(AQO 4953/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Small Business Saturday event being held on 7 December 2013 is being led by an independent national campaign supported by small businesses. It provides an opportunity for small businesses to raise their profile and to generate business by encouraging communities to support them at a key time in the shopping calendar.

I want to support all businesses, but as regards this initiative Invest NI is considering how they might contribute, taking into consideration their existing promotional and marketing activities.

Economic Strategy: Fiscal Levers

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her analysis of the fiscal levers which could be devolved to complement corporation tax to enhance the development and implementation of the local economic strategy. **(AQO 4954/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: Work is ongoing between the Executive and the UK Government to examine the potential to devolve other fiscal powers that could support the Economic Strategy goal of growing the private sector.

Whilst there are many taxes which could potentially benefit Northern Ireland, we need to focus on those which are likely to have the greatest economic impact and where there is a clear rationale for devolution – such as Corporation Tax and long-haul APD which impacts our competitiveness relative to the Republic of Ireland.

We must also not lose sight of the need to develop those areas already within our control, such as skills and infrastructure, which are essential for supporting both local and foreign investment.

Department of the Environment

Wind Turbines

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the planning applications for (i) single; and (ii) multiple wind turbines on agricultural land in (a) North Antrim; and (b) Northern Ireland.

(AQW 22405/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Table 1 below details the number of single wind turbine and wind farm applications received¹ from 2008/09 to 31 August 2013², on agricultural land³, in North Antrim⁴ and in Northern Ireland.

Table 1

		2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014
North Antrim	Single wind turbine	13	9	86	78	47	27
	Wind farm	1	1	5	4	0	1
	Total	14	10	91	82	47	28
Northern Ireland	Single wind turbine	157	97	571	626	572	245
	Wind farm	14	9	15	10	5	12
	Total	171	106	586	636	577	257

Notes:

- 1 All applications received in the period may not have had a decision issued within the same time period. Applications received may also include some applications that are subsequently withdraw
- 2 Latest available fully validated renewable energy information
- 3 The dataset was arrived at by taking the relevant applications from the Renewable energy database and then selecting those which intersect DARD farm polygons
- 4 Area refers to the North Antrim parliamentary constituency

Appendix A includes the details of each of these planning applications, a copy of which has been placed in the Assembly Library.

Dereliction Funding

Mr Storey asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions his Department has had with other Departments in relation to dereliction funding.

(AQW 25253/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In the course of developing the Dereliction Intervention Programme, DOE officials held discussions with DSD officials to ensure a common understanding of our roles. This was to safeguard against the possibility of overlaps in either funding or physical terms.

The ongoing grant process is assisted by the Department's planning staff, who have a good local understanding of potential interfaces with the work of other departments.

Planning Conditions

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment what is the timescale between a reported breach of planning conditions and his Department ensuring that there is compliance with the relevant planning conditions.

(AQW 26433/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Enforcement is a key priority for the Department and it investigates all complaints into alleged breaches of planning control and prioritises each complaint. The priority given is determined by the guiding principle that any action in response to an actual breach of planning control should be proportionate to the harm it causes.

The Department has discretion to take enforcement action when it regards it as expedient to do so. In determining the most appropriate course of action in response to an alleged breach, the Department will take into account the extent of the breach and its potential impact on the environment.

The priority given is determined by the guiding principle that any action in response to a breach of planning control should be proportionate to the harm it causes.

Departmental staff work within a number of Performance targets for Breaches of planning control measured against 3 Categories. Priority 1 cases reflect the most serious cases with shorter deadlines.

Key Performance Targets include;

- discuss and agree a course of action for 95% of Priority 1 cases within 2 working weeks of receipt of the initial complaint;
- discuss and agree a course of action for 60% of all other cases within 8 working weeks and 95% within 12 working weeks of receipt of the initial complaint;
- bring 70% of cases to a target conclusion within 39 working weeks (9 months) of receipt of complaint.

Driving Licences

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many medically qualified members of staff are employed by the Driver and Vehicle Agency; (ii) how driver licence applicants' private medical records are managed; (iii) whether the same confidentiality safeguards are applied as those applied by the Health Service; and (iv) how these safeguards are guaranteed.
(AQW 26751/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In response to each of the questions above:

- (i) The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) do not directly employ medically qualified staff. Applications for driver and taxi driver licences which require medical investigation are referred to the Department of Finance and Personnel's Occupational Health Service (OHS), who are contracted by the Department to provide professional medical advice.
- (ii) Medical records provided in connection with a driving licence application are processed by a dedicated section within DVA Driver Licensing in Coleraine. The records are treated as confidential and are accessible only by the staff who have a business need to view them and where expert medical opinion is required, by OHS doctors or consultants contracted to provide specialist medical advice to OHS.

Documents are transferred between DVA and OHS by secure courier in sealed containers, which are opened only by OHS medical staff or staff in the DVA Driver Licensing Medical Section. Medical records posted to DVA by licence holders or applicants are opened only by staff in the medical section, provided the envelopes in which they are sent have been appropriately marked by the sender.

Medical records are retained in accordance with the DVA Driver Licensing Retention and Disposal Schedule. Where the records are identified for destruction, they are destroyed by secure shredding within the Coleraine County Hall grounds before incineration.

- (iii) All staff working in the Driver Licensing medical section are required to sign a confidentiality declaration which prohibits the unlawful access to, or disclosure of, sensitive personal data, including medical records. This declaration is in addition to the requirements of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Data Security Policy and the NICS Code of Ethics. All staff are given appropriate training to ensure that they carry out their duties in accordance with the Department's data protection policies. OHS doctors and staff are required to sign and adhere to a separate confidentiality agreement.

Wind Turbines

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment when he will answer AQW 22405/11-15.
(AQW 26851/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Table 1 below details the number of single wind turbine and wind farm applications received¹ from 2008/09 to 31 August 2013², on agricultural land³, in North Antrim⁴ and in Northern Ireland.

Table 1

		2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014
North Antrim	Single wind turbine	13	9	86	78	47	27
	Wind farm	1	1	5	4	0	1
	Total	14	10	91	82	47	28
Northern Ireland	Single wind turbine	157	97	571	626	572	245
	Wind farm	14	9	15	10	5	12
	Total	171	106	586	636	577	257

Notes:

- 1 All applications received in the period may not have had a decision issued within the same time period. Applications received may also include some applications that are subsequently withdrawn
- 2 Latest available fully validated renewable energy information
- 3 The dataset was arrived at by taking the relevant applications from the Renewable energy database and then selecting those which intersect DARD farm polygons
- 4 Area refers to the North Antrim parliamentary constituency

Appendix A includes the details of each of these planning applications, a copy of which has been placed in the Assembly Library.

Taxi Industry

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the taxi firms or representative bodies that he has met since taking office.
(AQW 26998/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I have met with representatives of taxi companies and bodies, and other interested parties since taking office. I have met representatives of Belfast Public Hire Taxi Drivers and Belfast Taxis CIC (Community Interest Company), the owners of Value Cabs and Fonacabs, taxi stakeholders in Derry and representatives of consumer groups with an interest in the taxi industry. A further meeting with taxi stakeholders from Derry is being arranged for late October.

I will also ensure that my officials continue to be available to engage with key stakeholders in the taxi industry and those who represent the views of consumer groups as we progress reform of the taxi industry.

Taxis: Single-tier System

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the impact on service users should the single-tier taxi system proposal be implemented.
(AQW 27214/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The single-tier taxi system provided for in the Taxi Act (NI) 2008 will allow all taxis to ply for hire anywhere in Northern Ireland. Consumers will find increased availability of taxis to use and have greater choice in which taxi they can choose to use, and there will be reduced confusion around which activities individual classes of taxis are permitted to undertake. The benefits to the consumer will be most noticeable within Belfast City Centre, as more taxis will be able to ply for hire within City limits, facilitating transport particularly from licensed premises after closing.

Consumer and disability groups support the implementation of single tier licensing. In its response to the Department's consultation earlier this year on the implementation of single tier licensing, the Consumer Council stated that it believes that the change to a one-tier system will prove beneficial for passengers in providing more choice. The Council has been consistently supportive of the Taxis Act as a whole, considering that the proposed legislative changes will increase consumer protection from over-charging and ensure that customers will benefit from increased safety measures. Disability groups such as the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) and Disability Action are also supportive of a single tier system as they believe it will simplify access to taxis for disabled consumers. Improving vehicle accessibility has been one of the key priorities for IMTAC during the taxi reform programme.

Single tier licensing will also enable the Department to take more effective enforcement against illegal taxi activities, which is an issue those in the taxi industry as a whole are very concerned about.

Taxis: Single-tier System

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment what are the cost implications of the single-tier taxi system for service users with a disability, particularly those with wheelchairs or walking aids, in relation to public hire taxis, who operate a flat fee, against the private hire companies who can charge more than double the fee of public hire taxis for passengers using wheelchairs or walking aids.

(AQW 27264/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A single-tier taxi system will allow all taxis to ply for hire anywhere in Northern Ireland, removing the distinction between public and private hire taxis.

At the same time, a separate set of Taximeter Regulations will be introduced which will set a maximum fare tariff for all taxis in Northern Ireland. These regulations will ensure that no taxi is able to charge a wheelchair user or customer with a walking aid any more than the maximum fare regardless of the size and type of vehicle being provided. This will protect all consumers from overcharging and provide costs savings against charges currently levied by some private hire companies to customers requesting a larger taxi vehicle.

An additional protection will be provided in that drivers will not be able to engage the taximeter until the passenger is in the vehicle and ready to depart, and this must be disengaged immediately on arrival at the destination. Therefore any time required for passenger assistance will not lead to an increased journey cost for the consumer.

Outsourcing of Functions: DOE

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to outsource any of his Department's functions in a bid to achieve efficiencies.

(AQW 27291/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department recognises the potential for achieving efficiencies through outsourcing where this is cost-effective. However, whilst there are currently no plans to outsource specific departmental functions, the Department will keep under review and investigate opportunities for outsourcing to deliver efficiencies.

Giant's Causeway: UNESCO Report

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment what actions he has taken following the publication of the UNESCO Report on the impact of the proposed development at Runkerry on the World Heritage Site status of the Giants Causeway.

(AQW 27394/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The position of the former Minister was that he did not accept the validity of the Report of the Advisory Mission to the Giants Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site which was presented to the annual meeting of the World Heritage Committee in June this year. That remains my position and I do not accept or intend to act upon the recommendations made by the Committee as a result of the Mission Report, until the legitimate questions and concerns identified by the Department about the preparation of this report have been addressed.

Minerals Applications

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 25467/11-15, how many times minerals permissions have been reviewed to assess the environmental impact on a newly declared candidate Special Area of Conservation or other designations of international importance, since 2000.

(AQW 27412/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has not reviewed any previously granted minerals permission to assess impact on SAC's or international designations since 2000. Existing designations and potential for environmental impact will have been taken into consideration by the Department as part of the planning process for minerals applications.

Planning Application: A/2009/0400/F

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the date the deemed refusal for retrospective planning application A/2009/0400/F became effective; and (ii) when the letter of deemed refusal was issued to the applicant in accordance with Regulation 15(2A) of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.

(AQW 27413/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This application was deemed refused on 4 June 2010 due to the applicant failing to submit further environmental information required to forward the assessment of the proposal.

While no letter issued at the time, my officials are now writing to the agent to advise of the deemed refusal and the portal will be updated to reflect this position.

Anaerobic Digester: Mallusk

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) any plans his Department has seen relating to a possible anaerobic digester opposite the Chimney Corner on the Antrim Line, Mallusk; (ii) who has been consulted regarding the anaerobic digester; and (iii) the current stage of this application.

(AQW 27425/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department received a valid planning application for the development of an Anaerobic Digestion Plant at a site 220m North East of 9 Park Road, Mallusk on 20th April 2012.

The application was advertised in the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News, the News Letter and Andersonstown News Group on 4th May 2012. Belfast City Council, as owners of the adjacent City of Belfast Playing fields at 2 Park Road, Ballyvesey, were notified of the application. No objections to the proposal were received.

During the processing of the application, the Department consulted with:

- Land and Resource Management (NIEA)
- Water Management Unit (NIEA)
- Industrial Pollution & Radio Chemical Inspectorate (NIEA)
- Veterinary Service (DARD)
- Veterinary Service (Animal By-Products) (DARD)
- Environmental Health (Newtownabbey Borough Council)
- Roads Service
- NI Water

None of the above consultees expressed concerns with the proposal. An opinion to approve the application was presented to Newtownabbey Borough council on 13th May 2013 and Council agreed with this recommendation. Planning permission was granted on 14th May 2013.

Planning Permissions: Discharge Consents

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 26495/11-15, in relation to the 24 planning permissions, whether all had been approved prior to discharge consents being granted.

(AQW 27482/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In relation to the 24 planning permissions; one of these was approved following the discharge consent date.

Peatland

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment what targets have been set for peatland restoration; and what resources will be allocated to carry out this work.

(AQW 27570/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My predecessor wrote to the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon, on securing benefits from UK peatlands in July this year. In the letter he offered continued support to the further development of the Peatland Code including the identification of suitable peatland restoration projects in Northern Ireland. He also stated that the Department was working with DARD to help improve the natural capital of peatlands through implementation of agricultural policies.

We have since supported the launch of the trial phase of the UK Peatland Code in September and emphasised the need for peatland restoration to be included in recent RDP consultation. Staff in my Department are currently working closely with DARD on the development of the new agri-environment schemes.

Within my Department some resources have been allocated to peatland restoration e.g. planning regulation, research and survey, designated site management and partnership projects and helping develop the UK peatland code in Northern Ireland and DARD agri-environment policies. However, more work is required before targets for peatland restoration can be set.

My Department has commenced working with the devolved administrations to develop an EU Funding proposal under the LIFE Programme. The main focus of this bid across the administrations will be peatland restoration.

Peatland

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he has taken with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that agri-environment schemes deliver peatland management and restoration.

(AQW 27571/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My predecessor wrote to the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon, on securing benefits from UK peatlands in July this year. In the letter he offered continued support to the further development of the Peatland Code including the identification of suitable peatland restoration projects in Northern Ireland. He also stated that the

Department was working with DARD to help improve the natural capital of peatlands through implementation of agricultural policies.

We have since supported the launch of the trial phase of the UK Peatland Code in September and emphasised the need for peatland restoration to be included in recent RDP consultation. Staff in my Department are currently working closely with DARD on the development of the new agri-environment schemes.

Within my Department some resources have been allocated to peatland restoration e.g. planning regulation, research and survey, designated site management and partnership projects and helping develop the UK peatland code in Northern Ireland and DARD agri-environment policies. However, more work is required before targets for peatland restoration can be set.

My Department has commenced working with the devolved administrations to develop an EU Funding proposal under the LIFE Programme. The main focus of this bid across the administrations will be peatland restoration.

Peatland

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment whether he plans to implement the Peatland Code; and if so, when.
(AQW 27572/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My predecessor wrote to the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon, on securing benefits from UK peatlands in July this year. In the letter he offered continued support to the further development of the Peatland Code including the identification of suitable peatland restoration projects in Northern Ireland. He also stated that the Department was working with DARD to help improve the natural capital of peatlands through implementation of agricultural policies.

We have since supported the launch of the trial phase of the UK Peatland Code in September and emphasised the need for peatland restoration to be included in recent RDP consultation. Staff in my Department are currently working closely with DARD on the development of the new agri-environment schemes.

Within my Department some resources have been allocated to peatland restoration e.g. planning regulation, research and survey, designated site management and partnership projects and helping develop the UK peatland code in Northern Ireland and DARD agri-environment policies. However, more work is required before targets for peatland restoration can be set.

My Department has commenced working with the devolved administrations to develop an EU Funding proposal under the LIFE Programme. The main focus of this bid across the administrations will be peatland restoration.

Planning Application: E/2013/0093/F

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on planning application E/2013/0093/F.
(AQW 27612/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Work is currently ongoing in processing this application. My officials are completing the EIA Determination and have sought the advice from the relevant environmental bodies.

Planning Application: E/2013/0093/F

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether his Department is conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on planning application E/2013/0093/F; and if so (ii) when and where details of this EIA will be published; and (iii) why this information was not made publically available before the deadline for public submissions to the planning application.
(AQW 27614/11-15)

Mr Durkan: 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.

Details of the Departments EIA Determination will be published when the determination is completed and will be placed on the planning portal for public viewing.

The information has not been made publically available because the EIA Determination is not complete. The Department accepts public submissions up until the application being presented to Council therefore it is not considered that the public have been subject to any prejudice.

MOT Centres

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of MOT centres.
(AQW 27646/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are 15 MOT centres at various locations across Northern Ireland.

Information regarding each test centre can be found on the NIDirect website via the following link:

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/motoring/mot-and-vehicle-testing/about-the-mot-scheme/where-are-the-test-centres.htm>

MOT Centres

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the operating cost of each MOT centre.
(AQW 27647/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) does not hold the information in the format requested, as not all operating costs are held at test centre level. There are operating costs which are held and managed centrally in relation to test centres operations including the maintenance of MOT equipment, the test booking system and accommodation maintenance. Consequently, total operating costs are not available for each MOT Centre.

However, the analysis of total operating cost of £34.4m for Driver and Vehicle Testing as a whole can be found in the DVA Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013.

<http://dvtboucweb1/dvl/publications/AnnualReports/DVA%20annual%20report%20accounts%20-%202012%202013.pdf>

MOTs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of lorry MOT tests completed in each of the last three years.
(AQW 27649/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The number of lorry MOT tests completed in each of the last three financial years (1 April -31 March) is set out below.

Lorry Vehicle Tests 2010-11 to 2012-13¹

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Full Test	26,270	25,476	23,955
Retest	8,914	8,823	7,657
All Tests	35,184	34,299	31,612

¹ Note: Figures are the latest DOE/DVA Official Statistics.

MOTs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the requirements for motorbikes to complete a MOT test.
(AQW 27667/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) conducts MOT tests on motor bicycles in compliance with The Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and the Motor Vehicle Testing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003. The Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 requires motor bicycles to be tested from 4 years old, and annually thereafter. The Motor Vehicle Testing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 provide for making an appointment and conducting the test. These Regulations also prescribe the statutory requirements for motor bicycles.

The prescribed statutory requirements primarily provide for an assessment of the vehicle's registration number and frame number, lights, brakes, wheels, tyres, steering, speedometer, horn, stand, petrol tank and silencers. In addition, the vehicle is subject to a general maintenance assessment to ensure it is unlikely to be a danger on the road.

Wind Farm: Upper Glenelly Valley

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the impact on the landscape character of the Upper Glenelly Valley of the SSE proposal for a windfarm in that area; and the precedent it will set for applications in other conservation areas.
(AQW 27682/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has not yet received a planning application for a wind farm in the Glenelly Valley from SSE but is aware of future proposals for a large wind farm within the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by the same company.

Should the application subsequently be received, it will be subject to the full assessment under relevant planning policies and guidance, including the impacts on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area.

NIEA: West Tyrone

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Tourist Board, whether he will under take a review of the work of the NIEA in West Tyrone and fund a management scheme for heritage sites and monuments in the area.
(AQW 27683/11-15)

Mr Durkan: NIEA is working closely with NITB and others to enhance the economic and social benefits from our heritage across Northern Ireland. NIEA Officials are working with NITB, in a constructive way, regarding the promotion of heritage in

County Tyrone in general. Various members of staff in the NIEA Historic Monuments Unit are engaged in meetings with NITB to develop a marketing strategy for the heritage of the county, clustering sites together and tying this in to the promotion of tourism and business.

In 2012 the Historic Monuments Council, the statutory advisory body to the Department on historic monument matters, undertook a visitation survey of monuments in State Care. NIEA has prioritised work taking account of the recommendations in the associated report. In addition, specialist advisors are being procured to develop specifications for work at various monuments throughout Northern Ireland. Newtownstewart Castle and Harry Avery's Castle are included in this programme of work.

Rather than divert resources to a review process, I have asked NIEA to ensure that this partnership work is actively continued.

NIEA staff has been, and will continue to be, engaged with Strabane Council, plus various community groups in West Tyrone, to develop and facilitate heritage-led community schemes in the area. Staff would welcome any proposals that would lead to increased community engagement at historic monuments in general.

RPA: TUPE Regulations

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the transfer of council Chief Executives under the Review of Public Administration, for how many years, after 2015, will TUPE arrangements be in place; and whether these arrangements will be the same as those for the transfer of other posts.

(AQW 27715/11-15)

Mr Durkan: TUPE regulations provide protection for all employees against changes to their terms and conditions of employment as a result of a transfer of an undertaking. Provision has been made to apply TUPE protections to staff transferring from the current 26 to the new 11 councils. There is no time limit set in respect of the application of TUPE. TUPE will apply equally to all affected staff, regardless of position or grade.

Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 27215/11-15, how much it has cost to date to equip enforcement officers with cameras and to train them on procedures in gathering and submitting such evidence.

(AQW 27716/11-15)

Mr Durkan: DVA Enforcement staff are issued with a digital camera to enable collection of photographic evidence which may be used to preserve an accurate record of evidence encountered during an investigation. Currently the cost of a camera and an SD card is approximately £51.78.

Training on procedures associated with gathering and submitting evidence is incorporated into one of seven modules that form part of The Advanced Certificate in Investigative Practice which is the standard training provided to all enforcement officers. Training for the certificate includes a module based on the gathering of data both written and photographic and how to ensure evidence collected during the course of an investigation is in strict accordance with Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. The current cost to train an enforcement officer for The Advanced Certificate in Investigative Practice is £3,500 per person.

Driving Licences

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether staff representing the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) Medical Section have medical qualifications; (ii) how many of these staff are employed within the DVA Medical Section; and (iii) to detail (a) for how long; (b) where; and (c) how information relating to the medical records of members of the public are stored.

(AQW 27741/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) and (ii) The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) does not employ medically qualified staff. Applications for driver licences which require medical investigation are referred to the Department of Finance and Personnel's Occupational Health Service (OHS) who are contracted by the Department to provide professional medical advice.
- (iii) (a) The Agency recently agreed a new Retention and Disposal Schedule in relation to medical records associated with a driver licence application. The schedule stipulates that medical records are retained for a period equal to the duration of the licence, plus one year, commencing with the date of the decision to grant a licence. Where the application is refused, the medical records are retained for a period of up to 10 years, but may be destroyed earlier if a further application is considered and determined within this period; and
- (b) and (c) The records are stored securely in DVA Driver Licensing Medical Section in County Hall, Coleraine and access to these records is restricted to Medical Section staff. Historic records are stored on an electronic database, access to which is strictly limited to DVA Driver Licensing Medical staff.

Driving Licences

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment whether the methodology for issuing Driving Licences locally is the same as that in the rest of the United Kingdom; and if not, to outline the differences, particularly in relation to confidential and personal medical records belonging to older people.

(AQW 27744/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The methodology for issuing driving licences in Northern Ireland is the same as that applied in Britain.

Weed Spraying: NIEA

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether hedges on property owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency are sprayed by contractors with substances to kill weeds and control hedge growth; (ii) whether the weeds which the spray was originally designed to kill are now becoming resistant; and (iii) whether this spray is responsible for the destruction of vegetation and habitat of Queen Bees, or animals.

(AQW 27745/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) It is not normal practice to spray hedgerows with substances to kill weeds and control hedgerow growth on property owned by my Department and managed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Officials have advised me that they are aware of a single instance where a herbicide has been used by NIEA to control weeds in a hedgerow. In this case the herbicide was applied carefully by trained NIEA staff to control the invasive and environmentally damaging alien plant species, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*).

This plant spreads rapidly by underground rhizomes and forms a dense thicket which smothers out native vegetation and has little value for wildlife. It is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 making it... 'an offence to plant or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild.' Because of its capacity to penetrate structures and displace native vegetation, policy on disposal of Japanese knotweed material places a duty of care on all waste producers to ensure it is disposed of to a landfill site licensed to receive it. There is also a duty of care to prevent spread to adjacent land.

Japanese knotweed found growing in a hedgerow at Brackagh Moss Nature Reserve near Portadown was sprayed with glyphosate. (This plant has also been controlled where found growing in non-hedgerow situations on Department lands, including Roe Valley Country Park.)

NIEA has encouraged others to control Japanese knotweed and advised how this can be achieved. DRD Roads Service has been encouraged to spray knotweed growing on road verges, where it may be growing through hedgerows.

No chemicals have been used by NIEA on the sites it manages to control the growth of the hedgerows themselves.

- (ii) NIEA officials are not aware of Japanese knotweed building up any resistance to glyphosate.
- (iii) Officials in DARD have advised that glyphosate is a widely used and non-residual herbicide which is approved for use under statutory regulations, including European Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market. Before approval, all plant protection products undergo rigorous efficacy and safety evaluation, including mammalian and eco-toxicology. This evaluation indicates that glyphosate has a very low mammalian toxicity and is considered to be relatively harmless to non-target invertebrate species, including bees.

Provided it is used in accordance with the instructions and legal limits specified on the product label, glyphosate is not considered to have any significant adverse environmental impacts. It is, however, recognised that glyphosate-based herbicides have the potential to affect non-target plants adversely if not applied carefully by the spray operator. NIEA takes the view that the environmental damage caused by the knotweed is more serious than any unintended impacts on other plants and wildlife of the careful application of glyphosate.

Taxis: Enforcement of Legislation

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the cost of the digital cameras installed for the enforcement of the new taxi legislation; (ii) the location of each camera; (iii) whether these cameras have been used to detect any infringements of other legislation; and (iv) if so, how many successful prosecutions have resulted.

(AQW 27751/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver and Vehicle Agency do not have fixed cameras installed in relation to the enforcement of road traffic legislation and currently do not have any plans to install cameras for the enforcement of the new taxi legislation.

Taxis: Single-tier System

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment how he will ensure that the proposed single tier taxi system will be equitably applied throughout Northern Ireland.

(AQW 27754/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The legislation which will implement a single tier taxi system in Northern Ireland will apply equally to all taxis, regardless of their geographical location. The legislation will remove the existing distinction between public hire taxis operating in Belfast and those operating throughout the rest of Northern Ireland.

The proposed maximum fare tariff will impose only a maximum limit on taxi fares; operators will be free to adjust their fares in response to local economic conditions, provided that their fares do not exceed the statutory maximum fare.

Aside from the requirement that only taxis approved as wheelchair accessible will be permitted to stand on taxi ranks in Belfast, all the new regulatory provisions will apply equally across Northern Ireland.

Entertainment Licences

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the guidance his Department provides to councils on the enforcement of the terms of entertainment licences issued; and for his assessment of the issues of public safety and overcrowding at the Jamboree in the Park event in Fintona, County Tyrone on Saturday 2 November 2013.

(AQW 27781/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Entertainments licences are issued by councils under Article 3 of, and Schedule 1 to, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Entertainment licences may be issued in respect of places, indoor and outdoor, where categories of entertainment specified in schedule 1 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 are provided. Examples of such entertainment are theatrical performances, music or contests such as boxing.

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 provides that an entertainments licence may contain terms, conditions and restrictions regarding matters such as regulating the conduct, days and hours of use, maximum numbers of attendees and general arrangement of the place;

In addition councils are required to have regard to any model terms, conditions and restrictions issued by the Department, but they are not obliged to comply with them.

Paragraph 1.05 of the Model Terms, Conditions and Restrictions for Indoor Entertainments provides that the numbers of persons on the premises at any one time shall not exceed the maximum number stated in the licence and a system of accounting and recording numbers should be kept.

When required by councils, admission to indoor places of entertainment providing concerts shall be by ticket only. If some tickets are for sale at the entrance then their number shall be limited to that which, together with the tickets sold in advance, does not exceed the maximum number stated in the licence.

In terms of stewarding such events, unless the performance warrants a higher level of supervision, the number of attendants shall not be less than one for every 100 persons in a place without seating.

The enforcement of licence conditions is a matter for the council which issues the licence; in the case referred to, this was Omagh District Council.

Councils: Debt

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to assist councils tackle their levels of debt.

(AQW 27788/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are controls in place to ensure that local government does not over-stretch in terms of borrowings. In line with Section 13 (1) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, "a council shall determine and keep under review how much money it can afford to borrow." A council may not borrow money if doing so would result in a breach of the limit determined by it under Section 13. This is examined each year by the Local Government Auditor as part of the audit process.

In terms of the expenditure of current councils in the run up to April 2015, I have issued a direction and guidance on expenditure controls for Statutory Transition Committees. This gives Statutory Transition Committees the power to examine and approve three year capital plans and revenue expenditure forecasts in their constituent councils.

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010, taken together with the Departmental direction, provides that councils must seek the consent of Statutory Transition Committees before:

- making a disposal of land where consideration exceeds £100,000;
- entering into a capital contract where consideration exceeds £250,000; or
- entering into a non capital contract where consideration exceeds £100,000.

This is to ensure that the current 26 councils cannot enter into new contracts that will have an impact on the finances of the newly created councils without first seeking permission from the Statutory Transition Committee. This power will also be applied to the new councils during the period when they will be operating in shadow mode from end May 2014 – March 2015.

Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment how many private hire taxi drivers have had their licences revoked due to breaches of regulations, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27815/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's licensing system does not differentiate between private hire and public hire drivers. The figures provided below are for all licensed taxi drivers whose licences have been revoked due to their loss of repute.

Year	Number of Taxi Drivers whose licence was revoked
2012/13	56
2011/12	40
2010/11	51
2009/10	56
2008/09	49

The figures are provided from Agency records and do not form part of published and validated DOE Official Statistics.

RPA: Planning Powers

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of his decision not to move the Planning Bill, what planning powers will transfer to local councils under the Review of Public Administration; and by what mechanism will these functions be transferred.

(AQW 27850/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 which received Royal Assent on 4 May 2011, provides the legislative basis for the transfer of the vast majority of planning functions and decision making responsibilities to councils. This includes the preparation of local development plans, development management, enforcement, and other additional planning controls for listed buildings, conservation areas, trees, advertisements and hazardous substances. These functions will transfer on commencement of the relevant sections of the 2011 Act.

Therefore, not moving the Planning Bill to Further Consideration stage will not adversely impact upon the transfer of planning powers to councils in 2015.

Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to provide a copy of the report compiled by senior Driver and Vehicle Agency staff following video-footage taken of private hire taxis by enforcement officers at Ravenhill Rugby Grounds, Mount Merrion Avenue entrance on 23 August 2013.

(AQW 27856/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department recently assessed the manner in which taxi services were being provided at Ravenhill rugby ground to ascertain whether there were any breaches of the current taxi legislation and to help inform the Department's policy position for enforcement.

The observations of enforcement officers were not captured in a separate formal report but rather formed part of the overall consideration of the Ravenhill arrangements, which included seeking legal clarification and advice from the Departmental Solicitors' Office. After careful deliberation, the Department determined that the provision of taxi services at Ravenhill rugby ground was compliant with the requirements of the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 and other related legislation.

My Department's interpretation of the legal position as regards provision of taxis at Ravenhill was issued on 21st October 2013 and is attached for information.

Carrier Bags

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment, in the context of the single use plastic bag levy, for his assessment of the studies by Professor Hugh Pennington, Emeritus Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Aberdeen, who has been investigating the use of hessian bags-for-life, and has concluded that they pose a threat to public health.

(AQW 27869/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am aware of the research carried out by Professor Pennington and of the similar research carried out by the University of Pennsylvania.

Any potential risk to public health must of course be taken seriously. Professor Pennington's research – and other similar studies - highlight the need for care in use of carrier bags – whether or not those bags are new or reused bags. With this in mind, in developing the policy in Northern Ireland, my Department worked closely with the Food Standards Agency - to ensure that there were adequate safeguards to protect the health and safety of consumers.

The Northern Ireland carrier bag legislation therefore contains exemptions for specific products on the grounds of hygiene and food safety and the protection of both goods and consumers. In relation to food, the legislation provides certain exemptions. Sellers will not have to apply the levy to:

- (i) bags used to contain unpackaged food for human or animal consumption;
- (ii) bags of a certain size used solely to contain packaged uncooked meat, poultry or fish; and
- (iii) bags used to contain takeaway hot food or hot drinks.

The exemption for raw meat, poultry and fish reflects the particular food safety issues around these products and the potential for cross-contamination if they are not handled carefully.

The Department believes that the legislation as drafted provides sufficient protection for consumers. There is however a broader food safety message, which applies whether or not carrier bag charging is in place. In general people should always take reasonable care when handling products such as raw meat; this is emphasised in guidance given by the Food Standards Agency in July 2013. These guidelines entail packing raw meat and fish separately from food that is ready to eat, keeping a separate carrier bag for holding raw meat and fish and disposing of the bag if there has been any spillage of raw meat juices.

Carrier Bags

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment, in the context of the single use plastic bag levy, for his assessment of the research by the University of Pennsylvania which found that there had been a 25 per cent rise in hospital admissions and a 46 per cent increase in deaths from food-borne illnesses after San Francisco banned plastic bags.

(AQW 27870/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am aware of the research carried out by the University of Pennsylvania and of the similar research carried out by Professor Pennington of the University of Aberdeen.

In relation to the University of Pennsylvania research, it has been acknowledged that these increases may have a number of causal factors – and are not necessarily related to the plastic bag ban. However, any potential risk to public health must of course be taken seriously. With this in mind, in developing the policy in Northern Ireland, my Department worked closely with the Food Standards Agency - to ensure that there were adequate safeguards to protect the health and safety of consumers.

The Northern Ireland carrier bag legislation therefore contains exemptions for specific products on the grounds of hygiene and food safety and the protection of both goods and consumers. In relation to food, the legislation provides certain exemptions. Sellers will not have to apply the levy to:

- (i) bags used to contain unpackaged food for human or animal consumption;
- (ii) bags of a certain size used solely to contain packaged uncooked meat, poultry or fish; and
- (iii) bags used to contain takeaway hot food or hot drinks.

The exemption for raw meat, poultry and fish reflects the particular food safety issues around these products and the potential for cross-contamination if they are not handled carefully.

The Department believes that the legislation as drafted provides sufficient protection for consumers. There is however a broader food safety message, which applies whether or not carrier bag charging is in place. In general people should always take reasonable care when handling products such as raw meat; this is emphasised in guidance given by the Food Standards Agency in July 2013. These guidelines entail packing raw meat and fish separately from food that is ready to eat, keeping a separate carrier bag for holding raw meat and fish and disposing of the bag if there has been any spillage of raw meat juices.

Planning Application: A/2009/0400/F

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 27481/11-15, whether (i) the note on 24 June 2010 recorded that the application was to be withdrawn; and (ii) letters issued to the applicant and the Derry Planning Office on 28 June 2010 confirmed the formal withdrawal of A/2009/0400/F.

(AQW 27976/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can confirm that file reference A/2009/0400/F contains a note of a meeting between officials agreeing to the withdrawal of this case.

A letter issued to the agent and to the Area Planning Office on 28 June 2010 advising that the application had been withdrawn.

I can advise that a letter issued to the agent on 5 November 2013 advising that this application is in fact deemed refused.

Car Parks

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment what was the outcome of his meeting with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport on the issue of private car parks.

(AQW 28052/11-15)

Mr Durkan: When I met the Parliamentary Under Secretary of Transport, Robert Goodwill, MP on 6 November, the meeting dealt exclusively with DVLA's proposals to centralise vehicle licensing in Swansea and to cut 300 jobs in DVA. However, after my meeting with Mr Goodwill, I met Mr Patrick Troy, the chief executive of the British Parking Association, which represents virtually all of the companies that enforce car parking in private car parks here.

At my meeting with Mr Troy, I emphasised the need for BPA to ensure adherence by members to the Association's Code of Practice, which deals with all of the matters of concern raised by Members during the recent debate. I was assured that the BPA will do so if they receive specific complaints about inappropriate behaviour and I would urge Members to send any evidence of inappropriate behaviour to the BPA for investigation.

I also raised the lack of an independent appeals process in Northern Ireland. I pointed out that the scheme for England and Wales could easily be extended to cover Northern Ireland and that the cost to BPA members of running the scheme would be very modest. Over 50% of cases appealed are determined in favour of the appellant, indicating both that it is a fair system but also that the enforcement companies are indeed making mistakes.

Mr Troy undertook to make the case to the members of the BPA for extending the appeals system to Northern Ireland and I will follow this up.

It was also agreed that officials from my Department will take part in meetings of the user group of BPA members operating in Northern Ireland to raise the concerns of Members and motorists.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Businesses: Closed/Ceased Trading/Bankrupt

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many businesses have (i) closed; (ii) ceased trading; and (iii) been declared bankrupt for each year for the most recent five years for which data is available.

(AQW 27242/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The Office for National Statistics produces estimates of the number of Northern Ireland businesses which have closed or ceased trading for any reason by calendar year. These estimates are shown in Table 1 and exclude public sector organisations, agriculture and businesses which are not VAT and/or PAYE registered. The latest available estimates are for 2011.

Table 1: Numbers of Northern Ireland Businesses which have closed or ceased trading for any reason¹, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010 ²	2011 ²
Total Business Deaths ³	3,760	4,180	5,170	5,235	4,950

Source: ONS Business Demography, 2011

1 Information on the reason for closing or ceasing trading is not available from this source.

2 Estimates for 2010 and 2011 are provisional and subject to revision. 2Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5

The number of sole trader businesses that have been declared bankrupt and the number of Limited Companies which have gone into liquidation or Administration in each of the last 5 financial years is available from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (NI) and has been provided below:

Financial Year	Sole Trader Business Bankruptcies
2008/09	640
2009/10	643
1010/11	859
2011/12	790
2012/13	586

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (NI)

Limited Companies

Financial Year	Compulsory Liquidations	Creditors Liquidations	Voluntary Administrations	Total
2008/09	151	74	37	262
2009/10	174	105	82	361

Financial Year	Compulsory Liquidations	Creditors Liquidations	Voluntary Administrations	Total
2010/11	248	113	76	437
2011/12	216	120	79	415
2012/13	208	135	74	417

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (NI)

Air Passenger Duty

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the decision by the Dublin government to abolish air passenger duty on short haul flights.

(AQW 27349/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I continue to regard Air Passenger Duty (APD) as an unfair tax that disproportionately affects regions in the UK and Northern Ireland in particular where alternative transport options are more limited and where the option of travelling from Dublin exists.

However, given that the current €3 rate of APD in the Republic of Ireland is already lower than the £13 UK short haul rate, the Irish Government's elimination of this tax is unlikely to have a significant effect on our competitive position in this regard.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the potential savings or cost of each option in the Outline Business Case for the Civil Service Pension Future Delivery Project.

(AQW 27540/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Civil Service Pensions are in the process of replacing their IT systems due to the impending termination of existing contracts. In line with the NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, all feasible options for replacement must be considered. The Outline Business Case for the Civil Service Pensions Future Service Delivery Project is still in development. The potential savings or costs of the various options under consideration are not available at this stage.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) whether confirmation has been given to staff that jobs will be lost at Waterside House; (ii) the minimum number of job losses projected by his Department; and (ii) what prior consultation, including with staff, was carried out.

(AQW 27661/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Civil Service Pensions are in the process of replacing their IT systems due to the impending termination of existing contracts. In line with the NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, all feasible options for replacement must be considered. Trade Unions and staff working in Waterside House have been advised that less staff will be required. This is because the new system will be an integrated system, which will both pay and administer pensions and will have self service facilities. Precise staffing implications are not yet known. Trade Unions and staff in Civil Service Pensions have been consulted by Management since the Civil Service Pensions Future Service Delivery Project was established in December 2012.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the options for future service delivery of civil service pensions.

(AQW 27662/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Civil Service Pensions are in the process of replacing their IT systems due to the impending termination of existing contracts. In line with the NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, all feasible options for replacement must be considered, including installing a new system or moving to a managed service to pay and administer pensions.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether there are plans to outsource the administration function of Northern Ireland Civil Service Pensions.

(AQW 27663/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Civil Service Pensions are in the process of replacing their IT systems due to the impending termination of existing contracts. In line with the NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, all feasible options for replacement must be considered, including installing a new system or moving to a managed service to pay and administer pensions. All options will be considered, as part of the Outline Business Case which is still in development.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether business cases relating to the future of civil service pensions staff have been shared with Trade Union representatives.

(AQW 27664/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Civil Service Pensions are in the process of replacing their IT systems due to the impending termination of existing contracts. In line with the NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, all feasible options for replacement must be considered. The Strategic Outline Business Case, which establishes the need for replacement, has been shared with Trade Union representatives. However the Outline Business Case for the Civil Service Pensions Future Service Delivery Project is still in development.

European Funding: Peace III and Peace IV

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of the potential gap between Peace III and Peace IV funding, what steps are being taken to ensure that initiated work and groups will be supported over this period.

(AQW 27769/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There are no plans to offer gap funding to projects engaged in Peace III who may also wish to participate in Peace IV.

Vacant Domestic Dwellings

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 27538/11-15, to detail how many of these vacant dwellings are (i) Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties; (ii) Housing Association properties; and (iii) privately owned properties.

(AQW 27894/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Of the 804 domestic dwellings in the North Down Borough Council area that were recorded as vacant at 30th September 2013 (i) two were recorded as Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties, (ii) six were recorded as Housing Association properties, (iii) 714 were recorded as privately owned properties and the owners of the remaining 82 properties are currently unknown.

Since the introduction of the Rating of Empty Homes legislation on 1st October 2011 the rate liability for vacant domestic properties has been assessed at 100%. There is currently no requirement for ratepayers to inform Land & Property Services that their property is vacant, nor is there any financial advantage to doing so. As such, current information on the number of empty domestic properties may not be complete.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on Air Passenger Duty.

(AQW 27941/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive devolved the power to set the rate of Air Passenger Duty (APD) on direct long haul flights departing Northern Ireland airports and subsequently eliminated this on 1st January 2013.

DETI, with input from DFP, is currently undertaking a study to consider what more can be done to improve our air connectivity, including both APD and non-APD measures. However, I continue to regard APD as an unfair tax, and given that the Government imposes and sets this tax, I firmly believe the onus is on them to address the negative impact it has on regions like Northern Ireland.

NAMA

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) how many times he and his predecessor met with the NI Advisory Committee to the National Asset Management Agency board or with individual members of the committee; (ii) the issues discussed at these meetings including any agreed outcomes; and (iii) any plans for future meetings and the items to be discussed.

(AQW 27994/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I met with the NAMA Chairman and members of the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee for the first time since taking office on the 7th October 2013. We discussed a broad range of issues around NAMA's management of its Northern Ireland assets, including the importance of ensuring that they are released at a suitable time without having a negative impact on the market. We also discussed the NAMA schemes that are available that offer financial assistance to develop NAMA assets.

I understand my predecessor met with the NAMA Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on six occasions between August 2010 and April 2013, and like him, I plan to continue this regular engagement to discuss current issues around the Agency's activities in Northern Ireland.

Banks: Green Investment Bank

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail any dialogue between his Department and the Green Investment Bank regarding the availability of funds for energy efficiency measures and initiatives in the public sector buildings stock. **(AQW 28004/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: I am not aware of any discussions between my officials and the Green Investment Bank in respect of public sector estate energy efficiency measures.

Green Investment Bank funding must be additional to the market and is provided on a commercial basis. It is important to recognise that the Northern Ireland departments could not access this loan funding directly without HM Treasury imposing a corresponding reduction in our DEL budget.

October Monitoring Round and Capital Reallocation Exercise

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide a breakdown by Department for (i) the amount of funds surrendered as part of the October Monitoring Round and Capital Reallocation Exercise; (ii) the original designated use for those funds; and (iii) how those funds will now be used. **(AQW 28024/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: My Statement to the Assembly on 21 October 2013 announced the outcome of both the October Monitoring exercise and the Capital Reallocation Exercise for 2014-15. All departmental reduced requirements and the allocations made were detailed in the tables which accompanied my Statement. Factors other than reduced requirements contributing to the funds available for allocation were detailed in my Statement.

The tables are now published with my Statement on the DFP website and can be accessed at the following link <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/statement-on-2013-14-october-monitoring>

Banks: European Investment Bank

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline (i) any discussions his Department has had with the European Investment Bank; and (ii) the legislative basis that prevents the Executive from borrowing directly from the Bank as part of national borrowing. **(AQW 28025/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: My officials are aware of an ongoing dialogue between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the University of Ulster in relation to the Jordanstown Campus relocation to Belfast city centre.

There is no legislative barrier that prevents the Executive borrowing directly from the EIB. However, any such direct borrowing would score against Public Sector Net Debt and HM Treasury would therefore reduce the Executive's Capital DEL accordingly. This means that the Executive would in fact be worse off because we would have to pay interest on the borrowed capital. There are, however, undoubtedly opportunities for other sectors within Northern Ireland to avail of EIB funding and I am keen to explore how this may finance regional infrastructure improvements.

Shared Services

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the potential for a reformed local government to work with central government on shared services projects. **(AQO 4980/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: I believe that there are opportunities for a reformed local government to work with and benefit from central government experience of shared services. The shared services in my own department have already had some engagement with local Councils, in relation to IT Shared services and communications.

Extending our shared services to new customers is a complex matter, given the differing needs and nature of public sector organisations and we will continue to evaluate each opportunity on a case by case basis.

Equal Pay

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on progress to deliver an equal pay settlement to PSNI, Northern Ireland Office and Department of Justice staff who were not part of the original settlement. **(AQO 4971/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: I am conscious of unnecessarily raising expectations through signalling any deviation from the position previously stated in relation to PSNI and former NIO staff, as it could easily be misinterpreted and turn out to be unhelpful and ultimately unproductive. Nonetheless, I am currently carefully considering the matter and I will update the Assembly in due course.

Cross-border Cooperation

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline his future strategy for co-operation and engagement with the Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan, TD.

(AQO 4982/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: We have a number of areas of common interest with the Republic of Ireland including the economy, banking and other fiscal matters. I agreed with Minister Noonan when I first met him in August that we would meet regularly to engage on such areas of common interest. I met him again when he was here in September, and at the NSMC Plenary meeting last week.

Departmental Spending

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what role he plays in monitoring spending programmes in other departments to ensure that money is being released for the purposes intended in the Programme for Government.

(AQO 4975/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Officials within my department, monitor departmental spending performance on a monthly basis and challenge departments where profiles of spend are not deemed to be satisfactory. Any areas of particular concern will be brought to my attention.

Of course, the in-year monitoring process provides a formal system for reviewing spending plans and places an onus on departments to surrender reduced requirements above the £1 million de-minimis threshold as soon as they become known. This provides the Executive with an opportunity to reallocate available resources in line with its priorities at that time.

Budgets

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how, and for how long, money can be retained at the centre.

(AQO 4976/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The 'Centre' plays a fundamental role in the careful management of the Northern Ireland Budget. In Budget planning it is often necessary to retain funds outside of departmental budgets in advance of Executive allocation decisions, or indeed because those funds cannot be attributed to one specific department.

Funding can remain at the 'Centre' throughout the financial year, although it is good practice to ensure that there are minimal funds at the conclusion of January Monitoring to facilitate maximum departmental spend. This is important since the Executive is subject to the constraints of the Budget Exchange Scheme in terms of carry forward of resources from one year to the next.

Civil Service: Salaries

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what was the total cost of salaries for established civil servants in the Northern Ireland Civil Service in each of the last three years.

(AQO 4977/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The total cost of salaries for 2010/11 was 1,007 million pounds, for 2011/12 it was 960.4 million pounds and 2012/13 was 960.7 million thousand pounds.

These figures include a small number of people who are not classed as civil servants.

Lending Data

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what engagement he has had with the British Bankers Association on the provision of lending data for Northern Ireland.

(AQO 4978/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I met with Anthony Browne, Chief Executive of the BBA, on the 11 September 2013 to discuss how the quarterly SME bank lending data they provide my Department with can be improved.

The current dataset relates to the activities of the four main banks operating locally. I asked for this to be widened to include other banks with a presence in Northern Ireland and for the scope of the data provided to be extended, and in particular for a sectoral breakdown to be provided.

Mr Browne indicated to me that he hoped that an improved dataset would be available before the end of the year and my officials have been liaising with the BBA on this matter. The BBA is now working with the banks to develop this dataset.

Employment

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many EU and non-EU nationals are currently in employment in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 4979/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There were an estimated 1 782,000 EU nationals and 13,000 non-EU nationals aged 16 and over in employment in Northern Ireland, based on respondents' reported nationality in the April – June 2013 Labour Force Survey (LFS), conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

1 Since the LFS is a sample survey, these estimates are subject to sampling variation.

Digital Roll-out

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the roll out of more public services on digital channels.

(AQO 4981/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My department, through the NI Direct Digital First programme, has been working over the last year to increase the number of public services that are available to citizens through digital channels such as the nidirect website (16m visits pa), SMS text service (200,000 messages pa) and social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook).

The following online digital services are currently being developed with planned go-live dates in 2013/14:

- 1 **OFMDFM Social Investment Fund** – online grant management solution to support proposed scheme;
- 2 **DFP General Registrar Office Genealogy NI** - online portal for searching and purchasing documents;
- 3 **DFP Land & Property Services CAMEO 2** - online portal for searching and purchasing of digital and paper maps; and
- 4 **DSD Landlord Registration** – online registration and fee payment by private landlords.

In addition, work has commenced on other online digital services planned for delivery during 2014/15.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the likely impact of the decision to remove Air Passenger Duty in the Republic of Ireland on air travel in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 4983/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Firstly let me say that I continue to regard Air Passenger Duty (APD) as an unfair tax that disproportionately affects regions in the UK and Northern Ireland in particular where alternative transport options are more limited and where the option of travelling from Dublin exists.

However, given that the current €3 rate of APD in the Republic of Ireland is already lower than the £13 UK short haul rate, the Irish Government's elimination of this tax is unlikely to have a significant effect on our competitive position in this regard.

Budgets: Current/Capital

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how HM Government's switch from current to capital budgets will impact on Northern Ireland.

(AQO 4984/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I believe that the continued skewing of available resources to the capital budget should be viewed positively. The constrained resource position, whilst providing its own particular challenges, should be a catalyst for a continued savings agenda that will ensure that the Executive's resources are put to optimum use. It also means that genuine public sector reform is now an urgent imperative as we will need to deliver better services with less.

We will, of course, also benefit from the additional capital through the Barnett formula. This will allow us to invest in our regional infrastructure; secure long term economic returns; and create immediate construction sector employment opportunities.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of multiple sclerosis specialist nurses employed in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 27728/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The numbers of specialist multiple sclerosis nurses employed by each HSC Trust are shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Headcount	Whole-time Equivalent
Belfast	7	6.1

HSC Trust	Headcount	Whole-time Equivalent
Northern	1	0.8
South Eastern	0	0.0
Southern	2	2.0
Western	2	1.5

Source: Health & Social Care Trusts

Notes

1 Patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust access specialist multiple sclerosis nursing support from the Belfast Trust.

Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the (i) support; (ii) services; and (iii) treatments available to patients from a multiple sclerosis specialist nurse in each Health and Social Care Trust.
(AQW 27729/11-15)

Mr Poots: All patients in Northern Ireland diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis have access to the specialist MS nursing service.

This specialist MS nursing support delivers a range of treatments and services including information for newly diagnosed patients, advice regarding disease modifying therapy, initiation and monitoring of disease modifying therapy, referral to Allied Health Professionals and voluntary agencies and liaising with a patient's GP.

In addition the MS nursing service provides home visits, ward visits, assessments for new treatments and a telephone advice line. The service will also support patients who have progressive MS and are not eligible for disease modifying therapy. Patients can also access the service to assist in preparing benefit claims.

Furthermore the service undertakes clinical audits, nursing research and the education of Trust staff. In summary, the specialist MS nursing service provides information, support and advice for any aspect of the disease.

Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number, and nature, of complaints concerning the multiple sclerosis nurse advice line made to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, since it came into operation.
(AQW 27733/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast HSC Trust have received 3 formal complaints about the multiple sclerosis (MS) nurse advice line since it came into operation, all of which related to difficulty accessing the MS advice line.

Greenmount Agricultural College

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has leased Greenmount Agricultural College; and if so, how much is being paid for the lease each year.
(AQW 27759/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer both these questions together as they are inter-related.

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has not leased Greenmount Agricultural College and has no plans to do so.

The Business Services Organisation has been given approval to acquire a short term lease of Greenmount House in Ballymena.

Greenmount Agricultural College

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for what purpose does the Northern Health and Social Care Trust intend to use Greenmount Agricultural College.
(AQW 27760/11-15)

Mr Poots: I will answer both these questions together as they are inter-related.

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has not leased Greenmount Agricultural College and has no plans to do so.

The Business Services Organisation has been given approval to acquire a short term lease of Greenmount House in Ballymena.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has confirmed that the reason for choosing Bretten Hall as the new premises for senior management is the unwillingness of the doctors in Antrim Hospital to walk in the open air to meet with Trust staff in Bush House.
(AQW 27761/11-15)

Mr Poots: This was not one of the criteria used by the Northern Trust when evaluating alternative options for locating its Senior Management Team.

Care Homes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when a decision will be made on the review of a ban on statutory care home admissions.

(AQW 27766/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board has advised that it is currently monitoring the impact of the policy of non admissions to statutory residential care homes for older people and will keep the situation under review.

A document will issue from the HSC Board, in the near future, on the current and future accommodation needs of older people. This will be a consultation document to ensure that individuals, families and the wider public have their say.

Care Homes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what concerns, raised by attendees at the recent public meeting in Belfast, will the Health and Social Care Board consider before making decisions on the future of local care homes.

(AQW 27767/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) held a public meeting on 29th October 2013. This was an opportunity to listen to the views expressed by individuals and organisations. The HSCB is taking time to carefully consider all the comments that were raised at this meeting. These comments will inform the forthcoming consultation document on the current and future accommodation needs of older people.

The publication of this consultation document will be important. I am keen that individuals, families and the wider public have their say, before future decisions are made about local care homes.

Care Homes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what factors will be taken into account in the review of a ban on statutory care home admissions.

(AQW 27768/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board has advised that it is currently monitoring the impact of the policy of non admissions to statutory residential care homes for older people and will keep the situation under review.

A document will issue from the HSC Board, in the near future, on the current and future accommodation needs of older people. This will be a consultation document to ensure that individuals, families and the wider public have their say.

Safeguarding Board

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the thematic review into Child Sexual Abuse conducted by the Safeguarding Board.

(AQW 27782/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) is being directed, under the Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, to conduct a Thematic Review into the 22 cases of child sexual exploitation that are the subject of the ongoing PSNI investigation. The Act also requires my Department to consult with the SBNI on a Direction made under the Act. Consultation on the Direction is still ongoing.

The Thematic Review is a complex piece of work in the sense that it interfaces directly with an ongoing police investigation. There are a number of issues that need to be thought through comprehensively to ensure that the Thematic Review will not interfere with the ongoing police investigation. These issues are the focus of ongoing consultation with the SBNI.

Domiciliary Care

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether regional guidance exists for the delivery of domiciliary care.

(AQW 27784/11-15)

Mr Poots: In May 2008 my Department issued Regional Access Criteria for Domiciliary Care. The Criteria provide a framework for a more consistent approach to eligibility and fairer access to domiciliary care and advises that, where the level of risk to a service user is identified as critical or substantial, domiciliary care should be delivered. Where risk is identified as moderate or low, HSC Trusts have discretion about providing domiciliary care.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority is responsible for regulating a range of health and social care providers, both statutory and independent, in accordance with the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation)(Northern Ireland) Order 2003 and its supporting regulations. This includes domiciliary care agencies.

IVF Treatment

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made in increasing the provision for IVF treatment.

(AQW 27786/11-15)

Mr Poots: Currently Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland provides one publicly funded IVF treatment to those who meet the criteria and, from 1 April 2012, one frozen embryo transfer is also offered to new referrals who meet the clinical criteria.

It is recognised that some regions across the UK provide a greater number of treatment cycles than the available resources currently permit in Northern Ireland. Access criteria in Northern Ireland, which were developed following public consultations in 2006 and 2009, are however wider than in some other regions of the UK, eg offering treatment to couples who already have a child, thus allowing more people to avail of publicly funded treatment.

To increase the number of individual treatments provided within current funding could limit the number of women who could access the service.

Health Care Workers: Qualifications

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are any regulatory or statutory requirements for health care workers to have an NVQ Level 2.

(AQW 27818/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are many different regulatory and statutory qualification requirements for health care workers depending on their specific role across the health service, for example clinical professionals are required to hold specific professional qualifications set out by their regulatory bodies (GMC, NMC etc).

In relation specifically to health care support workers there are no regulatory or statutory requirements to hold a NVQ Level.

Employers may recruit staff with other non-vocational qualifications and previous experience and it is the responsibility of HSC employers to establish appropriate clinical governance arrangements to ensure that all staff, whether qualified or not, only undertake tasks for which they are fully trained and deemed competent. Health care support workers deliver care to patients as part of a competent multi-professional health and social care team.

The Belfast Trust, for example, has developed an educational framework for health care support workers to support the development of the competencies identified as necessary to function effectively and safely within the care environment. Similar arrangements are in place across the other HSC Trusts.

IVF Treatment

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an estimate of the costs of making a second full cycle of IVF available to eligible patients.

(AQW 27836/11-15)

Mr Poots: I intend to answer questions AQW 27836/11-15, 27837/11-15 and 27838/11-15 together. Although the information requested is not available I can advise that the Health and Social Care Board invests £3 million per year in infertility services, which includes Ovulation induction (OI) by oral medication (Clomiphene citrate / gonadotrophins) and Intrauterine insemination (IUI) as well as IVF and ICSI.

IVF Treatment

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an estimate of the costs of making a third full cycle of IVF available to eligible patients.

(AQW 27837/11-15)

Mr Poots: I intend to answer questions AQW 27836/11-15, 27837/11-15 and 27838/11-15 together. Although the information requested is not available I can advise that the Health and Social Care Board invests £3 million per year in infertility services, which includes Ovulation induction (OI) by oral medication (Clomiphene citrate / gonadotrophins) and Intrauterine insemination (IUI) as well as IVF and ICSI.

IVF Treatment

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an estimate of the costs of removing the cap on the number of frozen embryos transferred as part of an IVF cycle.

(AQW 27838/11-15)

Mr Poots: I intend to answer questions AQW 27836/11-15, 27837/11-15 and 27838/11-15 together. Although the information requested is not available I can advise that the Health and Social Care Board invests £3 million per year in infertility services, which includes Ovulation induction (OI) by oral medication (Clomiphene citrate / gonadotrophins) and Intrauterine insemination (IUI) as well as IVF and ICSI.

G8 Summit: Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the cost of the G8 summit in Fermanagh to the Western Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) how these costs were accrued; (iii) whether the Trust has been reimbursed by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) for these costs; and (iv) whether the HSCB has been awarded costs by any other agency.

(AQW 27861/11-15)

Mr Poots: Projected costs by the Western Health and Social Care Trust in the region of £415,000 were submitted to DFP as part of a June monitoring bid for unexpected pressures relating to the preparedness for the G8 Summit. This amount was secured and was allocated by the HSC Board to the Western Trust.

Costs incurred by the Western Trust were in the main staffing costs across a range of services, including medical, nursing, pharmacy, radiology, laboratory, older people, mental health and women & children. There were also costs associated with providing support services, ICT, Estates and general preparedness such as on call arrangements, training equipment, signage and relocation of services.

On evaluation of the full costs associated with preparedness for the Summit, the Western Trust has advised the HSC Board that it incurred costs in the region of £561,856. The additional costs are currently being considered by the HSC Board as a funding pressure.

The HSC Board has not been awarded costs by any other agency.

Acute Mental Health Beds: Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the siting of the acute mental health beds in the southern sector of the Western Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 27863/11-15)

Mr Poots: Following the range of views expressed during the public consultation on the proposals for the location of a second in-patient acute mental health unit in the Western Trust area, I advised the Assembly on 19 March that further work was to be undertaken in respect of this matter before a final decision could be made. The Health and Social Care Board is in the process of carrying out this work and has advised that they expect to complete this and report to the Department by the end of December 2013.

Protect Life

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of the allocation of Protect Life funding awarded in each constituency.

(AQW 27866/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available by constituency. Funding under the Protect Life Strategy for local suicide prevention initiatives is allocated by the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board to Local Commissioning / Health and Social Care Trust areas.

Suicide Prevention

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the benefits of adopting an international approach to tackling suicide.

(AQO 4989/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is important that international research into the causes of suicide and approaches to suicide prevention informs efforts to reduce suicide in Northern Ireland. In developing and implementing the Protect Life Strategy, my Department and its partners have made use of international evidence on effective practice. Indeed, a review of international evidence and best practice was commissioned specifically to inform the 2012 refresh of the Strategy.

We continue to look at the latest evidence from across the world. I recently opened the joint Irish Association of Suicidology and Contact NI international conference which showcased experiences and best practice from a number of countries.

Family Fund

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Family Fund, which helps children with disabilities and their families, operates in Northern Ireland; and how many families benefit from its work.

(AQW 27917/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Family Fund covers all of the UK and is funded by the Governments of all four UK Administrations. My Department contributes approximately £1.57m annually to support the Fund's work in Northern Ireland.

During the 2012/13 financial year, this funding provision allowed the Family Fund to support over 2,900 families with disabled children in Northern Ireland. The Fund was able to provide families with help to purchase a range of items such as beds,

bedding, clothing, computers, games consoles, sensory equipment and specialist toys, day trips, family breaks, washing machines and other white goods.

Car Parking Spaces: DHSSPS Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27947/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department does not have a permanent renting or leasing arrangement in place for car park spaces for civil servants.

A short term lease arrangement for two car parking places currently exists and is due to end early next year.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Freedom of Information Response

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to Company B mentioned in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Freedom of Information response Fol/ 7037 dated 7 October 2013, to detail (i) the goods/ services the company supplied and subsequently issued 11 separate invoices for, dated 3 July 2012; (ii) the circumstances whereby the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust initially issued 11 separate low value purchase orders; and (iii) whether these transactions were carried out in full compliance with the Trust's Procurement policy/procedures.

(AQW 27986/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- i The goods supplied by Company B were uniforms for holiday relief staff.
- ii. I understand that the Trust did not issue 11 purchase orders. I am unable to comment on why Company B issued 11 invoices for the goods supplied.
- iii. As these goods were requisitioned and needed at short notice, the invoices were received by the Trust prior to the official order being raised. This aspect was not in accordance with the Trust's Procurement Process and therefore the Trust instigated its Post Purchase Procedures to address the situation.

Health and Social Care Trusts: Financial Accounts

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the Health and Social Care Trusts that are still to lay their financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 in the Assembly; (ii) the reasons provided for the delay; and (iii) the date by which he expects all accounts will be laid.

(AQW 27990/11-15)

Mr Poots: As at 8 November, all Health and Social Care Trusts have laid their financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 in the Assembly.

Legal Cases: Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the evidence he has that the courts failed to act impartially in legal cases in which he has been involved in his role as Minister.

(AQW 28006/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have not said that the Courts have failed to act impartially in cases in which I have been involved.

Paediatric Cardiac Services

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will make an announcement on the future of paediatric cardiac services in Belfast.

(AQW 28019/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am continuing my discussions with the Republic of Ireland's Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly TD, to explore whether it would be possible to establish a two centre Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services model within the island of Ireland to be located in Belfast and Dublin. My overriding concern is for the safety of these very vulnerable children and in obtaining the best possible treatment and care for them.

I am aiming to make my final decision on the future arrangements for this service as soon as possible.

Abortion: Guidelines

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the discussions he has had with his Department, his legal counsel and key stakeholders on the draft abortion guidelines.

(AQO 4994/11-15)

Mr Poots: Since the consultation closed there have been meetings with the families recently reported on by the BBC and the staff responsible for their health care. I have also had discussions with the Minister for Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions. Finally, discussions have taken place with senior officials in my Department and legal advisors.

The consultation has highlighted that a wide range of opposing views exist on the issue of termination of pregnancy guidance. This is a complex and emotive subject.

It is my intention to bring revised guidance to the Executive that adequately reflects the law and empowers health professionals to act within this difficult area.

Downe Hospital: Cardiac Ambulance

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the future of the Cardiac Ambulance at the Downe Hospital in Downpatrick.

(AQW 28067/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is no longer a need for a cardiac ambulance service at the Downe Hospital as patients in the Ulster, Lagan Valley and Downe Hospitals areas who suffer the most severe form of heart attack will now benefit from a new Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) service to ensure speedy, life-saving treatment. Suspected heart attack patients will be assessed by Northern Ireland Ambulance Service staff. If they turn out to have a particular type of heart attack (STEMI), which affects approximately 40% of hospitalised heart attack patients, they will be taken straight to the Royal Victoria Hospital to have a blockage in the blood vessels around their heart removed using a balloon or stent. The experience in the Belfast pilot for this service, and in other parts of the UK where this process has been used, has shown that receiving primary PCI increases the prospect of survival, reduces longer term complications and shortens the length of time patients have to stay in hospital.

Ulster Hospital: Catheterisation Laboratory

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the need for a catheterization laboratory facility at the Ulster Hospital.

(AQO 4992/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board has advised that there is a short term arrangement for the provision of diagnostic-only cath lab procedures at the Ulster Hospital. Patients diagnosed as requiring an interventional procedure are referred to the Belfast Trust. The continuation of this interim arrangement will be considered against: progress in implementing the expansion in capacity in the Belfast and Western Trusts; and, waiting times for access to this service across Northern Ireland.

DHSSPS: Arm's-length Bodies

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on his plans to enhance the accountability of his Department's arm's-length bodies.

(AQO 4999/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am continuing to develop existing accountability arrangements to ensure that we hold our DHSSPS sponsored Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) to account on **all** aspects of their expected performance. Recent developments include:

- Introduction of more robust business planning and performance monitoring arrangements for all ALBs;
- Annual completion of a Board Governance Self Assessment Tool by all ALB Boards;
- Public Facing Accountability meetings with ALBs – 2 of which have been held to date, with a further meeting planned for November; and
- Visits to Services

Waiting Times: Anti-TNF Drugs

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress is being made in reducing the waiting times for patients requiring anti-TNF drugs.

(AQO 4987/11-15)

Mr Poots: We now spend more than £40m annually on anti-TNFs. The waiting time targets for biologic therapies are being substantially achieved. No patient has waited longer than 3 months for NICE approved anti-TNF therapies for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis. In September only 8 patients were waiting longer than 3 months for anti-TNF therapy for plaque psoriasis, which is a new target I introduced in April this year. These figures compare favourably with the same time last year when 73 patients had waited longer than 3 months for anti-TNF treatment. Although this is significant progress I expect further improvement.

Care Homes

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he will ensure that the future quality of care in statutory and private care homes will be of the highest standard.

(AQO 4995/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is an independent arms length body which has overall responsibility for the registration and inspection of all care homes in Northern Ireland. This is in accordance with regulations and against minimum care standards published by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety. These minimum care standards ensure that the care being provided is of an acceptable high quality and standard.

Each home receives two inspections annually – one announced and one unannounced – with the aim of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all residents and encouraging improvement.

Where RQIA identifies concerns about a particular care home it may take enforcement action to ensure the safety, wellbeing and protection of those residents living in the care home. If the care being provided does not comply with standards, RQIA has powers of enforcement, which are granted under the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation)(Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

Abortion: Guidelines

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the departmental and legal officials who contributed to the 2013 draft guidance on the termination of pregnancies.

(AQO 4996/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have asked a Working Group chaired by the Chief Medical Officer to develop guidance.

Membership of the group comprises the Chief Social Services Officer, a Senior Medical Officer and a Nursing Officer, with secretariat provided by the Department's Family Policy Unit.

Legal support to the Group is provided by representatives from the Departmental Solicitor's Office.

As the Minister, I will approve the content of any document I table for Executive agreement.

Sexual Assault

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are available to victims of sexual assault or abuse.

(AQO 4997/11-15)

Mr Poots: In May 2013, Northern Ireland's first Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) known as The Rowan, opened its doors. This facility raises the standards of care for all victims (male and female adults and children) of sexual assault in Northern Ireland. The Rowan delivers a 24/7 service, 365 days per annum. The Centre offers a range of services for victims of rape or sexual assault including, a comprehensive assessment of their needs, a forensic medical examination, screening and treatment for sexually-transmitted infections and treatment to help prevent HIV. The emotional needs and psychological wellbeing of the victim are also considered and if required an adult victim who self-refers to The Rowan will be supported in making a report to the PSNI.

The Rowan is unable to provide long term psychological or emotional support or counselling services to victims. However, The Rowan provides information and advice on accessing other specialist support services which are available from a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

My Department has also arranged the publication of an updated version of the Regional Directory of Services, which provides information on existing statutory and voluntary support services available throughout the province for victims of sexual assault and abuse. The Directory is available in electronic and hardcopy format.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he has taken to improve care for people diagnosed with cystic fibrosis.

(AQO 4998/11-15)

Mr Poots: Adult cystic fibrosis patients attend Belfast City Hospital's Cystic Fibrosis Centre and children attend the Unit at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. Both the adult and paediatric centres have a multi-disciplinary team of medical, nursing and allied health professionals to meet the needs of the patients. I announced on 12 March 2013 that Ivacaftor, otherwise known as Kalydeco, would be made available to suitable cystic fibrosis patients in Northern Ireland. Ivacaftor is the first in a new class of medicines that target the underlying cause of cystic fibrosis rather than simply treating the symptoms. There are now 32 cystic fibrosis patients being treated with the new drug ivacaftor, with a further 15 being assessed for their clinical suitability before they can start treatment. I can also advise that newborn screening for cystic fibrosis is part of the newborn blood spot screening programme, which is offered to all babies at 5 days of age.

Department of Justice

Prison Service: Release of Prisoner

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice when AQW 24552/11-15 will be answered.
(AQW 26896/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The circumstances surrounding the release of the prisoner on 21 June 2008 were investigated by the Northern Ireland Prison Service in July 2013.

The risk assessment paperwork contained an administrative error which referred to the wedding in June 2008 as that of the prisoner's daughter rather than that of his niece. The investigation concluded that this paperwork was initiated by one of the administrative staff within LMU in Maghaberry but could not ascertain who initiated this paperwork and made the initial error.

The investigation concluded that the designation of the relationship between the prisoner and the bride was never a deciding factor and there had been no attempt on the part of the prisoner or any other individual to deliberately deceive or corrupt the process.

At the time of this prisoner's release there was a requirement for a multi-disciplinary risk assessment to be carried out on each occasion a prisoner left the prison. There was no requirement for them to interview the prisoner on each occasion.

I am satisfied that the Prison Service has conducted a thorough investigation into this matter.

Legal Aid: Offender Levy

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, given the success of the Offender Levy, whether he will introduce a similar system whereby a levy is applied in cases where Legal Aid was granted, to help off-set the overall Legal Aid expenditure.
(AQW 27702/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have no plans to introduce an offender levy to contribute to the legal aid fund at this time.

Prison Service: Release of Prisoner

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, considering the review into the circumstances and decisions to release convicted murderer Kenneth Douglas has been underway for almost two years, to detail (i) the Terms of Reference; (ii) the cause of the delay; (iii) who and what grade of staff are conducting the review; and (iv) whether the Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland have been notified and if so, when.
(AQW 27708/11-15)

Mr Ford: A Review of the case management arrangements for Kenneth Douglas has already been completed by a Governor for the Northern Ireland Prison Service and an Assistant Director of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

The review of Mr. Douglas' case management was commissioned to consider:

- his case management since revocation of his life licence on 11 November 2010;
- the decision-making arrangements and information available at multi-disciplinary meetings on his progression to UTRs between 9 April and 25 July 2011;
- interventions provided both in custody and in the community to address his risk levels which gave rise to his return to custody;
- in liaison with the Chief Psychologist, to assess the impact of the risk assessment of "a high level of violent re-offending";
- the impact of the 22 August 2011 ACE assessment of "upper medium band";
- the reasons for use of hostel accommodation and subsequent approval to stay overnight with his grandfather from late November 2011;
- the impact of the 2 February 2012 ACE assessment that he was no longer presenting a risk of serious harm;
- the information available, and the decisions available to the multi-disciplinary case conference approving his entry to Phase 2 on 13 February 2012;
- the actual authorisation process and the factors taken into consideration to inform that decision;
- the impact of the 17 February 2012 Principal Forensic Psychology assessment that he presented low to medium risk of violent recidivism (again in consultation with the Chief Psychologist);
- the information available to, and the actual decision taken, to permit entry to Phase 3 on 23 April 2012;
- his supervision and management and reporting procedures whilst on Phase 3;
- impact of use of peer mentor support in the community;
- what else might have been considered in relation to his preparation in custody and whilst he was out in the community on Phase 3; and
- whether indications were obvious that should have informed an earlier decision on his potential recall.

Mr Douglas' case has not been reviewed within the Public Protection in Northern Ireland Arrangements.

Domestic Violence

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to domestic violence cases within the court system and following conviction, whether these are recorded as the basic charge, for example assault, threats etc, or specifically marked as domestic incident; and if not, whether he will consider amending this to ensure accurate recording and aggravating factors are highlighted.

(AQW 27718/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no specific offence of domestic violence. Charges before the court and convictions arising will relate to an offence as set out in legislation, for example assault occasioning actual bodily harm or threat to kill etc. These charges will also be recorded against any convictions arising from the court process. However, during the investigation stage, the PSNI identify offences with a suspected domestic violence motivation and this information is passed to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and considered during the decision to prosecute stage.

Appropriate cases are subsequently prosecuted by the PPS and any aggravating factors outlined to the court by the prosecutor. Charges are not specifically marked or recorded as a domestic violence incident on court records.

My officials are considering possible changes to the monitoring of domestic violence cases within the justice system and will consult the inter-agency Domestic and Sexual Violence Working Group on any proposals.

Children in Care

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many people, per court division, are presently within the court system for inducing a child in care to run or stay away from a responsible person and/or keeping a child in care from a responsible person; and of these, how many alleged victims are involved.

(AQW 27725/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the number of defendants currently within the court system, by county court division, charged with offences associated with inducing a child in care to run or stay away from a responsible person and/or keeping a child in care from a responsible person. Information is provided from the Integrated Courts Operations System as at 5 November 2013.

There are 3 alleged victims involved in these cases.

County Court Division	Number of Defendants
Antrim	1
Ards	3
Craigavon	1
Total	5

Note: this includes one defendant appealing a conviction to the county court.

Prisoner Ombudsman: Reports

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the second report by the Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland into matters surrounding the death in custody of Frances McKeown in Hydebank Women's Prison, to detail (i) why this report was not published as per standard procedure in such cases; (ii) who made the decision to keep the report confidential; (iii) when the report is due to be published, with necessary redactions as required; and (iv) how many other reports by the Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland have not been published.

(AQW 27727/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Prisoner Ombudsman is an independent office holder and the Member may wish to write to him directly about this matter.

Access NI

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice how many people have had more than one AccessNI check carried out on their behalf, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27732/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below provides the available information. It shows the number of individuals who have received more than one AccessNI certificate in a single calendar year during each of the last three years calendar years:

Years (to date)	Number of individuals
January – December 2011	7,373

Years (to date)	Number of individuals
January – December 2012	11,411
January – November 2013	8,917

It should be noted that the figures include applicants who have received different types of disclosure, for example basic, standard or enhanced or who may have applied for entirely different types of work. Therefore the information on certificates may not have been identical in each case.

There may be a number of other individuals who have received more than one certificate in a single year, but AccessNI is unable to confirm this from the information available from the IT system. This could be the case where, for instance, different forenames have been used.

Access NI

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice how many people have had more than five AccessNI checks carried out on their behalf, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27734/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below provides the available information. It shows the number of individuals who have received more than five AccessNI certificates in a single calendar year, during each of the past five calendar years:

Years (to date)	Number of individuals
January – December 2009	7
January – December 2010	11
January – December 2011	18
January – December 2012	14
January – October 2013	3

It should be noted that the figures include applicants who have received different types of disclosure, for example basic, standard or enhanced or who may have applied for entirely different types of work. Therefore the information on certificates may not have been identical in each case.

There may be a number of other individuals who have received more than five certificates in a single year, but AccessNI is unable to confirm this from the information available in the IT system. This would arise where, for instance, different forenames have been used.

Prisons: Drugs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the steps taken by his Department to stop drugs being smuggled into prisons.

(AQW 27747/11-15)

Mr Ford: The physical measures in place to prevent illicit drugs coming into prisons include both routine and intelligence led searching, drugs dogs and visiting restrictions where appropriate.

The use of drugs within prison is monitored by mandatory drug testing and sanctions are taken against those who test positive for illicit substances.

Staff are trained to enable them to combat the smuggling and use of drugs. NIPS also work closely with the PSNI and a joint initiative to reduce the drugs supply within Maghaberry Prison is ongoing.

Prison Service: Release of Prisoner

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 20359/11-15, to detail (i) when he expects the review to conclude; and (ii) when a full report be published.

(AQW 27762/11-15)

Mr Ford: A Review of the case management arrangements for Mr Douglas has been completed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

The report contains sensitive personal information. To publish this information would breach of the first and second data protection principles.

The report concludes that due process and the multi-disciplinary approach were evident throughout the case and the events which led to the return to prison of Mr Douglas could not have been pre-empted.

Domestic Violence

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice what support his Department provides to the PSNI to tackle rising levels of domestic violence.

(AQW 27789/11-15)

Mr Ford: While dealing with the reported incidents of domestic violence is an operational matter for the Police Service of Northern Ireland, my Department and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety have joint policy responsibility for tackling domestic violence and abuse. The PSNI is represented on the Regional Strategy Group for domestic and sexual violence and abuse (and its associated Sub-Groups). My Department liaises closely, therefore, with PSNI representatives on how agreed strategy and policy changes may impact on their operational roles.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the suggestion by Independent Arbitrators, Dr Carol Ackah and Liam Deane, contained at 13.4 of their December 2009 Report, that 'the use of an officer other than the Adjudicating Governor to present the NIPS management case at disciplinary hearings may serve to reinforce the impartiality of the decision maker', is to be incorporated into disciplinary hearings under the Code of Conduct 2013, particularly in cases of gross misconduct; and if not, to detail his rationale.

(AQW 27817/11-15)

Mr Ford: I note from previous questions asked by the Member that he has access to a copy of the new Professional Code of Conduct. I would refer him to Paragraphs 5.20 to 5.40 of the Code, which set out the procedures in place for disciplinary hearings. I would also refer the Member to the answers I gave to AQW/21007/11-15 and AQW/27299/11-15.

Sex Offenders Register

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in the event of a conviction under Section 64A of the Sexual Offences Order (NI) 2008 of knowingly engaging the sexual services of a trafficked victim, whether the offender will be placed on the Sex Offender's Register and monitored as such.

(AQW 27821/11-15)

Mr Ford: The offence at section 64A is a strict liability offence and the question does not arise as to whether the offender knew the victim had been subject to force. It is not therefore listed as a relevant offence, for the purposes of sex offender notification, in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

If knowledge of exploitative circumstances can be proved, the offender would be guilty of a non consensual sexual offence, such as rape or sexual assault, and, if convicted and sentenced as necessary, would then be subject to sex offender notification.

Police Part-time Reserve

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) how applications can be made to the new £383,000 fund to support former part time police reservists; and (ii) whether this fund will be made available to reservists that did not benefit from the Gratuity Scheme.

(AQW 27828/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is envisaged that a number of policing charities will administer the new Part-time Reserve (PTR) Support Programme and applications will be made directly to them: officials from my Department are currently working to identify those charities. The programme will be available to all former members of the PTR, both RUC GC and PSNI; to members' dependants; and to the surviving partner of any member now deceased.

Prison Officers: Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total number of Prison Officers who have received the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings scheme as a result of having to leave their homes.

(AQW 27854/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings scheme (SPED) is a scheme which is owned and administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and is not a Northern Ireland Prison Service Scheme.

The table below outlines, by year, the number of Prison Officers who have availed of this scheme since 2010.

Year	No of Prison Officers
2010	1
2011	2
2012	1

Year	No of Prison Officers
2013	0

Prison Officers: Personal Security

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of Prison Officers who have (i) been targeted; and (ii) received threats, since June 2012 following the introduction of new Custody Officers.

(AQW 27855/11-15)

Mr Ford: As this question relates to the personal security of prison staff it would not be appropriate to provide specific details.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why prison staff are not required to report receipt of a police caution for a criminal offence; and to detail why this requirement has been excluded from Section 10.1 of the Code of Conduct 2013.

(AQW 28083/11-15)

Mr Ford: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW/27299/11-15.

Department for Regional Development

Parking: Spencer Street

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he can take to stop commuters parking in residents spaces in Spencer Street, Donaghadee.

(AQW 26573/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): At present, there are no on-street "residents' spaces" in Spencer Street, Holywood. Any driver may park their car in Spencer Street so long as it is road-legal, is not causing an obstruction and is not in contravention of any restrictions that may be in place at that particular location.

My Department is currently developing Residents' Parking Schemes for parts of Belfast as well as discrete areas in Londonderry and Antrim. Along with scheme development, Departmental officials are currently drafting the necessary subordinate legislation to facilitate schemes and aims to have the first schemes delivered during 2014.

With regard to Holywood, I have asked officials to carry out an initial assessment of the eligibility of residential streets within Holywood town centre for a Residents' Parking Scheme. Officials are currently preparing a consultant's brief for a survey to be carried out in a number of streets in the town centre, which will issue shortly.

Flags: Health and Safety

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 23850/11-15, what health and safety assessments his Department have undertaken on the dangers posed by the possible detachment of flags and other materials from lamp posts and other street furniture.

(AQW 27055/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has assessed that the possible detachment of flags and other materials from lamp posts and other street furniture could potentially distract or injure road users. Fortunately, there have been no significant incidents of this nature to date.

A more significant safety concern, as referred to in my earlier answer to the Member's previous question AQW 23850/11-15, comes from large banners attached to street lighting columns, due to the effect of wind loading on the structural stability of the column.

While it is not feasible for my Department to routinely carry out individual assessments of all unauthorised attachments, it does respond and take appropriate action on any unsafe attachments that it becomes aware of.

Traffic Calming: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how many traffic calming measures have been requested in North Down in each of the last five years; and of these, how many were agreed and implemented.

(AQW 27253/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department receives a large number of requests for traffic calming measures and details of the number of such requests are not held in a readily accessible format.

Traffic Flow

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 25708/11-15, to detail the average daily traffic flow in each of the months provided at peak rush hour times.

(AQW 27472/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the average daily peak traffic flows from April to September 2011, the most recent year of data currently available, are provided in the table below:

Average Daily Traffic Flow on the A26 Lisnevenagh Road from April 2011 – September 2011

Month	Average Morning Peak Traffic Flow	Average Evening Peak Traffic Flow
April	2081	2767
May	2279	2828
June	2237	2700
July	1900	2670
August	2084	2971
September	2388	2905

Train Use

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what incentives he is considering to encourage more people to use the train.

(AQW 27506/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Rail passenger journeys increased by 7 % in 2012/13 and figures to the end of September 2013 show an increase of 15% compared to the previous year.

Through a year-round programme of innovative marketing and promotional campaigns, by conventional advertising and use of social media, an extensive range of ticketing products are on offer to cater for Translink's wide customer base and to enable passengers to avail of flexible travel options to suit their needs.

In addition to the conventional products, Translink offers promotional web fares for Enterprise travel to Dublin, PLUSBUS tickets which allow passengers to travel by train and complete their journey by Ulsterbus Town or Metro Services, including the Airport Express Service (No. 600) to George Best Belfast City Airport.

Keeping pace with technology, rail passengers can avail of m-link, which facilitates the purchase of weekly, monthly and new 3-day flexi tickets via mobile devices.

Passengers travelling by rail can now avail of free wi-fi during their journey, making it easier to access the Internet for business and leisure purposes. This also applies to Enterprise services to Dublin.

Investment in customer information on Translink's website, particularly in relation to the use of mobile devices, Journey planner facility and real time information apps has also played its part in passenger growth.

In tandem with new rolling stock acquisitions, focus has been given to the quality of service offered to passengers, i.e. punctuality, presentation of trains and customer service.

Rail infrastructure developments have enhanced performance levels across the rail network, the most recent example being the completion of Phase 1 of the Coleraine to Londonderry track improvement project.

Translink have continued the upgrade of its rail stations and passenger facilities, including Park & Ride. The integrated bus and rail station at Antrim and the redeveloped rail station at Portadown make clear my commitment to further improve rail and bus transport.

Earlier this year, my Department carried out a public consultation on how we should prioritise future investment in Northern Ireland railways up to 2015. The extensive and varied response to the consultation is still being analysed against the prioritisation framework for wider regional transportation expenditure. I hope to publish a report on the railway analysis later in the autumn.

Signage: Irish/Bilingual Destination Signs

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26234/11-15, to detail (i) when the decision was taken to introduce Irish language destination signs on the 10H service; (ii) the cost to provide bilingual destination signs; and (iii) whether he has any plans to change the signs to English only.

(AQW 27509/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Metro corridor service 10H has no Irish language destination signs.

Traffic Calming: Vertical Deflection

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the vertical deflection schemes installed in each of the last five years; and of these, how many vertical deflection ramps were installed in each scheme and how much each scheme cost. (AQW 27574/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department carries out a programme of Traffic Calming schemes each year. The overall objective of this programme is to improve driver behaviour and control traffic speed, in order to reduce the number of collisions, primarily those involving pedestrians and cyclists. These Traffic Calming schemes incorporate a number of traffic calming measures, not all of which involve the use of vertical deflection. The results of this work are published in the Road Safety Engineering Report, which is available online at the following web address: <https://applications.drdni.gov.uk/publications/document.asp?docid=19634>

Detailed of those traffic calming schemes provided within Northern Ireland, in each of the last five financial years, which consisted of some form of vertical deflection are provided in the following table:

Year	Traffic Calming Scheme	No. of vertical deflection measures	Cost (£k)
2008/09	Ballymagarry Lane, Belfast	17	23.5
	Clarawood Park area, Belfast	14	37.5
	Coolnasilla Park area, Belfast	12	18
	Earlswood Road / Belmont Church Road area, Belfast	13	37.5
	Euston Street area, Belfast	17	37
	Kensington Road area, Belfast	21	35
	Lepper Street / Spamount Street area, Belfast	31	31
	Maryville Park / Myrtlefield Park area, Belfast	22	30
2008/09	North Boundary Street area, Belfast	12	18
	Sydenham Avenue area, Belfast	35	29
	Tamar Street / Witham Street area, Belfast	11	18
	Lower Braniel Road area, Castlereagh	21	30
	Wynchurch Road area, Castlereagh	12	18
	Causeway End Road area, Lisburn	19	7
	Lagmore Avenue & Dale area, Lisburn	13	8.5
	Magheralave Road area, Lisburn	16	73.5
	Skyline Drive area, Lisburn	29	45
	Barn Road / Elizabeth Avenue area, Carrickfergus	21	76.5
	Bracken Drive area, Newtownabbey	18	40
	Hazelburn Road area, Newtownabbey	9	20.5
	Drumhirk Drive area, Bangor	12	52
	Grays Hill area, Bangor	15	15
	Woodburn area Derry/Londonderry	28	20
	Bishop Street Area Derry/Londonderry	3	15
	Benview Estate. Derry/Londonderry	11	15
	Stiles Estate, Antrim	6	36
	Randalstown	26	36
	Seacliff, Larne	13	23
Eastermeade, Ballymoney	5	17	

Year	Traffic Calming Scheme	No. of vertical deflection measures	Cost (£k)
	Gortgore Road, Greysteel	15	66
	Shore Rd, Cushendall	7	30
	Strangford Heights, Newtownards	6	12
	Derrymore Rd, Bessbrook	18	19
	Clonallen Rd, Warrenpoint	8	14
	Laurelvale	10	60.5
	Drumbreda Walk, Armagh	5	21.5
	Commercial Road, Banbridge	6	22.5
	Diamond Road, Dromore	5	28
	Donard View, Loughbrickland	5	7.5
	Bachelors Walk, Portadown	7	10
	Cecil Street area, Portadown	15	29
2008/09	Derrychara Area, Enniskillen	14	4.2
	Fountain Street Area, Strabane	17	22
	Ardstraw Village, SDC	11	21
	Mourne Park, Newtownstewart, SDC	17	14.5
	Killyclogher area, ODC	14	40
	Lambrook Road, Omagh	6	5.7
	Ballyronan Village	16	23
	Ardboe Village	22	32
	Blackpark Road, Toome	12	19
	Leckagh / Killowen, Magherafelt	21	22
2009/10	Alexandra Gardens area, Belfast	5	9
	Ballysillan Park area, Belfast	14	54
	Bilston Road area, Belfast	10	20.5
	Cabin Hill Park area, Belfast	6	8
	Friendly Street, Belfast	7	8
	Jellicoe Avenue area, Belfast	16	9.5
	Martinez Avenue area, Belfast	7	11
	Beechill Road area, Castlereagh	17	36.5
	Cairnshill Park / Burnside Park area, Castlereagh	14	21
	Merok Crescent area, Castlereagh	25	17.5
	Newtownbreda Road, Castlereagh	9	16
	Gregg Street area, Lisburn	8	21
	Hawthorne Way / Ollardale Park area, Ballyclare, Newtownabbey	6	12.5
	Castle Park Road area, Bangor	8	38.5
	Carnhill, Derry/Londonderry	11	5
	Knockwellan, Derry/Londonderry	14	15
	Rathenraw Antrim	17	29

Year	Traffic Calming Scheme	No. of vertical deflection measures	Cost (£k)
	Toome Village	14	16.5
	Glynn	10	8
	Saul St/ Saul Rd Downpatrick	35	34
	Circular rd, Castlewellan	4	12
	Cumber RD Drumanness	4	14
2009/10	Victoria Ave Newtownards	7	18
	Dorans Hill Newry	18	13
	Scrogg Rd Killeel	19	20
	Cloughmore Rd Rostrevor	9	19.5
	Granemore Road, Keady	12	49
	Madden Row, Keady	9	20
	Newry Street, Rathfriland	8	20
	Seapatrick road, Banbridge	7	17
	North Circular Road, Lurgan	10	29.5
	Gortgonis Road & Plater's Hill, Coalisland	22	36.2
	Irvinestown	27	86
	Castletown Area, Strabane	20	27.4
	Mountfield Village, ODC	19	24.4
	Hospital Road North & Winters Lane, ODC	32	39.5
	Fintona Village, ODC	20	35
2010/11	Cupar Way area, Belfast	22	55.5
	Laurelhill Road, Lisburn	26	28
	Ballybog Road / Seymour Hill area, Lisburn	69	121
	Carnmoney Road North area, Newtownabbey	33	38
	East St / West St Newtownards	14	30
	Forkhill Village	15	48
	Eastway, Derry/Londonderry	2	25
	Hawthorn Terrace, Derry/Londonderry	14	12
	Church Rd, Randalstown	15	13
	Ballytromery Road, Crumlin	8	7
	Bridge Rd, Dunloy	8	15
	Greystone Estate Antrim	10	10
	Ardmore, Armagh	20	41
	Acton	8	20
	Mill Hill, Waringstown	11	235
	Hillview & Kilmacormick Road, Enniskillen	23	16.3
	Victoria Bridge Village, SDC	24	25
	Lurganboy Rd, Castlederg, SDC	4	2.5

Year	Traffic Calming Scheme	No. of vertical deflection measures	Cost (£k)
2010/11	Parkview Rd, Castlederg, SDC	4	2.5
	Seskinore Village, ODC	11	11.3
	Queens Avenue, Magherafelt	10	32
	Milburn / Princess Terrace	17	29
	Northland, Moneymore	11	9
	Gortalowry, Cookstown	6	5
	Coolnafranky, Cookstown	3	3
2011/12	Bryson Street / Madrid Street area, Belfast	11	20
	Cambrai Street, Belfast	9	17
	Circular Road area, Belfast	21	104
	Newington Avenue area, Belfast	7	21.5
	Tudor area (Shankill), Belfast	16	37.5
	Branial / Whincroft area, Castlereagh	7	17
	Glen Road / Roddens Crescent area, Castlereagh	26	36
	Manse Road, Carryduff, Castlereagh	14	17
	Ravenswood Park, Castlereagh	6	2
	Alexander Road area, Carrickfergus	53	75
	Regent Avenue area, Carrickfergus	25	22.5
	Rashee Park area, Ballyclare	16	33.5
	Abbey Ring area, Holywood	33	75
	Ballymacconnell Road South area, Bangor	22	28
	Church View / Spencer Street area, Holywood	13	19
	Skipperstone Road / Whitehill Drive area, Bangor	49	119.5
	Rosstown Road, Derry/Londonderry	16	15
	Bards Hill, Derry/Londonderry	13	15
	Hillfort Road, Derry/Londonderry	6	10
	Springtown Road, Derry/Londonderry	14	15
	Parkhall Estate, Antrim	9	15.5
	Linn Rd Upper Carncastle Rd Larne (Phase One)	8	43
	Bayview Road, Ballycastle	2	6
	Ballykinlar Village	7	20
	New Harbour Rd Portavogie	12	22
	Mourne Esplanade Kilkeel	7	13
2011/12	Forth rd/Dallan Rd Warrenpoint	12	35.5
	Ballygowan Road, Banbridge	16	40
	Huntly Road, Banbridge	8	58
	Annaclone	10	30
	Lower Toberhewny Rd, Lurgan	6	20.5
	Annagher Area, Coalisland	26	13.5
	Killen Village, SDC	14	12

Year	Traffic Calming Scheme	No. of vertical deflection measures	Cost (£k)
	Drumquin Village, ODC	20	19
	Drumnakilly Rd, Carrickmore, ODC	7	6.5
	Sunningdale, Omagh	1	2
	Upperlands Village	12	16
	Tullagh Drive, Cookstown	6	5
	Fortview / Drumcree, Cookstown	13	10
	Grove Terrace / O'Hara Road	10	9
2012/13	Cranmore Park area, Belfast	21	42.5
	Island Street area, Belfast	7	44.5
	Lower Malone area, Belfast	29	113
	Sicity Park / Priory Park area, Belfast	29	38
	Prospect Heights area, Carrickfergus	25	30.5
	Devenish Drive, Newtownabbey	1	5.5
	Steelstown Road, Derry/Londonderry	16	10
	Ballycraigy Estate Antrim	25	22
	Linn Rd Upper Carncastle Rd Larne (Phase Two)	11	43
	Circular Rd, Newtownards	13	43.2
	Mount Cres, Downpatrick	8	16.7
	Drumsill Park, Armagh	6	12
	Castle Hill, Gilford	7	20
	Ballynamoney Rd, Aghacommon	17	60
	Oakvale, Craigavon	4	8
	Glenholme Park, Lurgan	10	20
	Drumbeg / Drumbawn, Enniskillen	3	5.5
	Mullaghmore Road, Dungannon	19	46
	Old Eglisk Road, Dungannon	3	3.3
2012/13	Gallows Hill, Omagh	8	5.7
	Melmount Gardens, Strabane	4	3.7
	Ashbrook, Strabane	6	3.5
	Westland Road / Highfield, Magherafelt	33	25

Penalty Charge Notices: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Penalty Charge Notices have been issued in Pay and Display car parks in North Down, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 27583/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued in Pay and Display car parks in North Down in each of the last two financial years are as follows:

Year	PCNs Issued
2011/12	2073
2012/13	2076

Penalty Charge Notices: Appeals

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of times a further appeal has been lodged against a Penalty Charge Notice one the initial appeal has been rejected, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27586/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the total number of representations against the issue of a Penalty Charge Notice, in Northern Ireland, for the last five financial years are provided in the table below. It is not possible to define how many of these have had a previous appeal.

Penalty Charge Notice - Representations

Year	Representations Received
2008/09	5199
2009/10	4611
2010/11	4419
2011/12	4373
2012/13	4178

Flooding: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the steps being taken to address the risk of flooding in the North Down area.

(AQW 27587/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service, NI Water and DARD Rivers Agency all provide key infrastructure which contributes to drainage and alleviation of flood risk in the North Down area and throughout Northern Ireland.

All three bodies carry out cyclical inspection of sewer, road gully, culvert and designated water course infrastructure taking account of risk and weather conditions. Where necessary, remedial work is carried out to maintain the drainage infrastructure, for example, removing sewer blockages, cleaning gullies and ensuring that inlet grilles are operating properly.

Work to improve our drainage systems within the North Down area is currently being progressed at or around Donaghadee, Hollywood, Bangor and Millisle, and Rivers Agency will be providing a new sandbag store in Bangor in conjunction with North Down Council.

Unfortunately the risk of flooding cannot be absolutely eliminated and severe rainfall will always have the potential to overwhelm drainage systems. However, my Department and NI Water, along with Rivers Agency and other statutory agencies, will continue to work towards reducing the risk of flooding and mitigating the impact on people's homes and lives when it occurs.

Traffic Congestion: Armagh

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the studies that have been completed in relation to traffic congestion in the Armagh City area; and whether traffic conditions have been identified as an obstacle to economic growth.

(AQW 27588/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has undertaken a number of studies in the Armagh area to identify traffic progression issues as part of the work for the Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015, and to assess relative merit of improvements such as the East Link and North and West Link road proposals. Whilst the focus of such studies typically relates to improving traffic progression and safety, I recognise the important role that improving the road infrastructure has in supporting the local economy.

It is expected the provision of both the A28 Armagh East Link and the A3 Armagh North and West Link proposals will contribute to a reduction in the traffic on the city centre road network. In addition, as with all Strategic Road Improvement schemes, the choice of route should provide: value for money for all road users, reliable journey times and should benefit the regeneration areas of the wider economy as a whole.

However, progress of the design and development of these schemes will be dependent upon the completion of the statutory procedures, the scheme continuing to have a satisfactory economic appraisal and the availability of funding in future budget settlements.

My officials are also working closely with Armagh City and District Council, and their consultants, to determine how best to deal with traffic growth predicated as a result of the implementation of the Armagh Masterplan. This work is ongoing, with consideration of a one way gyratory system around The Mall, one of the key proposals being analysed, by way of a jointly funded traffic model for Armagh.

Working in partnership will allow any roads infrastructure related barriers to development to be identified at an early stage and, where feasible, plans put in place to mitigate the impact of this level of development on the performance of the existing

roads network. This work can then be used to help inform the planning process as projects are brought forward in the appropriate manner.

Cycling Group

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the remit of his Department's new cycling group. (AQW 27623/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: From 1 November 2013, I have established a Cycle Policy Unit in my Department, tasked with better co-ordinating all cycle issues and working with other interested stakeholders to develop robust and sustainable strategies.

Senior officials are now considering how the new cycling unit could best complement work previously carried out in different parts of my department, to ensure cycling issues are progressed in a more coordinated manner and are given an increased focus and priority.

Road Bonds

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26961/11-15, to detail (i) the bank, developers representative or administrator that have received interest payments, including the amount paid to each; and (ii) the cost to his Department of handling (a) cash bonds; and (b) surety bonds. (AQW 27653/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Any refunds due for the Cash Bonds detailed in my previous response to AQW 26961/11-15 have been paid back directly to the developer rather than a bank, representative or administrator. None of these refunds included interest as the rate is currently set at zero. There are no additional costs to the Department for handling surety bonds or cash bonds other than current Departmental Running Costs.

Water Meters

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26666/11 and AQW 26667/11-15, how much has been paid to contractors for the installation of water meters, including the occasions where a contractor attended, but meters were not ready for installation, in each of the last five years. (AQW 27668/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that records of the amount paid to contractors for the installation of water meters are not held by constituency area and the information requested for South Antrim is therefore not available.

DRD: Minister's London Visit

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the groups he met during his recent visit to London. (AQW 27673/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I observed the Barclays Cycle Hire scheme operating on the ground and meet with senior officials from Transport for London (TfL) and Serco, who are the company responsible for the management and development of the scheme under contract to TfL.

I further met with senior TfL officials to establish relationships, discuss traffic control measures and also discuss the Lord Mayor's vision for cycling in London. I also visited the Surface Transport and Traffic Operations Centre (Transport for London) which has overall responsibility for traffic management and enforcement in London and actively manages the movement of people and goods to keep the city moving.

Cycling: Minister for Regional Development's London Visit

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the benefit gained by his recent visit to London, in terms of developing a local cycling transport policy. (AQW 27674/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I met with senior officials from Transport for London who are responsible for the provision of the Barclays Cycle Hire Scheme and Serco, who are contracted to manage and develop the scheme.

The meeting took place at Serco's Penton Street operational hub where I was provided with a presentation on:-

- the key principals of developing and operating a bike hire scheme;
- the delineation of responsibilities between the Authority and the contracted operator;
- safety issues;
- design principles;
- usage patterns by time of day and gender and;
- key indicators for behavioral change by users

As you are aware, the Belfast Public Bike Hire scheme was one of the four active travel projects funded by my Department. The others being cycling infrastructure in Londonderry, Strabane and Craigavon.

Belfast City Council was awarded almost £700,000 in capital grant for the Belfast scheme. The intention is to provide around 300 bicycles at 25 docking stations in and around the core city centre.

The scheme is still in the development stage and it is the Council's intention to go out to tender in early November. The scheme should be operational by the Autumn of 2015. My officials who also attended the meetings are providing a project assurance role for the capital grant aspect of the scheme.

I further met with key personnel in Transport for London's headquarters at Palestra House. During this meeting I had discussions with senior TfL officials on traffic control measures and the Mayor's vision for cycling in London. I had the opportunity to meet with the Chief Operating Officer, Streets and Traffic, who is responsible for keeping London moving and helping to drive forward the Mayor's agenda to smooth traffic flow in the Capital.

Following the meeting I visited the Surface Transport and Traffic Operations Centre (Transport for London) which actively manages the movement of people and goods to keep London moving. This world class centre achieves this by traffic management planning for events, including major roadwork schemes, the use of real time traffic information, enforcement and the implementation of traffic signal contingency plans in response to events and incidents.

These meetings were extremely informative and established relationships with key personnel in Transport for London.

Footpaths

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the budget allocated for the replacement or creation of footpaths in (i) 2013/14; and (ii) 2014/15; and to outline how many miles of footpaths this will cover.

(AQW 27696/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service undertakes an annual programme of footway reconstruction and resurfacing works, the composition of which is dependent upon the level of funding made available for this type of work.

I can confirm the initial allocation for footway resurfacing and reconstruction for 2013/14 was some £2.6 million. This figure is likely to change during the course of the financial year for a variety of reasons, including, for example, the receipt of and targeting towards footway maintenance of additional funding obtained as a result of successful bids during Monitoring Rounds.

Final decisions regarding allocations for 2014/15 financial year have yet to be made and therefore I am unable, at this stage, to state how much will initially be allocated to footway resurfacing and reconstruction.

My Department undertakes new footway construction through its annual programme of Local Transport Safety Measures (LTSM). These measures cover areas such as network development, traffic calming, collision remedial and pedestrian measures. Work on new footways is often carried out as part of an overall scheme and, as such, the costs of the footway element is not allocated or captured separately. I should also explain new footway schemes are subject to an assessment process that is used to compare and prioritise schemes which ensures finite resources are directed at those schemes where the needs are greatest.

The LTSM budgets for 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years are £10.1 million and £10.3 million, respectively.

In 2013/14, it is planned to deliver some 2.8 miles (4.5km) of new footway.

Street Lighting

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the average cost of replacing a street light.

(AQW 27698/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised the average cost of replacing a street light is approximately £1,650. The actual cost of replacing street lighting will depend on site-specific factors such as the extent of work required, location and type of road and the type of equipment to be used.

Footpaths

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria for the allocation of a capital funding scheme to replace footpaths with tarmac.

(AQW 27700/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has a statutory duty to maintain public footways in a safe and serviceable condition and operates a system of regular safety inspections to ensure that essential response maintenance is identified and completed, as necessary.

The cyclical safety inspections help to identify the condition of public footways, and this information is then used in the preparation and prioritisation of Roads Service's annual footway reconstruction and resurfacing programme.

In addition to the information gleaned from the inspections, other criteria such as footway usage, general surface condition, structural deformation, public enquiries and public liability claims are used to determine the programme of capital funding for footway construction.

Factors such as the size of the area, level of maintenance activity, degree of vehicle overrun and environmental considerations are taken into account when determining whether footpaths are replaced with either bitmac/asphalt or flagstones.

Parking Restrictions

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to parking restrictions which indicate no return within two hours, whether the time period starts when a driver leaves the parking space.

(AQW 27711/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The legislation for limited parking bays defines the maximum period for which a vehicle can park, for example, one hour and the minimum period before a vehicle can return again to that parking space after it has moved, for example, two hours.

In practice, a Traffic Attendant will record the time a vehicle was observed in a parking space on their first visit, and if the vehicle is no longer there at the time of the second visit, the 'no return' period will apply from the time of the Traffic Attendant's first visit. This approach is adopted as the Traffic Attendant will not be aware at what specific time the vehicle vacated the parking space.

However, if the vehicle is still in that parking space on the Traffic Attendant's second visit, and the vehicle has not exceeded the maximum stay, then the two hour 'no return' period is started from the time recorded on the Traffic Attendant's second visit.

Parking Spaces: Belfast

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the assessed level of parking spaces in Belfast; (ii) how many and the proportion of these that are available to the public; and (iii) how many and the proportion that are controlled by his Department.

(AQW 27712/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Parking within Belfast City Centre is divided into two zones, as defined in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015. The core parking area represents an extension of the existing controlled parking zone, whereas the fringe represents the area where car drivers can park and then walk into the city.

My Department carries out surveys on the parking in Belfast city centre on a two yearly basis. The last completed survey was in October 2011 and the current survey for 2013 is currently underway.

Based on the 2011 parking survey, there are approximately 28,000 parking spaces, on-street and off-street in both the core and fringe areas Belfast city centre, all of which are available for public use. The breakdown is as follows:-

- Core off street – 10,600 spaces
- Core on street – 3,410 spaces
- Fringe off street – 4,680 spaces
- Fringe on street – 9,320 spaces

My Department does not maintain details of the availability of private car parking spaces.

In relation to the proportion that are controlled by my Department, approximately 1,630 spaces (15%) in the core area and 330 spaces (7%) in the fringe area are controlled by my Department's Roads Service.

Railways: Ballymena to Belfast

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the steps that are being taken to alleviate overcrowding on the Ballymena - Antrim - Belfast train service.

(AQW 27773/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Railways routinely monitor passenger loadings on all services.

From January of this year, service frequency was increased on this service to every hour, with a half hour service to/from Belfast early morning and evening. Several services daily are operated with six carriage trains.

Northern Ireland Railways is now experiencing standing passengers on several services throughout the day.

As passenger numbers continue to grow, Northern Ireland Railways will deploy additional six carriage trains in place of three carriages, in line with available resources. I have already raised the issue of funding for additional train carriages with the Department of Finance and Personnel and intend to pursue this further.

Belfast Rapid Transport System

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the estimated cost of building the Belfast Rapid Transport System.

(AQW 27803/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Outline Business Case for Belfast Rapid Transit, which was completed in May 2012, estimated the cost of building the system at £98.5m. In line with the relevant guidance this includes a significant amount to cover potential risk and unforeseen issues.

My Department is currently developing the detailed designs for the Belfast Rapid Transit system and, as this work progresses, the likely final costs will become clearer. My Department is delivering efficiencies through collaboration with the Department for Social Development on joint projects along the routes and is seeking to mitigate potential financial risks to the project through the detailed design process.

Lurgan Railway Station

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the current usage of Lurgan Railway Station.
(AQW 27857/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The footfall recorded for the first 6 months of 2013/14 has been documented at 459,000 (an increase of 8.6% on the same period last year). Based on these figures Lurgan is still the 7th busiest station on the rail network. Footfall recorded at Lurgan Station for 2012/13 was 901,000.

SmartPass

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development how many valid Senior Smartpasses are in use.
(AQW 27887/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The number of Senior Smartpasses held as at 8 November 2013 was 221,510. Of these 159,362 have been used at least once on Translink's buses and trains in the last twelve months.

A2: Landslides

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans for an immediate inspection of the Antrim Coast Road to identify further potential road closures due to landslides.
(AQW 27905/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials from my Department's Roads Service inspect the A2 Coast Road each morning and if there is any evidence of landslides or the risk of rock falls, more detailed inspections by engineering staff are undertaken.

In addition, a more detailed visual inspection is conducted twice per year by engineering officials, to identify any deterioration of the rock face slopes, which may increase the risk of landslides and rock falls. The most recent took place on 9 October 2013 and the next one is scheduled for May 2014.

There are also plans to undertake further retention works on the slopes at Straidkilly, just north of Glenarm village later this financial year.

Department for Social Development

Social Housing Stock: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the social housing stock levels in North Down, broken down by number of bedrooms; and (ii) the current levels of vacancy and demand for each category.
(AQW 27622/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, in relation to (i) Table 1 attached details the current Housing Executive stock levels and levels of vacancy in their Bangor District Office area that covers North Down; and Table 2 details the Housing Association Stock and Vacancies in North Down. In relation to (ii) Table 3 details the Waiting List at 1 October 2013, by number of bedrooms required.

Table 1 – Housing Executive Stock and Vacancies – North Down: -

District	Status	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	Total
Bangor	Occupied	463	1047	1030	47	4	2591
Bangor	Void	38	14	12	0	0	64
Total		501	1061	1042	47	4	2655

Table 2 - Housing Association Stock and Vacancies - North Down: -

No. of Bedrooms	Total stock	Vacancies
1 Bed	607	13
2 Bed	671	30
3 Bed	145	2
4 Bed	3	1
5 Bed	0	0
6 Bed	1	0
7 Bed	1	0
8 Bed	5	0
9 Bed	1	0
10 Bed	1	0

Table 3 – Waiting List at 1 October 2013, by number of bedrooms required

	1-Bed	2-Bed	3-Bed	4-Bed	5-Bed	6-Bed	Total
Total Applicants	1,259	556	210	67	13	4	2,109

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.

Twaddell Avenue

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of whether the occupation of the site in Twaddell Avenue is legal or not.

(AQW 27742/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that persons entered onto the land at Twaddell Avenue, Belfast without the authorisation, consent or permission of the Housing Executive. The entering onto the land was not and is not lawful. The Housing Executive has not consented to the occupation. Following discussions with the PSNI, the Housing Executive has refrained from taking action to remove protestors from its lands to date in the hope that a potentially highly charged situation can be defused and resolved to avoid the possibility of any civil disorder.

Housing Waiting List

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people on the housing waiting list for each District Office, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27763/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table attached details the number of people on the Common Waiting List for each Housing Executive District Office area in each of the last five years.

Table - Applicants on the Waiting List by NIHE District 2009–2013

NIHE District Office	31.03.09	31.03.10	31.03.11	01.05.12*	31.03.13
Antrim	991	972	977	852	992
Armagh	797	760	802	708	851
Ballycastle	359	357	334	326	352
Ballymena	1,530	1,420	1,520	1,256	1,564
Ballymoney	497	439	496	390	481
Banbridge	698	665	677	479	581
Bangor	1,930	1,885	1,884	2,146	2,414
Belfast West	2,363	2,456	2,618	2,550	2,778
Belfast East	1,962	1,850	2,125	1,392	1,660
Belfast North	2,478	2,479	2,435	2,037	2,496

NIHE District Office	31.03.09	31.03.10	31.03.11	01.05.12*	31.03.13
Shankill	893	897	888	672	860
Belfast South	2,321	2,259	2,112	2,122	2,692
Carrickfergus	1,032	994	974	818	962
Castlereagh	1,371	1,367	1,462	1,167	1,318
Coleraine	1,292	1,219	1,297	1,026	1,293
Cookstown	408	371	407	362	400
Waterloo Place	817	884	982	1,001	1,220
Waterside	874	863	1,007	748	943
Collon Terrace	727	827	1,004	1,013	1,123
Downpatrick	1,292	1,213	1,323	1,250	1,601
Dungannon	915	895	1,022	920	1,103
Fermanagh	894	833	853	639	826
Larne	526	509	550	406	490
Limavady	521	497	472	372	508
Lisburn Antrim Street	2,032	1,981	1,991	1,709	1,937
Lisburn Dairy Farm	638	626	604	559	598
Lurgan	1,242	1,061	1,154	961	1,226
Magherafelt	503	507	512	429	490
Newry	1,778	1,828	1,827	1,571	1,965
Newtownabbey ¹	814	785	826	731	889
Newtownabbey ²	912	906	917	783	928
Newtownards	1,682	1,706	1,811	1,486	1,690
Omagh	620	590	622	495	663
Portadown	732	694	768	646	802
Strabane	482	525	638	511	660
Total	38,923	38,120	39,891	34,533	41,356

* NIHE advises that:-

- 1 Figures for 2011/12 were extracted on 1 May 2012, due to the implementation of a new electronic Housing Management System.
- 2 Due to the introduction of the new Housing Management System and a change to the annual renewal process for applicants, the number of waiting list applicants for 2011-12 are not directly comparable with previous years.

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.

Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Framework

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 26087/11-15, whether the contractors to the planned maintenance framework have been appointed.

(AQW 27845/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that no decision has yet been reached in appointing contractors to the planned maintenance framework.

Housing Stress: Dungannon District

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Social Development how many of the 342 applicants in housing stress in the Dungannon district as of March 2013 are living in hostel accommodation; and how many are living in overcrowded accommodation.

(AQW 27849/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that at 31 October 2013 there were 357 applicants on the waiting list in their Dungannon District Office area who had been awarded Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status, that is they are statutorily homeless.

They further advise that there were 633 applicants in housing stress on the waiting list in the Dungannon District as at 31 October 2013. Applicants are defined as being in housing stress if they have been awarded a total of 30 or more points.

The number of homeless presenters placed in temporary accommodation by the Housing Executive's Dungannon District Office at 31 October 2013 was 33, with 12 placements in voluntary sector hostels and 21 placements in private sector temporary accommodation. However, this does not include those applicants who self refer to a voluntary sector hostel.

Of the 357 FDA applicants on the waiting list for Dungannon District Office area at 31 October 2013, 113 were in receipt of overcrowding points. However, some of these applicants may not currently be residing in overcrowded accommodation. This is because a no-detriment policy applies to FDA applicants i.e. they may have retained their overcrowding points even if their situation has changed and they are no longer in overcrowded accommodation.

Housing-led Regeneration

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the Housing Led Regeneration Scheme, to outline the (i) criteria by which areas were selected; (ii) timescale for the scheme to progress; and (iii) proposed budget. (AQW 27934/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The six areas chosen for the Building Successful Communities pilot were selected on the basis of the criteria set out last year in my housing strategy: Facing the Future, which was subject to public consultation. In order to determine the areas for inclusion, my Department first selected areas of deprivation that are either Neighbourhood Renewal Areas or Areas at Risk. Indicators that reflect social housing market failure and the need for regeneration were then considered i.e. void stock, low or medium projected housing need and vacant land in the Housing Executive's ownership that could be utilised to develop new housing.

The six pilot areas were considered to be those that both scored among those most in need according to the regeneration indicators, and that required additional intervention above that already planned or existing. To enable this approach to be fully tested the pilots also cover a range of contexts such as higher and lower population and differing housing problems.

Regeneration Forums will now be established in each area, it is anticipated that it will take approximately six months for these forums to consult and engage with local communities and statutory bodies to identify the housing and regeneration needs of each area and develop plans to address those issues. Subject to business plans being signed off to confirm value for money, I aim to see actual work on the ground in 2014/15.

In terms of budget, no figure has yet been determined; this will depend on the action plans developed by each Regeneration Forum. A business case for each area action plan will be formulated in due course which will confirm the funding required for each area.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development how many complaints his Department has received from contractors of the Warm Home Scheme regarding condensation issues following cavity wall insulation. (AQW 28003/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There have not been any complaints from contractors of the Warm Homes Scheme regarding condensation issues following cavity wall insulation.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Northern Ireland Assembly: Tablet Contract

Mr Kinahan asked the Assembly Commission in regard to the Assembly tablet contract to detail, (i) the cost of the contract; (ii) the contract provider; (iii) what piloting took place; and (iv) were any other options considered. (AQW 27034/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission):

(i) The total cost for the supply, delivery and maintenance of the tablet computers is detailed below.

	Price Per Unit	Numbers	Cost
Acer Iconia Tablet W510	£449.95	170	£76,491.50
Acer three year warranty	£43.78	170	£7,442.60
Delivery	£80.00	2	£160.00

	Price Per Unit	Numbers	Cost
Total Whole Life Costs (over three years excluding delivery costs)	£83,934.10		

- (ii) The supplier was Specialist Computer Centres PLC.

The supply of tablet devices to MLAs and Committee staff formed part of the Assembly Electronic Committee Pack (ECP) project. The Central Committee Office undertook a pilot project during April to June 2012 involving the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Committee for Employment and Learning and the Committee for Standards and Privileges. As part of this pilot, Information Systems Office procured a range of tablet computers with different specifications and operating systems. On completion of the pilot phase of the ECP project, an evaluation took place which included interviews with Members of the three committees, Committee staff and staff from the Information Systems Office. The tablet devices were evaluated against the following attributes:

- (iii) screen size; touchscreen performance; weight; battery life; portability; operating system interface and usability; consumption mode; integration with Assembly Information Technology infrastructure and systems; and connectivity. In November 2012 an additional tablet device was purchased and evaluated against the above criteria to ensure that the range of models tested was fully representative of the tablet marketplace at that time.
- (iv) In total, nine different device models were tested running on a variety of platforms including Apple iOS, Microsoft Windows and Android. The nine device models were:
Apple iPad 2; Eee Pad Transformer; Fujitsu Stylistic Q550; Fujitsu Stylistic ST6012; Asus Eee Slate B121; Samsung Series 7 Slate; Zoostorm 3310-9500 SL8; RM Windows 7 Slate; Acer Iconia W510.

The Acer Iconia model (running Microsoft Windows 8) scored highest in the technical evaluation and this was recommended as the most suitable tablet computer for Members who wish to access their email, calendar, documents, and Assembly network services such as the Assembly intranet, Committee SharePoint sites and current and future Assembly in-house applications.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 22 November 2013

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Assembly Questions

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will answer AQWs 19706/11-15, 20272/11-15, 18856/11-15 and 17810/11-15.
(AQW 21311/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The Member has received answers to each of these questions.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr McElduff asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of recent comments by a number of Ministers in relation to hydraulic fracturing, whether any decision on hydraulic fracturing will need to be made by the Executive.
(AQO 4885/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In accordance with the provisions of the Ministerial Code, it is in the first instance the duty of the responsible Minister to consider whether a particular matter needs to be brought to the attention of the Executive. In doing so, we would expect the Minister to make a careful assessment of whether the matter falls within any of the categories specified in the Code which trigger the requirement for referral to the Executive.

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

Mr Craig asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.
(AQO 4886/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse has been up and running since October 2012, when its confidential Acknowledgement Forum began hearing accounts from victims and survivors.

Of course, the Inquiry is independent from government and, subject to the rules governing the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act, the procedure and conduct of the Inquiry are directed by the Chairperson.

Recent figures show that 397 people have contacted the Inquiry and that 223 of these have been before the Acknowledgement Forum.

The Chairperson has said that the closing date for people to come forward to give sworn evidence to the Inquiry is 29 November and we would encourage anyone who has not yet come forward to do so.

We are aware from a public session held by the Chairperson in September that he intends to commence the first batch of public hearings in January.

The Inquiry's terms of reference anticipate that it will have completed all its work by January 2016.

Programme for Government 2011-15

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when a decision will be made in respect of extending the Programme for Government 2011-15.
(AQO 5005/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We have commissioned an internal review of the implementation of the Programme for Government, to consider progress made against our Commitments to date, and to make recommendations to support further progress.

The potential extension of the term of the current Assembly, through legislation presently being considered at Westminster, may create an opportunity to build on the progress we have already made.

For this reason, the review of the PfG will bring forward proposals for ensuring continuity in delivery in the context of an extension to the Assembly mandate.

Necessarily in this context, a decision on the extension of the PfG Period will take place when the outcome of the Westminster legislative process is known.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and Johne's Disease Schemes

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQT 276/11-15, to detail the financial contributions provided to the Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and Johne's Disease schemes by the agricultural industry.
(AQW 27730/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) and hence the agricultural industry is required to contribute at least 34% of the total costs of the BVD and Johne's programmes up to 31 December 2015. For the period from March 2013 to 31 March 2014, AHWNI is required to contribute £111,989 which included an industry cash contribution of £90,000. AHWNI have provided confirmation to my Department that, as of 9 October 2013, they have received cash contributions of £55,000 from industry and further funding is expected later this year.

Car Parking Spaces: DARD Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the measures her Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27822/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department keeps the number of car parking spaces which attract a charge under ongoing review to ensure these are necessary to allow business to be conducted. Currently the Department rents a total of 13 car park spaces at a cost of £3,436.00 per year. The spaces are rented at the George Best Belfast City (11) and Belfast International airports (2) and are required by Veterinary staff who carry out essential portal inspection duties at both locations.

Single Farm Payments

Mr Ó hÓisín asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the interest earned on delayed Single Farm Payments, in each of the last eight years.

(AQW 27872/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: While European Union rules governing the Single Farm Payment (SFP) require my Department to make payments in full by 30 June each year, there is no obligation within these rules to pay interest for payments made after that date. However, payments made after 30 June do provide a principled basis on which to pay interest where the delay in payment has been solely caused by my Department. The amount of interest paid out to farm businesses for SFP claims not finalised until after 30 June deadline for each of the last 8 scheme years is represented in the table below:

SFP Scheme Year	Interest Paid Out
2005	£39,499.9
2006	£23,538.9
2007	£1,793.86
2008	£473.35
2009	£0
2010	£0
2011	£3,486.74
2012	£0

There are a variety of reasons in any year for claims not being completed by 30 June. These reasons include delays in finalising inspection results and mapping issues. In many instances the reasons are beyond the control of my Department, for example, when probate has not been completed, where there is a dispute between landowners and tenants about the availability of land to one of the parties, where the same field is claimed by more than one applicant and where bank account details have not been provided to enable payment to issue.

Flooding

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the areas categorised as being at risk from coastal flooding.

(AQW 27926/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Strategic Flood Map, which has been available on my Department's website since 2008, shows areas that are at risk from coastal flooding. As part of the work to implement the EU Floods Directive, Significant Flood Risk Areas have been identified. Those areas with coastal flood risk are Belfast, Newtownards, Downpatrick, Newry and Warrenpoint.

Civil Service Posts: DARD

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many Civil Service posts existed in her Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 27944/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A breakdown of the information requested is provided on the attached Annex.

AQW 27944/11-15 - Annex

(a) DARD Permanent staff in post (Full Time Equivalent) as at 1 Jan 2012 by Work Location & District Council Area

Local Council Area	(viii) Grade 6	(vii) Grade 7	(vi) Deputy Principal	(v) Staff Officer	(iv) Executive Officer 1	(iii) Executive Officer 2	(ii) Administrative Officer	(i) Administrative Assistant	Total
Antrim	2.0	7.0	30.3	69.5	25.0	15.1	17.5	16.8	183.3
Ards		11.2	1.0	7.0	3.0	14.6	8.0	5.6	50.4
Armagh		13.2	2.0	10.5	12.4	17.4	15.4	11.2	82.1
Ballymena		10.4	5.6	14.3	31.4	17.5	14.3	13.2	106.7
Ballymoney				2.0					2.0
Belfast	10.5	69.4	132.7	167.6	113.9	146.6	117.7	51.9	810.2
Castlereagh	3.0	7.0	17.4	14.2	12.3	2.6	5.6	1.5	63.5
Coleraine		15.0	2.0	10.6	25.0	9.7	18.1	12.9	93.3
Cookstown		5.0	17.5	41.3	23.4	6.8	10.2	10.6	114.7
Craigavon		5.0	4.5	5.0	20.0	0.6	6.0	2.0	43.1
Derry		7.4	6.0	15.0	31.6	33.8	83.1	7.0	184.0
Down			2.0	7.6	10.5	2.0	8.6	1.0	31.7
Dungannon		6.9		9.8	23.0	15.6	10.3	8.8	74.4
Fermanagh		12.3	7.0	26.4	30.3	19.6	24.8	15.2	135.7
Larne		1.0		1.0	2.0	14.0	1.0		19.0
Limavady				3.6	2.0	1.0		1.0	7.6
Lisburn		1.0	2.0	7.0	8.9	3.4	8.4	4.0	34.7
Magherafelt		2.6	5.8	25.5	12.6	7.0	7.3	1.4	62.2
Newry and Mourne		20.7	5.0	18.1	21.5	30.3	14.6	10.1	120.3

Local Council Area	(viii) Grade 6	(vii) Grade 7	(vi) Deputy Principal	(v) Staff Officer	(iv) Executive Officer 1	(iii) Executive Officer 2	(ii) Administrative Officer	(i) Administrative Assistant	Total
Newtownabbey	1.0	7.3	0.8	3.5	7.2	12.9	7.0	8.6	48.3
Omagh		9.1	8.0	20.5	22.2	19.9	29.9	13.8	123.4
Strabane		1.0					1.0	1.0	3.0
Total	16.5	212.4	249.5	479.9	438.1	390.5	408.8	197.7	2393.4

Notes

Includes all Permanent DARD staff

Figures are Full-time Equivalents

Excludes staff on Career Break

(b) DARD Permanent staff in post (Full Time Equivalent) as at 1 Jan 2013 by Work Location & District Council Area

Local Council Area	(viii) Grade 6	(vii) Grade 7	(vi) Deputy Principal	(v) Staff Officer	(iv) Executive Officer 1	(iii) Executive Officer 2	(ii) Administrative Officer	(i) Administrative Assistant	Total
Antrim	2.0	7.0	30.6	66.7	34.0	15.1	17.6	16.4	189.3
Ards		11.2	1.0	7.0	3.5	12.6	7.1	6.6	49.0
Armagh		14.9	5.0	15.6	15.4	19.0	15.2	12.7	97.9
Ballymena		12.1	6.5	16.2	31.8	15.5	15.1	13.9	111.0
Belfast	11.5	76.2	139.2	160.6	119.0	140.3	114.0	44.9	805.6
Castlereagh	3.0	7.0	17.4	12.4	16.4	2.4	4.5	1.5	64.6
Coleraine		12.6	2.0	12.6	24.6	11.2	15.0	11.6	89.5
Cookstown		6.0	23.3	58.0	28.3	7.6	11.1	11.2	145.5
Craigavon		4.0	4.5	5.0	17.5	6.6	1.0	2.0	40.6
Derry		9.4	5.0	14.9	31.8	42.1	76.9	6.0	186.1
Down			1.0	8.7	11.1	2.0	8.8	0.7	32.3
Dungannon		11.7		10.3	24.1	16.8	11.0	8.0	81.9
Fermanagh		9.8	6.0	27.3	29.2	20.0	25.0	10.2	127.6
Larne		1.0			1.0	14.0	1.0		17.0
Limavady				5.6	2.0			1.0	8.6
Lisburn		1.0	2.0	7.0	7.9	9.0	2.4	4.0	33.3
Magherafelt		1.6	1.0	10.5	6.6	6.0	4.3	1.4	31.4
Newry and Mourne		23.6	5.0	18.2	20.1	28.8	12.6	12.0	120.3

Local Council Area	(viii) Grade 6	(vii) Grade 7	(vi) Deputy Principal	(v) Staff Officer	(iv) Executive Officer 1	(iii) Executive Officer 2	(ii) Administrative Officer	(i) Administrative Assistant	Total
Newtownabbey	1.0	6.9	0.8	4.5	7.1	13.3	6.0	7.7	47.4
Omagh		9.2	7.0	23.2	24.7	26.7	24.7	13.8	129.2
Strabane		1.0					1.0	1.0	3.0
Total	17.5	226.1	257.2	484.5	456.0	408.9	374.3	186.5	2411.0

Notes

Includes all Permanent DARD staff

Figures are Full-time Equivalents

Excludes staff on Career Break

Legal Costs: DARD

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail how much her Department spent on (i) legal costs; and (ii) paying damages or compensation as a consequence of legal actions, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27958/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department's spend on (i) legal costs; and (ii) payment of damages or compensation as a consequence of legal actions, in each of the last five years is as follows:

Financial Year	Legal Costs Amount (£)	Damages/Compensation Amount (£)
2008/2009	249,625	362,936
2009/2010	182,200	269,036
2010/2011	186,757	133,647
2011/2012	205,079	68,216
2012/2013	258,579	386,170

DARD: Headquarters

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the relocation of departmental headquarters to Ballykelly, specifically to detail (i) the anticipated timescale; (ii) the projected number of staff that will be working from Ballykelly; (iii) any discussions regarding the move with current staff in Dundonald House; (iv) the number of staff in Dundonald House that have transferred to other Departments or Agencies since the relocation announcement; and (v) the number of staff that have sought and been refused permission to transfer since the relocation announcement.

(AQW 28036/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In line with the Draft Programme for Government, I remain fully committed to the relocation of the DARD headquarters.

- (i) The business case to appraise the options for accommodating the DARD headquarters at the Shackleton site in Ballykelly is currently undergoing internal assurance. The preferred option reflects a phased approach for construction with phase one, accommodating 400 workstations, to be completed by end of 2016 and phase two to be completed by 2020.
- (ii) When complete, approximately 700 people will work from Ballykelly.
- (iii) Staff in my department receive regular updates in respect of the relocations programme through staff notices, management briefings and the dedicated intranet site. Consultation with Trade Union Side has been on-going through the Ad Hoc Whitley Committee which has been established to deal specifically with HQ relocations issues. I am committed to ensuring that staff and their representatives continue to be fully consulted and informed of progress throughout this process.
- (iv) Since 3 September 2012 a total of 78 staff have transferred from Dundonald House to other departments or agencies.

- (v) It is not possible to establish the number of staff that have sought and been refused permission to transfer since the relocation announcement. Requests to apply for transfer are discussed with local management and only those receiving approval proceed for further action. No specific concerns have been raised to date with Human Resources staff or at the regular consultation meetings. If staff have concerns then they can raise through agreed resolution procedures or through their local TUS representative.

Farming Restrictions

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has considered ending calendar farming restrictions for slurry spreading and other time limited restrictions.

(AQW 28066/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations prohibit slurry spreading from 15 October to 31 January. The Regulations also limit the times when solid manures and chemical fertilisers can be spread.

These spreading dates are based on scientific evidence from local research and take account of long term average weather patterns. The purpose of these dates is to ensure that slurry, manure and chemical fertiliser are spread when grass and crops are growing and the risks of causing water pollution are lower.

This helps farmers to maximise the benefit of the valuable nutrients contained in slurry and manure as they are used efficiently by grass and crops during the growing season.

During autumn and winter growth of grass and crops is limited by short day length and lower temperatures. Therefore, nutrient uptake is minimal and weather and soil conditions also mean that the potential for nutrient loss to surface and ground water is high. Research shows that if slurry is spread in autumn and winter up to 90% of the nitrogen it contains can be lost.

For these reasons, prior to the introduction of the Nitrates Action Programme in 2007, my Department's Code of Good Agricultural Practice advised farmers to "avoid spreading manures and slurry during November, December and January."

My Department does not intend to change the spreading dates as it has no scientific evidence to support an end to these restrictions.

Business: Irvinestown

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the support her Department will provide to the local business community in Irvinestown.

(AQW 28125/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current Rural Development Programme is providing opportunities through an application based process for funding across a range of sectors including: farm family members wanting to diversify; small business setting up or expanding; tourism; village renewal and provision of basic services for the rural community.

As you will be aware 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme is currently in the process of development and has the potential to provide the opportunity to support similar initiatives in our rural areas. This will include support for rural business development and a rural business investment scheme for micro and small businesses. How these schemes will be delivered is yet to be decided but will be accessible across all rural areas including Irvinestown. It is my intention to submit draft programme proposals to the EU Commission in early 2014.

Meat Plants

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail why meat plants do not permit cattle under thirty months old, emanating from Quality Assured dairy herds, to enter the food chain.

(AQW 28187/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: All animals entering the human food chain must meet rigorous public health inspection standards in accordance with EU food hygiene legislation. Certain categories of cattle must also test negative for BSE. Provided these conditions are met, there are no official controls preventing cattle which are under thirty months old from entering the food chain, whether or not they originate from a dairy herd and regardless of their quality assured status.

Meat plants may decide not to accept certain categories of cattle for commercial reasons. This is a matter which is outside the remit of DARD.

Livestock: Ear Tags

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the need to frequently replace lost ear tags from livestock; and whether the tags available for purchase undergo quality control by her Department.

(AQW 28189/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My officials regularly ask Industry to supply us with information on the need to replace ear-tags as a result of durability or performance issues. Without such evidence we cannot address their concerns with ear-tag providers. My department has a system in place to gather concerns about ear-tag performance. It is known as the Ear Tag Performance

form. This form is available on the DARD website (<http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ear-tag-complaint-form-final-july-2013.pdf>) and can be sent to my department via e-mail or by post.

The rule for replacing lost or illegible eartags in livestock is laid down in European and National legislation. Under National legislation all missing or unreadable official ear tags must be replaced within 28 days of discovery and in any event before the animal leaves the holding.

Ear-tags used for the official identification of cattle, sheep and goats must be officially approved. To be approved tags must have been tested and given PAS (Publicly Available Specification) approval; PAS 44:2009 (cattle) and PAS 66:2009 (sheep and goats). The Electronic Identification Device in sheep tags must be approved by the Joint Research Centre (JRC). The ear-tags must also have undergone on-farm welfare assessments carried out by a veterinary surgeon. Defra approves ear tags for use in England, Scotland and Wales. My department approves ear tags for use in the north.

The British Standards Institute (BSI) is about to conduct a review of PAS 44:2009 and PAS 66:2009 and my department will be represented in the stakeholder group. I would urge Industry to supply information about ear-tag performance via the link I have mentioned so that we can contribute fully to this review.

Farm Safety

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what funds she has committed to farm safety measures, given the increase in farm related accidents and deaths in recent years.

(AQW 28300/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Under the Farm Modernisation Programme my Department has committed over £4.2m in financial support for safety related items in letters of offer to successful applicants. Additional support will be committed, in letters of offer scheduled to be issued shortly, under the extension to tranche 3 which I announced on 30 September 2013 during an assembly debate on Farm Safety.

In addition, to date my Department has spent in excess of £117k in relation to the Farm Safe Awareness courses funded under the Rural Development programme.

As part of its Farm Safety Partnership involvement my Department provided £139k in funding towards the cost of the Partnership's 2013 Multimedia Campaign. My Department will also be providing an additional £111k for the 2014/15 year to extend this highly effective campaign.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

City of Culture: Contingency Fund

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she will allocate additional money to the City of Culture Contingency Fund if required.

(AQW 26871/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): My Department is investing up to £12.6 million to support the delivery of City of Culture in 2013. Of this allocation, £2m has been designated as optimism bias to manage unforeseen costs, subject to DCAL approval.

No further funding will be made available by DCAL for delivery of the 2013 City of Culture Cultural Programme.

I have secured £1m of funding to support continuation of key City of Culture projects from January to March 2014. These include the Music Promise, Portrait of a City, Community Cultural Strategies, digital and literacy skills projects and Other Voices' return to Derry in February 2014.

I have also secured £80k of capital funding to purchase an iconic Eamonn O'Doherty artwork, the 'Armoured Pram' and a Lumiere light installation 'Stitch in Time' which will be displayed on Rosemount Factory, to ensure a physical legacy of 2013.

DCAL: Capital Projects

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the major capital projects that are currently being funded by her Department.

(AQW 28226/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: At the time of writing, my Department has a capital budget for 2013/14 of £36.7m.

The major element of this (£16.3m) is allocated to the Regional Stadium's Programme with spend to date largely concentrated on Ravenhill.

The Libraries sector has a budget of £9.4m, covering new library builds at Kilkeel and Lisnaskea and mobile library and IT infrastructure replacement.

Within the Sports sector, a budget of £5.1m has been allocated to a programme providing sports facilities at community level. Work is also beginning in the Sports sector on City of Culture legacy work.

Department of Education

Education and Library Boards: Staff Redundancies

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail the financial impact of staff redundancies in each Education and Library Board, in the last financial year, broken down by sector.

(AQW 27259/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The financial impact of staff redundancies in each Education and Library Board, in the last financial year, broken down by sector is provided in the table below:

	Pre Primary	Primary	Post Primary
BELB	£0	£345,368	£1,626,199
NEELB	£1,281	£534,733	£1,736,990
SEELB	£9,904	£1,236,783	£2,837,621
SELB	£2,759	£1,626,589	£2,145,231
WELB	£0	£1,048,767	£2,012,907
Totals	£13,944	£4,792,240	£10,358,948

Notes:

1. The financial impact has been defined as the reduction in salary costs arising from redundancies made in the 2012-13 financial year.
2. The timing of redundancies made may not result in a full year reduction in salary costs due to the variation in the date of redundancies.
3. Reductions reported include teaching and non-teaching costs.

Common Funding Formula: Consultation

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether he will commission an independent compliance assessment of the consultation process on the Common Funding Formula to determine its robustness and compliance with the standards laid out in The Consultation Charter.

(AQW 27717/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The consultation on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme ran for 17 weeks and elicited well over 14,000 responses from a wide range of interested parties, including children and young people. These responses are currently being considered to allow me to make my final decisions. I see no need, nor have I any plans to commission an independent compliance assessment of this consultation exercise.

Common Funding Formula: Consultation

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the training that staff received prior to conducting the recent Common Funding Formula consultation, including (i) to what standards; (ii) to which certification; and (iii) by which accredited training organisations.

(AQW 27719/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Departmental officials are in the main General Service grades, tasked with a wide range of duties; their skills and experience are transferable throughout all work areas. The team established to implement the outworkings of the Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme, comprises officials of differing grades, relevant experience and skills.

The skills required to carry out the consultation exercise are indicative of the expected duties required of NICS and Departmental officials.

Common Funding Formula: Consultation

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to (i) publish the project plan for the recent Common Funding Formula consultation; and (ii) outline the pre-consultation, scoping, budgeting, stakeholder identification, profiling and mapping, choice of dialogue methods, recording, analysis and interpretation, acknowledging, feedback and feed-forward, findings and responses.

(AQW 27723/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In June 2012, I set up an Independent Panel of experts, chaired by the educationalist Sir Robert Salisbury, to carry out a review of the Common Funding Scheme (CFS). This panel was given very specific terms of reference and asked to produce their report by January 2013. Their report, which contained 29 recommendations, was published on my Department's website in the same month.

In June 2013, I set out my view on each of these recommendations in a Statement to the Assembly. I stated then that I would be consulting with schools and other stakeholders before the end of June and that I was determined to have changes to the CFS in place by April 2014.

The recommendations I accepted are not being implemented as a project, however in relation to the consultation exercise, the principles of project management have been applied.

The consultation ended on 25 October and well over 14,000 responses were received including over 3,000 from children and young people. The analysis of the consultation responses is currently underway and I remain determined that my original implementation date of April 2014 will be achieved. My officials are working towards this deadline.

Schools: Newbuilds

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how his Department determines the order in which schools are awarded new builds.

(AQW 27814/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The process adopted to select new build school projects is set out in two protocol documents published on the Department's website as follows:

- i. June 2012 Announced Projects: http://www.deni.gov.uk/major_works_protocol.pdf
- ii. January 2013 Announced Projects:
http://www.deni.gov.uk/microsoft_word_-_protocol_for_selection_of_project_to_advance_on_planning.pdf

In brief, projects were initially confirmed as certain to form part of area solutions for the schools estate.

The criteria adopted to assess projects were then drawn from the following priorities for investment:

- To effect rationalisation;
- To address serious accommodation inadequacies and schools operating on split sites; and
- Undue reliance on temporary accommodation.

Finally, the prioritised list of projects was considered against the available capital budget.

Common Funding Formula: Special Educational Needs

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Education how the Special Educational Needs element of the Common Funding Formula is calculated and implemented in primary schools.

(AQW 27853/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Common Funding Formula for schools is made up of a range of factors, as outlined in the Common Funding Scheme, available on the Department's website www.deni.gov.uk/schools and [infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding](http://www.deni.gov.uk/infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding).

Pupils with statements of special educational need who are in attendance / registered in a special unit within a primary school, grant-aided under the Common Funding Scheme, will attract the appropriate AWPU weighting as set out in Annex G of the Scheme. The reduced weighting reflects the fact that the Funding Authority meets the full cost of staffing in special units. Schools with approved Special Units also receive an appropriate lump sum for each class in the unit.

Pupils with statements of special educational need who are in attendance/registered in a mainstream class generate the same AWPU weighting as applicable to non-statemented pupils. In addition, the Funding Authority will meet the additional costs (outside the formula) required to fulfil the terms of the pupil's statement.

There is no specific "Special Educational Needs" element within the current Common Funding Formula, and no imminent proposal to change these arrangements.

Common Funding Formula: Integrated Education

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what consideration has been given to the inclusion of an integrated education premium in the Common Funding Formula.[R]

(AQW 27874/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: An independent review of the Common Funding Scheme, which determines how funds are allocated to schools, was completed in January 2013. The panel's report did not consider the inclusion of an integrated education premium in the Common Funding Formula and I have no current plans to do so.

Schools: Savings from Closures

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the savings made as a result of school closures in the last financial year. (AQW 27908/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The running costs, in their year of closure, of schools closed in the 2012/2013 financial year was £1,436,000. This figure excludes the one-off costs arising as a result of the closures such as demolition, security or redundancy costs. This information has been sourced from the relevant funding authorities.

Schools: Enrolment Numbers

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to list the schools that have been approved for decreased enrolment; and the actual number of reduced school places, broken down by sector. (AQW 27909/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below lists the schools that have been approved for a decrease to their enrolment number and the actual number of reduced places. The decrease at each school will be effective from September 2014, or as soon as possible thereafter.

School	Sector	Current Approved Enrolment	Revised Approved Enrolment	Variance
Holy Cross Boys' PS	Catholic Maintained	536	420	-116
St Kieran's PS	Catholic Maintained	650	525	-125
Good Shepherd PS	Catholic Maintained	823	343	-480
St Teresa's PS, Lurgan	Catholic Maintained	261	203	-58
Tannaghmore PS, Lurgan	Catholic Maintained	854	620	-234
St Joseph's Convent PS, Newry	Catholic Maintained	470	407	-63
Total		3,594	2,518	-1,076
Bangor GS	VGS	880	850	-30
Foyle College	VGS	880	865	-15
Total		1760	1715	-45
Ebrington PS	Controlled	551	450	-101
Total		551	450	-101
Overall Total		5,905	4,683	-1,222

Schools: Enrolment Numbers

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to list schools that were granted a temporary variation of numbers; and the number of additional spaces created as a result. (AQW 27910/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Additional places were granted for the 2013/14 school year by a temporary variation of the admission or enrolment numbers at the following schools:

(Primary) Name	Town	Additional Places granted 2013/14 school year
Carr's Glen Primary School	Belfast	1
St Michael's Primary School	Belfast	1
Holy Family Primary School	Belfast	1
Scoil An Droichid	Belfast	3
Gaelscoil na Mona	Belfast	1
Forge Integrated Primary School	Belfast	11
Cranmore Integrated Primary School	Belfast	1
Kesh Primary School	Enniskillen	4

(Primary) Name	Town	Additional Places granted 2013/14 school year
Belleek(2) Primary School	Enniskillen	2
Ballougry Primary School	Derry	5
Edwards Primary School	Castledearg	6
Strabane Controlled Primary School	Strabane	3
Greenhaw Primary School	Derry	1
Maguiresbridge Primary School	Enniskillen	1
Enniskillen Model Primary School	Enniskillen	1
Gaelscoil Neachtain	Derry	8
St Ninnidh's Primary School	Enniskillen	7
St Mary's Primary School	Enniskillen	8
Broadbridge Primary School	Derry	9
St Mary's Primary School	Omagh	2
Drumlish Primary School	Omagh	1
St Lawrence's Primary School	Omagh	5
St Columbkille's Primary School	Omagh	6
St Patrick's Primary School	Castledearg	3
St Dympna's Primary School	Omagh	5
Chapel Road Primary School	Derry	1
Gaelscoil na gCrann	Omagh	7
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School	Enniskillen	3
Omagh Integrated Primary School	Omagh	8
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School	Derry	2
Woodburn Primary School	Carrickfergus	1
Gracehill Primary School	Ballymena	1
Greenisland Primary School	Carrickfergus	2
Fourtowns Primary School	Ballymena	1
Culcrow Primary School	Coleraine	6
Damhead Primary School	Coleraine	2
Macosquin Primary School	Coleraine	2
Mossley Primary School	Newtownabbey	1
Creggan Primary School	Antrim	2
St Mary's Primary School	Ballymena	1
Mount St Michael's Primary School	Antrim	2
St Brigid's Primary School, Tirkane	Maghera	4
St Trea's Primary School	Magherafelt	1
St John's Primary School	Maghera	2
St Patrick's & St Joseph's Primary School	Coleraine	5
St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School	Antrim	3
St Brigid's Primary School	Magherafelt	14
St Macnissi's Primary School	Newtownabbey	2

(Primary) Name	Town	Additional Places granted 2013/14 school year
St Columba's Primary School	Coleraine	5
St Patrick's Primary School (Glen)	Maghera	2
St Brigid's Primary School	Ballymena	29
Gaelscoil Eanna	Newtownabbey	18
Ballycastle Integrated Primary School	Ballycastle	1
Ballyvester Primary School	Donaghadee	1
Grey Abbey Primary School	Newtownards	1
Moneyrea Primary School	Newtownards	1
Glasswater Primary School	Downpatrick	1
St Patrick's Primary School	Downpatrick	2
St Francis' Primary School	Castlewellan	2
St Joseph's Primary School	Belfast	1
St Mary's Primary School	Ardglass	1
St Brigid's Primary School	Downpatrick	1
St Colman's Primary School	Lisburn	5
St Comgall's Primary School	Bangor	2
St Mary's Primary School	Newcastle	8
Kircubbin Primary School	Newtownards	4
All Childrens Integrated Primary School	Newcastle	4
Oakwood Integrated Primary School	Belfast	1
Millennium Integrated Primary School	Saintfield	15
Drumlins Integrated Primary School	Ballynahinch	4
Rowandale Integrated Primary School	Moira	4
Armstrong Primary School	Armagh	2
Clare Primary School	Tandragee	1
Waringstown Primary School	Craigavon	2
Bleary Primary School	Craigavon	1
Maralin Village Primary School	Craigavon	2
Aughnacloy Primary School	Aughnacloy	4
Augher Central Primary School	Augher	1
Markethill Primary School	Armagh	8
Bronte Primary School	Down	1
Drumadonnell Primary School	Banbridge	16
Orchard County Primary School	Craigavon	3
Killyman Primary School	Dungannon	3
St Oliver Plunkett Primary School	Newry	1
St Patrick's Primary School	Newry	6
St Brigid's Primary School	Newry	9
St Patrick's Primary School	Craigavon	1
St Mary's Primary School	Newry	6

(Primary) Name	Town	Additional Places granted 2013/14 school year
Roan St Patrick's Primary School	Dungannon	1
St Mary's Primary School	Dungannon	2
St Patrick's Primary School	Newry	21
St Joseph's Primary School	Dungannon	8
St Mary's Primary School	Banbridge	1
St Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery Unit	Banbridge	5
St Mary's Primary School	Newry	1
St Mary's Primary School	Dungannon	1
St Jarlath's Primary School	Dungannon	1
St Mary's Primary School , Aughnacloy	Aughnacloy	7
St Francis' Primary School , Aghderg	Banbridge	1
St Patrick's Primary School Dungannon	Dungannon	33
St Colman's Primary School	Newry	4
St Johns Primary School	Armagh	7
St Francis Primary School	Lurgan	7
Our Lady's and St Mochua's Primary School	Keady	3
St Josephs and St James Primary School	Newry	6
Seagoe Primary School	Portadown	7
Gaelscoil Aodha Rua	Dungannon	3
Kilbroney Integrated Primary School	Newry	1
Portadown Integrated Primary School	Portadown	14
Phoenix Integrated Primary School	Cookstown	5

(Post-Primary) Name	Town	Additional Places granted 2013/14 school year
Ashfield Girls HS	Belfast	1
De La Salle College	Belfast	2
St Joseph's Boys' School	Derry	1
St Colm's High School	Draperstown	4
St Paul's College	Kilrea	1
St Pius X College	Magherafelt	2
St Patrick's College	Maghera	1
St Louis Grammar School	Ballymena	1
St Columbanus College	Bangor	3
Shimna Integrated College	Newcastle	1
Newtownhamilton High School	Newtownhamilton	2
Fivemiletown College	Fivemiletown	1
St Patrick's High School	Keady	2
St Catherine's College	Armagh	25
St Colman's College	Newry	1
St Joseph's Grammar School	Donaghmore	1

Notes:

1. The figures show temporary increases given to schools' admissions or enrolment numbers for additional pupils
2. Numbers can change due to additional places being granted but not taken up, pupils becoming statemented, pupils leaving the school, or where the approved permanent enrolment or admissions numbers have been increased

Legal Costs: DE

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail how much his Department spent on (i) legal costs; and (ii) paying damages or compensation as a consequence of legal actions, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27959/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The tables below set out how much my Department spent on (i) legal costs; and (ii) paying damages or compensation as a consequence of legal actions, in each of the last five years.

Legal costs: this includes notional costs in relation to the Departmental Solicitors Office and the movement in legal provisions.

Financial year	£000
2008-09	2,308
2009-10	202
2010-11	218
2011-12	41
2012-13	274

Damages or compensation as a consequence of legal actions: this includes legal expenses and compensation

Financial year	£000
2008-09	5
2009-10	37
2010-11	21
2011-12	432
2012-13	96

Pupils: Diabetes

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for an estimate of the number of children with type 1 diabetes in primary schools in each of the last five years; and how many of these children have been allocated additional support from classroom assistants to provide such services as assisting with the management of insulin pumps.

(AQW 28042/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education's school census collects data on the number of children with diabetes but this is not split into type one and type two. The number of children with diabetes in primary schools, in each of the last five years, is as follows:

- 2008/09 – 115
- 2009/10 – 129
- 2010/11 – 122
- 2011/12 – 126
- 2012/13 – 142

The above figures include nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes.

The Education and Library Boards have advised that the number of these children who have been allocated additional support from either classroom or general assistants, in the last five years, is as follows:

- 2008/09 – 5
- 2009/10 – 9
- 2010/11 – 13
- 2011/12 – 21
- 2012/13 – 27

Education Bill

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the meetings he has had with other political parties and stakeholders regarding the Education Bill since it last was debated in the Assembly.

(AQW 28068/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Since the Education Bill was last debated in the Assembly I have had a large number of meetings with a wide range of educational stakeholders and political representatives with an interest in ESA.

Education and Library Boards: Resources

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education which areas in the Education and Library Boards require extra resources; and what action he is taking to provide those resources whilst the Education Bill remains at an impasse.

(AQW 28071/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools are generally in a state that is unsustainable. They remain in this state in the protracted absence of ESA. The main action I am taking, therefore, to address this is to continue to press urgently for progress on the Education Bill. In the meantime, my Department is currently exploring the scope for a modest programme of support in a number of key priority areas.

Common Funding Formula: Consultation

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education whether he will order an independent review of the Common Funding Formula consultation to demonstrate that it has been undertaken to best practice, and to ensure avoidance of legal expenses, should it be challenged in the future.

(AQW 28094/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The consultation on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme ran for 17 weeks and elicited well over 14,000 responses from a wide range of interested parties, including children and young people. These responses are currently being considered to allow me to make my final decisions. I see no need, nor have I any plans to commission an independent review of this consultation exercise.

Common Funding Formula: Consultation

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education to explain the project plan for the recent Common Funding Formula consultation, including (a) the budget; (b) who prepared and implemented the consultation; (c) the external support and training provided; (d) the standards and quality assurance procedures; and (e) by whom the process was reviewed and evaluated.

(AQW 28095/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In June 2012, I set up an Independent Panel of experts, chaired by the educationalist Sir Robert Salisbury, to carry out a review of the Common Funding Scheme (CFS). This panel was given very specific terms of reference and asked to produce their report by January 2013. Their report, which contained 29 recommendations, was published on my Department's website in the same month.

In June 2013, I set out my view on each of these recommendations in a Statement to the Assembly. I stated then that I would be consulting with schools and other stakeholders before the end of June and that I was determined to have changes to the CFS in place by April 2014.

The recommendations I accepted from the Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme are not being implemented as a project, however in relation to the consultation exercise, the principles of project management have been applied.

The team established to implement the outworkings of the Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme, comprise officials of differing grades, relevant experience and skills. The skills required to carry out the consultation exercise are indicative of the expected duties required of NICS and Departmental officials.

The consultation ended on 25 October and well over 14,000 responses were received including over 3,000 from children and young people. The analysis of the consultation responses is currently underway and I remain determined that my original implementation date of April 2014 will be achieved. My officials are working towards this deadline.

Curriculum: Science

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education what review has been carried out of the Teaching of Science in Primary Schools since the introduction of the Revised Curriculum.

(AQW 28096/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspect Science and Technology in primary schools as an integral part of the World Around Us (WAU) area of learning. It consists of three contributory subjects, History, Geography and Science and Technology and the ETI record it as a unitary performance level, a collective area of learning.

During the inspection period of September 2009 to September 2013 in primary schools, 79% of the WAU lessons evaluated were good or better, with 48% being very good and outstanding.

During 2011 the north of Ireland participated for the first time in TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) a large international comparative study of achievement, which examined the mathematics and science ability of pupils ages 9-10 (equivalent to our P6 year). The survey results published earlier this year, showed that our primary school pupils are performing well above the international averages. The TIMSS survey ranked our primary school performance in science 21st out of the 50 countries surveyed, with a scale score significantly above the international average.

Redburn Primary School Site

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education for an update on the old Redburn Primary School site.
(AQW 28117/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The site of the former Redburn Primary School remains in the possession of the South Eastern Education & Library Board.

The Board has confirmed it is committed to redeveloping the site for educational purposes in the future and is currently considering options in this regard.

Preschool Funded Places: North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many free pre-school funded places are there in North Down.
(AQW 28119/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Under the 2011-15 Programme for Government my Department is committed to ensuring that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.

For admission to pre-school in September 2013, 99.8% of children, whose parents engaged with the pre-school admissions process to the end, obtained a funded pre-school place. This included all of the parents in the North Down area.

In the 2013/14 school year there are 875 funded pre-school places in the North Down constituency, broken down as follows:

- Statutory nursery school / nursery unit (full time) - 104
- Statutory nursery school / nursery unit (part time) - 364
- Voluntary / Private Pre-School Settings - 407

There are still a number of places available in voluntary/private settings if additional children in their final pre-school year apply.

Officials will continue to work with colleagues in the South Eastern Education and Library Board to maintain sufficient provision in the area.

DE: Minister in Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many times he has visited the Department of Education in Bangor since becoming Minister.
(AQW 28120/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Since taking up post as Minister for Education I have visited the Department of Education in Bangor as follows:-

- 2011 - 25 occasions.
- 2012 - 16 occasions.
- 2013 to date -11 occasions.

The Department of Education (DE) also have an office in Parliament Buildings which I work out of on average three days a week.

Education Made More Accessible Report

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education what action he has taken in relation to the Education Made More Accessible report.
(AQW 28130/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education's position in relation to the issues raised in the Education Made More Accessible report are documented within "Count, read: succeed – A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy. In particular paragraph 4.17 addresses the use of phonics.

The strategy recognises that in developing early literacy skills, pupils need to acquire phonological awareness and that, pupils who have not yet fully developed their phonological awareness need to receive a systematic and time-bound programme of high-quality phonics work. However, based on local and international evidence, the strategy stresses that a broad and balanced approach to promoting literacy is key and a range of other strategies for developing early literacy should also be deployed as appropriate. The strategy also cautions that pupils who have successfully developed their phonological awareness should not be required to undertake phonics work if the teacher does not think it necessary or beneficial.

The Department does not endorse or fund any specific commercial or other phonics programmes. Count, read: succeed makes it clear that it is for schools to decide on its particular approach to phonics, taking account of evidence and of advice and support available, for example from the ELBs.

Mr Campbell's document also raises the introduction of the Primary Movement Programme. The revised curriculum, now in place across all 12 years of compulsory education, places a greater emphasis than before on giving teachers much more flexibility over how they deliver the curriculum to meet children's differing needs. The Department does not, therefore, recommend or endorse any particular programmes or approaches to teaching.

Pupils: Support

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education to outline the support offered to mainstream primary school pupils diagnosed with a learning disability.

(AQW 28132/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My priority is to ensure that every child, including those with a learning disability, receives a high quality education. To that end I am continuing to put in place a range of policies aimed at raising standards.

The Code of Practice (COP) on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN) addresses the identification, assessment and provision made for all children who may have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made. The COP recognises that there is a continuum of needs and sets out a five stage approach for children with a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made. Stages one and two are school based with teachers and the SEN co-ordinator taking the lead in identifying and co-ordinating a child's SEN. At stage 3 the school is supported by specialists from outside the school and at stage four the education and library board (ELB) considers the need for a statutory assessment. At stage 5, if appropriate, the ELB makes a statement of SEN and arranges, monitors and reviews provision.

One of the main contributors to the Department of Education's key aim to raise standards in all our schools is the development of the education workforce to meet the needs of all our pupils. To this end ELBs must ensure that arrangements for necessary training of teachers and classroom assistants, who are supporting children with a learning disability, are in place.

I attach great importance to building the capacity of all schools to manage the needs of children with a learning disability. During 2011 a comprehensive SEN resource file was made available to primary and post-primary schools and teachers can also access materials on Learning NI and the DE website.

Pupils: Support

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education to outline the duty of care that Education and Library Boards have to children, in receipt of additional support at primary school, who are transferring to post-primary education.

(AQW 28134/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As detailed in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) should carefully consider a child's transfer to post-primary education at the annual review meeting during the last year in the child's current school. If necessary, the meeting should be brought forward to allow sufficient time for consideration of the school which will be appropriate for the child in the next phase.

Arrangements for a child's placement should be finalised by the beginning of the child's last term before transfer to allow time for any advance arrangements relating to that placement to be made and to ensure that parents feel confident and secure about the arrangements.

Parents have the statutory right to request the board to substitute the name of a grant-aided school for the school named in a child's statement of special educational needs.

Pupils: Support

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the support offered to pupils with learning difficulties, particularly pupils with dyslexia.

(AQW 28135/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) rests with both schools and the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

I am satisfied that schools and ELBs provide a range of effective services to meet the individual needs of children with SEN, including dyslexia.

With specific regard to dyslexia the recent Education and Training Inspectorate report "A Survey of the Provision for Pupils with Dyslexia" (May 2012) notes that provision for pupils with dyslexia is either good or better in all schools and in some schools outstanding. Schools are becoming more proactive in seeking a range of training for all teaching and support staff ensuring consistent use of appropriate and effective practice for addressing dyslexia throughout the school and tracking the progress of individual pupils.

The report goes on to note that across all ELBs there is increasing acceptance that early identification and continuous and intensive intervention, based on assessment of each child's learning profile, remains the best educational approach for pupils with dyslexia. ELBs continue to work collaboratively and a working group has been established to secure further commonality, consistency and equity of access to appropriate provision.

I am confident that schools and ELBs have made good progress in this area and will continue to do so in the future.

Pupils: Support

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education what support is offered to pupils who are identified as having low self-esteem and a lack of confidence.

(AQW 28136/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All schools are required as part of their School Development Plan to promote the positive emotional health and wellbeing of pupils. It is a matter for each school to determine how it will pursue this objective given its particular circumstances.

All pupils do have access to the Revised Curriculum is balanced and broadly based and promotes, their emotional, physical and intellectual development. The learning objective is to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life by equipping them with appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills. The Personal Development and Mutual Understanding' strand provides the opportunity for specific attention to be given to a pupil's emotional wellbeing, health and safety.

Information and advice on sources of support is available directly to pupils through the i-Matter programme. A suite of information sheets on 20 topics of concern have been distributed to schools. This material can be used as lesson topics, homework diary inserts, posters and leaflets. Whilst aimed at post-primary pupils, this material can be used in an age appropriate way with younger pupils.

Post-primary age pupils can also access counselling provided by the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS). The ICSS is funded by the Department and delivered by counselling providers contracted through a public tendering process. The counselling provided while school based is independent of the school and conforms to high professional standards and current best practice. All of the ICSS counsellors have experience in working with young people.

Schools: Newbuild at Belfast City Hospital Site

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Education for an update on his Department obtaining the site at Belfast City Hospital to facilitate the proposed new primary school for inner south Belfast.

(AQW 28137/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The responsibility for planning of the Controlled school estate in Belfast lies, in the first instance, with the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB).

You are aware that BELB's draft primary area plan was published and subjected to public consultation earlier this year. The Board is currently analysing the consultation responses.

The draft plan contains proposals for the amalgamation of Blythefield, Donegall Road and Fane Street primary schools on a new site, but also highlights alternative proposals, should the new site option not materialise.

The matter of a potential new primary school site or school building for inner south Belfast pupils is not currently an issue for my Department.

The process involves the Board publishing a statutory Development Proposal(s) (DP) setting out its intent for these schools. Following publication, there is a statutory two month consultation period during which interested parties may make their views known to the Department. I then make a decision on the DP taking account of all pertinent information and comments received.

To bring its future plans to fruition, the Board will need to secure the necessary DP approval(s) and prioritise the associated capital schemes so that they can compete with other projects for the necessary investment.

Teachers: Substitute Teacher Register

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 27563/11-15, why 2522 teachers were removed from the Register.

(AQW 28138/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are a number of reasons that a teacher might leave or be removed from the NISTR, including:

- gaining a permanent post;
- gaining a fixed term contract for a whole school year;
- allowing their General Teaching Council (GTC) registration to lapse;
- illness or death;
- disciplinary proceedings;
- if they choose not to be available to teach;
- if they take up another occupation, or
- relocation (including moving overseas)

Although over 2,522 teachers left the register in the last year, this was offset by other teachers joining the register (including re-registration of some teachers, whose GTC registration had previously lapsed, who have since paid their GTC fee and consequently again became eligible for registration on NISTR) and the number of teachers on the NISTR is reasonably steady year on year:

- March 2012 – 8,238
- June 2012 – 8,362
- Oct 2012 – 8,689
- Nov 2013 – 8,021

Area Planning Steering Group

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 21400/11-15, how many times the Steering Group has met since April 2013; and to list the attendees at each meeting.

(AQW 28140/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Area Planning Steering Group has met on seven occasions since April 2013. Included in the seven meetings is a Ministerial Quarterly Update Meeting held on 1 August 2013.

Date	Organisation	Attendees
8 April	Department of Education	John O'Dowd, MLA John McGrath Diarmuid McLean Bruce Fitzsimons Kathy Mairs
	Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team	Gavin Boyd
	Education and Library Boards Belfast Western North Eastern South Eastern Southern	Dr Clare Mangan Barry Mulholland Ray Gilbert Gregory Butler Tony Murphy
	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Jim Clarke Gerry Lundy
	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	Noreen Campbell
	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	Dr Micheál Duibh
	29 April	Department of Education
Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team		Gavin Boyd
	Education and Library Boards Belfast Western North Eastern South Eastern Southern	Dr Clare Mangan Barry Mulholland Shane McCurdy Gregory Butler Tony Murphy
	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Jim Clarke
	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	Noreen Campbell
	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	Dr Micheál Duibh

Date	Organisation	Attendees
28 May	Department of Education	Diarmuid McLean Lorraine Finlay John Williamson Bruce Fitzsimons
	Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team	Gavin Boyd
	Education and Library Boards Belfast Western North Eastern South Eastern Southern	Dr Clare Mangan Barry Mulholland Gregory Butler Tony Murphy
	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Jim Clarke
	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	Noreen Campbell
	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	Dr Micheál Duibh
	24 June	Department of Education
Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team		Gavin Boyd
Education and Library Boards Belfast Western North Eastern South Eastern Southern		Dr Clare Mangan Barry Mulholland Shane McCurdy Gregory Butler Tony Murphy
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools		Jim Clarke Gerry Lundy
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education		Noreen Campbell
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta		Dr Micheál Duibh
1 August Ministerial Quarterly Update		Department of Education
	Special Advisor to Minister	Mark Mullan
	Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team	Gavin Boyd
	Education and Library Boards Belfast Western North Eastern South Eastern Southern	Dr Clare Mangan Rosemary Watterson Shane McCurdy Gregory Butler
	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Jim Clarke Gerry Lundy
	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	Noreen Campbell
	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	Dr Micheál Duibh

Date	Organisation	Attendees
9 October	Department of Education	John McGrath Diarmuid McLean Lorraine Finlay Bruce Fitzsimons Roy Stevenson Kathy Mairs
	Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team	Pat O'Neill
	Education and Library Boards Belfast Western North Eastern South Eastern Southern	Dr Clare Mangan Barry Mulholland Shane McCurdy Gregory Butler Mike Donaghy
	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Jim Clarke Gerry Lundy
	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	Noreen Campbell
	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	Nodlaig Ni Bhrollaigh
6 November	Department of Education	John McGrath Diarmuid McLean Lorraine Finlay Angela Kane Bruce Fitzsimons Kathy Mairs
	Department of Employment and Learning	Dr Mary McIvor
	Education and Library Boards Belfast Western North Eastern South Eastern Southern ELB and Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team	Dr Clare Mangan Barry Mulholland Shane McCurdy Gregory Butler Gavin Boyd
	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	
	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	Jim Clarke Gerry Lundy
	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	Noreen Campbell Dr Micheál Duibh

DE: Aggregated Schools Budget

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what percentage of his departmental budget is allocated to schools through the Aggregated Schools Budget.

(AQW 28141/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2013-14, 58.8% (£1,123.0 million) of the Department of Education's Resource budget has been allocated to schools through the Aggregated Schools Budget.

DE: Central Procurement Directorate

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, in the light of his decision to transfer the procurement of goods and services to the Central Procurement Directorate to achieve greater efficiency, whether he is considering similar options for capital procurement.

(AQW 28142/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I wrote to the Education Committee in December 2012, to update the Committee on my decisions relating to the future delivery of procurement services in education. When I advised the Committee of my decision to transfer the Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) function for the procurement of supplies and services to the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), I also informed the Committee on my decision in relation to capital procurement. I have no intention of transferring capital procurement to CPD.

Mount St Catherine's Primary School

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education why Mount St Catherine's Primary School's website utilised a graphic which belongs to the America Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

(AQW 28157/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Websites do not form part of the core provision provided by the C2k Managed ICT Service. Each school is responsible for its own website and it is therefore a matter for individual schools to decide on the material they wish to publish on their school website. Schools have the flexibility to choose the resources and programmes they wish to use to support their delivery of the curriculum. The Department of Education does not recommend or endorse any particular programmes for use by schools.

Curriculum: Entrepreneurship

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail any strategies or initiatives his department has to implement entrepreneurship education.

(AQW 28184/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Employability, including entrepreneurship, is a key theme underpinning the revised curriculum which aims to better prepare all our young people for all aspects of life and work and enable them to develop as confident and articulate individuals, able to play their full part in our society and economy.

At primary level through the area of Personal Development & Mutual Understanding, pupils are now given opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and personal qualities related to enterprise and entrepreneurship.

At post-primary level, entrepreneurship is covered under the Employability strand of Learning for Life and Work with a focus on Work in the Local and Global Economy, Career Management and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. Pupils are given opportunity to reflect on their own skills and areas for self-development; to explore the changing concept of 'career' and various types of jobs, including in the local area; to explore enterprise and entrepreneurship; and to develop and practise some of the skills and attributes associated with being enterprising.

In addition to schools delegated budgets, my Department also provides funding to a number of organisations to provide enterprise, employability and innovation events and programmes either in school or at larger regional events, for both primary and post-primary pupils. These organisations include Young Enterprise, Sentinus and a number of Business Education Partnerships where local schools and businesses work together to address specific needs of pupils in a cluster of schools in a particular area.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many Inspectors were employed by the Education and Training Inspectorate in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 28205/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of Education & Training Inspectors employed by the Department of Education as at 31 March in each of the last ten years is as follows:

Year	No. of Inspectors
2003/04	52
2004/05	59
2005/06	61
2006/07	52
2007/08	54
2008/09	56
2009/10	62
2010/11	58
2011/12	58
2012/13	57

The figures provided do not include Chief Inspector or Assistant Chief Inspector grades.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what was the cost of the Education and Training Inspectorate in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 28206/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below outlines the cost of the Education and Training Inspectorate in each of the last ten financial years.

It should be noted that the rise of £449,605.54 in 2009/2010 is due to an increase of 6 new inspectors in that year and the rise of £339,095.76 in 2012/2013 is due to a 'Pay and Grading' exercise, which was carried out in August 2012.

Year	Total cost
2003-04	4,661,769.39
2004-05	4,771,389.17
2005-06	5,046,820.14
2006-07	4,957,331.76
2007-08	5,162,675.99
2008-09	5,262,172.74
2009-10	5,711,778.28
2010-11	5,781,333.20
2011-12	5,408,696.83
2012-13	5,747,792.59

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what were the travel and subsistence costs for the Education and Training Inspectorate in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 28207/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The travel and subsistence costs for the Education and Training Inspectorate in each of the last ten years were as follows:

Financial Year	£'000
2003-04	313
2004-05	282
2005-06	314
2006-07	293
2007-08	301
2008-09	307
2009-10	285
2010-11	274
2011-12	278
2012-13	277

School Crossing Patrol Guards

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many school crossing patrol guards are employed in each Education and Library Board.

(AQW 28215/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

Education and Library Board	No of School Crossing Patrol Guards
SEELB	69
WELB	122
SELB	121
BELB	102
NEELB	129

School Crossing Patrol Guards

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many school crossing patrol guards were employed in each Education and Library Board (i) five; and (ii) ten years ago.

(AQW 28216/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

Education & Library Board	No of School Crossing Patrol Guards 2008	No of School Crossing Patrol Guards 2003
SEELB	101	146
WELB	136	157
SELB	144	233
BELB	107	131
NEELB	146	162

Kirkinriola Primary School

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education why the follow-up inspection of Kirkinriola Primary School, which was scheduled for November 2013, was cancelled.

(AQW 28217/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Kirkinriola Primary School received notice of a follow-up inspection scheduled for November 2013. At the time of the original inspection in March 2011 important areas for improvement in leadership and management and relationships were identified and the school entered DE's formal intervention process. In the November 2012 follow-up inspection, these areas had not been addressed due to a lack of continuity in the leadership and governance arrangements in the school. The staffing arrangements from September 2013 are more stable, but key action plans need to be finalised and the associated training needs to be provided. As a result, ETI decided to postpone not cancel, the follow-up inspection until later in the academic year to allow time for the plans and training to impact positively on provision and relationships in the school. In the interim the District Inspector will visit the school to discuss the action plans and will continue to monitor the work of the school until the follow-up inspection.

DE: Recruitment

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 27331/11-15 and AQW 26875/11-15 and given the figure of under representation of Protestant applicants, on how many occasions in the last two years has a 'welcome statement' been used in job advertising.

(AQW 28228/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In compliance with Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, all 5 DE led recruitment competitions held in 2011 and 2012 were referred to the Equality & Diversity Branch, Department of Finance & Personnel for consideration as to whether it was appropriate to take positive affirmative action by including a 'welcome statement' in the job advertisements. As a result of these considerations; in the 2011 and 2012 DE led recruitment competitions, a 'welcome statement' was not included in job advertisements.

St Francis' Primary School, Loughbrickland

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education when a decision will be made on the development proposals for St. Francis' Primary School, Loughbrickland.

(AQW 28239/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I approved the Development Proposal to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers of St Francis' PS to 25 and 175 respectively, with effect from 1 September 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter on 25 October.

A press release issued following my decision and details were added to the 'Latest News' section of the DE website.

Classroom Assistants: South Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of classroom assistants employed by each primary school in South Antrim.

(AQW 28254/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below details the number of classroom assistants (headcount) in primary schools in South Antrim.

School	Headcount
Antrim Primary School	15
Ballycarrickmaddy Primary School	5
Ballyclare Primary School	10
Ballycraig Primary School	12
Ballymacrickett Primary School	7
Ballymacward Primary School	2
Ballynure Primary School	3
Carnmoney Primary School	10
Creavery Primary School	6
Creggan Primary School	3
Crumlin Controlled Integrated Primary School	12
Doagh Primary School	2
Duneane Primary School	5
Earlview Primary School	5
Fairview Primary School	7
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	8
Greystone Primary School	6
Groggan Primary School	5
Kilbride Primary School	5
Loanends Primary School	10
Maine Integrated Primary School	6
Mallusk Primary School	2
McKinney Primary School	2
Moneynick Primary School	9
Mossley Primary School	33
Mount St Michael's Primary School	10
Parkgate Primary School	2
Parkhall Primary School	11
Randalstown Central Primary School	7
Rathenraw Integrated Primary School	4
Round Tower Integrated Primary School	11
St Comgall's Primary School	22
St Joseph's Primary School, Antrim	9
St Joseph's Primary School, Crumlin	18
St Macnisius' Primary School	7

School	Headcount
St Macnissi's Primary School	3
St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School	6
Straid Primary School	1
Straidhavern Primary School	3
Templepatrick Primary School	14
Thompson Primary School	7
Tildarg Primary School	3
Tir-na-Nog Primary School	1

Schools: Promotion of Respect and Inclusion

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education what funding is available to local schools who wish to promote respect and inclusion both inside and outside of the classroom.

(AQW 28262/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department's Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy contributes to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self respect and respect for others, by providing children and young people, in formal and non formal education settings, with opportunities to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions. It also provides opportunities for young people to explore issues surrounding any of the Section 75 groups which should lead to a greater understanding of the need to be inclusive towards all regardless of their background.

My Department provides annual financial support of £1.1m for the CRED policy through the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) CRED and Youth Council (YCNI).

More information on the CRED Enhancement Scheme can be found on the dedicated website at: www.credni.org

Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of (i) fully-funded; and (ii) part-funded nursery schools places available at Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 28276/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are 26 full-time places in Kilcooley PS Nursery Unit, all of which are fully funded by the Department of Education.

St Columbanus' College

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the religious breakdown of pupils attending St. Columbanus' College.

(AQW 28277/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The most up-to-date figures for pupil enrolments relate to the 2012/13 school year, these are detailed in the table below. Updated 2013/14 figures will be available following the completion of the annual school census which is currently being undertaken.

Religious breakdown of pupils attending St Columbanus College - 2012/13

Religion	Total pupils
Protestant	211
Catholic	260
Other	137
Total enrolment	608

Source: School census

Note: The other category includes 'other Christian', 'non Christian' and 'no religion'.

Education and Training Inspectorate: Underachieving Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 27560/11-15, to list the 20 schools involved in the project.

(AQW 28315/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The schools involved in the Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics programme are:

1. Belfast Boys' Model School
2. St Mary's Christian Bros. Grammar School
3. Parkhall Integrated College
4. Holy Cross College, Strabane
5. Hazelwood College
6. St Joseph's College, Belfast
7. Limavady HS
8. Ashfield Boys' HS
9. Ballyclare Secondary School
10. Glastry College
11. Lismore Comprehensive School
12. Brownlow Integrated College
13. Girls' Model School, Belfast
14. St Patricks College, Ballymena
15. St Mary's College, Londonderry
16. Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College
17. Oakgrove Integrated College
18. St Colm's HS
19. St Louises Comprehensive College

Please note that 19 schools are currently in the programme. An additional school will be identified in due course.

Education and Training Inspectorate: Underachieving Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 27511/11-15, what responses his Department has received from the Education and Library Boards in relation to this initiative.

(AQW 28316/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Training Inspectorate received two responses from the Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards in relation to this initiative, seeking clarification on how the schools were identified and inviting the Chief Inspector to attend a meeting of the Association of Chief Executives.

This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the project in more detail and clarify how the Education and Training Inspectorate would keep the Education and Library Boards informed of progress.

Education and Skills Authority: Senior Management

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what is the proposed senior management structure for the Education and Skills Authority.

(AQW 28317/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Senior Management Structure for the Education and Skills Authority will comprise a Chief Executive supported by five Directors as follows:

- Director of Human Resources and Workforce Development;
- Director of Finance and ICT;
- Director of Children and Young People Services;
- Director of Education Quality and Strategic Planning; and
- Director of Operations and Estates.

Education and Library Boards: Job Evaluation

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 27559/11-15, how many staff in each Education and Library Board have had their request for a job evaluation on their post agreed by management.

(AQW 28318/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Pursuant to the response given to AQW27559/11-15, all 137 posts listed have been agreed by management.

The procedures are such that only those requests for further evaluation that have the support of line management can be considered.

DE: Youth Capital Funding Scheme

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the location; and (ii) the amount due to be spent on each of the 53 Youth Projects identified to receive £53 million investment in their facilities.

(AQW 28322/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In my announcement on 14 November 2013, 53 schemes were successful in applying for grant-aid from the Youth Capital Funding Scheme for Voluntary Organisations for 2013/2014. Each organisation has supplied an estimate of cost for its specific project and the total estimated value that the Department of Education (DE) is being asked to contribute to all the schemes is approximately £12 million. The table below shows the organisations, their locations and approximate DE contribution towards each project. The actual cost for each scheme and DE's contribution will be dependent on Departmental approval of detailed drawings and costings.

Youth Organisation	Location	Approx Cost to DE
*1st Hillsborough Scout Group	Hillsborough	£50,000.00
1st Randalstown Scout Group	Randalstown	£50,000.00
1st Tyrone Scouts	Dungannon	£309,800.00
314 Northern Ireland Girls Brigade, Monkstown	Monkstown, Newtownabbey	£150,000.00
4th Portadown (St Mark's) Scout Group	Portadown	£140,000.00
6th Belfast Scout Group	Ophir Gardens, Belfast	£5,000.00
6th Fermanagh Scouting Ireland	Irvinestown	£18,665.00
6th Tyrone Scouts	Cookstown	£66,871.00
Ardoyne Youth Club	Ardoyne, Belfast	£324,000.00
Ardstraw Presbyterian Church Youth Council	Omagh	£144,177.00
*Ballysillan Youth for Christ Community Drop in Centre	Benvue Road, Belfast	£360,000.00
Boys Brigade Belvoir Project	BB House, 14 May Street, Belfast, BT1 4NR	£299,000.00
Catholic Guides of Ireland Northern Region, Belfast	Beechmount Drive, Belfast	£246,322.00
Cladagh Glen Centre, Fermanagh	Enniskillen	£142,529.00
*Clann Eirann Youth Club	Lurgan	£850,000.00
Comber Youth for Christ	Comber	£119,130.00
Conway Youth Centre	Conway Street, Belfast	£103,102.00
Corpus Christi Youth Centre	Ballymurphy Road, Belfast	£146,295.00
Croi Éanna	Glengormley	£5,000.00
Deanby Youth Centre	Oldpark Road, Belfast	£112,000.00
Downpatrick Group Scouting Ireland	Downpatrick	£12,780.00
Ebrington Church Youth Council	Derry	£107,260.00
Fairhill Youth Centre, Maghera	Maghera	£49,000.00
Forthspring Inter Community Group	Springfield Road, Belfast	£29,094.00
Gallbally Youth and Community Association	Gallbally, Dungannon	£87,336.00
Girlguiding Ulster, Lorne House, Craigavad	Craigavad, Holywood	£145,000.00
Glarryford Young Farmers' Club	Glarryford, Ballymena	£50,000.00
*Glenview Community Centre	Londonderry	£150,000.00
Goal Line Youth Trust, Portadown	Portadown	£93,011.00
Holy Family Youth Centre, Belfast	Limestone Road, Belfast	£135,216.00
Holy Trinity Youth Centre	Norglen Gardens, Belfast	£116,900.00
Holywood Family Trust	Holywood	£140,000.00
John Paul II Youth Club	Brookfield Place, Belfast	£292,487.00

Youth Organisation	Location	Approx Cost to DE
Kingdom Youth Club	Kilkeel	£36,000.00
Londonderry YMCA	Londonderry	£148,000.00
Loughiel Community Association	Loughiel, Antrim	£89,352.00
Magnet Young Adult Centre	Newry	£312,000.00
National Council of YMCAs of Ireland, Newcastle	Newcastle	£146,000.00
Newhill Youth & Community Centre Association	Whiterock Road, Belfast	£607,200.00
Patrician Youth Centre, D'patrick	Downpatrick	£137,500.00
*Portadown YMCA	Portadown	£1,200,000.00
Rosario Youth Centre	Ormeau Road, Belfast	£200,580.00
Saints Youth Centre	Twinbrook, Belfast	£149,895.00
Share Discovery Village	Lisnaskea	£55,440.00
St Comgalls Youth Centre	Antrim	£149,756.00
*St Mary's Youth Club, Derry	Derry	£2,384,073.00
St Michael's Scout Group Enniskillen	Drumlyon, Enniskillen	£140,890.00
St Patricks Youth Centre, Donaghmore	Donaghmore	£117,000.00
St Peter's Immaculata Youth Centre	St Peter's Square North, Belfast	£77,064.00
St Teresa's Youth Club, Belfast	Glen Road, Belfast	£149,980.00
The Scout Association - NI Scout Council	National Scout Centre Crawfordsburn	£500,000.00
West Kirk Community Project	Conway Street, Belfast	£140,000.00
Willowfield Parish Church	My Lady's Road, Belfast	£240,000.00
Overall Total		£12,030,705.00

* Denotes a new build.

Curriculum: The Holocaust

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what provision is made within the curriculum for teaching children about the Holocaust.

(AQW 28342/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The revised curriculum gives teachers more flexibility over how they deliver the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. The minimum to be taught is detailed in legislation as Areas of Learning and a number of these provide opportunities for schools to explore the Holocaust and related issues. A number of examples of the opportunities provided are detailed below:

At Key Stage 2 there are opportunities within the areas of the World About Us and Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, for pupils to explore human rights and social responsibility, how people in the world interact and the causes of conflict and appropriate responses.

At Key Stage 3, the Environment and Society Area of Learning includes history as a contributory element and the statutory Minimum Content for History requires opportunities to be provided for pupils to investigate the impact of significant events of the 20th Century on the world.

The Local and Global Citizenship strand of the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning also provides opportunities for pupils to explore issues relating to diversity in societies and investigate key human rights principles and local and global scenarios where human rights have been seriously infringed.

In line with the flexibility provided by the revised curriculum, the specifics of what is taught, and how it is taught, under each Area of Learning is a matter for each teacher/school.

Cycling: Schoolchildren

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what initiatives his Department is following to encourage the uptake of cycling by the school age population.

(AQW 28361/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I would refer the Member to my answer to his earlier question AQW 20533/11-15 published in the Official Report on 15 March 2013.

Curriculum: The Holocaust

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what discussion he has had with the Holocaust Educational Trust on making the Lessons From Auschwitz programme available to pupils.

(AQW 28404/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have had no direct discussions with the Holocaust Educational Trust. I have received correspondence on behalf of the Holocaust Educational Trust regarding the Lessons from Auschwitz Programme. My replies have outlined the opportunities provided through the revised curriculum for pupils to explore the Holocaust and other related issues.

In line with the flexibility provided by the revised curriculum, it is a matter for individual schools to decide on their involvement with outside organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust to assist in their delivery of the curriculum.

Schools: Mobile Phones

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to ban pupils from bringing mobile phones into school.

(AQW 28426/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is a matter for the Board of Governors of each school to adopt a policy regarding the use of mobile phones by children and young people on school premises.

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the location of each Autism Spectrum disorder unit in South Antrim; and (ii) the number of pupils who attend each unit.

(AQW 28471/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North-Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that there are no units dedicated solely to supporting pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in South Antrim.

Department for Employment and Learning

Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Student Awareness

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail any work being carried out to make students aware of the dangers of drugs and alcohol use.

(AQW 27731/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The four campus based Higher Education Institutions and the six further education colleges all have policy statements in place regarding drugs and substance abuse and misuse of alcohol.

They provide information to students on drugs and alcohol as part of the induction process and throughout the year through a range of media including handbooks, promotional leaflets and websites. Support services are also available to students in the form of counselling, welfare and healthcare.

Each college has a number of policies in place to raise awareness, provide education on the detrimental effect of drugs and substance abuse and provide guidance to staff and students on the procedures to deal with incidents.

The colleges also work in partnership with a number of external stakeholders and organise a number of promotional events and workshops throughout the year.

Universities: Maximum Student Number

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail any increase he intends to make to the maximum student number cap in the next two years.

(AQW 27888/11-15)

Dr Farry: On 28 August 2013 I confirmed that my Department had enabled the provision, from a 2011-12 baseline, of an additional 1,350 places for learners undertaking an economically relevant STEM course by 2015.

In implementing the final phases of this provision, I intend to increase the Maximum Student Number (MaSN) cap at the Northern Ireland universities by 403 places in academic year 2014/15 and by a further 144 places in academic year 2015/16.

I also intend to increase the number of MaSN controlled higher education places at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges by 46 places in academic year 2014/15 and by a further 24 places in academic year 2015/16.

Further and Higher Education: Disability Discrimination Act

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 26987/11-15, (i) if all Further and Higher Education colleges comply with the definitions stipulated within the Disability Discrimination Act; (ii) why South West Regional College claimed, in error that they provided learning disability/Post-19 courses for Dungannon and Cookstown Campuses, when both are specifically for students with mental health issues; and (iii) whether the initial information skewed the figures prior to correction; and (iv) to detail any discussions he has had with the South Regional College regarding this error.

(AQW 27902/11-15)

Dr Farry:

- (i) Further to my response to AQW 26987/11-15, I can confirm that further education (FE) colleges and higher education (HE) institutions are bound by the definitions stipulated within the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). All FE colleges and HE institutions comply with these obligations and operate on a pan-disability approach, which ensures that support for students is based on need, rather than category of disability;
- (ii) In the interest of completeness, South West College (SWC) included details of its work with Beacon Centres, delivered at its Dungannon campus, for people with mental health issues, in its response. The College did not claim these courses were specifically for those with a learning difficulty, post-19, and, as I have mentioned in previous responses, SWC has maintained that this provision was not appropriate for young adults leaving special schools. The courses delivered at the Cookstown campus of SWC were for young adults leaving special schools;
- (iii) This information was not included in the figures, as it was outside the remit of the audit, so the figures provided remain accurate.
- (iv) My Department sought clarification from SWC on this provision, and is content that the information provided was forwarded in an attempt to be comprehensive, and was not to be included in their provision for post-19 students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Teacher Training

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) how many students began teacher training at college or university in this academic year; and (ii) what are the admission numbers for these courses over the next three years.

(AQW 27919/11-15)

Dr Farry:

- (i) Data on the number of students that began teacher training at college or university in this academic year are unavailable at present. In 2011/12, the latest year for which data are available, 632 students began teacher training at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions.

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

- (ii) The Department of Education is responsible for determining the number of students to be admitted each year to courses of initial teacher education here.
- (iii) The Department of Education has determined an overall intake number of 600 for 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15. Intakes for 2015/16 have not yet been determined.

Notes:

The latest available data on Higher Education enrolments are for 2011/12.

The Department of Education has indicated that information on the number of intakes for 2015/16 is not yet available.

Queen's University: Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail any actions or investigation he intends to pursue with Queen's University, Belfast regarding the Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Tony Gallagher being found guilty of academic misconduct.

(AQW 27938/11-15)

Dr Farry: I would advise that it is not a matter for me or my Department to investigate cases of alleged academic misconduct. This is an internal matter for the University and it is up to that institution to handle any allegations of misconduct and to monitor, and where necessary improve, the suitability and appropriateness of the mechanisms in place to provide assurances over academic integrity.

Queen's University: Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assurances he can give that all publications claimed in Professor Tony Gallagher's research and scholarly activity bibliography have been published as referenced.

(AQW 27940/11-15)

Dr Farry: I would advise that it is not a matter for me or my Department to provide assurances as to the accuracy of any particular academic's activity bibliography. This is an internal matter for Queen's University, Belfast and it is up to that institution and the individuals involved to ensure the accuracy of the bibliographical details contained in any academic publications.

Civil Service Posts: DEL

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many Civil Service posts existed in his Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 27952/11-15)

Dr Farry: The total number of posts within the Department for Employment and Learning at 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 is summarised below*. The figures are based on Staff in Post (Full Time Equivalent) plus vacant posts in the General Service Grades specified. A breakdown by grade and local Council area for each period is provided in Annex A and Annex B respectively which I have placed in the Assembly Library and on the DEL website.

Total Number of posts at 1 January 2012	Total Number of posts at 1 January 2013
1788.04	1834.13

* As information is not held by Human Resources in relation to the dates specified in the question, statistics are provided in relation to the closest dates available, i.e. 3 January 2012 and 12 December 2012 respectively.

Apprenticeships: Construction Industry

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how many apprentices on all schemes are employed in the construction industry, broken down by constituency, for each of the last 3 years.

(AQW 28035/11-15)

Dr Farry: Table 1 overleaf details ApprenticeshipsNI occupancy relating to Construction and Construction Crafts apprenticeship frameworks, broken down by constituency, for each of the last 3 years.

As the member will be aware, in February of this year I announced a major review of my Department's apprenticeship policy. This review, which is all encompassing in nature, is progressing as planned and I will be reporting its findings later in the winter.

Table 1 Occupancy(1) on Apprenticeships NI in Construction and Construction Crafts Frameworks by Quarter and Parliamentary Constituency(2)

	April 2011	April 2012	April 2013
Belfast East	14	11	9
Belfast North	19	18	16
Belfast South	22	18	15
Belfast West	16	12	11
East Antrim	36	27	21
East Londonderry	6	10	9
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	43	34	21
Foyle	8	37	11
Lagan Valley	26	22	24
Mid Ulster	43	33	19
Newry And Armagh	33	30	22
North Antrim	39	22	22
North Down	11	10	9
South Antrim	39	31	21

	April 2011	April 2012	April 2013
South Down	43	28	27
Strangford	19	16	18
Upper Bann	10	8	13
West Tyrone	66	48	44
Not Known ⁽³⁾	2	0	2
Total	495	415	334

Source: Data extracted from the DEL Client Management System on 26 July 2013

- (1) Occupancy figures refers to the number of participants on provision on the last Friday of each quarter
- (2) Parliamentary Constituency is based on the home post-code of the participant
- (3) "Not Known" includes those participants for whom post-code is not known or incorrect, or where post-code cannot be mapped to PC.

Further Education: Students with Learning Disabilities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW27081/11-15, whether he will consider relaxing the aspect of pan-disability approach until there is a definitive, fit for purpose programme in place across all colleges under his remit which is compliant with all statutory regulations specifically for students with learning disabilities.

(AQW 28059/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department considers that it would not be constructive to relax the pan-disability approach, applied across colleges, as this has the potential for creating a hierarchy of disability, which could result in possible discrimination between categories of disability. It is considered that the pan-disability approach is fair and equitable, and that no disability is considered any more or less important than another, ensuring that anyone with an additional need is supported, regardless of the nature of the disability.

As I have stated before, decisions on the curriculum offered is a matter for each individual college, based on local demand and viability. I am content that colleges are already meeting their obligations under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (SENDI), which places a duty on institutions to make reasonable adjustments, to ensure that people who have a disability are not put at a substantial disadvantage (compared to people who do not have a disability), in accessing further and higher education.

Education Maintenance Allowance: Fraud

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what measures the Department is taking to prevent fraud on Education Maintenance Allowance payments.

(AQW 28158/11-15)

Dr Farry: I can advise the member that both my Department and the Department of Education, the Student Loans Company, who administer the scheme on behalf of both Departments and the Learning Centres are focused on preventing Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) fraud and have put in place a number of measures to minimise the risk.

From an auditing view, in order to provide assurance on the effectiveness of the role of colleges and schools, my Department's Financial Audit Systems Team (FAST) monitors the administration of the scheme by the Learning Centres. The team carry out inspections at approximately 25% of the Learning Centres in Northern Ireland each year. During the inspections the team will assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of control for this programme, the degree of compliance with Departmental Guidelines and the accuracy, reliability and completeness of associated accounting records. Training and information away days for Learning Centre EMA administrators are arranged twice a year to flag up common mistakes made in administration and to promote fraud awareness.

The Student Loans Company has responsibility for the processing of EMA applications. The checks and balances put in place ensure that original identification and financial evidence is required to accompany the student's application, all Customer Service advisors have been trained on fraudulent documents awareness, specifically on passports, birth certificates, and financial documents. In addition, students must provide evidence, either a tax credit notification or a utility bill to confirm residence at the address stated on the application form.

The EMA processing system automatically performs checks to ensure there have been no duplicate applications submitted or that the bank details have not been duplicated on another account or application. A Cross reference and reconciliation task is also completed on a monthly basis from October to January in partnership with the Western Education and Library Board in relation to the Further Education Award computer system and the EMA computer system to ensure students have not applied for both schemes, thus avoiding double funding for the same student.

EU: Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail any interaction he has had with the EU's "Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs".

(AQW 28186/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs is a multi-stakeholder consortium, launched by the European Commission in March 2013, to tackle the twin issues of a projected shortfall of up to 900,000 ICT professionals in Europe by 2015, exacerbated by a decline in computing science graduates. Its aim is to increase the overall supply of digitally skilled professionals and to better match supply and demand of digital skills.

The Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs is similar to the ICT Skills Working Group, which I established and Chair, in that it utilises a multi-stakeholder approach using collaborative action to address skills mismatches in the digital/ICT sector.

A number of its priorities also align closely with the aims of the ICT Skills Working Group.

The ICT Skills Working Group, and the associated ICT Skills Action Plan which sets out the short, medium and long term actions required to ensure that local ICT employers have access to the skilled workforce they need now and in the future, are having a positive effect on the ICT skills landscape in Northern Ireland. For example, in the last year alone applications to IT-related degrees at both of our local universities have risen by over 24%. There is an opportunity for my Department to engage with the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs by pledging support for its aims and objectives and sharing the best practice approach developed in Northern Ireland.

Officials in my Department are also currently exploring the possibility of submitting an application to a Call for Proposals under the PROGRESS funding stream which is seeking to identify effective implementation measures, good practice and innovative approaches with a special emphasis on the employment potential of ICT and the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs.

University of Ulster: Campuses

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether it would be more cost-effective to relocate existing schools from the Jordanstown University of Ulster campus to Magee as opposed to the Belfast City campus.

(AQW 28280/11-15)

Dr Farry: The University of Ulster's business case for the transfer of activities from its Jordanstown campus to its Belfast campus was prepared several years ago and received approval from both this Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel in March 2010. The development of the University's Belfast campus is a major infrastructure project which had been in the planning for some time before the business case was approved. The question of cost-effectiveness is one that only the University is in a position to answer and the matter is now wholly one for it to consider.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Energy: Review of Competition

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the proposed review of competition in the energy sector announced in the House of Commons, whether this will include Northern Ireland, and if not, will a separate review be conducted.

(AQW 27772/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Energy policy is a devolved matter and different energy markets operate in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The review of competition in the energy sector announced in the House of Commons is specific to the energy sector in Great Britain and will not include Northern Ireland.

I have no current plans to initiate a review of competition in the energy sector in Northern Ireland.

Trading Standards: Cigarettes

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 27105/11-15, when Trading Standards last carried out inspections in Ballymena to investigate the sale of illegally imported cigarettes.

(AQW 27774/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Trading Standards Service (TSS) has not carried out any inspections to investigate the sale of illegally imported cigarettes in Ballymena.

Free Derry Museum

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when she will release the letter of offer to the Free Derry Museum given the urgency of other funding offers being lost due to the delay.

(AQW 27886/11-15)

Mrs Foster: A conditional Letter of Offer will be issued in due course for this project

Electricity: Renewable Sources

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 27528/11-15, whether she is confident that, by 2020, 40 percent of electricity will be generated by renewable sources.

(AQW 27942/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Executive remains committed to the target of 40 percent electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020. As I noted in my response to AQW 27528/11-15 (not AQW 27447/11-15 as referenced in the question), we have a range of plans and policies to support the delivery of the 40 percent target.

Progress to date has been very good and I welcome the ongoing strong private sector interest in developing renewable electricity projects.

I have just approved work which will provide an updated analysis of the costs and benefits arising from the 40 percent target which will feed into the planned mid-term review of the Strategic Energy Framework due to commence in 2014-15.

Economy

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact on the local economy from the recovery of the British and southern Irish economies.

(AQW 27981/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As a small open economy, the performance of key external markets influences Northern Ireland in areas such as exports, tourism and FDI. I therefore welcome the recent growth in both the Great Britain and Republic of Ireland economies. While it is not possible to quantify what impact it has had on the local economy, it is fair to say that recovery in these economies has had a positive impact.

We have begun to see welcome improvements to the Northern Ireland economy during 2013. For example, there has been nine consecutive monthly falls in unemployment benefit claimants, rises in employee jobs, improved business activity being reported in a range of external surveys and growth in exports.

However, as highlighted in our Economic Strategy, it is vital that the local economy continues to diversify into new high-growth markets to ensure that we are not as reliant upon more traditional markets such as Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board: Flag Protests

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 27369/11-15, to detail the concerns that prospective visitors raised regarding flag protests.

(AQW 28017/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Prospective visitors raised a number of issues in their correspondence.

Energy: Wind Turbine Grid Connections

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of single wind turbines successfully connected to the grid between 1 May 2010 and 1 November 2013, broken down by generator output levels (i) 0kW to 50kW; (ii) 51kW to 100kW; (iii) 101kW to 200kW; and (iv) 201kW to 250kW.

(AQW 28028/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Data on grid connections is retained by NIE however the Department understands that the information is not kept in the format requested. The most relevant information that can be provided is the commissioning dates for onshore wind generating stations accrediting under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) which is sourced from Ofgem's Renewables and CHP register.

Table 1 Number of onshore wind generating stations commissioned between 1 May 2010 and 1 November 2013.

Installed Capacity	Numbers Commissioned
0 – 50kW	67
51-100kW	20
101-200kW	23
201-250kW	33

It should be noted that it is not possible to confirm if all the generating stations are single turbines; however the majority of turbines up to 250 kW will be single turbines.

Department of the Environment

Car Parking Spaces: DOE Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27883/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): As part of its overall strategy for cost reduction, my Department has been engaged in a significant programme to reduce and consolidate the number of leased contract spaces annually since 2010/11. These reductions have produced overall savings of £187,570 which represents a reduction of 66.2% between 2010/11 and 2013/14.

The consolidation exercise included a reduction in the number of car park providers from eight to three through identification of those car park arrangements which were least cost effective and by renegotiation of the retained contract lease agreements.

My Department has also introduced car pooling arrangements, whereby the number of spaces leased is fewer than the number of people in the pool. The overall aim in using the pooling arrangement is to optimise utilisation and maximise savings based on evidence that not all users will be in the car park at any one time.

My Department continues to monitor car park usage and target areas of under usage to ensure the Department benefits from 'best value' for money.

Planning: Counter-fraud Arrangements

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the Northern Ireland Audit Office's findings on the history of planning applications for the Waringstown Rath site and Grange listed building, which were reported to the Public Accounts Committee, and the subsequent report "DoE Planning – a review of counter-fraud arrangements" of 15 Oct 2013, what action he has taken, and plans to take, in respect of (i) a counter-fraud strategy and policy; (ii) creating internal control mechanisms to counteract fraud; (iii) the roles of his Department's internal audit and the Planning Policy Division's compliance policy and review team; and (iv) arrangements for instilling a counter-fraud culture, including whistle-blowing, in his Department.

(AQW 27892/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) report "DoE Planning – A Review of Counter-Fraud Arrangements" acknowledges that my Department has a comprehensive set of fraud and whistle blowing policies in place to prevent and detect fraud. The recommendations made by the NIAO, as a result of this report, are currently being considered by my officials who will implement appropriate measures to ensure the enhancement of existing counter-fraud policies and the continued development of an anti-fraud culture.

My Department also receives an independent and objective opinion on risk management, control and governance through regular reviews of systems and processes by Internal Audit. Audits are also conducted by the Compliance, Improvement & Review Team with agreed recommendations implemented accordingly.

I am committed to ensuring that work continues to further develop a robust counter-fraud culture within DoE Planning.

Local Government: Power Sharing

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment what assurances he can give that from the initial formation of the shadow councils power sharing will be fair and equitable.

(AQW 27898/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am committed to ensuring that the sharing of power and responsibility is the cornerstone of the new councils. The arrangements provided for in the Local Government Bill in relation to positions of responsibility and the membership of committees will apply to the incoming councils, following the local government election in May 2014.

Traffic: Noise Levels

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the acceptable noise levels from vehicular traffic within residential areas and conservation zones.

(AQO 4968/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are no formal noise limits or acceptable noise levels for vehicular traffic within residential areas and conservation zones.

Although no overall noise limit exists, individual vehicles must comply with the noise limits set out in The Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.

In addition, under the Environmental Noise Directive the noise exposure of the population was required to be determined and Noise Action Plans developed. Following the publication of noise maps for roads in September 2012, the Department for Regional Development, as the Competent Authority for roads, is in the process of preparing a Noise Action Plan.

While the associated technical guidance published by my Department to assist Competent Authorities in the preparation of Noise Action Plans does not identify a particular noise limit value, it does recommend that when addressing areas of high noise, a prioritised approach should be adopted, firstly considering those affected by the highest noise levels.

The Noise Action Plan, which was released for a full public consultation earlier in the year, is now in the process of being finalised.

Planning Policy Statement 21

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of increasing cases of farmers being denied mortgages because of the constraints of CTY 10 in PPS 21, which insists on siting a farm dwelling as close to the farm yard as possible, will he consider reviewing this part of the policy to give decision makers greater flexibility in its application.

(AQO 4962/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am not aware of a recent increase in the number of mortgage applications declined due to the requirements of CTY 10, however I will happily consider any evidence the member may have of this.

CTY 10 requires that a new building is visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm.

This provision is intended to minimise the impact of a new dwelling on the character and appearance of the landscape by ensuring that it forms an integral part of the building group or, when viewed from surrounding vantage points, it appears to be visually interlinked with those buildings.

The policy also provides that, as an exception, consideration will be given to an alternative site away from other buildings on the farm where there are either, demonstrable health and safety reasons, or verifiable plans to expand the farm business at the existing group of buildings.

The application of CTY 10 has already been considered as part of my predecessor's rolling review into the operation of PPS21 which was intended to ensure appropriate consistency and flexibility in interpretation, in accordance with the content and substance of the policy.

As part of the review officials were instructed of the need to have greater regard to the practicalities of requiring new dwellings to be clustered with an established group of buildings on the farm.

In his statement to the assembly on the outcome of the review, my predecessor made it clear that he did not expect applicants to be required to access new dwellings through busy working farmyards where an acceptable alternate access can be achieved without detriment to integration.

I am satisfied that, as a result the actions taken through my predecessor's review, the policy is now being applied with appropriate flexibility and that a further fundamental review of this aspect of CTY10 is not necessary at this time.

Local Government: Training

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment to outline how the local government sector will be involved in the designing and implementation of capacity building and training programmes required for the new councils.

(AQO 4964/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Capacity building and training is a priority task of the Local Government Reform Programme. The reform process is complex and will mean a period of significant change for all those working in and with local government. This includes those civil servants working in areas that will transfer to local government in April 2015.

My Department has worked closely with key stakeholders in both central and local government, including the Local Government Training Group, the National Association of Councillors, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, the Human Resources Working Group, the Pilots and Community Planning Working Group, DOE Planning and DSD to identify the capacity building needs of both elected members and central and local government staff. This will result in a capacity building framework which prioritises the capacity building requirements between now and 2015.

It will be the task of my officials to implement this framework and to continually review its impact to ensure priority development needs are met in a coordinated and timely way.

To facilitate this important work, my predecessor secured £3m for capacity building and training and a further £600K for staff induction from the Executive over this financial year and next. The framework I have outlined will determine how most of this funding is spent. Meanwhile, I have already committed monies in this financial year to early capacity building, training and staff induction activities for both central and local government, including supporting the work of the Local Government Training Group and Statutory Transition Committees.

Taxis: Single-tier System

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of the Environment to outline how public hire taxis can be facilitated under the single tier system.

(AQO 4965/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The forthcoming suite of legislation, which will fully implement the Taxis Act 2008, will bring in a single tier licensing regime for all taxis in Northern Ireland which is aimed at creating a level playing field between public and private hire taxis. It will also contribute to a safe and fit for purpose taxi industry for the general public. A key element in this will be that all taxis may be booked in advance, or ply for hire in the street when they are not already hired.

I am aware of the concerns of Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers, who currently enjoy exclusive access to Belfast City Centre taxi ranks and are the only class of taxi who can ply for hire within Belfast; indeed I met with a number of their representatives on 16 October 2013, to hear their concerns firsthand.

The proposed reforms are designed to ensure that the public are safe when using taxis and to improve standards of service throughout the industry. This will help to target enforcement activities towards illegal taxi operations, which will drive down the demand for illegal taxis and increase business for compliant operators. All operators will have the opportunity to benefit from greater use of taxis by the public, including those operated by Belfast Public Hire.

Further, as a consequence of the Department's intention to permit only taxis approved as wheelchair accessible vehicles to access ranks within Belfast and to grant acquired rights status to those already approved as wheelchair accessible (including all Belfast Public Hire Taxis), Belfast Public Hire will continue to be able to use city centre ranks, unlike the vast majority of private hire vehicles.

The Taxi Reform Programme is the first substantial overhaul of taxi regulations in Northern Ireland for nearly thirty years, and there has been widespread agreement across the taxi industry and other key stakeholders that the current situation is not fit for purpose. It is therefore inevitable that significant changes are necessary, some of which may not find favour with all taxi operators and drivers. However, responses to a consultation on the introduction of single tier clearly indicated support for its introduction with 84% in favour. The Environment Committee has also given its support to the full implementation of the Taxis Act and has clearly indicated that all the remaining legislative changes are to be in place by September 2014.

I believe, therefore, that all taxis in Northern Ireland can and will be facilitated under the introduction of single tier. Whilst I am committed to implementing the entirety of the Taxis Act, my Department has also been listening to all stakeholders and working to ensure that the transition to the new regime is as smooth as possible. This includes ensuring that the particular work of the taxi buses in Belfast is recognised and facilitated in the transition. This important work will continue.

Waste: Fuel Laundering

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment what impact the dumping of toxic waste from cross-border fuel laundering is having on the natural environment.

(AQO 4966/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The effects on the environment arising from illegal disposal of fuel laundering wastes cannot be predicted, it will be site-specific. These effects will be driven by the risks to health, environmental receptors (such as groundwater, rivers and lakes) and agricultural receptors (such as crops, grazing land and livestock). Fuel laundering waste products can cause serious environmental damage by contaminating land and waterways. The toxic effects of the chemicals contained in the waste from laundering fuel can directly affect aquatic life. The changes in the pH (acidity/alkalinity) of a waterway will have an effect on both invertebrates and fish life. Oil is a toxic chemical which forms a film on rivers and lakes, reducing the amount of oxygen available for aquatic life. The recovery of the waterway from this contamination may take several years.

To date, the NIEA Water Management Unit has not undertaken any specific water surveys in relation to dumping of fuel laundering wastes. The Agency has however assessed the water quality data available for those polluting substances which may be associated with fuel laundering wastes. No water quality failures due to these substances have been identified in cross border locations where the dumping of fuel laundering waste has allegedly occurred. The existing freshwater biological and water quality sampling programmes have not identified any impacts that have been linked to dumping of toxic waste in cross border areas.

Planning Bill: Legal Advice

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the fact that he did not seek the legal advice freely available to him from the Attorney General in relation to the concerns he has with the Planning Bill, how much additional cost has been incurred in seeking the alternative legal advice.

(AQO 4967/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Like any Minister in the Executive, I am free to seek the opinion of any legal counsel where I consider this to be necessary. The nature, scope, timing and ramifications of the two significant, complex and late amendments to the Planning Bill at Consideration stage prompted my predecessor to seek independent legal opinion, which on this occasion, came from one of the top QCs in the UK, who specialises in planning, environmental and public law. I have confidence in that advice which I have made publically available. The cost to my Department of that legal advice was £4,150 net of VAT. I consider this reasonable when weighed against the potential legal and other costs to the planning system and the economy of attempting to defend the legal challenges which I have no doubt would have been made against clauses 4 and 15 of the Bill (as amended at Consideration stage).

Taxis: Single-tier System

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment whether proposed new legislation will deliver a single tier taxi system. (AQO 4969/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The delivery of a single tier taxi system by September 2014 is at the core of the Department's programme of taxi reforms.

The current taxi licensing system provides for two distinct licensing systems, private hire and public hire, each derived from different legislative bases and each with its own distinct rules and regulations. Public hire taxis are further divided into public hire within Belfast, and public hire outside Belfast. This system has proved to be confusing for members of the public wishing to use taxis, who may be unsure which taxis can ply for hire on the street, and which they must pre-book.

Under the new taxi licensing regime all taxis will be required to hold the same licence. In order to cater for the variety of different uses of taxi in Northern Ireland, this licence will be obtainable for a number of discrete uses. The main two categories of use will be Class A, which will cover all taxis being used to stand or ply for hire and those which are pre-booked; and Class B taxis, which will be wheelchair accessible.

My Department will be following the necessary steps to make secondary legislation to achieve these aims of the Taxis Act 2008, in the coming months.

Single tier licensing will provide Northern Ireland with a taxi system whose vehicles will meet common standards, administered through a single legislative framework, and which is more easily accessible and understood by consumers.

Expert Review Report by Chris Mills

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the concern over what has been permitted to take place at Mobuoy Road and the potential risks this poses to public health and the integrity of the River Faughan Special Area of Conservation, for a timeframe for the publication of the Mills Report. (AQW 28460/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The report is being finalised by Mr Mills and, once I have received a copy I will want to consider its findings and recommendations, before deciding how to proceed.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Rates Initiatives

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the current rates initiatives in operation for both domestic and non-domestic properties; and when evaluations were carried out on each initiative. (AQW 27799/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): All domestic rating reliefs are currently being evaluated in the context of the wider Welfare Reform changes as they relate to rate rebate replacement and associated funding issues.

Non-domestic reliefs are listed in the table alongside the related information on their evaluation.

Non-domestic Rating	
Small Business Rate Relief	The policy was reviewed in 2011 when the Large Retail Levy was introduced. A further in-year review was undertaken in 2012. The scheme is due to end in 2015 but a full policy evaluation is due in 2014.
Post Office Rate Relief	The scheme is due to end in 2015 but will be considered alongside the review of the main scheme.
Empty Shops Rates Concession	This was a one year scheme but was extended after its first year following evaluation. It will now end in 2015.
Charitable Exemption	There is no intention to evaluate this provision but the Department continues to monitor the position in GB in relation to avoidance.
Sport and Recreation Relief	Policy evaluation currently rests with DCAL as the policy competent Department.
Quarries and Mines	An evaluation is currently being undertaken.
Industrial Derating	Evaluated in 2009 as part of the decision to retain derating at 30%. Policy is due for further review in 2014.
Freight Transport Relief	Evaluation aligned to Industrial Derating Policy.

Non-domestic Rating	
Non-Domestic Vacant Rating	Evaluated in 2009 – 5 years after the policy was introduced.
Hardship Relief	An evaluation is currently being undertaken.
Rural ATMs Relief	This initiative is reviewed on a 3 year basis. Evaluations were undertaken in 2010 & 2013.
Shop Window Displays	This scheme was introduced as a three year scheme – due to end in 2015.
Residential Homes Relief	No evaluation planned.
Community Halls	An evaluation is currently being undertaken.

Car Parking Spaces: Government

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 25356/11-15, to detail the cost of car parking spaces per year, broken down by Department.

(AQW 27802/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: DFP does not have the cost of owned spaces as these spaces are attached to buildings and the costs are not separated out from the general building costs.

I would advise the Member to contact each Department for costs relating to their owned spaces.

Car Parking Spaces: DFP Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27884/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has rationalised car parking contracts to one provider, increasing buying power and reducing costs. It has also produced and introduced a policy to restrict the provision of car parking to essential business users only.

Legal Costs: DFP

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail how much his Department spent on (i) legal costs; and (ii) paying damages or compensation as a consequence of legal actions, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27961/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The amount spent on legal costs and paying damages or compensation as a consequence of legal actions by my Department in each of the last five years is provided in the attached table.

The damages/compensation figures include £17,310k in respect of DFP's share of the settlement payments made to staff at AA, AO, EOII and analogous grades in the NICS as a result of an agreement with NIPSA in respect of equal pay.

	Legal Costs £000	Damages/Compensation £000
2012/13	250	675
2011/12	910	2,664
2010/11	255	17,378
2009/10	507	236
2008/09	314	39

Tax

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the definition of direct tax revenue and its aggregate parts including to specify which elements are collected locally and by HM Revenue and Customs; and (ii) how returns from direct tax revenue can be quantified or measured.

(AQW 27995/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: DFP is not responsible for the definition of taxes, this is a matter for HM Treasury and HM Revenue & Customs.

Civil Servants: Promotions

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail within the last 5 years, how many Grade 3 and Grade 5 promotions have been awarded to Civil Servants; and how many of these have been female.

(AQW 28002/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The attached table includes existing civil servants successful in external recruitment competitions as well as those who were promoted through internal competitions.

Year	Gender	G3	G5	Total
2009	Female	1		1
	Male		3	3
2009 Total		1	3	4
2010	Female	1	2	3
	Male	1	6	7
2010 Total		2	8	10
2011	Female	3	4	7
	Male	3	6	9
2011 Total		6	10	16
2012	Female		4	4
	Male	2	6	8
2012 Total		2	10	12
2013	Female	3	10	13
	Male	5	6	11
2013 Total		8	16	24
Grand Total		19 (8 Female)	47 (20 Female)	66 (28 Female)

Cooperatives

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail for each of the last five years, (i) the economic value of the co-operative sector within the agri-food sector; (ii) the number of jobs sustained within it; and (iii) specific plans to further support its growth.

(AQW 28020/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: DFP is not responsible for supporting the co-operative agri-food sector and therefore does not hold the economic or employment data requested.

Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail any planned actions to ensure that Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff receive the 1% pay increase which was awarded in July 2013.

(AQW 28053/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: You will be aware that public bodies are subject to pay constraint and are required to complete a business case for any pay increase. This case has to be approved by both the sponsor Department and ultimately myself as Finance Minister.

I can confirm I approved the 1% pay increase for NIHE staff on 14 November 2013 and the sponsor department, DSD, was advised on the same date. The appropriate payment will now be made to NIHE staff.

Rates Arrears

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail what initiatives are currently being pursued to reduce rates arrears.

(AQW 28093/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: LPS undertakes various initiatives to rigorously pursue and reduce rate arrears. These initiatives, however, are balanced against assisting ratepayers who are genuinely struggling. LPS recognises that we are in tough economic times and many people are struggling to pay their bills during this difficult period. We are seeing increasing numbers of individuals and businesses facing bankruptcy, administration and liquidation. Within this context, initiatives to pursue and reduce rate arrears include:

- offering payment arrangements where appropriate;
- offering, where conditions are met, benefits, reliefs and allowances;

- court processes: obtaining court decrees, referral of debt to the Enforcement of Judgements Office, and initiation of bankruptcy proceedings where appropriate; (LPS also joins in bankruptcy proceedings generated by other organisations or individuals);
- using Land Registry information and data sharing agreements with other public bodies; and
- utilising tracing services to locate debtors.

It is worth noting that the rating debt has remained fairly constant over the past three years, while the cash collected by LPS has risen by over £125 million since 2008/09. This means extra millions can be invested in front-line services such as education, healthcare, roads and district council services from which all residents in Northern Ireland benefit.

Procurement Spend

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the percentage of procurement spend allocated to local firms; and how this compares with Scotland and Wales.

(AQW 28110/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy requires that all procurement is the subject to competition. Contracts are awarded on the basis of lowest price or most economically advantageous tender regardless of the location of the winning bidder.

In 2011-12, 79% of all contracts awarded by the Centres of Procurement Expertise in Northern Ireland were awarded to local companies. This compares favourably to Scotland and Wales where the figures are approximately 77% and 51% respectively.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail how his department estimated that the introduction of a zero percent rate on Air Passenger Duty would cost between £60 and £90 million; and to outline the method of calculation.

(AQW 28111/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department did not produce this estimate. It was prepared by HM Treasury.

The £60 million covers estimated Air Passenger Duty receipts from Northern Ireland airports in 2012/13. The £90 million figure is the projected rise in receipts in line with the Office of Budget Responsibility forecasts for increases in passenger numbers, for the UK as a whole, over the next five years.

Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has received instruction from the Minister for Social Development to award the one percent pay increase to Northern Ireland Housing Executive employees announced in July 2013.

(AQW 28257/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: All public bodies are subject to pay constraint and are required to complete a business case to be approved by both the sponsor Department and ultimately myself as Finance Minister.

I can confirm I recently received and approved the Pay remit for the NIHE 1% increase allowing payment to be made to NIHE staff.

Councils: Carbon Reduction Measures

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the finance options available to councils wishing to invest in carbon reduction measures.

(AQW 28304/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not hold this information.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Multiple Sclerosis: Prescription Drugs

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to allow the prescription of drugs, such as Fampyra and Copaxone, to be free of charge for people diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, who currently pay approximately £180 a month for these drugs.

(AQW 27720/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Northern Ireland has the highest uptake rate for specialist multiple sclerosis (MS) drugs in the UK and at October 2013, there were 1,395 people on active treatment. A report from the MS Society suggests that a MS patient in Northern Ireland is twice as likely to be taking a disease modifying

therapies (DMT) (68%) than an MS patient in Wales (30%), with access to treatment in Scotland and England only a little higher at 36% and 40%.

This access to MS drugs is supported by significant investment in MS specialist drugs; the current budget for this service is in excess of £10m per year.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) commissions DMT treatments in line with NICE Technical Appraisal guidelines. Currently the range of specialist treatments for MS include: Copaxone, Rebiff 22, Rebiff 44, Betaferon, Avonex, Extavia, Tysabri and Fingolimod. These are all routinely commissioned by the HSCB and therefore are free of charge to patients in Northern Ireland.

Fampyra (fampridine) is currently not under consideration within the NICE Technical Appraisal work programme. In instances where there is no explicit advice from NICE the HSCB takes into consideration guidance issued by other recognised appraisal bodies. In this context it should be noted that the use of this therapy is not recommended for use by the Scottish Medicines Consortium and the NHS England Commissioning Board recently issued its Commissioning Policy in April 2013 advising that this therapy would not be routinely funded for use within its licensed indication.

For treatments not currently commissioned in Northern Ireland, the HSCB has a clear process by which individual patient requests can nonetheless be considered. As part of this process the patient's consultant is expected to put in writing the exceptional clinical circumstances which apply to the case and such requests require to be supported by nominated senior clinicians and managers within the Trust. Where an individual funding request is approved by the HSCB and Public Health Agency, funding is made available to the requesting Trust to prescribe the therapy for that named patient.

If a drug is not routinely commissioned and treatment for an individual patient is not funded through the IFR process, then a patient may opt to pay for that therapy and such arrangements are set out in DHSSPS guidance.

I have set a performance indicator that no patient should wait longer than 13 weeks to commence NICE recommended disease modifying therapies for MS to ensure that eligible patients have timely access to the treatment. My Department collects information from the Trusts to monitor performance; as at 31st October 2013 there were 39 patients waiting to commence treatment, with no patients waiting longer than 13 weeks. Collected data does not indicate the exact treatment regime for those waiting patients.

Multiple Sclerosis: Prescription Drugs

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why patients diagnosed with multiple sclerosis have to wait up to three months before they receive medication such as copaxone.
(AQW 27721/11-15)

Mr Poots: Northern Ireland has the highest uptake rate for specialist multiple sclerosis (MS) drugs in the UK and at October 2013, there were 1,395 people on active treatment. A report from the MS Society suggests that a MS patient in Northern Ireland is twice as likely to be taking a disease modifying therapies (DMT) (68%) than an MS patient in Wales (30%), with access to treatment in Scotland and England only a little higher at 36% and 40%.

This access to MS drugs is supported by significant investment in MS specialist drugs; the current budget for this service is in excess of £10m per year.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) commissions DMT treatments in line with NICE Technical Appraisal guidelines. Currently the range of specialist treatments for MS include: Copaxone, Rebiff 22, Rebiff 44, Betaferon, Avonex, Extavia, Tysabri and Fingolimod. These are all routinely commissioned by the HSCB and therefore are free of charge to patients in Northern Ireland.

Fampyra (fampridine) is currently not under consideration within the NICE Technical Appraisal work programme. In instances where there is no explicit advice from NICE the HSCB takes into consideration guidance issued by other recognised appraisal bodies. In this context it should be noted that the use of this therapy is not recommended for use by the Scottish Medicines Consortium and the NHS England Commissioning Board recently issued its Commissioning Policy in April 2013 advising that this therapy would not be routinely funded for use within its licensed indication.

For treatments not currently commissioned in Northern Ireland, the HSCB has a clear process by which individual patient requests can nonetheless be considered. As part of this process the patient's consultant is expected to put in writing the exceptional clinical circumstances which apply to the case and such requests require to be supported by nominated senior clinicians and managers within the Trust. Where an individual funding request is approved by the HSCB and Public Health Agency, funding is made available to the requesting Trust to prescribe the therapy for that named patient.

If a drug is not routinely commissioned and treatment for an individual patient is not funded through the IFR process, then a patient may opt to pay for that therapy and such arrangements are set out in DHSSPS guidance.

I have set a performance indicator that no patient should wait longer than 13 weeks to commence NICE recommended disease modifying therapies for MS to ensure that eligible patients have timely access to the treatment. My Department collects information from the Trusts to monitor performance; as at 31st October 2013 there were 39 patients waiting to commence treatment, with no patients waiting longer than 13 weeks. Collected data does not indicate the exact treatment regime for those waiting patients.

Multiple Sclerosis: Prescription Drugs

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are diagnosed with multiple sclerosis; and how many are on a waiting list for drugs such as Fampyra and Copaxone.

(AQW 27722/11-15)

Mr Poots: Northern Ireland has the highest uptake rate for specialist multiple sclerosis (MS) drugs in the UK and at October 2013, there were 1,395 people on active treatment. A report from the MS Society suggests that a MS patient in Northern Ireland is twice as likely to be taking a disease modifying therapies (DMT) (68%) than an MS patient in Wales (30%), with access to treatment in Scotland and England only a little higher at 36% and 40%.

This access to MS drugs is supported by significant investment in MS specialist drugs; the current budget for this service is in excess of £10m per year.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) commissions DMT treatments in line with NICE Technical Appraisal guidelines. Currently the range of specialist treatments for MS include: Copaxone, Rebiff 22, Rebiff 44, Betaferon, Avonex, Extavia, Tysabri and Fingolimod. These are all routinely commissioned by the HSCB and therefore are free of charge to patients in Northern Ireland.

Fampyra (fampridine) is currently not under consideration within the NICE Technical Appraisal work programme. In instances where there is no explicit advice from NICE the HSCB takes into consideration guidance issued by other recognised appraisal bodies. In this context it should be noted that the use of this therapy is not recommended for use by the Scottish Medicines Consortium and the NHS England Commissioning Board recently issued its Commissioning Policy in April 2013 advising that this therapy would not be routinely funded for use within its licensed indication.

For treatments not currently commissioned in Northern Ireland, the HSCB has a clear process by which individual patient requests can nonetheless be considered. As part of this process the patient's consultant is expected to put in writing the exceptional clinical circumstances which apply to the case and such requests require to be supported by nominated senior clinicians and managers within the Trust. Where an individual funding request is approved by the HSCB and Public Health Agency, funding is made available to the requesting Trust to prescribe the therapy for that named patient.

If a drug is not routinely commissioned and treatment for an individual patient is not funded through the IFR process, then a patient may opt to pay for that therapy and such arrangements are set out in DHSSPS guidance.

I have set a performance indicator that no patient should wait longer than 13 weeks to commence NICE recommended disease modifying therapies for MS to ensure that eligible patients have timely access to the treatment. My Department collects information from the Trusts to monitor performance; as at 31st October 2013 there were 39 patients waiting to commence treatment, with no patients waiting longer than 13 weeks. Collected data does not indicate the exact treatment regime for those waiting patients.

Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the role of a specialist multiple sclerosis nurse.

(AQW 27726/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service is considered a specialist nursing role. The post holder may be based either in a hospital setting or within primary care.

MS Specialist Nurses are experts in nursing and the specialist requirements of patients with complex health problems.

They promote a "wellness" approach and coach patients to live healthily throughout the disease trajectory.

In 2001 the role of the MS Specialist Nurse was identified as:

"To empower those affected by MS by providing information, support and advice about the condition from time of diagnosis and throughout the disease spectrum. The MS specialist nurse is pivotal in providing a greater understanding of the condition, and by adopting a holistic, collaborative and coordinated approach can help those individuals, where possible, reach their goals of self-management. The role also involves acting as a consultant and educational resource for staff striving towards greater awareness and knowledge of MS in the health and social arena."

(Source: MS Trust, UKMSSNA, RCN. Specialist nursing in MS – the way forward: the key elements for developing MS specialist nurse services in the UK. April 2001.)

The role of the specialist nurse is to provide coordinated care and assessment for patients with multiple sclerosis on their caseload or those referred to the service.

The role also includes provision of support to patients' families and carers as required.

The nurse can provide support to patients with benefit claims and advice regarding community and voluntary organisations in local communities that provide additional services for individuals with MS including support groups.

As part of the clinical role the nurse will be required to attend multi-disciplinary case management meetings and provide expert nursing advice to the team in respect of nursing needs of patients undergoing assessment, treatment and ongoing management and review of their condition.

In addition, the nurse will carry out assessments on patients for new treatments and coordinate newly diagnosed education programmes and advice for patients.

The nurse may provide telephone contact advice for patients which may be part of a locally developed advice line.

The role includes the initiation, support and monitoring of disease-modifying therapy and provision of support to patients who have progressive MS and are not eligible for disease modifying therapy.

The nurse may practice in a nurse-led clinic in a Trust.

As part of the specialist role the nurse will have to incorporate a percentage of time toward clinical audit, education of staff and research within the field of the speciality.

The nurse may also be responsible for the development of local policies and procedures relating to the local service in keeping with current evidence and professional guidance.

The service includes participation of the nurses' role in the provision of an integrated service across the community and ward settings as well as attendance at neurology clinics where appropriate.

The nurse can provide onward referral to all Allied Health Professionals or community nursing teams for specific interventions as well as voluntary agencies and can liaise with GPs as required.

Their role is advisory and educational to the service user, their families and to the wider multi-disciplinary team. Their aim is to empower people who have a diagnosis of MS to self-manage their disease through the provision of correct information & support. They offer an open referral system to anyone who has been diagnosed with MS or Clinically Isolated Syndrome.

The MS Specialist Community Nurse works in partnership with Royal Victoria Hospital MS Nurses who cover the neurologists' outpatient clinics in outlying Trusts, commencing and monitoring patients on the disease modifying drug injections. The Royal Victoria Hospital MS Nurses also provide a regional helpline which patients in the outlying Trusts access.

The MS Nurses operate a number of Nurse Led Clinics where they assess patients for symptom management & ensure good compliance to drug therapies. They offer support to those individuals who have MS & also to their family members.

"People with long term neurological conditions have improved health outcomes and a better quality of life when they are able to access prompt and on-going advice and support from practitioners with dedicated neurological expertise" (The National Service Framework for Long Term Neurological Conditions 2005).

The MS Nurses in BHSCT manage the MS nursing care of patients from BHSCT, SEHSCT, NHSCT, SHSCT and WHSCT requiring specialist treatments such as Tysabri as there are no facilities other than in the BHSCT to receive such treatment locally. Patients travel to RVH for treatment. There is one exception in that some patients (10) in WHSCT receive treatment in WHSCT while others (5) are required to travel to Belfast for treatment.

Summary of the role

- Provide information and support for those people newly diagnosed with MS and those who have been living with MS for many years.
- Provide a telephone advice line service.
- Commence patients onto disease modifying therapy namely Avonex, Betaferon/Extavia, Copaxone and Rebif and manage their ongoing MS nursing care. Have own caseload of patients on treatments.
- Administer intravenous Natalizumab (Tysabri) to patients and manage their ongoing MS nursing care.
- Administer intravenous steroid therapy (Methylprednisolone) to patients and manage their ongoing MS nursing care.
- Administer oral Fingolimod (Gilenya) to patients and manage their ongoing MS nursing care.
- Provide a Nurse Led Clinics.
- Provide a bladder scanning service for patients.
- Carry out specialist blood test sampling.
- Attend case conferences and meetings as required.
- Refer patients to other members of the multidisciplinary team and receive referrals from them.
- Meet inpatients in Regional Neurology Unit and in other centres as required.
- Visit patients for assessment in their own homes.
- Provide educational talks to both professionals and people living with MS, their families and carers.
- Have involvement in the DOH Risk Sharing Scheme.
- Provide information evenings for people newly diagnosed with MS.
- Liaise with other members of the multidisciplinary team and in particular Pharmacy in relation to the management of specialist medicines for patients.
- Liaise with voluntary organisations/charities.
- Attend outpatient clinics in NHSCT – Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital.

Craigavon Area Hospital: Stroke Patients

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to transfer the treatment of stroke patients from Daisyhill Hospital, Newry to Craigavon Area Hospital.

(AQW 27749/11-15)

Mr Poots: The most recent Royal College of Physicians National Stroke Guidelines suggests that the development of a centralised 'hyper-stroke' unit improves outcomes for patients. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust is developing a long-term strategic plan to reorganise inpatient stroke services currently provided across four hospital sites (i.e. Craigavon, South Tyrone, Lurgan and Daisy Hill). The Trust is planning to bring proposals for public consultation to their public Trust Board meeting in the New Year.

However I am advised by the Southern Trust that patients in Newry and Mourne with symptoms of stroke will always be taken to the Daisy Hill Hospital Emergency Department for assessment and treatment and that this will not change.

Buddy Bear School, Dungannon

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what departmental funding is available for the Buddy Bear School, Dungannon.

(AQW 27778/11-15)

Mr Poots: Buddy Bear School will be included in the Public Health Authority's review of Allied Health Professional support for children with statements of special education needs in special schools and mainstream education.

It is my view that in circumstances that there is demonstrable benefits to a child's development it is for the appropriate Department should provide appropriate support.

Blood Donation: Legal Advice

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to make available a copy of the departmental legal advice into the ban on blood donation by gay men who have been sexually active in the previous twelve months.

(AQW 27783/11-15)

Mr Poots: Legal professional privilege is a fundamental principle of justice. The relationship between an individual and his legal adviser has long been recognised as requiring confidentiality, not just in the advice given but also in the exchange of information between client and lawyer, and it attracts legal professional privilege. This enables a free exchange of information and applies equally to instructions and advice. Legal professional privilege ensures that it is a trusting relationship both for the adviser and the advised. These are important principles and qualities which protect the relationship and they apply equally to government as to private individuals.

Legal professional privilege is a fundamental condition on which the administration of justice rests. It is a basic right recognised by common law, by the European Court of Human Rights, by the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and by the Freedom of Information Act.

In all these circumstances it is my view that it is inappropriate to waive legal professional privilege and provide details of the departmental legal advice.

Ovarian Cancer

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made in the prevention of ovarian cancer.

(AQW 27785/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is little evidence to show that ovarian cancer can be prevented however it may be possible to reduce risk by the general precautions that are common to all cancers, for example lifestyle choices such as smoking and healthy diet.

A particular challenge of ovarian cancer is that it is difficult to diagnose. Patients often present with vague, non specific abdominal symptoms that can be common to other illnesses.

However, as with all cancers, early diagnosis leads to a better outcome and there is general agreement among experts that early symptom identification, with a high index of suspicion of ovarian cancer, has the potential to improve prognosis.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) and the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board are currently working closely with GPs and specialists from across the HSC to develop an agreed management pathway for patients suspected of having ovarian cancer. The aim of the pathway is to ensure that all patients presenting with symptoms or signs of ovarian cancer are swiftly investigated and are able to access specialist cancer care rapidly.

The PHA has also started work to develop a cancer awareness campaign. The aim of the campaign is to raise public awareness of the key signs and symptoms of cancer. The campaign will also encourage people with symptoms to seek medical advice promptly. While the detail of the cancer awareness campaign has yet to be finalised, the PHA is committed to improving the outcome for women with ovarian cancer and will prioritise ovarian cancer as an area for inclusion within the upcoming campaign.

Carer Assessments

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 26711/11-15, for his assessment of the lower proportion of carers' assessments completed within the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust; and what action he will take to address this issue.

(AQW 27794/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is assumed that the question is referring to the response to AQW 27114/11-15. The response to AQW 27114/11-15 indicated that, between June 2011 and June 2013, 28% of carers offered a carers' assessment by the South Eastern HSC Trust accepted the offered assessment, which was then carried out by the Trust.

During the same period, the South Eastern HSC Trust offered carers' assessments to the largest number of carers of all of the HSC Trusts. Of all carers declining assessment in the South Eastern HSC Trust over that time, some 61% recorded their reason for refusal being the fact that they already had adequate informal support available to them and did not require additional support to cope with their caring duties.

I am currently considering the introduction of a new target to drive forward progress in the identification of carers and the number of carers being offered an assessment of their needs, in respect of their caring role.

Residential Homes

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how Health and Social Care Trust's plans to run down residential homes over a number of years will be considered under the Health and Social Care Board's Statutory Residential Homes Project.

(AQW 27819/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care (HSC) Board has advised that it is currently monitoring the impact of the policy of non admissions to statutory residential care homes for older people and will keep the situation under review. This is unlikely to be formally revisited however until the conclusion of the first stage of the consultation process.

To that end, the HSC Board will shortly commence a public consultation on criteria to be applied by HSC Trusts at a local level to evaluate statutory residential homes. In light of non-admission policies, it is anticipated that the proposed criteria will consider admission levels to both statutory and independent sector residential homes to enable consideration of overall demand for residential care.

Chestnut Grove Residential Home

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration is being given to the closure of Chestnut Grove residential home.

(AQW 27824/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the new regional approach outlined in Improving Services for Older People – A New Process for Consulting, Engaging and Implementing Change a number of key stages are involved before any proposals for home closures will be made. The first of these is a public consultation which will commence shortly on criteria which will be used by HSC Trusts at a local level to evaluate statutory residential homes.

Following this evaluation exercise Trusts will produce proposals for change which will then be subject to public consultation. It is only at this point, therefore, that it would be possible to say which homes may be proposed for closure. In the interim the Belfast Trust has stated that permanent residents will not be asked to leave either Chestnut Grove or Pine Lodge while the homes continue to meet their needs.

Chestnut Grove Residential Home

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what statutory residential homes the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is (i) considering for closure; and (ii) running down over a period of years.

(AQW 27827/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the new regional approach outlined in Improving Services for Older People – A New Process for Consulting, Engaging and Implementing Change a number of key stages are involved before any proposals for home closures will be made. The first of these is a public consultation which will commence shortly on criteria which will be used by HSC Trusts at a local level to evaluate statutory residential homes.

Following this evaluation exercise Trusts will produce proposals for change which will then be subject to public consultation. It is only at this point, therefore, that it would be possible to say which homes may be proposed for closure. In the interim the Belfast Trust has stated that permanent residents will not be asked to leave either Chestnut Grove or Pine Lodge while the homes continue to meet their needs.

Brooklands Care Home, Antrim

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of complaints his Department has received in relation to Brooklands care home, Antrim.

(AQW 27839/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of complaints received by the Department relating to Brooklands care home is not collected, as complaints regarding health & social care services will be referred to the relevant HSC Trust in which the facility is located.

In response to this question the Northern HSC Trust indicated that the information could only be provided at disproportionate cost, as information held on complaints may not include the name of the facility to which the complaint relates.

Vulnerable People: Accommodation

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what protections are in place to protect vulnerable people who are seeking alternative accommodation when a private nursing home can no longer provide care for a client.

(AQW 27840/11-15)

Mr Poots: Circular ECCU 1/2010 'Care Management, Provision of Services and Charging Guidance' states that care planning is a fundamental element of the care management process which provides an opportunity for the service user, family and carer to consider all options for meeting health and social care needs.

In the management, implementation & monitoring of a care plan Case Managers should undertake a number of key tasks to ensure care is being delivered in the most appropriate setting which meets all of the service user's assessed care needs. As the needs and circumstances of service users change, monitoring of the care plan will be an ongoing task to ensure service users' needs are continually met. It is recognized, however, that, in circumstances where a service user's needs are changing rapidly, adjustments may have to be made to the care package.

Medical Services: Non-UK Citizens

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 27491/11-15, how many non-UK citizens have been provided with medical services in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27846/11-15)

Mr Poots: Available data indicates the number of non-UK citizens that have been provided with medical services is as follows:

- 2008/09 6136
- 2009/10 6658
- 2010/11 7013
- 2011/12 6980
- 2012/13 6501

Lisburn Health Centre

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much rent or lease charges are being paid for the use of Lisburn Health Centre; and to whom is it being paid.

(AQW 27851/11-15)

Mr Poots: For the last financial year the total annual rental income in respect of Lisburn Health Centre was £118,190. This was paid to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust which owns the premises.

South West Acute Hospital: Medical Staff

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) junior doctors; and (ii) junior doctor vacancies in the South West Acute Hospital in each medical area; and (iii) locum doctors currently filling those positions.

(AQW 27862/11-15)

Mr Poots: The following table provides the information requested:

Specialty	Total Posts	Posts Vacant	Locum Doctors*
Medicine (St 1/2 level)	13	0	0
Surgery (St 1/2 level)	7	4	4
Paediatrics (St 1/2 level)	6	3	3
Paediatrics (GP clinics post)	1	0	0

Specialty	Total Posts	Posts Vacant	Locum Doctors*
Obstetrics & Gynaecology (St 1 level)	5	1	0
Obstetrics & Gynaecology (St 2+ level)	5	5	4
A&E (GP Trainee)	1	0	0
Totals	38	13	11

* Locum doctors include agency Doctors and Doctors on the HSC Trust payroll.

Foster Parents

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of foster parents that are (i) 29 years old and under; (ii) 39 years old and under; (iii) 49 years old and under; and (iv) 50 years old and over.

(AQW 27864/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not centrally available and has therefore been requested from the five HSC Trusts. Due to differences in data collection and data storage between the Trusts, only the Belfast, South Eastern and Western HSC Trusts have been able to provide this information. The Northern and Southern HSC Trusts were unable to provide an answer as it would require a manual trawl through hundreds of records.

Table 1 below details the number of foster parents by age group in the Belfast, South Eastern and Western Trusts.

Table 1: Foster parents by age at 6th November 2013, 2, 3

Age Range	Aged 29 or Under	Aged 30 - 39	Aged 40 - 49	Aged 50 or Older
No. of Foster Carers	50	196	366	597

1. Figures do not include the Northern & Southern Health and Social Care Trusts
2. Total includes Kinship (Panel & Fieldwork Approved), Panel Approved Stranger & Dedicated Foster Carers but does not include children living with Former Foster Carers
3. In cases where there are two foster parents age is related to only one of the foster parents

Note: These figures have not been validated by DHSSPS

Foster Parents

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of emergency foster parents in each Health and Social Care Trust area; and (ii) the consideration that has been given to increasing this number.

(AQW 27865/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The Table below details the number of foster carers by Trust area who provide time limited placements at short notice to children who need somewhere safe to stay. Foster Carers who provide this 'emergency' service may be from generic teams or from specialists teams who are approved as respite, short term and long term carers. They can be contacted at any time including weekends.

Trust	'Emergency' Foster Carers
Belfast	no specific category of "emergency" foster carers - where an emergency arises foster carers are trawled from existing stock of 149 respite and short term carers
South Eastern	15
Northern	12
Southern	13
Western	10

Source – Health & Social Care Trusts

- (ii) Recruitment of foster carers is a continual activity. Overall there are currently around 2,216 foster carers in Northern Ireland. The Regional Adoption and Fostering Service supports local HSC Trusts in the recruitment, assessment and training of foster carers and maintains an overview of the overall fostering position and continues with particular recruitment drives as required. Other established initiatives include: a free out-of-hours Regional Helpline; a HSC website www.adoptionandfostering.hscni.net to provide information about training events and other developments in fostering to potential new foster carers as well as existing carers and staff; and television advertising which is broadcast at intervals throughout the year. In addition Fostering Network NI, on behalf of the HSC Board promotes

foster care both locally and nationally by providing advice, support, information and training to support foster carers. The Department will also consider the findings of a recent review of Statutory Fostering Services which aims to build a profile of fostering services in NI, establish a baseline assessment of the fostering arrangements currently in place and identify gaps in the service.

Protect Life

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give that voluntary and community sector organisations which are providing services under Protect Life will not be disadvantaged by the tendering process planned for 2014/15.

(AQW 27867/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are 70 contracts for Protect Life and mental health promotion services which are scheduled for tendering by the Public Health Agency during 2014-15 under a phased procurement plan. Voluntary and community sector organisations that currently provide services under these contracts will have equal opportunities along with other potential providers to tender for services as part of this procurement process.

To help organisations to prepare for this, the Public Health Agency will hold generic awareness sessions across the region over the next six weeks. These sessions will be open to all potential providers and will be conducted within the parameters of the existing Public Contracts Regulations. The aim is to help organisations to understand the requirements of the procurement process and to enable them to prepare for participating in this.

Protect Life

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of community response plans to suicide across (i) Belfast; and (ii) Northern Ireland; and to outline their importance to the delivery of the Protect Life Strategy.

(AQW 27868/11-15)

Mr Poots: Suicide can trigger suicidal behaviour in others within an associated group or area. In the midst of a number suicides in any given community there is often confusion and a lack of clarity about what can be done to prevent further deaths. The development and implementation of emergency community response plans are, therefore, important elements in the delivery of the "Protect Life" Strategy which places emphasis on the early surveillance to identify emerging suicide "clusters".

The emergency cross-agency community response plans have been developed in each Trust area with the aim of quickly putting in place multi-agency actions to prevent further deaths occurring where a potential suicide cluster has been indicated.

The Plans have been implemented at different times in all Trust areas including Belfast. Early indications confirm the value and effectiveness of this approach in preventing further suicides and in providing appropriate early support to bereaved families.

Carrier Bags

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in the context of the single use plastic bag levy, for his assessment of the studies by Professor Hugh Pennington, Emeritus Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Aberdeen, who has been investigating the use of hessian bags-for-life, and has concluded that they pose a threat to public health.

(AQW 27871/11-15)

Mr Poots: This is a matter for the Food Standards Agency, which is a non-Ministerial Government Department. The Food Standards Agency has advised as follows:

Cross-contamination by bacteria that can cause foodborne illness through the improper use of reusable carrier bags could present a potential health hazard. However, there is very limited scientific evidence regarding how often such contamination occurs, by what means and its significance in public health terms. The Food Standards Agency has issued guidance to consumers regarding the safe use of reusable bags and in order to prevent bacteria being spread through carrier bags consumers are advised to;

- Pack raw meat and fish separately from food that is ready to eat
- Keep a bag and use it for raw meat and fish only
- Thoroughly wash bags if there has been any spillage of raw meat juices, where it is practical to do so. If that is not possible the bag should be discarded in order to prevent the possibility of cross contamination of food transported in it in the future.

Blood Donation: Legal Costs

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of his challenge of the Information Commissioner's ruling that legal advice on the ban of blood from gay men should be publically available.

(AQW 27879/11-15)

Mr Poots: The legal costs to date in this case, in relation to the legal challenge by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety, against the Information Commissioner, amount to £7,195.83

South West Acute Hospital: Medical School

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has been given to the establishment of a medical school at the South West Acute Hospital.

(AQW 27899/11-15)

Mr Poots: Whilst no consideration has been given to the establishment of a medical school at the South West Acute Hospital, the Hospital has been designated a Teaching Hospital, affiliated to the School of Medicine, Queen's University, Belfast in recognition of its importance in the acute hospitals sector in providing high quality clinical teaching and placements to medical students.

The Department does not believe that there is the need for a second medical school in Northern Ireland. Considerable investment was made in the QUB Medical School in 2005 to ensure its capability to produce the necessary numbers of medical graduates in line with service needs. The medical school at QUB is part of a UK wide medical education system.

South West Acute Hospital: Medical Staff

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken to attract and retain medical staff to the South West Acute Hospital.

(AQW 27900/11-15)

Mr Poots: In order to attract medical staff to the South West Acute Hospital the Western Trust advertises vacancies in the British Medical Journal, Irish Medical Times and the Belfast Telegraph. For those medical specialities where there is a UK shortage of applicants, further high quality advertising is undertaken to promote the benefits of working in the region.

Every opportunity is taken both in the recruitment process and after appointment to ensure that Doctors are fully engaged in the activities of the hospital, including access to continuing professional development and comprehensive medical education resources including extensive library services. Medical staff can also access onsite purpose built residential accommodation with access to an onsite crèche facility.

Western Health and Social Care Trust: Budgetary Position

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action is being taken to improve the budgetary position of the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 27901/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Western Trust, like other Trusts, is continuing to carry out detailed analysis of its financial position for 2013/14, taking account of emerging cost pressures and implementing, where possible, options to reduce expenditure which do not impact on front line services.

My Department and the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has supported the Trust in this process and there has been focused and purposeful engagement to progress plans which will enable the Trust to achieve statutory financial breakeven in 2013/14, while minimising potential impact on capacity and performance. Although this involves of necessity, identifying and implementing savings opportunities wherever possible, I am committed to ensuring that the needs of service users and patients are placed at the centre of this process.

Citizens Advice: Funding

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount of funding provided by each Health and Social Care Trust, and the Public Health Agency, to each Citizens Advice Bureau over the last five years.

(AQW 27903/11-15)

Mr Poots: The amount of funding provided by each Health and Social Care Trust, and the Public Health Agency, to each Citizens Advice Bureau over the last five years is set out in the table below:

	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £	2009/10 £	2008/09 £
BHSCT					
Duncairn Gardens CAB	99,086	83,332	86,812	87,120	52,343
Andersonstown Road CAB	0	0	31,703	35,057	34,244
BHSCT Total	99,086	83,332	118,515	122,177	86,587
SHSCT					
Dungannon CAB	19,686	19,686	19,738	10,000	13,000

	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £	2009/10 £	2008/09 £
Armagh CAB	19,686	19,686	19,738	10,000	13,000
Craigavon CAB	19,686	19,686	19,738	30,012	35,012
Banbridge CAB	19,686	19,686	19,738	19,484	19,225
N&M CAB	19,686	19,686	19,738	10,000	0
SHSCT Total	98,430	98,430	98,690	79,496	80,237
SEHSCT					
North Down	0	0	0	0	59,101
Downpatrick	18	59,382	29,700	47,483	8,126
Ards	30,386	30,386	30,386	30,712	30,920
Bangor	74,787	102,651	92,224	93,426	41,776
Lisburn	8,582	8,582	9,396	16,549	0
SEHSCT Total	113,773	201,001	161,706	188,170	139,923
PHA (established 01/04/2009)					
Antrim CAB	55,890	36,299	29,633	28,869	
Coleraine CAB	52,249	32,658	25,992	25,992	
Craigavon CAB	450	10,000	3,000	0	
Derry CAB	9,957	0	0	0	
Dungannon CAB	75,267	39,101	27,435	27,435	
Fermanagh CAB	10,000	0	0	0	
Newry/Mourne CAB	20,525	6,449	0	0	
Newtownabbey CAB	56,173	36,582	29,916	29,044	
PHA Total	280,511	161,089	115,976	111,340	
Total	591,800	543,852	494,887	501,183	306,747

The Western, Northern and NI Ambulance Service HSC Trusts did not provide funding to a Citizen's Advice Bureau over this period

Co-codamol Addiction

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many people are addicted to co-codamol; (ii) what action his Department is taking to (a) reduce the number of people in chronic pain becoming addicted to co-codamol; and (b) help people in chronic pain deal with an addiction to co-codamol.

(AQW 27904/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) There is no register or source of information for those addicted to co-codamol in Northern Ireland. However, during 2012/13, 136 people presented for treatment for the first time (or the first time in 6 months) for addiction to codeine and paracetamol. Of this number, 80 people stated that it was their main drug of misuse (Source: Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Misuse Database: 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013).

In addition, our Drug Prevalence Survey in 2010/11 showed that 3.6% of those surveyed stated that they had taken other opiates (including co-codamol) within the last month – though this includes legitimate /prescribed use of these substances. (Source: Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: 2010/11 Drug Prevalence Survey).

- (ii) **(a)** The Health and Social Care Board's (HSCB) Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team is currently undertaking a range of initiatives in relation to prescribing, including long-term co-codamol used to treat chronic pain.

In addition, the HSCB is currently in the process of finalising a support tool for opioid prescribing in chronic pain which highlights that there is no place for immediate release strong opioids in maintenance treatment of chronic pain and that if pain is not resolved within 6 weeks, a modified release product is recommended as there is less potential for abuse. Pain toolkits have also been ordered for each GP practice and will be sent out soon – to help patients to cope with pain, provide non-drug advice etc.

On an on-going basis, GPs advise patients of potential for addiction to such medications and are encouraged to prescribe acutely rather than on repeat and to discuss a ladder of suitable analgesia for patients depending on pain. Referral for physiotherapy, counselling and pain management is possible.

Under the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs, my Department has developed an action plan to prevent and address prescription drug misuse in Northern Ireland. This covers reducing supply, decreasing demand, and providing treatment and support for those who need additional help. The plan is currently being considered by the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board who will be responsible for its delivery.

- (b) If anyone has concerns that they are becoming addicted to any substance, they should speak to their GP in the first instance. A range of treatment and support services is available for those in Northern Ireland who wish to seek help with substance misuse (including illicit drugs, alcohol, or prescription and over-the-counter drugs). The services available in each Health & Social Care Trust area can be accessed online at:
<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/drug-and-alcohol-directories-services>.

Antrim Area Hospital: Short Stay Ward

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the status and number of beds in the short stay ward in Antrim Area Hospital.

(AQW 27911/11-15)

Mr Poots: The short stay ward in Antrim Area Hospital is a 10-bed unit co-located within the emergency department. Patients who are identified as requiring a length of stay in hospital of less than 24 hours would be admitted to this unit.

Antrim Area Hospital: Accident and Emergency

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what use is being made of the former Accident and Emergency area in Antrim Area Hospital.

(AQW 27912/11-15)

Mr Poots: The former emergency department in Antrim Area Hospital now accommodates the Acute Assessment Unit. This unit provides direct access for GPs to the on-site specialty teams in Antrim Hospital, eliminating the need for a patient to be referred to the emergency department. The unit also provides rapid access to the medical outpatient clinic to facilitate urgent outpatient reviews by a doctor.

There is also a discharge lounge located in the old emergency department. This is an area staffed by registered nurses where patients awaiting relatives or transport home following discharge can wait to be picked up.

Antrim Area Hospital: Inpatient Beds

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many inpatient beds were available in Antrim Area Hospital as of (i) 31 July 2013; and (ii) 28 October 2013.

(AQW 27913/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern HSC Trust has advised that there were (i) 401 inpatient beds available as of 31 July 2013; and (ii) 409 inpatient beds available as of 28 October 2013 at Antrim Area Hospital.

Antrim Area Hospital: Accident and Emergency

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many ambulances were diverted from Antrim Area Hospital's Accident and Emergency in the last twelve months.

(AQW 27914/11-15)

Mr Poots: Between 1st November 2012 and 31st October 2013, 52 ambulances were diverted from Antrim Area emergency care department. The table below details the number diverted from Antrim Area to other emergency care departments.

Emergency Care Department Diverted to from Antrim Area	Number
Altnagelvin	1
Causeway	29
Mater	15
Royal Victoria	7
Number	52

Source: NIAS

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Intermediate Care Beds

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a cost comparison was made by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in tendering the 15 intermediate care beds to Brooklands Health Centre; and what the cost would have been to (i) provide these beds in the Mid Ulster Hospital; and (ii) increase provisions at Dalriada.

(AQW 27915/11-15)

Mr Poots: I understand that the position was as follows:-

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHST), in discussion and agreement with the HSC Board, sought to increase the number of Intermediate Care beds following the unprecedented peak in unscheduled admissions; the very significant rise in the number of complex discharges; and the impact on Accident & Emergency services in January 2012. These additional beds were secured in order to provide additional capacity to address these significant pressures and ensure that patients, who were ready to leave hospital, could be safely discharged and avoid them remaining in an acute hospital setting.

Neither the Mid Ulster Hospital nor Dalriada Hospital, at that time, had the capacity to increase their bed numbers in the timeframe needed; therefore the option of securing 15 extra beds and the associated services in either of these hospitals was not costed.

The tender to seek additional capacity to support discharges from the acute hospital was open to all appropriately registered facilities in the Trust area (Nursing and Dual Registered Homes), able to meet the patients nursing and care needs.

This arrangement was put in place to deal with the pressures on acute services and to meet the needs of patients

Ballymena Health and Care Centre

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the timeline for the building and opening of the Ballymena Health and Care Centre.

(AQW 27936/11-15)

Mr Poots: The notice of contract award has been issued and subject to the normal legal requirements being satisfied it is intended to commence construction within the next few weeks.

The construction period for the building is 15 months and following a period of operational commissioning it is anticipated the building will be open in April 2015.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the cost involved in the relocation of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Senior Management Team from The Cottage in Ballymena to the Antrim Area Hospital site.

(AQW 27937/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Trust is currently developing a business which will identify the costs associated with its plans to relocate staff from The Cottage in Ballymena to the Antrim Hospital site. Until this business case has been completed, final costs cannot be determined.

Civil Service Posts: DHSSPS

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Civil Service posts existed in his Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 27955/11-15)

Mr Poots: The tables below show the number of funded posts in my Department in January 2012 and January 2013, including analogous (i.e. professional and specialist) grades.

January 2012

Council Area	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	Total
Belfast	17	91	148	144	60	74	60	48	642
Derry			1	1					2
Total	17	91	149	145	60	74	60	48	644

January 2013

Council Area	G6	G7	DP	SO	EO1	EO2	AO	AA	Total
Belfast	15	96	150	145	64	69	65	45	649
Derry			1	1					2
Total	15	96	151	146	64	69	65	45	651

Fire and Rescue Service: Fitness Test

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail how many fire fighters from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service who failed a fitness test in the last five years (i) were redeployed within the Service; and (iii) retired from the Service.

(AQW 27962/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the last 5 years, no NIFRS personnel have been retired or redeployed due to failing a fitness test.

Fire and Rescue Service: Fitness Test

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many fire fighters aged between (i) 50-55; (ii) 56-57; and (iii) 58-60 failed a fitness test, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 27963/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below provides a breakdown of the numbers of NIFRS personnel who have failed their fitness tests within the specified age groups in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (to date).

Year	Age			Total
	50-55	56-57	58-60	
2011	1	2	0	3
2012	1	0	0	1
2013 (to date)	1	0	0	1
Total	3	2	0	5

NIFRS did not conduct fitness testing prior to 2011.

Fire and Rescue Service: Firefighters' Ages

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many fire fighters between the ages of (i) 50-55; (ii) 56-57; (iii) 58-60; and over the age over 60 are employed by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

(AQW 27964/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below details the numbers of Firefighters between the ages of 50-55; 56-57; 58-60; and over the age of 60 employed by NIFRS:

	50-55	56-57	58-60	60+	Total
Wholetime	105	2	4	0	111
Retained Duty System & Volunteers	169	24	29	13	235
Total	274	26	33	13	346

Blind or Partially Sighted People

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people who have been newly certified as blind or partially sighted between 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013; and of these, how many were over 65.

(AQW 27977/11-15)

Mr Poots: Between 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, 240 people were newly certified as blind and 143 people were newly certified as partially sighted in Northern Ireland. Of these, 151 blind people and 72 partially sighted people were aged over 65.

This information is broken down by HSC Trust in the table below:

Number of People Newly Certified as Blind or Partially Sighted between 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, by Age Band and HSC Trust 1

HSC Trust	Number of people newly certified as blind		Number of people newly certified as partially sighted	
	Under 65	65 and over	Under 65	65 and over
Belfast	13	26	7	11
Northern	22	41	19	15
South Eastern	8	20	8	16
Southern	16	37	17	14
Western	30	27	20	16
Northern Ireland	89	151	71	72

1 The information recorded by HSC Trusts is not a register of those blind or partially sighted, as people may refuse to have their names added to relevant HSC Trust records.

Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a)

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) when the Special Conditions of Contract SS17a were last reviewed; and (ii) when they are next due to be reviewed.

(AQW 27987/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is no fixed period for review of Special Conditions of Contract SS17a. Special conditions of contract are constructed specifically for each individual procurement and, whilst containing a core of frequently used terms and conditions, will vary from procurement to procurement. The date the template was last formally updated was 20 May 2013.

Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a)

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 27266/11-15, to detail how the Business Services Organisation guarantees equality for suppliers under its Special Conditions of Contract SS17a as since October 2012 some contracts have allowed suppliers to request a price increase six months after the award of a contract, whereas others have imposed a twenty-four month period.

(AQW 27988/11-15)

Mr Poots: When conducting a procurement process, the Business Services Organisation has an obligation to ensure equal treatment of bidders during that process. As the Special Conditions of Contract SS17a are constructed specifically to suit each procurement, there may be a variation of terms between different contracts conducted under separate procurement processes.

Companies bidding for contracts in procurement processes have clear visibility of the special conditions of contract and confirm their acceptance of those terms as part of the bidding process. It is up to individual bidders to consider the implications of those terms for them in seeking to win the contract being tendered. Those special conditions of contract will not vary from bidder to bidder in individual procurement processes but may vary between different procurement processes.

Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a)

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 27265/11-15 to detail (i) the rate of increase in the Retail Prices Index over the last three years; and (ii) why the Business Services Organisation, within its Special Conditions of Contract SS17a, includes the term "Requests for a price increase must not exceed the lower of 2% or the average rate of RPI".

(AQW 27989/11-15)

Mr Poots: According to the Office For National Statistics, the most recent statistics published as Retail Price Index are found at the following link <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/cpi/consumer-price-indices/september-2013/consumer-price-inflation-reference-tables.xls> . For the purposes of this reply, the figures have been taken from Table 37 RPI: All items: 12 months % change 1948-2013, from which the figures for each of the years 2010 – 2012 are as follows:

2010	4.6%
2011	5.2%
2012	3.2%

Without being provided with the details of the specific contract from which this clause has been taken, I can advise only that in general, the BSO includes terms of this nature to control the level of price increase that may be sought during the contract. Additionally, in some procurements, BSO may seek to establish the pricing at the outset of the contract, in order to secure the best possible value for money over the life of the contract.

Residential Homes

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of Fionnuala McAndrew's statement on reviewing the non-admissions policy for statutory residential homes, to detail (i) the plans and structures that are in place to review this policy; and (ii) when the decision will be taken on a non-admissions policy.

(AQW 27991/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSC Board has indicated that the admissions policies adopted by Trusts will be kept under review. The situation is being monitored by the regional team responsible for reviewing the future of statutory residential care.

A document will issue from the HSC Board, in the near future, on the current and future accommodation needs of older people. This will be a consultation document to ensure that individuals, families and the wider public have their say. It is unlikely that admissions policies will be formally reviewed prior to the conclusion of this first stage of the consultation process.

Royal Victoria Hospital: Genito-urinary Medicine Clinic

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of running the Belfast Genito-urinary Medicine clinic.

(AQW 27996/11-15)

Mr Poots: The cost of the Royal Victoria Hospital's Genito-Urinary Medicine Outpatient specialty in 2011/12 was £6,819,756.

Ulster Hospital: Allergy Treatment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the future plans for allergy treatment at the Ulster Hospital; and whether a new consultant will be appointed to specialise in this area.

(AQW 28008/11-15)

Mr Poots: A new consultant paediatrician with specialist interest in asthma/allergy commenced working within the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust on 1 September 2013, and the vacant specialist nursing post has also been filled. The Trust has submitted a business case to the Health and Social Care Board for a second nurse specialist and additional dietician resource. With regards the Trust's future plans for the service, the new consultant is leading a reform programme as part of the development of its Paediatric Strategy, which will include re-evaluation of clinics to ensure maximum capacity and the need for dietician/psychology input into this service.

Medical Checks

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the reasons for the costs of a medical check varying between health centres in East Antrim.

(AQW 28034/11-15)

Mr Poots: GPs cannot charge for medical checks that are carried out as part of their health service work. However, they are entitled to charge for medical checks if they are carried out for purposes such as insurance cover, HGV licences or for employment requirements because those checks are not carried out as part of health service related work.

There is no set fee for carrying out such checks; the individual GP is entitled to decide what fee, if any, to charge for carrying out those medical checks.

Ulster Hospital: Mental Health Services

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the centralisation of acute mental health services at the Ulster Hospital site.

(AQW 28037/11-15)

Mr Poots: Following the South Eastern Trust's public consultation on the rationalisation of its acute mental health services, the Trust is finalising a business case for consideration and appraisal, seeking approval to proceed with this project.

Once the business case is approved, funding will be considered as part of the budgetary prioritisation process.

Ulster Hospital: Mental Health Services

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had to date with the Minister for Regional Development on improving the transport network for people travelling from South Down to the proposed new mental health hospital at the Ulster Hospital site.

(AQW 28038/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have had no discussions to date with the Minister for Regional Development as regards improving the transport network for people travelling from South Down to the proposed new mental health unit at the Ulster Hospital Site. The South Eastern Trust is committed to helping patients travelling to and from the Ulster Hospital and will examine any transport issues which may arise when the business case for this proposed unit has been approved.

Diabetes: Prevalence

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) children; and (ii) adults with type 1 diabetes in each Health and Social Care Trust area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 28039/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not available in the form requested.

Under the Quality & Outcomes Framework (QOF) of the General Medical Services contract, the total number of GP-registered patients aged 17 and over with diabetes mellitus is recorded. Although the practice must record whether the patient has type 1 or type 2 diabetes, this level of detail is not collected centrally, therefore the register size cannot be disaggregated by type of diabetes. As the care of children with diabetes mellitus is generally under the control of specialists and not general practitioners, the QOF register excludes them, therefore information on the number of children with diabetes is not available.

The number of patients, aged 17 and over, on the QOF diabetes register for the last five years is shown in table 1 below. Both patients with type 1 diabetes and patients with type 2 diabetes are included in the figures. The number of patients on the diabetes register in each Health and Social Care Trust area has been derived based on the location of the practice. It should be noted that patients may not reside in the same HSC Trust in which their practice is located.

Table 1: The number of patients, aged 17 and over, on the QOF diabetes register by HSC Trust, 2009 – 2013.

HSC Trust	Number of patient on the QOF diabetes register (aged 17+)				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Belfast	15,073	15,935	16,549	17,216	17,803
South Eastern	11,665	12,134	12,886	13,058	13,646
Northern	15,954	17,008	18,034	18,906	19,828
Southern	11,574	12,336	13,043	13,995	14,627
Western	10,800	11,567	12,181	12,662	13,168
Northern Ireland	65,066	68,980	72,693	75,837	79,072

Register sizes are taken from the Payment Calculation and Analysis System (PCAS) as at National Prevalence Day, 31 March each year.

Care should be taken when looking at trends in prevalence over time, as year-on-year changes in the size of QOF registers can be influenced by various factors including: changes in prevalence of the condition within the population; demographic changes, such as an ageing population; and improvements in case finding by practices.

Diabetes: Prevalence

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of children under the age of 11 who currently use an insulin pump; and how this figure compares to each of the previous five years.

(AQW 28040/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested was not held centrally and was therefore requested from each of the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts. Their responses have been collated in the table below.

Table 1: Number of children aged 11 or under who were using an insulin pump at 1st November (2009 – 2013)¹

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. of children	13	21	50	72	92

Source: HSC Trusts

¹ Please note that the Northern HSCT supplied the number of new insulin pump starts for this age group in each year.

Note: These figures have not been validated by DHSSPS

Diabetes: Prevalence

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the trend in the prevalence of type 1 diabetes in adults and children over the last decade, including the reasons for the trend.

(AQW 28041/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware of the increasing prevalence of diabetes in Northern Ireland although it is currently not possible to breakdown prevalence data by Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes cannot be prevented because the triggers for its onset are currently unclear, however over the past decade people living with Type 1 diabetes have benefited from improved services which have helped reduce complications and improve outcomes - services include early intervention, close monitoring of diabetic control, retinopathy screening, structured patient education and the innovative use of new technology. I am committed to continually improving services for people living with Type 1 diabetes in Northern Ireland.

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of women diagnosed with PreMenstrual Dysphoric Disorder in each of the last five years.

(AQW 28050/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of women diagnosed with PreMenstrual Dysphoric Disorder is not available.

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what treatment options are available to women diagnosed with PreMenstrual Dysphoric Disorder.

(AQW 28051/11-15)

Mr Poots: Successful treatment for PreMenstrual Dysphoric Disorder begins with accurate and early diagnosis of the condition. This may take place in primary care or gynaecological services in secondary care.

Once diagnosed and depending on the severity of the symptoms e.g. severe depression, the recommended treatments are generally medication based. It may be the symptoms require referral to mental health services for on-going management and treatment. If this is required, patients are referred by their GP or from gynaecological services in the normal way and are seen in line with the general mental health access criteria.

Foster Carers

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of current registered foster carers; and the number registered in each of the previous five years.

(AQW 28057/11-15)

Mr Poots: Table 1 below details the number of foster carers registered with Health and Social Care Trusts in each of the last five years.

Table 1: Registered Foster Carers (2009 – 2013) 1, 2, 3

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of Registered Foster Carers	1,714	1,727	1,729	1,748	1,825

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Note: These figures have not been validated by DHSSPS

1. Figures for 2009 taken at 31 August; Figures for 2010 at 30 April; Figures for 2011 – 2013 at 31 March
2. These figures include Kinship Foster Carers (Field work Approved & Panel Approved), Panel Approved Stranger Foster Carers and Dedicated Foster Carers
3. These figures do not include Former Foster Carers, Prospective Adopters dually approved as Foster Carers and Independent Foster Carers

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the services provided by his Department for adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder in County Fermanagh; and how this compares with other areas.

(AQW 28077/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available in the format requested.

The services required by an adult with ADHD will depend on the assessed needs of the individual. Some needs will be general in nature and will be addressed in primary or community settings. Access to more specialist services will be based on the assessed clinical needs of the individual.

Home Help

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of people currently in receipt of home help; (ii) the number in receipt in (a) 1993; and (b) 2003; (iii) the number of hours spent providing home help at present; (iv) the number of hours spent providing home help in (a) 1993; and (b) 2003; (v) the number of administration staff

supporting home help staff at present; and (vi) the number of administration staff supporting the delivery of home help in (a) 1993; and (b) 2003.

(AQW 28078/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of people in receipt of home help:

- (i) is not currently collected centrally;
- (ii) (a) at 31 March 1993 was 28,540;
(b) at 31 March 2003 was 26,339.
- (iii)&(iv) The number of hours spent providing home help is/ was not collected centrally.

The number of administration staff supporting:

- (v) home help staff at present is not centrally available from HSC Trusts and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- (vi) the delivery of home help in (a) 1993; and (b) 2003 is not available.

Domiciliary Care Workers: Training

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 27022/11-15, whether these training requirements apply to agency staff who are employed on an ad hoc basis.

(AQW 28105/11-15)

Mr Poots: The training requirements for domiciliary care staff set out in the Minimum Care Standards for Domiciliary Care Agencies, as described in AQW 27022/11-15, apply to all agency staff regardless of the basis on which they are employed.

Hospitals: Coffee and Confectionery Outlets

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the proposals to close the coffee and confectionery outlet at the Downe Hospital; and whether the respective Health and Social Care Trusts will close similar facilities at Lagan Valley or the Ulster Hospital.

(AQW 28122/11-15)

Mr Poots: I can confirm that the coffee and confectionery outlet at the Downe Hospital will close from 30 November 2013. However, the staff restaurant, which is within close proximity, will be able to offer many of the products currently on sale within the coffee/confectionery outlet.

Lagan Valley Hospital does not have a coffee bar and its shop is operated by the Guild of Ex-Patients (and is therefore not funded by the South Eastern Trust). In terms of the Ulster Hospital, the South Eastern Trust is planning to close the coffee bar in the Maternity Unit.

Fire Sprinklers

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to make fire sprinklers compulsory in new buildings.

(AQW 28123/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are no plans in place at this time to introduce legislation to make fire sprinklers compulsory in all new buildings.

Belfast City Hospital: 5N Medical Assessment Unit

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether a decision has been taken to close the 5N Medical Assessment Unit at Belfast City Hospital; if so (ii) to outline the rationale for this decision; and (iii) to detail the level of consultation with local GPs and other relevant stakeholders.

(AQW 28124/11-15)

Mr Poots: The GP direct assessment and admission unit in Belfast City Hospital will not be closing; however, it will operate out of ward 6N rather than 5N. From the beginning of December 2013, the service is being enhanced, with access to direct GP assessment and admission to the RVH site also.

Dentistry Appointments: Altnagelvin Area Hospital

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures he will implement to reduce the waiting list for dentistry appointments at Altnagelvin Hospital.

(AQW 28146/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised by the Western Health and Social Care Trust that the current demand for the dental service exceeds the capacity within the Trust to provide this service. Where demand exceeds capacity, the Health and Social Care Board provide additional funding to ensure patients are treated within the agreed time scale set out in the Commissioning Plan Direction 2013; therefore the Trust has transferred patients to the independent sector for treatment.

Dentistry Appointments: Hospitals

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current waiting time for dentistry appointments in each hospital.

(AQW 28148/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information is not available in the format requested. The Department collects the current waiting time for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment and the current waiting time for inpatient treatment, by specialty. For the purpose of this question, waiting times for dentistry appointments are taken to include the following specialties: Oral Surgery, Restorative Dentistry, Paediatric Dentistry, Orthodontics, Dental/Oral Medicine Specialties and Special Care Dentistry. Hospitals may provide dentistry services in one or more of these specialties. The figures detailed in the tables overleaf are presented for the total waiting times of these specialties combined.

Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in a dentistry specialty, at 11th November 2013¹

Hospital/HSC Trust	Patients Waiting for a first Consultant-led Outpatient Appointment, by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18	
RBHSC	93	36	29	21	0	0	179
School of Dentistry	875	191	35	14	0	0	1,115
Belfast HSCT	968	227	64	35	0	0	1,294
Northern HSCT2	280	112	110	39	6	3	550
Ulster	374	108	89	46	6	0	623
South Eastern HSCT	374	108	89	46	6	0	623
Craigavon Area3	187	64	26	9	12	9	307
Daisy Hill	131	36	26	4	0	0	197
Southern HSCT	318	100	52	13	12	9	504
Altnagelvin	328	92	68	94	57	258	897
South West Acute	102	47	27	20	23	42	261
Western HSCT	430	139	95	114	80	300	1,158

Source: HSC Trusts

Number of patients waiting for inpatient admission with a consultant in a dentistry specialty, at 11th November 2013¹

Hospital/ HSC Trust	Patients Waiting for Inpatient Admission, by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-12	>12-15	>15-18	>18	
RBHSC	39	20	10	10	1	10	90
School of Dentistry	63	34	10	0	0	0	107
Belfast HSCT	102	54	20	10	1	10	197
Northern HSCT2	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Ulster	25	15	2	0	0	0	42
South Eastern HSCT	25	15	2	0	0	0	42
Southern HSCT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Altnagelvin	313	134	24	10	4	14	499
South West Acute	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Western HSCT	322	134	24	10	4	14	508

Source: HSC Trusts

¹ The current waiting time refers to the waiting time position at the week commencing the 11th November 2013, for all HSC Trusts, with the exception of the Belfast HSC Trust, where it refers to the waiting time position at the 7th November 2013.

- 2 Dental services in the Northern HSC Trust are provided by visiting consultants from the Belfast, South Eastern and Western HSC Trusts. However, Northern Trust has responsibility for these patients waiting times. The Northern HSC Trust have stated that they are unable to provide waiting times for each hospital as joint waiting lists are used, and patients could be treated at either Antrim, Braid Valley, Causeway or Mid Ulster Hospitals.
- 3 A first consultant-led outpatient appointment within the Oral Surgery specialty in Craigavon Area Hospital is provided by a visiting consultant from the South Eastern HSC Trust.

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service: Poppies

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the policy of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service on the display of poppies, including on vehicles; and for his assessment of the policy in terms of freedom of expression.

(AQW 28154/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service policy on staff wearing poppies in the workplace accords with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland guidance and relevant employment legislation. The Equality Commission takes the view that wearing poppies in a respectful manner and during the appropriate period should not cause offence. NIAS has advised that it recently reissued its standing guidance, which has been consulted on with trade union side, on the wearing of poppies in the workplace.

NIAS staff who wish to wear a poppy are fully entitled to do so, enshrining freedom of expression in the guidance. The NIAS guidance makes clear that wearing poppies is a matter of personal choice for staff, but that displaying poppies on NIAS vehicles or premises is not permitted as NIAS consider it would be unacceptable for staff to feel uncomfortable for not wearing a particular emblem.

Domiciliary Care: Agency Staff

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many hours each Health and Social Care Trust have required agency staff to cover in domiciliary care services, in each of the last five years; and how this compares with the overall number of hours required in providing these services.

(AQW 28164/11-15)

Mr Poots: The use of agency staff to provide cover for HSC staff is not common practice in the HSC.

In the last 5 years only the Belfast Trust has used agency staff as cover when cases of severe staff shortages have arisen. The Trust has advised that, as a percentage of the overall total of domiciliary care hours provided these occurrences are small; however, the Trust could not provide the actual figures within the timeframe required.

Flu Pandemic: Preparations

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in the event of a flu pandemic, (i) what provisions are in place to help school teachers avoid the flu; (ii) what consideration has been given to providing standardised vaccinations for teachers to mitigate the disproportionate cost of providing substitute staff to cover periods of illness, and the resultant disruption to pupils; and (iii) what level of consultation he has had with the Minister of Education regarding these issues.

(AQW 28195/11-15)

Mr Poots: As part of the overall response to a flu pandemic there would almost certainly be a national campaign to remind everyone of the importance of maintaining basic respiratory and hand hygiene measures which will help to limit the spread of the disease throughout the whole community, not just in schools.

In Northern Ireland as in the rest of the UK, vaccination policy in relation to a pandemic will be informed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee that advises the four UK Health Ministers. In formulating its advice and recommendations, the Committee's aim is to ensure that the greatest benefit to public health is obtained from the most appropriate vaccination and immunisation strategies.

I meet with the DE Minister on a regular basis to discuss topics of mutual interest, such as for example the introduction of the routine annual seasonal flu vaccination programme to all children aged 2 to 16 years (inclusive). Although this vaccine does not protect against pandemic flu, seasonal flu is an annual occurrence, rather than a pandemic which occurs infrequently. The children's seasonal flu programme is expected to appreciably lower the public health impact of flu each year by directly averting a large number of cases of disease in children, and, through lowering flu transmission in the community, indirectly preventing flu in unvaccinated younger children, people in clinical risk groups, and older adults. In the event of a future pandemic both departments would work together to ensure any necessary arrangements were put in place, subject to JCVI recommendations

Cigarettes

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department will consider prohibiting the sale of cigarettes in quantities of less than twenty.

(AQW 28208/11-15)

Mr Poots: The policy aim behind introducing a minimum pack size for tobacco products is to reduce their affordability to children and young people. This is one of a number of measures being considered under the revised EU Tobacco Products Directive and was agreed on by Members of the European Parliament during a recent plenary vote.

The revised Directive is expected to be adopted in 2014 and the agreed measures will come into effect in all EU Member States, including the UK, from 2015/16.

Smoking

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures are under consideration to reduce the number of people taking up smoking.

(AQW 28209/11-15)

Mr Poots: With one in four adults being regular smokers, reducing smoking prevalence is a priority for my Department. The Tobacco Control Strategy has three main objectives: preventing people from starting to smoke; supporting smokers to quit; and protecting the population from tobacco-related harm. The Public Health Agency leads on implementation of the Strategy, including public information campaigns to inform people about the dangers of smoking and education-based programmes targeting school-aged children.

My Department is also delivering a programme of legislation on tobacco control, the main aim of which is to prevent the uptake of smoking by young people. Sales of tobacco from vending machines were banned from 1 March 2012, and a ban on the display of tobacco products in large shops, introduced from 30 October 2012, will be rolled out to small shops from 1 April 2015.

Earlier this year I introduced a draft Tobacco Retailers Bill to the Assembly and this is entering its final stages. The Bill will introduce further sanctions against irresponsible retailers who continue to sell tobacco products to those under the legal age of sale. Once commenced, I believe this new legislation will prove an effective deterrent to underage sales and make it much more difficult for children to access tobacco – thereby helping to prevent them from taking up the smoking habit.

Accident and Emergency: Waiting Times

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients, on average, had to wait longer than 12 hours in Accident and Emergency Units in each of acute hospital, between January and July 2013.

(AQW 28231/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on emergency care waiting times is published quarterly and is available to view or download from: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/emergency_care-3/emergency_care-monthly_waiting_times.htm

Lurgan Health Treatment Centre

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on proposals for a health treatment centre in Lurgan.

(AQW 28241/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the Transforming Your Care: Vision to Action consultation document, Lurgan was included as a hub in the illustrative hub and spoke model. The Health and Social Care Board, through its Local Commissioning Groups and in association with the HSC Trusts, is undertaking detailed analysis to determine the most appropriate locations for the various hubs and spokes. This work will provide an evidence base for the locations and will replace the illustrative model in the consultation document. It is expected that this work will be completed by the end of this year. Therefore I am not yet in a position to advise on when this facility is likely to proceed.

Emergency Services: Non-emergency Telephone Number

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are plans to introduce a three digit non-emergency telephone number for the emergency services, similar to that used in Scotland.

(AQW 28269/11-15)

Mr Poots: Scotland's current non emergency telephone number for health service is NHS24 (this is a 0845 number). Scotland is planning to replace NHS24 with the NHS111 number currently being used in England.

The Health & Social Care Board (HSCB) initially consulted on proposals for a single telephone number as part of Transforming Your Care. The HSCB subsequently conducted a public consultation on the "Strategic Framework for GP out Of Hours" which included a specific proposal to simplify patient access by reducing the current telephone and text numbers from a total of seven across NI to just one, simplifying access for people when contacting Out of Hours.

My Department, the HSCB and NIAS colleagues are keeping up to date with developments in relation to the 111 number to ensure we learn from the experiences in England and add value to any service which we develop here in Northern Ireland.

Hospitals: Car Parking Charges

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail criteria for exception of car parking charges at hospitals in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 28278/11-15)

Mr Poots: The criteria for exception of car parking charges at hospitals in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust are as follows:

Care Path	Application for Free Car Parking			
	Patient	Next of Kin / Partner	Relative	Visitor
Renal Dialysis Renal Outpatients	Yes	Yes if transporting patient	Yes if transporting patient	N/A
Patients attending McDermott Unit	Yes	As above	As above	N/A
Cardiac Rehabilitation	Yes	As above	As above	N/A
Critical Care	N/A	Yes	Discretionary	Discretionary
Attendance at Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)	N/A	Yes	Discretionary	Discretionary

A Ward Manager additionally has discretion to apply the eligibility criteria for exemption to car parking where the frequency of visits can lead to significant charging over a period of time, for example;

- Relatives spending a lot of time with a very sick or terminally ill relative;
- A patient who may benefit from lengthy or frequent visits from relatives which are of benefit to that patient.

NICE: Lenalidomide Guidelines

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation, by the Health and Social Care Board, of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines around Lenalidomide.

(AQW 28289/11-15)

Mr Poots: To date, NICE have only published one Technology Appraisal relating to Lenalidomide. NICE TA171 recommends Lenalidomide in combination with dexamethasone, within its licensed indication, as an option for the treatment of multiple myeloma only in people who have received two or more prior therapies.

This guidance was endorsed by my Department in September 2010 through Circular HSC (SQSD) (NICE) 06/10. The HSC Board have advised that Lenalidomide for the treatment of multiple myeloma is recurrently funded in Northern Ireland for all patients who meet the criteria outlined in NICE TA171. In line with my Department's circular, Trusts are required to submit applications to the HSC Board solely for monitoring purposes. Between the period of April 2012 until July 2013, 51 applications were received by HSC Board, all of which were in line with the NICE criteria for TA171.

Health Service: Experior Medical System

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department will consider the implementation of the Experior Medical system to improve and enhance patient care across the Health Service.

(AQW 28290/11-15)

Mr Poots: This innovative use of technology is designed by local clinicians to support medical training and is not a tool for direct patient care.

The app is in early stages of development. HSC Innovations are aware of the product and have had initial contact with the lead developer. The school of radiology which oversees the training of radiologists in Northern Ireland is aware of its development and will be considering how it can contribute to the education of junior doctors.

Smoking-related Illness

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the estimated cost of providing treatment to people with an illness related to smoking.

(AQW 28291/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the member to the answer I provided to AQW 22199/11-15.

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/writtensearchresults.aspx?&qf=0&qfv=1&ref=AQW 22199/11-15>

Accident and Emergency: Children with Alcohol Intoxication

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the information that 500 children a year attend Accident and Emergency Units due to alcohol intoxication, how many of these children have been referred to social services for "at risk" assessments, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 28353/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not centrally available and cannot be provided from Health and Social Care Trust information systems.

Autism Strategy

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Autism Strategy, including the funding that will be available as part of the Strategy to support community-based schemes for young people with autism.

(AQW 28372/11-15)

Mr Poots: A final draft of the cross-departmental Autism Strategy (2013-2020) and Action Plan 2013-2016) has been developed following the public consultation which completed in March 2013.

Subject to Executive approval, I hope to launch the Strategy and Action Plan before the end of the year.

I am grateful to my Ministerial colleagues for the participation of respective Departments in the development of this Strategy and Action Plan. It has also had significant involvement of community sector organisations. The entire document is based on a model of improved social inclusion for children, young people, families and adults living with autism. Each Department will have responsibility for funding those Actions which are relevant to their specific remit and responsibility.

Diabetes: Prevalence

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the estimated change in the number of people suffering from diabetes in each of the last three years.

(AQW 28481/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the Quality & Outcomes Framework (QOF) of the General Medical Services contract, the total number of GP-registered patients aged 17 and over with diabetes mellitus is recorded. As the care of children with diabetes mellitus is generally under the control of specialists and not general practitioners, the QOF register excludes them.

The number of patients, aged 17 and over, on the QOF diabetes register for the last three years, and the annual percentage change in the number of patients on the diabetes register, is shown in table 1 below. Both patients with type 1 diabetes and patients with type 2 diabetes are included in the figures.

Table 1: The number of patients, aged 17 and over, on the QOF diabetes register, and percentage change 2011 – 2013.

	2011	2012	2013
Number of patients on the QOF diabetes register (aged 17+)	72,693	75,837	79,072
Increase compared to previous year	3,713	3,144	3,235
Percentage change compared to previous year	5.4%	4.3%	4.3%

Register sizes are taken from the Payment Calculation and Analysis System (PCAS) as at National Prevalence Day, 31 March each year.

Care should be taken when looking at trends in prevalence over time, as year-on-year changes in the size of QOF registers can be influenced by various factors including: changes in prevalence of the condition within the population; demographic changes, such as an ageing population; and improvements in case finding by practices.

The QOF register figures, along with background information on QOF and detailed register definitions, can be found at the following link: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-resource/stats-gp-allocation/gp_contract_qof/statistics_and_research-qof-prevalence.htm

Department of Justice

Self-defence Classes

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what funding his Department provides for self-defence classes.

(AQW 27746/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Department of Justice does not provide funding for self-defence classes.

Interfaces: Consultation

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Justice, given the commitment to remove interfaces by 2023, to outline how his Department will ensure that young people are engaged in any consultation processes.

(AQW 27757/11-15)

Mr Ford: In taking forward work on interfaces since 2010, I have made clear the importance of engaging with communities to seek to find alternative ways of reassuring them that safety can be achieved without separation.

As part of that engagement it is important that we hear the views of our young people. That is why, for instance, I welcomed the publication of the Community Relations Council's report; 'Young people and the interfaces', which included a suggested consultation process for engaging with young people. Indeed, I attended the launch of this report.

Furthermore, the Department of Justice asked the Community Relations Council (CRC) to undertake research into how consultation should take place at interfaces to ensure an inclusive approach. The CRC commissioned the Institute of Conflict Research to look at past and current models of consultation and participation in relation to transformation and regeneration efforts on physical interface structures. Their report will be launched at the Interface Community Partners and Inter-agency Group annual conference on 3 December.

Importantly this report will set out a framework for meaningful engagement with the community on promoting regeneration and transformation around interface areas, including with young people. I have asked officials to ensure that this framework is incorporated within the work of the community groups currently engaged on the various interface programmes.

Offences: Bail

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of occasions, whilst remanded on bail on a charge of murder in 2011, has the individual (i) been convicted of an offence; and/or (ii) is presently in within the court system in respect of an alleged offence; and to detail the nature of the offence.

(AQW 27820/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am currently seeking advice on the Data Protection implications of answering this question and will provide an answer as soon as possible.

Sex Offenders

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convicted sex offenders, broken down by risk category, in each council area; and to outline the measures in place to monitor their behaviour.

(AQW 27852/11-15)

Mr Ford: On 10 October 2013 there were 1,080 convicted sex offenders in the community who were also subject to notification under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Information by Council area is not available. The breakdown for each police district as of that date is as follows:

Police District	Number of notified sex offenders
A	102
B	254
C	124
D	133
E	136
F	92
G	138
H	101

Sex offenders are subject to a variety of measures to reduce the risk of reoffending. Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 places a statutory requirement on certain sex offenders to notify personal information to the police. This information is provided in the interests of the prevention or investigation of crime and the protection of the public.

Offenders may also be subject to probation supervision of licence conditions or court orders on release from prison. Sex offender prevention orders are also available to the courts to place necessary restrictions on offenders' behaviour to prevent harm to the public.

For those who present the highest level of risk, multi agency public protection arrangements (PPANI) offer a combined approach to risk assessment and management. Information on how the PPANI arrangements seek to address risk is also available on (<http://www.publicprotectionni.com>).

Prisoners: Keys

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27405/11-15, to detail (i) whether all prisoners who hold their own cell keys are fully risk assessed for the safety of themselves and others; and (ii) the criteria that must be met for prisoners to hold their own cell keys.

(AQW 27891/11-15)

Mr Ford: All prisoners are risk assessed before being moved into an area where they will have access to their own cell key. Only selected residential locations in each establishment have the facility where prisoners can have keys to their own cells.

Those located within these areas are continually monitored to ensure the required standard of behaviour is maintained. If the appropriate behaviour is not maintained at the standard required prisoners are deselected from the unit and will no longer have access to cell keys.

There are detailed specific admissions criteria for these residential locations set by each establishment.

Sexual Offences Prevention Orders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders have been imposed in each of the last three years, broken down per court division.

(AQW 27893/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the number of Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs) made in each of the last three years, broken down by County Court Division.

Number of SOPOs made¹ by County Court Division: 2010 to 2012

Division	2010	2011	2012
Belfast	31	19	40
Londonderry	10	11	18
Antrim	11	12	19
Fermanagh and Tyrone	13	6	11
Armagh and South Down	3	7	14
Ards	12	12	26
Craigavon	11	12	12
Total	91	79	140

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

1 Data includes SOPOs made on appeal if no SOPO was made on the original case.

Appeals Service

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Justice to detail the current waiting times for social security related appeals to be heard by the Appeals Service.

(AQW 27921/11-15)

Mr Ford: In the period 1 October 2013 to 31 October 2013, the average waiting time from receipt of valid appeal in The Appeals Service until the first date of hearing was 18 weeks.

Sentencing: Murder

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail the legislation used by judges to impose a life sentence for murder.

(AQW 27922/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 abolished the death penalty in Northern Ireland and replaced it with a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment for murder. Where the court has imposed a life sentence, the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 governs the determination of tariffs. Under this legislation, the court is required to impose a minimum term that must be served before the prisoner is eligible for release on licence. This exercise involves the judge making an estimate of the period of imprisonment that is necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence. Decisions for release on licence on expiry of this period are made by the Parole Commissioners based on the assessment of risk.

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 created statutory starting points for tariffs in mandatory life sentence cases in England and Wales. Following their implementation, the Northern Ireland Office issued a public consultation, in January 2004, seeking views on these provisions and the appropriateness of their application to the sentencing framework in Northern Ireland.

The Government at that time made no changes to the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 as a result of this consultation.

My review of this legislation is ongoing. The impetus for the review came from the tariffs set for Wootton and McConville for the murder of Constable Stephen Carroll, which were referred to the Court of Appeal by the Director of Public Prosecutions on the grounds of undue leniency. A consultation paper will be published following the judgment in that Court of Appeal reference.

Sentencing: Murder

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many consultations have been carried out on life sentencing tariffs for murder since 2003; and what changes in the law have been instituted in that time.

(AQW 27923/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 abolished the death penalty in Northern Ireland and replaced it with a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment for murder. Where the court has imposed a life sentence, the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 governs the determination of tariffs. Under this legislation, the court is required to impose a minimum term that must be served before the prisoner is eligible for release on licence. This exercise involves the judge making an estimate of the period of imprisonment that is necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence. Decisions for release on licence on expiry of this period are made by the Parole Commissioners based on the assessment of risk.

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 created statutory starting points for tariffs in mandatory life sentence cases in England and Wales. Following their implementation, the Northern Ireland Office issued a public consultation, in January 2004, seeking views on these provisions and the appropriateness of their application to the sentencing framework in Northern Ireland. The Government at that time made no changes to the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 as a result of this consultation.

My review of this legislation is ongoing. The impetus for the review came from the tariffs set for Wootton and McConville for the murder of Constable Stephen Carroll, which were referred to the Court of Appeal by the Director of Public Prosecutions on the grounds of undue leniency. A consultation paper will be published following the judgment in that Court of Appeal reference.

Sentencing: Murder

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQO 2988/11-15, for an update on the review of sentencing legislation for murder.

(AQW 27924/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 abolished the death penalty in Northern Ireland and replaced it with a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment for murder. Where the court has imposed a life sentence, the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 governs the determination of tariffs. Under this legislation, the court is required to impose a minimum term that must be served before the prisoner is eligible for release on licence. This exercise involves the judge making an estimate of the period of imprisonment that is necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence. Decisions for release on licence on expiry of this period are made by the Parole Commissioners based on the assessment of risk.

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 created statutory starting points for tariffs in mandatory life sentence cases in England and Wales. Following their implementation, the Northern Ireland Office issued a public consultation, in January 2004, seeking views on these provisions and the appropriateness of their application to the sentencing framework in Northern Ireland. The Government at that time made no changes to the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 as a result of this consultation.

My review of this legislation is ongoing. The impetus for the review came from the tariffs set for Wootton and McConville for the murder of Constable Stephen Carroll, which were referred to the Court of Appeal by the Director of Public Prosecutions on the grounds of undue leniency. A consultation paper will be published following the judgment in that Court of Appeal reference.

Courts: Victim Statements

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice whether he will bring forward legislation similar to that being introduced in England and Wales, under the new Victims Code, allowing the victims of crime to address the court before sentencing.

(AQW 27943/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am planning to legislate in the forthcoming Justice Bill to give victims of crime the opportunity to make a written victim personal statement.

While victims in England and Wales will now be permitted to read out their statement in court, I have some reservations about this. There were mixed views on this matter when we consulted on our proposals for formalising the submission of victim personal statements. I would have concerns about the potential for this to re-traumatise a victim, particularly if the statement contains sensitive material. Reading the statement aloud may increase the likelihood that a victim could be subject to cross-examination and also risk sensationalised media reporting.

While the victim will not have an entitlement to read out their statement, the judge may, at his or her discretion, as at present, read out or refer to part of the statement when sentencing the offender, as is considered appropriate. As with all policies, this matter will be kept under review.

The Justice Committee was briefed on and endorsed my Department's plans to formalise the process for making a victim personal statement at its meeting on 7 November.

Car Parking Spaces: DOJ Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Justice to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27948/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department is currently consulting on a draft car park policy which will apply to all business areas based in Belfast City Centre. This policy is intended to provide Senior Officers who are charged with allocating spaces with a framework within which to operate. My Department has already achieved £12,000 in savings in the last two years from an expenditure of £64,600 and it is expected that the policy once implemented will produce further savings to the Department.

The Department plans to introduce the new Belfast City Centre Car Parking Policy in spring 2014.

Civil Service Posts: DOJ

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Justice how many Civil Service posts existed in his Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 27956/11-15)

Mr Ford: The location and number of full time equivalent Civil Service posts in the Department of Justice (excluding the NI Courts and Tribunals Service) on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 are detailed in the tables below. Information relating to NICTS will follow as soon as possible.

Grade Level at 01 January 2012

Council Area	AA	AO	C/EO	SO	DP	Grade A/7	Grade 6	Total
Antrim	0	0.78	0	0	0	0	0	0.78
Ards	2	4.88	2.04	0	1	1	0	10.92
Ballymena	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	4
Banbridge	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
Belfast	60.53	155.9	134.66	146.76	104.46	60.29	2	664.6
Carrickfergus	0.8	23.6	11.49	3.9	4	3	1	47.79
Castlereagh	5.68	18.72	8	1.89	0	0	0	34.29
Coleraine	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Craigavon	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Derry	1.1	2	0	1	0	0	0	4.1
Down	0	0.81	0	0	0	0	0	0.81
Fermanagh	0	0.57	0	0	0	0	0	0.57
Limavady	5	21.9	8	2	1	0	0	37.9
Lisburn	12	42.31	18.7	8	3.9	1	0	85.91
Newry & Mourne	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
North Down	1	6.99	0.88	1	0	0	0	9.87
Omagh	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	4
Total By Grade	90.11	286.46	184.77	167.55	114.36	65.29	3	911.54

Grade Level at 01 January 2013

Council Area	AA	AO	EO2	EO1	SO	DP	Grade 7	Grade 6	Total
Ards	2.0	8.69	0	1.6	1.0	0	1.0	0	14.29
Ballymena	1.0	3.0	0	0	1.0	0	0	0	5.0
Banbridge	1.0	3.0	0	0	1.0	0	0	0	5.0
Belfast	54.29	145.91	64.11	59.07	140.93	108.59	61.96	2.0	636.86
Carrickfergus	0.8	22.57	5.31	4.54	5.0	7.54	4.0	1.0	50.76
Castlereagh	6.0	19.3	7.0	2.0	0.89	0	0	0	35.19
Derry	1.1	2.0	0	0	2.0	0	0	0	5.1
Limavady	5.83	24.22	6.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	0	0	42.05
Lisburn	10.99	35.83	13.93	6.61	6.81	1.9	1.0	0	77.07
North Down	1.0	6.17	1.0	0	1.0	0	0	0	9.17
Omagh	0	2.56	0	0	1.0	0	0	0	3.56
Total By Grade	84.01	273.25	97.35	76.82	162.63	119.03	67.96	3.0	884.05

Offences: Specific Case

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to David Paige and any offence for which he was dealt with immediately prior to the alleged commission of the current matter in Lurgan, to detail (i) the nature of the offences and when committed; (ii) the disposal and/or penalty imposed including the date; and (iii) the terms of the Sexual Offences Prevention Order imposed including whether this was in place at the time the offence was committed, and if so, whether the terms were reaffirmed or enhanced.

(AQW 27969/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested constitutes personal information and is exempt from disclosure by virtue of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Prisoners: Reviews

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether any evidence has been established, through the investigation into issues around the Prisoner Assessment Unit and subsequent reviews and investigations, which show links into the handling of prisoners, such as Noel Parker and Kenneth Douglas, who caused reviews to be carried out as to their management whilst they were inmates in this facility.

(AQW 27970/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no evidence from these reviews to suggest that there are links into the handling of these prisoners.

Human Trafficking: Review of Case

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27406/11-15, whether the fourth man in this case was prosecuted; and if so, to detail the charges and their disposal.

(AQW 27971/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prosecution and sentencing are matters for the Public Prosecution Service and judiciary, respectively. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of both and have asked the Public Prosecution Service to reply directly to the Member.

Mixed Committals

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27701/11-15, for an estimate on (i) the timeframe for the abolition of mixed committals; and (ii) the savings to the Legal Aid budget as a result, based on the average yearly pay-outs for such hearings.

(AQW 27972/11-15)

Mr Ford: Provisions to give effect to the abolition of mixed committals will be carried in the proposed Justice Bill. Subject to Executive approval, I intend to introduce the Bill to the Assembly in the early part of next year. The timeframe for abolition will be dependent on the passage of the Bill.

Currently, a mixed committal will attract either the standard committal fees set out in Schedule 1 to the Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009 ("the 2009 Rules") or, where the Legal

Services Commission determines that a mixed committal should be treated as a very high cost case, fees based on the hourly and daily rates set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Rules.

As part of my programme of work to reform Legal Aid, I intend to amend the 2009 Rules to remove the provisions in relation to very high cost cases before the end of the year. Savings in relation to the cost of mixed-committal will therefore be made prior to the introduction of the Justice Bill.

Hate Crimes

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice whether he has considered reviewing legislation and sentencing guidelines for homophobic and transphobic hate crimes.

(AQW 27997/11-15)

Mr Ford: Article 2 of the Criminal Justice (No.2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 makes provision for an increase in sentence for offences aggravated by hostility because the victim of the offence is a member, or perceived to be a member, of a racial, religious, or sexual orientation group or is disabled.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, in its recent Racist Hate Crime Report, considered the current legislation to be adequate, but did highlight the need for increased awareness and understanding to improve detection and prosecution rates. My officials are currently considering the Report's recommendations.

Sentencing within the legislative framework is a matter for the independent judiciary. In making decisions, members of the judiciary are guided by sentencing guidelines which already indicate that, where the offence is motivated by, or demonstrates, hostility on account of (or presumed account of) the victim's race, religion, sexual orientation, or disability, this should be treated as an aggravating factor when deciding the appropriate sentence.

Hate Crimes

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions for both homophobic and transphobic hate crimes, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 28000/11-15)

Mr Ford: While the Criminal Justice (No.2.) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 makes provision for an increased sentence for offences aggravated by hostility, hate crime does not constitute a separately identifiable offence in itself. Conviction datasets held by my Department record offences, but neither suspect motivation, nor specific details of the nature and circumstances of offences, adequate to allow the identification of homophobic and transphobic hate crimes.

Prison Service: Scanning Technology

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the justification process for scanning technology within the Northern Ireland Prison Service estate.

(AQW 28043/11-15)

Mr Ford: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW/25557/11-15. No further update will be available until the Justice Secretary writes to me with his recommendation on the way forward.

Courts: Registered Intermediary Scheme

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27137/11-15, if the proposed changes to the Pritchard Test are implemented, whether this will necessitate a restructuring of the Registered Intermediary Scheme; and to clarify whether this scheme will be permitted to continue to assist vulnerable people.

(AQW 28047/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Law Commission considered that the use of an intermediary to assist a vulnerable defendant to communicate during his trial should not be a factor which is taken into account when assessing the fitness to plead of that individual. Therefore, if the proposed changes to the Pritchard test are implemented, any modification to that test will not impact on the Registered Intermediaries Schemes.

Prostitution and Human Trafficking Regulation: Swedish Government

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of occasions his Department has been in communication with the Swedish Government regarding the regulation of prostitution and trafficking, including the date and method of communication.

(AQW 28048/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is widespread availability of published material on the regulation of prostitution in Sweden. My Department has of course made use of this material. However, while there is much to learn from how other jurisdictions, including Sweden, respond to these issues, I believe the most effective response is one tailored to local needs.

As I have already announced, I am commissioning research into prostitution in Northern Ireland which, while it will consider the regulation of prostitution in Sweden and elsewhere, and the impact of such regulation on trafficking, will focus on the local context. This will provide a sound evidential base for future policy decisions.

Sexual Offences Prevention Orders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders are currently within the court system for an alleged breach of the Order, broken down per court division.

(AQW 28049/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the number of defendants, by County Court Division, currently charged with an alleged breach of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order as at 11 November 2013.

Division	Number of Defendants charged with a breach of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order
Antrim	1
Ards	2
Armagh and South Down	1
Belfast	4
Craigavon	2
Fermanagh and Tyrone	3
Londonderry	2
Grand Total	15

Source: Integrated Court Operations System

Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008: Article 64A

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice when the review of Article 64A of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 will be published.

(AQW 28087/11-15)

Mr Ford: My officials considered the policy with key stakeholders and I have already announced plans to bring forward legislative change to extend the time period within which offenders can be prosecuted for this offence.

Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008: Article 64A

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether Article 64A of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 makes provision for seizing telephones and computers for forensic examination whilst a person is (i) under suspicion; (ii) under arrest; (iii) being charged; and/or (iv) convicted.

(AQW 28088/11-15)

Mr Ford: Article 64A of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 sets out the scope of the offence of paying for the sexual services of a prostitute subjected to force etc. It does not confer any specific powers of seizure.

Police powers of search and seizure of evidence are set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the conduct of disciplinary hearings held under the 2013 Code of Conduct, whether the Northern Ireland Prison Service will make a verbatim record of hearings available to staff members recommended for dismissal or demotion in time to submit their case if they are lodging an appeal.

(AQW 28162/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW/27299/11-15.

Prison Service: Nurses

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 27654/11-15, to detail (i) the name of the employer of the nurses working in the Northern Ireland Prison Service; (ii) the regulations under which they carry out duties in prisons; and (iii) to whom they report.

(AQW 28200/11-15)

Mr Ford: The nurses who work in the Northern Ireland Prison Service are employees of the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. Parts (ii) and (iii) of the question are matters for the Trust so the Member may wish to re-direct these queries to it.

Crime: Border Areas

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice to detail how his Department is working in conjunction with agencies across the border to deter criminal activities such as robberies in border areas like Derrylin.

(AQW 28455/11-15)

Mr Ford: The policing of border areas is an operational matter for the PSNI who liaise with An Garda Síochána where necessary. In relation to rural crime specifically, they work closely with agriculture officials on both sides of the border.

The Organised Crime Taskforce, which I chair, has a cross border sub-group in relation to fuel fraud which is a crime that is particularly prevalent in border areas.

Human Trafficking

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Justice how he plans to strengthen the approach, as well as raise awareness, of front line professionals in addressing the crime of human trafficking, as highlighted in the second report of the Inter-departmental Ministerial Group on Human Trafficking.

(AQO 5031/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am committed to ensuring that Northern Ireland's response to human trafficking is robust. I am a member of the Inter-departmental Ministerial Group. Its report helpfully highlights some of the key elements of our approach, including the joined up response provided through OCTF and in partnership with the other jurisdictions.

In terms of our approach, prevention, training, supporting victims, investigation, prosecution and improving our understanding of trends and emerging threats have been identified as priorities in the Human Trafficking Action Plan. Good progress is being made.

Examples include the work being taken forward by the relevant agencies to ensure that appropriate training is provided to frontline professionals, including the roll out of training to almost 4000 PSNI officers and the publication of guidance on arrangements for the welfare and protection of both child and adult victims of human trafficking.

The Health and Social Care Board has also developed practical advice to staff in Emergency Departments, which is being piloted. In addition last month the Public Prosecution Service published a Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Human Trafficking.

Legal Aid

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of Justice to confirm that none of the proposed changes to Legal Aid will not adversely affect the most vulnerable in our society in obtaining an appropriate level of legal representation.

(AQO 5033/11-15)

Mr Ford: In short, the reform of legal aid will not have an adverse impact. My proposals to reform Levels of Representation in the civil and family courts will ensure that everyone who is eligible for legal aid, including the most vulnerable, will continue to be provided with an appropriate level of representation, paid for by the public purse, across all court tiers.

CJINI: Report on Dealing with the Past

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Justice when the Criminal Justice Inspection report on the Costs and Impact of Dealing with the Past will be published.

(AQO 5039/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have recently given approval to Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland for this report to be published and I expect them to do so by the end of November 2013.

I would like to thank the inspectors and staff of CJINI in conducting a thorough and detailed inspection, and providing an authoritative report and recommendations to support the work of criminal justice agencies.

I am confident this report will help inform discussions between all parties and Richard Haass as we look to the all-party group on resolving the more difficult issues, including how to address our troubled past.

Firearms: Age Restrictions

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Justice for an update on any plans he has to reduce the age at which people can use firearms.

(AQO 5040/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department, following a consultation process on a range of issues concerning firearms, concluded that the age at which young people can shoot should be reduced to 12, but with appropriate supervision. It is seeking to reach agreement on the other issues in the consultation, such as a revised fee structure to cover costs of the scheme and a possible banded system so that all can be taken forward together.

Courts: Victim Statements

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Justice what steps he has taken to formalise the use of Victim Impact Statements in court proceedings.

(AQO 5041/11-15)

Mr Ford: Victim personal statements are intended to give victims, or their representatives, the opportunity to make the court aware of how a crime has affected them. Work on formalising the process for making a victim personal statement is well advanced. The Justice Committee was briefed on the way forward on 7 November and has endorsed my Department's plans.

We are aiming to have the new process in place by the end of December. Once a decision is taken to prosecute, the Public Prosecution Service will advise victims that they have the opportunity to make a statement and provide them with an information leaflet. Victim Support Northern Ireland and the NSPCC will support victims in making their statement. This will improve on the current, rather ad hoc, arrangements.

I also plan to legislate in the near future to give victims a legal entitlement to make a statement.

Coroners' Court: Historical Inquests

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice what steps he will take to ensure that all available documented evidence, including that from the PSNI, the Ministry of Defence and the intelligence services is provided to the Coroner's Court to assist in historic inquests.

(AQO 5042/11-15)

Mr Ford: In terms of policing, the provision of material to the Coroners Service is an operational matter for the Chief Constable. However, I am well aware that the PSNI has committed considerable resources to this area of work and that it is seen as a priority by the Chief Constable. Dealing with these historic inquests is vitally important for the families as well as the Coroners Service, the PSNI and the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and I will continue to encourage and support these organisations in their efforts to address these cases.

You will know that as Minister of Justice I have no responsibility for either the Ministry of Defence or the Intelligence Service and therefore have no influence over their engagement with the Coroners Service. That said I would nonetheless encourage both organisations to work closely with the Courts to assist the Coroner in any way possible to conclude his work in these cases.

Prisons: Drugs

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice whether there is a drugs problem within the NI Prison Service estate.

(AQO 5043/11-15)

Mr Ford: Drugs are prevalent in our community and prisons are not immune from the issues that affect wider society. There is a real and concerted effort by the Northern Ireland Prison Service to address what is an issue of genuine concern.

Physical measures are in place to prevent illicit drugs coming into prisons, the use of drugs is monitored by mandatory drug testing and sanctions are taken against those who test positive for illicit substances.

A joint initiative, involving the Prison Service, the Police Service and other partners, to reduce the drugs supply and demand within Maghaberry Prison is ongoing. At all three prisons revised searching strategies have also been developed to drive performance in this respect.

It is also crucial that support is in place for those with addiction issues. Prison staff are currently being selected to work on a new cutting edge addiction programme which will be piloted in Maghaberry in the New Year. This demonstrates the innovative approach prison staff are willing to take to deliver change.

Department for Regional Development

Cycle Lane: Upper Arthur Street, Belfast

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail his Department's response to complaints that the cycle lane on Upper Arthur Street, Belfast is being blocked by bins, delivery vehicles and road signs.

(AQW 26728/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Traffic Attendants patrol Upper Arthur Street several times each day and during the twelve month period to 30 September 2013, six Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued for contraventions in the cycle lane. However, I understand a further 631 vehicles were recorded but drove away before a PCN could be issued. It is also not clear whether these offences can be attributed to parking in the cycle lane as this information is not recorded.

With regard to bins blocking cycle lanes, this has been reported to Roads Service on a number of occasions. Where a bin has been presented for collection and has obstructed the cycle lane, any complaint will be investigated to establish ownership. My officials have, in the past, spoken to the relevant owners and advised them of their responsibility to ensure that the bin is not

placed in the cycle lane, and that once it have been emptied by the collection service, it should be removed from the street immediately after. Where ownership has not been established or where owners have failed to cooperate with my officials, these bins have, with the assistance of Belfast City Council, been removed.

Officials will continue to periodically carry out site inspection and take appropriate action, where necessary.

In relation to road signs, my Department has no record of such signs obstructing the cycle lane.

Roads Service: Grass Cutting

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Roads Service spent on grass cutting in the South Belfast constituency in each of the last three years.

(AQW 26963/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not maintain an analysis of grass cutting expenditure by Constituency area.

Roads Service: Grass Cutting

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Roads Service has spent on grass cutting in each of the last three years, broken down by council area.

(AQW 27076/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not maintain an analysis of grass cutting expenditure by council area.

Housing Developments: Unadopted Roads

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26299/11-15, what steps are being taken by his Department to address this issue and reduce the number of unadopted private roads in Omagh and Strabane District Council areas.

(AQW 27153/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are currently 103 developments within the districts of Omagh and Strabane that remain unadopted. Officials from my Department's Roads Service continue to work with developers with a view to achieving adoptions on as many sites as possible without recourse to enforcement action. This pragmatic approach affords developers the opportunity to fulfil their obligations under the determinations and bond agreements.

Where it is evident that a developer is no longer either willing or capable of completing the work and taking account of bond provision, Roads Service will seek to complete the works using enforcement action, if necessary.

The timescales for progression of individual developments is, however, dependent upon their relative priority and the availability of resources. Enforcement action has already commenced and is being progressed on 4 developments across Strabane and Omagh during the current financial year and it is anticipated similar action will be initiated on a further six developments across Strabane and Omagh before the end of the 2014/2015 financial year.

A6: Derry to the M22

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development when the dualling of the A6 from Derry to the M22 will be completed.

(AQW 27642/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Currently 40 kilometres of the M2/M22/A6 Belfast to Londonderry route is either motorway or dual carriageway. My Department's Strategic Road Improvement Programme contains two schemes to dual a further 44 kilometres of the route. These two are schemes the 14 kilometre section from Randalstown to Castledawson and the 30 kilometre section from Londonderry to Dungiven.

You will be aware I recently secured funds to enable work to progress on the A31 Magherafelt Bypass and also allow the A26 Frosses Road dualling to be taken forward.

Unfortunately, bids to fund construction on the A6 were less successful on this occasion. However, an allocation has been confirmed that would enable procurement to proceed for the Randalstown – Castledawson Dual Carriageway. I will continue to press the need for this scheme in future bids for funding.

I hope to publish a Departmental Statement before the end of this year, recommending the way forward for the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme.

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021 envisages an alternative funding package to construct road schemes including the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven scheme in the period 2015/16 to 2020/21. However, a decision to fund the revenue consequences of this package will be required. In the event of this funding not being available, the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven scheme could be included, together with other high priority schemes, in the bidding process for conventional funds, in the next Budget period. Consequently, it is too early to say when the scheme might be constructed.

Penalty Charge Notices: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Penalty Charge Notices have been (i) issued; (ii) paid; (iii) successfully appealed; and (iv) unpaid in North Down, in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 27697/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As it takes up to six months for the full statutory appeals process to run its course, that is, through challenges and appeals, I am unable to provide figures for the last twelve months.

However, the table below details figures relating to Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's) issued, paid and outstanding in North Down, on a monthly basis, for the financial year 2012/13:

Penalty Charge Notices issued, paid and outstanding in North Down in 2012/13

Month	PCNs Issued	PCNs Paid	PCNs Outstanding
April	423	366	18
May	456	397	26
June	422	369	17
July	450	389	29
August	432	368	26
September	383	317	23
October	415	347	25
November	392	318	18
December	266	219	23
January	246	202	14
February	305	250	17
March	316	265	23

It is not possible to give figures relating to successful appeals as this information is not maintained on a District Council basis.

Street Lighting

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the budget allocated for the replacement of street lights in (i) 2013/14; and (ii) 2014/15.

(AQW 27699/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The budget currently allocated for the replacement of street lights in 2013/14 is £7 million.

The budget allocations for 2014/15 have not yet been finalised.

Cycle Lanes and Boxes

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the new cycle lanes and boxes that are planned for (i) the rest of 2013; (ii) 2014; and (iii) 2015, broken down by council area.

(AQW 27736/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is fully committed to improving cycling facilities, and cycling and pedestrian schemes will continue to be identified and delivered as resources permit. The information requested, regarding new cycle lanes and boxes, in respect of the current financial year, is set out in the table below:

Council	Detail
Ards Borough Council	Comber Bypass (Ballyhenry Road to Moate Road). New cycle lane. 2013/14
Down District Council	Castlewellan Road, Newcastle. Extension of existing footway/cycle track to the junction of Carrigs Road. 2013/14
Lisburn City Council	Bridge Street and Graham Gardens, Lisburn. New cycle lanes. 2013/14

Detailed budgets have yet to be agreed for future years and as such, it is not possible to predict levels of spend or where this might be focused for 2014 or 2015.

Adopted Roads: Donaghadee and Millisle

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the areas in Donaghadee and Millisle (i) where roads have been adopted in the last five years; and (ii) where roads are in the process of being adopted.

(AQW 27750/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the roads in Donaghadee and Millisle which my Department has adopted in the last five years are provided below:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| ■ Edgewater, Millisle Road, Donaghadee; | ■ Hawthornridge, Donaghadee; |
| ■ Morey Hills, Donaghadee; | ■ Brackenridge, Donaghadee; |
| ■ The Cornmill, Donaghadee; | ■ The Meadows, Donaghadee; |
| ■ Rockhill, Donaghadee; | ■ Seahill, Donaghadee; |
| ■ Millisle Road, Donaghadee; | ■ Moss Road, Millisle; |
| ■ Pineridge, Donaghadee; | ■ Abbey Court, Millisle; and |
| ■ Banff, Brackenridge, Donaghadee; | ■ Ballyrolly Cottages, Millisle. |

Details of the roads in Donaghadee and Millisle which my Department is in the process of adopting are provided below:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ East Street, Donaghadee; | ■ Millbank, Millisle. |
| ■ Mount Royal, Donaghadee; and | |

Motorways: Hard Shoulder

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has any plans to allow public transport to avail of the hard shoulder on the M2 and M5 motorways.

(AQW 27765/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Currently public transport does use the hard shoulder on the M2 between Browns Road (between Junction 5 and Junction 4) and the Hightown Bridge (just after Junction 4).

My Department's Roads Service has commissioned consultants to investigate what additional parts of the Northern Ireland motorway network might benefit from using the hard shoulder and the cost effectiveness of using motorway hard shoulders for use by all traffic and, separately, for use by public transport only. Roads Service is currently considering the results of this study.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the expenses paid to each Board Member of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27801/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The payment of expenses to members of the Board of Belfast Harbour Commissioners is the responsibility of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. However, Belfast Harbour Commissioners have provided me with details of expenses paid to Board Members over each of the last three years, as set out in the table below:

Period	Expenses Paid to Board Members
November 2010 – October 2011 inclusive	£1,622
November 2011 – October 2012 inclusive	£689
November 2012 – October 2013 inclusive	£421

Translink: Stock Disposal

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how Translink disposes of transport stock which is no longer required.

(AQW 27805/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Disposal of life-expired railway rolling stock is to the highest bidder though the placement of an advert for the vehicles on the Translink website.

In the case of disposals for heritage purposes (i.e. to transport museums, heritage railway operators etc.), transport stock can be gifted, subject to approval of a business case and economic appraisal.

As far as the disposal of redundant buses is concerned, the aim is to maximise value using the most appropriate outlet. The vast majority of buses are life-expired and the highest scrap value is obtained from a handler selected following a tendering exercise.

Selected vehicles which are considered to have further operational life are advertised on the Translink website and, where appropriate, in Industry publications or by use of approved dealerships.

Offers for non-life expired vehicles are considered for approval by the Translink Executive Committee.

Translink: Profitability

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his plans to increase Translink's profitability.
(AQW 27806/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As the majority of Translink's capital expenditure is funded by the Department, the expectation is that in the medium to long term the Translink group will breakeven. Translink is obligated to consider 'Going Concern' in its planning.

On an annual basis Translink seeks approval from my Department for the main elements of its Corporate Plan, including its projected financial position and profitability. The Corporate Plan sets out the broad financial plans and key performance measures for a three year period.

My Department is currently in the middle of a three year cycle where the expectation is that Translink will break even, and it has recently commenced preparatory work on next year's planning process which covers the three year period up to 2016/17 and will take account of all relevant factors including funding assumptions, revenue generation, costs and a continued push for increased efficiency.

Lurgan Railway Station

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will ensure that Lurgan Railway Station will be upgraded, in line with other stations such as Londonderry.
(AQW 27858/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am keen to see progress on the redevelopment of Lurgan Station.

Translink is currently developing a Project Mandate for a redevelopment of Lurgan station.

It is hoped this will be ready for submission to the Translink Executive Committee for approval in December 2013.

The project is at an early stage and will be subject to the necessary Economic Appraisal. Funding has also to be secured.

NI Water: Reservoirs

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) why NI Water are planning to sell seventeen reservoirs; (ii) the location of each reservoir; and (iii) the expected impact on water security and demand.
(AQW 27876/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that

- (i) there are 18 former reservoirs which are no longer in operational service and are surplus to requirements. NIW is obliged, under the terms of its Licence, to limit its land and property holdings to the minimum required for the performance of its responsibilities and therefore plans to dispose of these reservoirs at some time in the future. However, a timeframe for offering them to the market has not yet been identified.
- (ii) The reservoirs are located at:

Name	Location
Altmore	Pomeroy
Ballintemple	Armagh
Ballyboley	Larne
Ballydoolagh Lough and Intake	Enniskillen
Ballylane Lough	Coleraine
Ballysallagh Lower	Bangor
Ballysallagh Upper	Newtownards
Ballyversal	Coleraine
Boomers Reservoir	Lisburn
Capagh	Dungannon
Crockacleaven Lough	Enniskillen
Conlig Low (Old)	Newtownards
Craigahullier	Portrush
Dunalis	Coleraine

Name	Location
Killea	Londonderry
Knockbraken	Carryduff
Leathemstown	Dundrod
Sullatober Pond	Carrickfergus

- (iii) As none of the reservoirs are required for operational service there will be no residual impact on water security and demand. All such matters were taken fully into account before any of the sites were identified as surplus.

A4 Dual Carriageway: Street Lighting

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed street lighting scheme at the Granville Road and A4 junction, as part of the A4 dual carriageway scheme.

(AQW 27895/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following the October monitoring round, funding has been secured and made available to install street lighting between the existing street lighting at Granville Industrial Estate and the lighting installed as part of the A4 dualling project at Granville Road. It is anticipated the works, which will commence in January 2014, should be completed in approximately one month.

Penalty Charge Notices: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for a breakdown of the street locations of Penalty Charge Notices issued in North Down, in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 27907/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A breakdown of the street locations where Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) have been issued in North Down Council Area, on a monthly basis, is not readily available.

However, information in relation to PCNs issued in specific streets can be provided, upon request, from my Department's Roads Service.

Roads Service: Salt and Grit

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether Roads Service procure salt and grit for roads from local sources.

(AQW 27927/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department purchases supplies of salt from a local Salt Mining & Exploration Company. It also purchases its grit supplies, under local contracts, from various quarries across Northern Ireland.

Roads Service: Salt and Grit

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Roads Service have spent on salt and grit for roads during winter 2013/14.

(AQW 27928/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The purchase of grit and road salt by my Department's Roads Service is subject to a tender process. I am therefore unable to disclose the cost of purchase for reasons of commercial sensitivity and in the interests of securing best value for money in future competitions.

Roads Service: Winter Service Vehicles

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many winter service vehicles are available for use by Roads Service.

(AQW 27929/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service currently has 130 front line Salt Spreading Machines and 8 Snow Blowers available for use during the upcoming winter season.

In addition, I can also confirm my Department can, through contractual arrangements with farmers, agricultural contractors and owners of plant, call upon additional vehicles to assist with the clearance of snow from local roads during severe weather conditions.

Car Parking Spaces: DRD Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27949/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has a number of operational depots and section offices distributed throughout Northern Ireland, many of which are located in rural areas or are remote from urban centres. Parking spaces are provided for staff and operatives at these locations to enable the quick and efficient delivery of services to the local communities. This is particularly crucial in relation to winter service and emergency response activities. Details of the costs for maintaining these parking spaces is not available but would be minimal.

Water Abstraction: River Faughan

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development how much water his Department is licensed to abstract from the River Faughan; and to detail how much water it has abstracted in each of the last five years, including what has removed to date in 2013.

(AQW 27980/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the current Abstraction and Impoundment Licence for Carmoney Water Treatment Works allows up to 55,000 cubic metres of water per day to be abstracted from the River Faughan for the public water supply.

The table below shows the total volume of water abstracted in each of the past five years and to date during 2013, along with the daily average abstraction.

YEAR	Daily Average (cubic meters)	Yearly Total (cubic meters)
2008	24,720	9,022,000
2009	24,130	8,807,000
2010	25,650	9,363,490
2011	23,390	8,536,490
2012	19,420	7,069,260
YTD 2013	17,220	5,441,000

Civil Service Posts: DRD

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Civil Service posts existed in his Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 28012/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The required information for my Department is shown in the tables below.

DRD Posts* at 1 January 2012 by District Council Area

District Council	Analogous Grade Level								Total
	AA	AO	EO2	EO1	SO	DP	Grade 7	Grade 6	
Antrim	6	3	0	9	3	2	0	0	23
Ards	5	3	0	5	1	1	0	0	15
Armagh	8	7	0	13	3	2	0	0	33
Ballymena	22	23	7	42	30	13	5	2	144
Ballymoney	5	1	0	6	1	1	0	0	14
Banbridge	5	1	0	6	1	0	0	0	13
Belfast	80	118	77	102	143	119	50	5	694
Carrickfergus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Castlereagh	17	26	5	71	48	19	6	2	194
Coleraine	21	22	7	40	21	13	6	1	131

District Council	Analogous Grade Level								
	AA	AO	EO2	EO1	SO	DP	Grade 7	Grade 6	Total
Cookstown	10	3	0	12	2	1	0	0	28
Craigavon	27	25	6	45	28	10	4	1	146
Derry	12	6	4	16	6	5	0	0	49
Down	23	29	8	44	23	14	3	1	145
Dungannon	10	5	0	8	3	1	0	0	27
Fermanagh	13	15	1	16	5	2	0	0	52
Larne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lisburn	15	2	0	8	2	1	0	0	28
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moyle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newry & Mourne	12	2	0	8	2	1	0	0	25
Newtownabbey	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
North Down	7	2	0	4	1	1	0	0	15
Omagh	20	36	10	49	34	15	5	1	170
Strabane	7	2	0	6	1	1	0	0	17
Total	327	331	125	512	358	222	79	13	1967

* This includes funded and unfunded vacant posts

DRD Posts* at 1 January 2013 by District Council Area

District Council	Analogous Grade Level								
	AA	AO	EO2	EO1	SO	DP	Grade 7	Grade 6	Total
Antrim	2	7	0	9	3	3	0	0	24
Ards	1	5	0	4	1	1	0	0	12
Armagh	1	11	5	13	2	2	0	0	34
Ballymena	8	29	9	45	28	12	5	1	137
Ballymoney	1	6	0	3	1	1	0	0	12
Banbridge	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	5
Belfast	34	120	89	89	142	119	50	5	648
Carrickfergus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Castlereagh	5	34	4	66	42	15	6	1	173
Coleraine	10	22	9	33	18	12	8	2	114
Cookstown	0	11	0	8	1	1	0	0	21
Craigavon	10	39	11	47	25	12	4	1	149
Derry	4	19	4	23	8	6	0	0	64
Down	16	31	9	40	26	11	3	0	136
Dungannon	0	14	1	10	2	1	0	0	28
Fermanagh	1	22	2	16	4	2	0	0	47
Larne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2

District Council	Analogous Grade Level								
	AA	AO	EO2	EO1	SO	DP	Grade 7	Grade 6	Total
Lisburn	3	12	2	8	2	1	0	0	28
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Moyle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newry & Mourne	1	12	0	8	1	1	0	0	23
Newtownabbey	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
North Down	1	8	0	4	1	1	0	0	15
Omagh	5	42	14	54	34	16	5	1	171
Strabane	0	7	1	6	1	1	0	0	16
Total	103	452	162	493	343	218	81	11	1863

*This includes funded and unfunded vacant posts

DRD: Income-generating Capital Assets

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the income-generating capital assets that were previously earmarked for disposal by the Executive in 2014-15 that will now be retained; (ii) the income they generate; and (iii) how that income is used.

(AQW 28022/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm your understanding of the Executive position but because of the possibility of future reviews, the commercial nature of this matter and potential employment implications I do not think it appropriate to list the assets. I can say they include car parks. The combined income generated by these assets is around £1.54 million which is reinvested within the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

Waste Water: Ballynure

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of times the pumping station at Ballynure Waste Water Treatment Works has used the overflow mechanism into the Sixmilewater River; and what safeguard is in place to ensure it operates during a cut in power.

(AQW 28044/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the emergency overflow discharge pipe at Ballynure Wastewater Pumping Station has operated on 30 occasions during the past year in times of very heavy rainfall when the capacity of the Station has been exceeded. The Station is consented to discharge to the Six Mile Water River in storm conditions and such discharges will contain high volumes of storm water, while the receiving watercourse will generally be fast flowing

The Station does not have a fixed electricity generator, but in the event of a power failure NIW's Control Centre is alerted by its telemetry system and operational staff are quickly deployed to the Station with a mobile generator.

Drainage Network: Ballyclare

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in relation to separating stormwater and sewage drains within the network in Ballyclare.

(AQW 28045/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it expects to commence work on a revised Drainage Area Plan (DAP) for Ballyclare by the end of November 2013, with investment recommendations available by the end of 2014. This follows the completion of a pilot study into storm separation in Ballyclare by the Storm Water Management Group (SMG), which is jointly chaired by my Department and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency of the Department of the Environment.

Implementation of any recommendations will be within NIW's Price Control 2015 period (April 2015 to March 2021) and will depend on the priority given to investment in sewerage infrastructure as set out in my Department's PC15 Social and Environmental Guidance, which is currently out for consultation.

NI Water: Reservoirs

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether NI Water intend to refill the reservoirs in Conlig, Co. Down.

(AQW 28081/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the Upper and Lower reservoirs at Conlig have been drained to allow essential safety work to be undertaken. Work on the Upper reservoir has been completed and the reservoir is currently refilling. Work on the Lower reservoir is almost finished and the reservoir will be refilled on completion. Neither of the reservoirs is in service.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the progress made in the releasing of value from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners; (ii) how this value compares to the anticipated income; and (iii) how the difference is impacting on budgetary planning.

(AQW 28089/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I refer the Member to my previous answer on 21 June 2013 (AQW 24050/11-15). In addition, the £20 million for 2013/14 has been provided in full through the in-year Monitoring rounds.

Hydraulic Fracturing: Water Supplies

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the input from NI Water to the forthcoming Water UK report on the risks of hydraulic fracturing to water supplies.

(AQW 28113/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the report referred to relates to the potential impacts of shale gas fracking on the UK Water Industry and was produced by UKWIR with input from Water UK. NIW had no direct input into the report.

The report provides details of the work both Water UK and UKWIR are doing on this subject and will provide water companies in the United Kingdom, including NIW, with increased knowledge and understanding in terms of any potential risks to water resources in regard to hydraulic fracturing.

Water Consumption: Flushing Options

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of (i) the reduction in water consumption if all dwellings were equipped with toilets with two flushing options; and (ii) offering incentives to households to install toilets with two flushing options.

(AQW 28172/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is well prepared for the incoming winter season and will be able to provide a high standard of service delivery for the salting of roads.

Prior to the start of each winter service period, Roads Service carries out a significant amount of planning to ensure a state of readiness for the coming season. In addition to a number of routine pre-season checks, planning includes ensuring adequate staffing arrangements are in place, including training for new staff, where required, and ensuring all winter service equipment is in working order. Every night, from the end of October 2013 until the middle of April 2014, Roads Service will have almost 300 people on standby ready to salt main roads, helping drivers across Northern Ireland cope with the wintry conditions.

At the start of this season, Roads Service salt barns were at full capacity, with stocks in excess of 70,000 tonnes. Additional salt stock resilience, totalling 38,100 tonnes, is held at six strategic locations throughout Northern Ireland. The current Winter Service salt contract also provides for the supply of a further 15,000 tonnes per month from October 2013 to April 2014, if required.

During periods of heavy rainfall, my Department's primary objective is to deal with the impact of roads-related flooding caused by blocked or overwhelmed infrastructure, such as gullies or other road drainage systems, for which it has responsibility. I am satisfied sufficient quantities of sandbags are in store for emergency purposes and, in line with current policy, my officials will continue to assist other bodies deal with flooding incidents. This includes, for example, the prompt deployment of sandbags, particularly where properties are at risk of flooding.

Members of the public with concerns about flooding can contact the Flooding Incident Line on 0300 2000 100. This service provides a single number to report serious flooding and is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

NI Water: Burst Pipes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the advice and assistance provided by NI Water to domestic customers regarding the prevention of burst pipes during winter.

(AQW 28232/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it's 'Beat the Freeze' advertising campaign was launched on 1 October 2013 and will run until February 2014. 'Beat the Freeze' leaflets providing advice on how to prevent and deal with burst pipes, are currently being delivered to every home and business in Northern Ireland. In addition, the first phase of an extensive media advertising campaign consisting of television adverts, radio, online and print media, as well as outdoor advertising on buses and billboards, has already commenced. An extensive stakeholder and public relations

campaign has been running alongside the advertising campaign, with NIW staff in attendance at a number of public facing events run by local councils and voluntary organisations.

NI Water: Burst Pipes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost to repair burst mains pipes, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 28233/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the cost of repairing broken, leaking or burst water mains pipes in each of the last three years is as detailed in the table below:

Financial Year	Cost (£million)
2010/11	6.4
2011/12	6.3
2012/13	5.5

NI Water: Reservoirs

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of disused reservoirs.

(AQW 28234/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that there are 22 impounding reservoirs under public ownership which are not currently in use. These are as detailed in the table below.

Reservoir	Location
Lough Cowey	Portaferry
Quolie Upper	Broughshane
Quolie Lower	Broughshane
Craigahullier	Portrush
Portavo	Donaghadee
Ballyversall	Coleraine
Boomers	Lisburn
Ballydoolagh	Enniskillen
Stoneyford	Lisburn
Crieghtons Green	Craigantlet
Ballysallagh Upper	Craigantlet
Ballysallagh Lower	Craigantlet
Conlig Upper	Conlig
Conlig Lower	Conlig
Church Road	Holywood
Knockbracken	Carryduff
Dunalis	Macosquin
Killea	Londonderry
Leathemstown	Dundrod
Cappagh	Dungannon
Altmore	Pomeroy
Lough Money	Downpatrick

NI Water: Complaints

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of complaints lodged against NI Water, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 28235/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the number of complaints lodged against the company, in each of the last three years, is as detailed in the table below:

Year	Number of Complaints
2010/11	4,327
2011/12	2,340
2012/13	3,173

Translink: Privatisation

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development what impact the privatisation of Translink would have on the public transport bus network in North Antrim.

(AQO 5017/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have no plans to privatise the bus network provided by Translink in North Antrim or anywhere else. The current system is characterised by a comprehensive and stable network of public transport services across most main roads in Northern Ireland, provided at relatively low fares which have not risen in real terms over the past eight years. I believe that privatisation would jeopardise this.

The public transport system here is regulated. This means that Translink cannot stop running services or increase fares without my approval. This provides passengers, many of whom cannot afford to run a car, with significant protection that is not available in most other areas of the UK. It also means that I require Translink to use the revenue from the profitable routes to help subsidise the more rural routes that have lower passenger volumes. This is illustrated by the situation in the Ballymena district where only 18 out of 43 routes made a net profit. Similarly, in the Coleraine district only 23 out of 60 routes made a net profit.

As a result of these restrictions, it is unlikely that there would be any interest by private operators in running the services. Therefore, talk of competition and privatisation is a distraction from the more important work of continuously trying to improve the standards of existing services and integrating them within the Translink network and with other publicly-funded passenger services.

Roads: Republic of Ireland Funding

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has received any information that finance from the Republic of Ireland Government will be forthcoming for roads projects in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 5023/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As the Member will be aware, the Irish Government committed £400million to the development of the A5 and A8 dual carriageway projects being taken forward by my Department, with payments linked to progress on the A5 scheme. In February 2012, this commitment was revised to £25million annually in 2015 and 2016 due to prevailing financial circumstances, with further commitments to be reviewed through the Irish Government's Budget Planning process and North South Ministerial Council Transport Meetings.

I have not received any information in relation to funding for road schemes other than the A5 and A8.

Water Abstraction: River Faughan

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the percentage of Londonderry's water supply that was supplied by water abstracted from the River Faughan, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 28401/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the percentage of water supplied to the Londonderry area during the past five years, by water abstracted from the River Faughan, is as detailed in the table below:

Year	%
2008/09	54
2009/10	57
2010/11	60
2011/12	60

Year	%
2012/13	63

Road Safety: Junctions

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria for changing the layout of a road junction where there are concerns over the potential for road traffic accidents.

(AQO 5021/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Member will agree one fatality on our roads is one too many, however, despite difficult budgetary allocations, my Department has invested, through a targeted collision remedial programme, approx £3.5million since I came to office in May 2011. This has made a valuable contribution towards significantly reducing fatal and serious collisions to record low levels.

Evidence indicates that collisions are now occurring at increasingly random locations, and the focus is now turning towards treating routes instead of individual sites, such as at junctions.

My Department takes into account a range of factors when considering if changes to the layout of a road junction are necessary.

Following each road traffic collision involving personal injury, my officials receive and analyse accident reports prepared by the PSNI that will highlight the specific circumstances and any contributing factors. If, for example, it is considered the layout of the junction was a causation factor, and especially in those instances where there is a previous history of collisions at the location or on that particular route, my officials will develop scheme proposals which will consider a range of potential measures, including engineering measures such as a revised junction layout.

Priority is given to those sites where accidents have occurred most frequently or with the most significant impact and subject to completion of the necessary statutory procedures, schemes are progressed on the basis of the available budget for such works.

Urban Clearway: South Belfast

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the trial period for relaxing the urban clearway restrictions on the Lisburn Road, Malone Road and Stranmillis Road in South Belfast.

(AQO 5022/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I met with traders from the Lisburn Road in Belfast and, in an attempt to improve local trading conditions, I decided to relax some of the existing urban clearway restrictions.

The experimental relaxation of the existing urban clearway restrictions changes the hours of operation along the following lengths of road:

- Upper Lisburn Road/Lisburn Road, from Black's Road to Malone Avenue;
- Malone Road, from Upper Malone Road to University Road; and
- Stranmillis Road, from the roundabout at the Embankment to University Road.

At present, those roads are subject to urban clearway restrictions in both the morning (8.00 am to 9.30am) and afternoon (4.30pm – 6.00pm) periods. The proposal is to amend the times of operation such that they will apply in a 'tidal' fashion, with the restriction being removed from the 'out-of-town' side of the road in the mornings, and from the 'into-town' side of the road in the evenings.

My Department now proposes to proceed with the signing and sealing of the Direction Order for the making of the experimental scheme and publication of a Notice stating the scheme has been made.

Officials plan to amend the existing urban clearway signage along these routes and erect temporary driver information signs on Sunday 24 November 2013, with a view to the trial commencing on the following day - Monday 25 November.

A2: Shore Road Scheme

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A2 Shore Road Scheme at Greenisland.

(AQO 5024/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to advise work is now well underway on the A2 Shore Road scheme at Greenisland. The contract is almost 40 weeks into a very tight 120 week programme which involves upgrading, to dual carriageway standard, some 3.5 kilometres of the A2 between Jordanstown Road and Seapark. Improvements will also include four new roundabouts at Shore Avenue; Shorelands; Station Road, Greenisland; and Seapark.

To date, the site has been cleared and excavation of earthworks has been carried out. A number of retaining walls and a bridge are currently being constructed. Work is ongoing to Utility services and accommodation works at many adjacent properties.

When I visited the site at the end of August, I was very impressed with the rate of progress. At that time an extensive programme of works within the Belfast High School grounds and at the University of Ulster access had been completed over the summer holiday period.

I am pleased to be able to confirm the scheme is on schedule for completion in summer 2015.

Cycling

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to promote cycling.
(AQO 5025/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has been actively involved in promoting cycling over many years and this has been carried forward by a number of different business units. In order to focus and re-double this work I have established a Cycling Unit in my Department. I have given it responsibility for co-ordinating all cycling issues and for ensuring that cycling provision is a key element in both transport strategy and delivery. It will also work with other interested stakeholders to develop a robust and sustainable strategy and cycling policies.

There are three specific initiatives that my Department is working on that are aimed at promoting cycling. Firstly, there is the Action Plan for Active Travel that I launched at the beginning of August. Contributions to the Action Plan come from eight Departments, nineteen local Councils and a number of other interested stakeholders, including Sustrans and Outdoor Recreation NI. The Plan covers the period up to 2015 and sets out measures to be taken by government Departments, local authorities and voluntary bodies to encourage more cycling and walking and less dependency on private cars.

Secondly, the Active School Travel Programme will provide a programme of cycling and walking skills training and awareness to pupils in 180 schools across Northern Ireland over a three year period in pursuit of the Programme for Government commitment. The objective is to encourage more school pupils to adopt cycling and walking as their main mode of transport to and from school.

Thirdly, I anticipate that hosting the Grande Partenza of the Giro d'Italia in Northern Ireland in May next year will provide a major boost to all forms of cycling and I will seek to ensure that my Department avails of this opportunity to promote cycling and to ensure a legacy that includes more use of cycling as a means of transport particularly to work and to school.

Finally, my Department will continue to promote cycling through its Travelwise initiative.

A1: Speed Restrictions

Mr Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development, given that Roads Service is planning to close off the central reservation on the A1 from Hillsborough to Banbridge, whether he is planning to lift the speed restrictions at Dromore and Banbridge which were introduced to improve safety issues along this stretch of roadway at minor junctions.
(AQO 5026/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm my Department is developing plans to provide flyover/underpass type improvements at four locations on the A1 and a north-bound on-slip at Castlewellan Road, Banbridge. The project also includes the provision of a continuous central safety barrier and closing up of all the gaps in the central median between Hillsborough and Loughbrickland.

Whilst I anticipate a preferred option for this proposal could be selected around the end of 2013, there is a considerable amount of work still to be completed before work can commence on site.

I can confirm informal reviews of the speed limits were carried out by the PSNI and my officials earlier this month. Whilst there have been significant improvements to the infrastructure on the A1, it has been concluded, given the number and frequency of crossing points that are still present and in the interests of road safety, the 60mph limit, along those sections of the A1 to which it currently applies, should remain in place at this time.

This position will be reviewed periodically, as work on the proposed A1 Junctions Phase 2 scheme progresses, however, I am sure Members will agree with me that road safety must take precedence over traffic progression.

Roads: Vehicle Damage Compensation

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development what was the amount paid out in compensation to motorists, for damage caused to their vehicles by potholes and poor road surfaces, over the last four financial years.
(AQO 5027/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Separate information on compensation paid out for damage caused to vehicles arising from pot holes and poor road surfaces is not available. However, details of all vehicle damage compensation paid out, in each of the last four financial years, are provided in the table below. It should be noted compensation may not be paid out in the financial year the claim was lodged.

Vehicle Damage Compensation

Financial Year	Amount
2009/2010	£214,759.27
2010/2011	£313,912.12

Financial Year	Amount
2011/2012	£345,754.15
2012/2013	£127,811.67

A5 Western Transport Corridor: Public Consultation

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the dates for commencing the public consultations on the EU Habitats Directive appropriate assessment and the Addendum to the Environmental Statement in respect of the A5 Western Transport Corridor.

(AQO 5028/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During my predecessor's time, a decision was taken not to carry out full appropriate assessments on the potential impacts on the various designated sites arising out of the A5 Western Transport Corridor (WTC) project. We are now dealing with the consequences of that decision.

There are four reports currently being developed to inform Habitats Regulations Assessments of the potential impacts on those various designated sites, on which it is proposed consultation will commence in spring 2014.

In order to comply with the Judgement, my Department needs to proceed carefully. Therefore, the issues and timing associated with updating the Environmental Statement are still being considered and developed and it is not possible to finalise a programme, at this time.

Department for Social Development

Employment and Support Allowance: Helpline

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of unanswered calls received by the Employment Support Allowance Helpline in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 27724/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The latest published statistical information for Employment and Support Allowance covers the period ending 31 May 2013.

During the previous twelve month period (June 2012 to May 2013) the Employment and Support Allowance Centre enquiry line (0845) offered 306,408 calls. A total of 282,481 calls were answered (92%). The number of abandoned calls during this period was 23,927 (8%).

The table below provides a monthly breakdown of the information requested.

Month	Calls Offered	Calls Unanswered	Calls Answered	Response Rate
Jun 12	23,074	1,795	21,279	92%
Jul 12	23,157	1,785	21,372	92%
Aug 12	26,676	1,989	24,687	93%
Sept 12	24,624	1,881	22,743	92%
Oct 12	29,823	2,232	27,591	93%
Nov 12	24,761	1,968	22,793	92%
Dec 12	20,479	1,558	18,921	92%
Jan 13	28,856	2,155	26,701	93%
Feb 13	24,677	2,006	22,671	92%
Mar 13	26,605	2,111	24,494	92%
Apr 13	27,274	2,328	24,946	91%
May 13	26,402	2,119	24,283	92%
Total	306,408	23,927	282,481	92%

Social Housing: Schemes Purchased

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the social housing schemes purchased off the shelf by housing associations since 2007, including (i) the number of purchases; and (ii) the main developer or contractor in each purchase, broken down by the housing association involved.

(AQW 27780/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The table attached details the number of off the shelf purchases by Housing Associations for social housing during the period 2007/08–2012/13. The Housing Executive advises that the developer/ contractor column has been compiled from information recorded from Site Registration submissions from Housing Associations, but advise that Housing Associations often respond 'Not Known' or leave this field blank because in most instances they are dealing directly with a selling agent.

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Developer	
2007/08	Helm	Bellevue Manor, Lisburn	19	NA	
	Helm	1-3 Thorndale Avenue, Belfast	6	NA	
	Clanmil	Beechlands, Carnlough	6	NA	
	Clanmil	Causeway Meadows, Lisburn	22	NA	
	Clanmil	Maple Villas, Springfield Road, Belfast	16	NA	
	Clanmil	Springfield Mill, Springfield Road, Belfast	9	NA	
	Dungannon & District	Millview, Manor, Dungannon	29	NA	
	Fold	162-172 Antrim Road, Belfast	16	NA	
	Fold	293 Antrim Road, Belfast	8	NA	
	Fold	34 Cliftonville Road, Belfast	9	NA	
	Fold	45 Cliftonville Road, Belfast	15	NA	
	Fold	Carvill Site, Annadale, Belfast	50	NA	
	Habinteg	Lawnbrook Avenue, Shankill Road, Belfast	6	NA	
	Habinteg	Mill Road, Bawnmore	8	NA	
	Habinteg	23 Thorndale Avenue, Belfast	3	NA	
	Habinteg	8 Glandore Avenue, Belfast	5	NA	
	South Ulster	Springmartin, Martins Lane, Newry	23	NA	
	South Ulster	Gilpin Mews, Old Portadown Road, Lurgan	20	NA	
		Total 2007/08		270	
	2008/09	Belfast Community	Carrickvale Manor, Lurgan	10	NA
Belfast Community		Glenbryn Park, Belfast	7	NA	
Helm		Chequer Hill, Armagh Road, Newry	33	NA	
Helm		29-31 Beechmount Avenue, Belfast (DPF)	5	NA	
Clanmil		Pottingers Quay, Belfast	27	NA	
Clanmil		Church Lane, High Street, Donaghadee	6	NA	
Clanmil		Glenwood, Newtownards	7	NA	
Clanmil		Foxhill, Derry	5	NA	
Clanmil		The Bush, Dungannon	6	NA	
Clanmil		Wolfhill Manor, Ligoniel Road, North Belfast	8	Templeton Robinson	
Clanmil		Sydney Street West, Belfast	4	NA	
Clanmil		11 Atlantic Avenue, Belfast	3		
Clanmil		Grange Meadows, Kilkeel	8	NA	

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Developer
	Connswater	Trinity Place, Lisburn	15	
	Fold	Fairy Glen, Crossmaglen	18	NA
	Fold	Upritchard Court, Bloomfield Road, Bangor	14	NA
	Habinteg	Clanrye Avenue, Newry	7	NA
	Habinteg	17 Milltown, Dungannon	6	NA
	Habinteg	Slatequarry Road, Cullyhanna, Newry	6	NA
	Habinteg	Ard Grange, Derry	14	NA
	Newington	124-126 Antrim Road, Belfast	6	NA
	Oaklee	7a Glen Road, Derry City	6	
	Oaklee	Antrim Road, Belfast	6	NA
	Oaklee	Throne Retail Park, Whitewell Road, Belfast	11	NA
	Rural	Culowen, Blackwatertown, Co Armagh	6	NA
	Rural	7&8 Beech Tree Lane, Tempo	2	NA
	South Ulster	Mark Street, Lurgan	22	NA
	South Ulster	The Hollows, New Mills, Dungannon (DPF)	9	NA
	Triangle	107a North Road, Belfast	8	NA
	Triangle	Station Road, Dunloy	4	NA
	Ulidia	The Ferns, Rostrevor Road, Hilltown, Newry	10	NA
	Total 2008/09		299	
2009/10	Belfast Community	Carrickvale Manor, Lurgan	6	NA
	Clanmil	Old Bleach Green, Banbridge	8	NA
	Clanmil	Woodbrook Phase 1, Lisburn	7	NA
	Clanmil	Woodbrook Phase 2, Lisburn	10	NA
	Clanmil	Sherman Court, Derry	18	NA
	Clanmil	Curzon Cinema Site, Belfast	42	NA
	Clanmil	Sydney Street West, Phase 2, Belfast (DPF)	4	NA
	Dungannon & District	Gortin Park, Dungannon	4	
	Dungannon & District	Annabeg Park South, Dungannon	2	
	Dungannon & District	Ballygawley Road, Dungannon	5	
	Dungannon & District	Diamond Court, Moy	5	
	Dungannon & District	Lisnaree, Dungannon	4	
	Dungannon & District	Lurgaboy Lane, Dungannon	8	
	Dungannon & District	Milestone, Dungannon	5	
	Dungannon & District	Millview Manor, Phase 3, Coalisland	6	
	Filor*	1 Lawnbrook Square/Avenue, Belfast (DPF)	1	
	Fold	Dunanney Avenue, Rathcoole	37	NA
	Fold	The Square, Clough	8	NA
	Fold	Clonard Gardens, Belfast	11	NA
	Fold	37-41 Camden Street, Belfast	9	NA

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Developer
	Habinteg	1-3 Jubilee Court, Jubilee Road, Dromore	3	NA
	Helm Housing	Bartley's Wood, Ballywalter	14	Dunlop Homes
	Helm Housing	Crossan Court, Lisburn (DPF)	6	
	Helm Housing	Chequer Hill, Phase 2, Armagh Road, Newry	5	O'Hagan Property Group
	Helm Housing	Peggy's Loaning, Banbridge	60	
	Apex Housing	Springtown Road, Derry	23	NA
	Apex Housing	Swilly Park, Portstewart	23	NA
	Apex Housing	Ashdene, Dungannon	11	
	Apex Housing	Dungannon/Coalisland OTS Purchases	11	
	Apex Housing	Lurgaboy Lane, Dungannon	12	Connelly & Fee
	Apex Housing	Millview Manor, Phase 2, Coalisland	24	
	Oaklee	99-103 Henderson Avenue, Belfast	3	NA
	Oaklee	Knocknagreana, Upper Dromore Road, Warrenpoint	12	NA
	Oaklee	Oakfield Court, Tempo Road, Enniskillen	10	NA
	Rural	Aghagay Meadows Phase 1, Newtownbutler	4	
	Rural	Millvale Close, Annaclone	6	
	South Ulster	Gilpins Mews, Old Portadown Road, Lurgan	5	NA
	Triangle	Greenhall Highway, Coleraine	20	NA
	Triangle	Chapel View, Bellaghy, Phase 1	3	NK Construction
	Triangle	Chapel View, Bellaghy Phase 2	3	NK Construction
	Triangle	Churchfields, Rasharkin	4	Topaz
	Ulidia	Maloon Manor, Cookstown	5	NA
	Total 2009/10		467	
2010/11	Apex Housing	Bramblewood, Dungannon	11	GMAC Properties
	Apex Housing	Tudor/Shankill OTS	5	
	Apex Housing	Ballycanice Close, Eglinton	4	NA
	Apex Housing	Lenamore Gardens/Leafair Park, Derry	2	NA
	Apex Housing	Forthglen, Cookstown	2	JJ McMahon Builders
	Apex Housing	Forthglen Phase 2, Cookstown	2	JJ McMahon Builders
	Apex Housing	Tobermore Road, Draperstown, Phase 2	17	
	Apex Housing	Workspace, Tobermore Road, Draperstown	6	
	Clanmil	Abbey Row, Main Street, Greyabbey	3	C/o Reeds Rains

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Developer
	Clanmil	81 Castle Meadows, Cloughey	1	P&J McCullough
	Clanmil	Glenview, Glenavy Road, Lisburn	2	Lester Contrsuction
	Clanmil	McBriar Meadows, Main Street, Carrowdore	4	NA
	Clanmil	Ringbouy Cove, Cloughey	2	Higginson Homes
	Clanmil	St Marks, Thomas Street, Newtownards	3	C/o Reeds Rains
	Clanmil	6-12 Whitewell Road, Belfast	15	TAL Ltd
	Clanmil	Woodbrook Phase 3, Lisburn	8	
	Fold	Dufferin Avenue, Bangor	6	NA
	Fold	Springfield Heights, Belfast Phase 1	16	McFeeley Group
	Fold	Upritchard Gardens, Bangor	9	New Quay
	Helm Housing	75-77 Cliftonville Road	6	NA
	Helm Housing	Rosnareen OTS Belfast	2	Mr P Walsh
	Helm Housing	Linen Hall Street, Banbridge	7	Stevenson & Cummings
	Newington/Filor	Delaware Building 119 Limestone Road, Belfast	22	NA
	Oaklee	93 to 105 Great Victoria Street, Belfast	58	Russell Simpson Construction
	Oaklee	Brookfield Meadows, Peggy's Loaning, Banbridge	16	G McGreevy Construction
	Oaklee	Riverside Meadows, Ballynahinch	36	Nevada Properties
	Oaklee	5-21 Beechmount Avenue, Belfast	15	NA
	Oaklee	94-96 Woodland Park, Lisburn	15	NA
	Oaklee	1-5 Fedorna Heights, Poyntzpass	5	NA
	Rural	EGLISH Road, EGLISH, Armagh	6	
	South Ulster	Mark Street, Lurgan Phase 2	13	NA
	South Ulster	Ravens Glen, Chancellors Road, Newry	13	Enda Boylan
	South Ulster	The Demesne, Carnagat, Newry	20	John Rogers
	South Ulster	Fifth Avenue, Derrybeg, Newry	8	E Kelly
	South Ulster	Moorfield Court, Moor Road, Kilkeel	7	Kelly Brothers
	Ulidia	The Moorings, Killyleagh	16	O'Hagan Property Group
	Apex Housing	21 & 22 Gortin Crescent	2	Kieran Gallagher
	South Ulster	Oliver Plunkett Park, Newry	2	NA
	Oaklee	Hosford House/Skainos, Belfast	13	
	Total 2010/11		400	

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Developer
2011/12	Apex Housing	Killyman Road, Dungannon	6	
	Apex Housing	Aghagay Meadows, Newtownbutler	3	Darren Chapman
	Clanmil	Redwoods, Dunmurry	45	McAleer & Rushe
	Connswater	Ashely Park, Dunmurry	6	Sean Kelly
	Connswater	Glenavy Gardens, Lisburn	4	Lisburn Community Self Build
	Fold	Mill Road, Bawnmore (Ben Madigan)	55	NA
	Fold	2B Killinchy Road, Comber	12	Patterson Miller
	Fold	Carnmoney Court, Eglinton	6	Gerry Heaney
	Fold	Glenabbey, Skeoge Road, Derry	22	Braidwater
	Fold	Glenabbey, Skeoge Road, Derry Phase 2	23	Braidwater
	Oaklee	College Court Central, Belfast	31	Gareth Graham
	Oaklee	Greyabbey Road, Ballywalter	6	Dunlop Homes
	South Ulster	Burren Road, Warrenpoint	12	Kelly Brothers
	South Ulster	Hillcrest, Lurgan	7	NA
	South Ulster	The Demesne, Carnagat Phase 3, Newry	12	John Rogers
	South Ulster	5 Abbey Manor, Lurgan	1	G Reynolds
	South Ulster	169 Banbridge Road, Kinallen	4	Samual Clinghan
	South Ulster	Carnagat, Newry	20	B&D Property Services
	Total 2011/12		275	
2012/13	Habinteg	Moorelands, 86 Andersonstown Road	2	TDR Commercial Property
	Oaklee	Barcroft, Hillside, Newry	5	
	Apex Housing	Bull's Hill, Newry	4	EDB Properties
	Apex Housing	Burren Road, Warrenpoint	14	Kelly Brothers
	Apex Housing	Salter's Bridge, Magherafelt	8	Joe McGinnis
	Apex Housing	Gortevin, Coalisland	12	G&V Construction
	Apex Housing	Gortgonis, Coalisland	4	G&V Construction
	Apex Housing	1A & 1B Aileen Terrace, Newry	2	EDB Properties

Year	Housing Association	Scheme Name	Units	Developer
	Clanmil	33-35 Templemore Avenue, Belfast	2	Habitat for Humanity
	Clanmil	The Demesne, Carnagat Road, Newry	18	Bill Davidson
	Fold	Peters Court, Newry	8	Alan Fitzpatrick Developments
	Oaklee	Riverview Quarter, Dromore Street, Ballynahinch	4	via Agents
	Oaklee	Cloona Glen, Upper Dunmurry Lane	21	Bill Davidson
	Oaklee	Glenville Mews, Whiteabbey	6	Barry Owens
	Oaklee	Throne Retail Apartments, Whitewell Road, Belfast	20	NA
	Total 2012/13		130	

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.

Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage of Employment Support Allowance appeal applications have been successful in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27807/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The chairman of the Tribunal records whether the decision made on appeal was either more or less advantageous than a previous decision. A more advantageous decision may increase the allowance or direct that a new award be made. A less advantageous decision may reduce the allowance or make no change to the original determination.

The table below details, for each of the last three financial years, the number of Employment and Support Allowance appeals which received a final determination/outcome and percentage which were more advantageous.

Year	Final Outcome	Number more Advantageous	Percentage more Advantageous
2010/11	5035	1461	29%
2011/12	6318	2193	35%
2012/13	8559	2855	33%

Social Housing Newbuilds: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any plans for social housing new builds in North Down.

(AQW 27809/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Table attached details the social housing new builds that are currently programmed to be delivered within North Down over the period 2013/14 – 2015/16.

The Social Housing Development Programme is managed on the basis of a three year rolling programme. The Housing Executive is currently in the process of formulating the new draft Social Housing Development Programme for the period 2014/15 – 2016/17 which subject to my approval will be published on the Housing Executive's website early in 2014.

Year	Association	Scheme/ Location	Units	Needs Group
2013/14	Clanmil	117A Donaghadee Road/ 7 Summerhill Park, Bangor	10	General Needs
	Clanmil	South Circular Road, Extension, Bangor	4	General Needs
	Helm Housing	22 Croft Road, Hollywood	20	General Needs
	Oaklee	Clifton Special Care School, Old Belfast Road, Bangor	106	General Needs

Year	Association	Scheme/ Location	Units	Needs Group
	Trinity	78 Rathgael Road, Bangor	6	General Needs
		Total	146	
2014/15	Ark	North Down Older People, Ravara, Bangor	24	Elderly Housing with Care
	Clanmil	Corner of Faulkner Road/Clandeboyne Road, Bangor	54	General Needs
	Habinteg	34-36 Bangor Road, Holywood	8	General Needs
	NIHE	Rathgill Greenfield, Phase 1 Site A	100	General Needs
	NIHE	Rathgill, Phase 2, Bangor	50	General Needs
	Triangle	PSNI Site, 5 Millisle Road, Donaghadee	10	General Needs
	Trinity	West Church, Bangor	18	General Needs
		Total	264	
2015/16	Apex Housing	Killoughey Road, Donaghadee	24	General Needs
	Apex Housing	Moss Road, Millisle, Phase 2	3	General Needs
	Fold	122-124 High Street, Holywood	18	General Needs
	Fold	High Bangor Road, Donaghadee	12	General Needs
	Fold	Rathgael Road/ Clandeboyne Road, Bangor	30	General Needs
	NIHE	Kilclief Gardens, Bangor	13	General Needs
			Total	100

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.

Disability Living Allowance: Appeals

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage of Disability Living Allowance appeals were upheld in each of the last three years.

(AQW 27810/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Chairman of the Tribunal records whether the decision made on appeal was either more or less advantageous than a previous decision. A more advantageous decision may increase the allowance or direct that a new award may be made. A less advantageous decision may reduce the allowance or make no change to the original determination.

The table below details, for each of the last three financial years, the number of Disability Living Allowance appeals that have received a final determination/outcome, how many and the percentage which were more advantageous.

YEAR	Number of Appeals with a final outcome	Number More Advantageous	Percentage More Advantageous
2010/11	4607	1651	36%
2011/12	3826	1511	39%
2012/13	3819	1395	37%

Disability Living Allowance/Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what is the annual cost of providing transport for (i) Disability Living Allowance; and (ii) Employment and Support Allowance appeals.

(AQW 27813/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The annual cost to The Appeals Service in providing transport for Disability Living Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance appeals during the period April 2012 to March 2013 is detailed in the table below:

	DLA	ESA
April 2012 –March 2013	£343.58	£896.30

Houses of Multiple Occupancy: Antisocial Behaviour

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 720/11, (i) what were his Department's findings from their review of the Houses of Multiple Occupancy registration scheme, in respect of addressing and managing anti-social behaviour; and (ii) whether any subsequent recommendations have been implemented.

(AQW 27834/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development undertook a review of Houses in Multiple Occupation regulation in 2011/12. This concluded that the current HMO definition and regulatory controls, including those for anti-social behaviour, were inadequate. Consultation on a new regime of HMO control took place in late 2012 and my officials reported the outcome of that exercise to the Social Development Committee on 25 April 2013. Since then officials have been developing proposals which include a new HMO definition, mandatory and discretionary licensing schemes for HMOs and updated physical and management standards, which will include anti-social occupancy clauses. This work is included in my "Facing the Future Housing Strategy" and is timetabled for completion in 2015/16.

Houses of Multiple Occupancy: Antisocial Behaviour

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 720/11, (i) what special control provisions to address anti-social behaviour, contained within the Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) registration scheme, have been employed in the Holylands area of south Belfast; (ii) on how many occasions have these controls been used; and (iii) how many HMO registrations have been revoked as a result of failing to adhere to the conditions on anti-social behaviour imposed by the Housing Executive.

(AQW 27835/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive is responsible for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) regulation and enforcement. The Housing (NI) Order 2003 allows the Housing Executive to apply Special Control Provisions (SCPs) to prevent HMOs from adversely affecting the amenity or the character of an area, due either to the behaviour of an HMO's residents or the existence of an HMO.

SCPs can only be applied to individual properties if the owner/manager has failed to take reasonable steps to abate the nuisance. Under the current statutory registration scheme, the Fitzroy area in Belfast is the only designated SCP area.

The Housing Executive has advised me it has neither applied SCP provisions nor had reason to revoke any HMO registration, as any nuisance has been resolved through, for example, ongoing action of Police, Belfast City Council and the Landlords.

Boiler Replacement Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what differences exist in the eligibility and financial assessment rules of the boiler replacement scheme compared with the rest of the UK.

(AQW 27847/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Boiler Replacement Scheme is currently the only Government grant funded scheme in Great Britain to replace boilers and is unique to Northern Ireland. Therefore differences in financial assessments and rules cannot be made with elsewhere in the UK.

In the UK, there is an Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme which is funded by the energy/utility companies to help UK households lower their energy bills by becoming more energy efficient. However this is not a Government funded scheme. Under ECO scheme some customers may be eligible for a boiler replacement/repair under if they are in receipt of certain benefits. However to meet their obligation targets, energy companies are free to decide how best to deliver this obligation across the UK as a whole, in a way that limits the costs to all consumers.

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.

Housing Executive: Contractors

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 27042/11-15, whether there is no documentation in the possession of his Department upon which he based his statement to the Assembly on 10 June 2013 that four contractors had overcharged the Northern Ireland Housing Executive by £18m.

(AQW 27848/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I would refer the Member to the answer I gave in AQW 27042/11-15.

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas: Funding

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the level of funding allocated to; and (ii) the per capita spend in, each Neighbourhood Renewal area in the 2012/13 financial year.

(AQW 27896/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The tables below details funding allocated to, and the per capita spend in each Neighbourhood Renewal Area in the 2012/13 financial year. They provide:

- the level of capital funding,
- the level of revenue funding and
- the combined level of capital and revenue funding.

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	2011 Census Population	Total Capital Spend	Total Capital Spend Per Capita
Andersonstown	8,952	£1,343,147.96	£150.04
Colin	18,557	£189,216.53	£10.20
Crumlin/Ardoyne	14,493	£248,620.90	£17.15
Greater Falls	16,877	£1,254,757.91	£74.35
Greater Shankill	18,089	£1,297,800.51	£71.75
Inner East	23,799	£4,450,719.25	£187.01
Inner North	12,444	£249,208.79	£20.03
Inner South	8,688	£830,462.42	£95.59
Lenadoon	2,329	£185,300.65	£79.56
Ligoniel	7,897	£242,584.14	£30.72
Rathcoole	7,408	£27,967.33	£3.78
South West	6,369	£39,204.45	£6.16
Tullycarnet	2,092	£8,348.18	£3.99
Upper Ardoyne/Ballysillan	3,051	£533,248.83	£174.78
Upper Springfield/Whiterock	11,327	£16,412.86	£1.45
BRO Total	162,372	£10,917,000.71	£67.23
Triax	16,109	£3,833,136.00	£237.95
Outer North	15,255	£469,186.00	£30.76
Outer West	8,640	£147,801.00	£17.11
Strabane	5,583	£361,000.00	£64.66
Waterside	9,577	£1,342,481.00	£140.18
Limavady	2,364	£0.00	£0.00
NWDO Total	57,528	£6,153,604	£106.97
Armagh	5,372	£149,995.56	£27.92
Ballyclare	1,247	£0.00	£0.00
Ballymena	4,199	£264,564.09	£63.01
Bangor	2,644	£229,051.91	£86.63
Brownlow	8,658	£257,438.77	£29.73
Coalisland	2,681	£71,364.09	£26.62
Coleraine	6,394	£262,452.06	£41.05
Downpatrick	6,080	£202,120.75	£33.24
Dungannon	1,575	£0.00	£0.00
Enniskillen	3,115	£531,078.50	£170.49
Lurgan	8,919	£305,291.70	£34.23
Newry	10,559	£640,893.58	£60.70
NW Portadown	2,704	£308,961.05	£114.26
Omagh	2,594	£551,217.61	£212.50
RDO Total	66,741	£3,774,429.67	£56.55

Notes:

1. Figures include; Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund capital expenditure, expenditure from physical regeneration programmes (Urban Development Grants, Comprehensive Development, Environmental Improvements Schemes and Public Realm).
2. Caution is advised in making comparisons of expenditure across Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. The expenditure is influenced by factors such as; the population of the area, the historic expenditure and/ or proposed capital investment in an area from other initiatives or mainstream sources, geographical location and proximity to existing services and the needs identified in Action Plans. Some NRA's encompass their city centre or town centre and this has a significant impact on the level of expenditure reported for those areas.

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	2011 Census Population	Total Revenue Spend	Total Revenue Spend Per Capita
Andersonstown	8,952	£423,044.83	£47.26
Colin	18,557	£1,036,591.21	£55.86
Crumlin/Ardoyne	14,493	£1,048,854.85	£72.37
Greater Falls	16,877	£889,907.74	£52.73
Greater Shankill	18,089	£1,513,435.69	£83.67
Inner East	23,799	£860,113.34	£36.14
Inner North	12,444	£820,481.69	£65.93
Inner South	8,688	£447,715.04	£51.53
Lenadoon	2,329	£481,712.43	£206.83
Ligoniel	7,897	£180,474.54	£22.85
Rathcoole	7,408	£389,601.55	£52.59
South West	6,369	£694,603.23	£109.06
Tullycarnet	2,092	£341,350.02	£163.17
Upper Ardoyne/Ballysillan	3,051	£255,100.81	£83.61
Upper Springfield/Whiterock	11,327	£1,098,210.52	£96.96
BRO Total	162,372	£10,481,197.49	£64.55
Triax	16,109	£1,140,000.00	£70.77
Outer North	15,255	£855,000.00	£56.05
Outer West	8,640	£631,000.00	£73.03
Strabane	5,583	£463,000.00	£82.93
Waterside	9,577	£685,000.00	£71.53
Limavady	2,364	£197,000.00	£83.33
NWDO Total	57,528	£3,971,000.00	£69.03
Armagh	5,372	£391,322.74	£72.84
Ballyclare	1,247	£29,550.90	£23.70
Ballymena	4,199	£428,585.25	£102.07
Bangor	2,644	£270,949.91	£102.48
Brownlow	8,658	£611,037.61	£70.57
Coalisland	2,681	£189,035.57	£70.51
Coleraine	6,394	£369,762.71	£57.83
Downpatrick	6,080	£488,683.82	£80.38
Dungannon	1,575	£332,773.79	£211.28
Enniskillen	3,115	£437,098.13	£140.32
Lurgan	8,919	£685,010.21	£76.80

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	2011 Census Population	Total Revenue Spend	Total Revenue Spend Per Capita
Newry	10,559	£570,310.30	£54.01
NW Portadown	2,704	£214,198.37	£79.22
Omagh	2,594	£381,777.22	£147.18
RDO Total	66,741	£5,400,096.53	£80.91

Notes:

Caution is advised in making comparisons of expenditure across Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. The expenditure is influenced by factors such as; the population of the area, the historic expenditure in an area, revenue investment in an area from lead Departments or from other initiatives;

and the needs identified in Action Plans.

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	2011 Census Population	Total Spend	Total Spend Per Capita
Andersonstown	8,952	£1,766,192.79	£197.30
Colin	18,557	£1,225,807.74	£66.06
Crumlin/Ardoyne	14,493	£1,297,475.75	£89.52
Greater Falls	16,877	£2,144,665.65	£127.08
Greater Shankill	18,089	£2,811,236.20	£155.41
Inner East	23,799	£5,310,832.59	£223.15
Inner North	12,444	£1,069,690.48	£85.96
Inner South	8,688	£1,278,177.46	£147.12
Lenadoon	2,329	£667,013.08	£286.39
Ligoniel	7,897	£423,058.68	£53.57
Rathcoole	7,408	£417,568.88	£56.37
South West	6,369	£733,807.68	£115.22
Tullycarnet	2,092	£349,698.20	£167.16
Upper Ardoyne/Ballysillan	3,051	£788,349.64	£258.39
Upper Springfield/Whiterock	11,327	£1,114,623.38	£98.40
BRO Total	162,372	£21,398,198.20	£131.79
Triax	16,109	£4,973,136.00	£308.72
Outer North	15,255	£1,324,186.00	£86.80
Outer West	8,640	£778,801.00	£90.14
Strabane	5,583	£824,000.00	£147.59
Waterside	9,577	£2,027,481.00	£211.70
Limavady	2,364	£197,000.00	£83.33
NWDO Total	57,528	£10,124,604.00	£175.99
Armagh	5,372	£541,318.30	£100.77
Ballyclare	1,247	£29,550.90	£23.70
Ballymena	4,199	£693,149.34	£165.07
Bangor	2,644	£500,001.82	£189.11
Brownlow	8,658	£868,476.38	£100.31
Coalisland	2,681	£260,399.66	£97.13
Coleraine	6,394	£632,214.77	£98.88

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	2011 Census Population	Total Spend	Total Spend Per Capita
Downpatrick	6,080	£690,804.57	£113.62
Dungannon	1,575	£332,773.79	£211.28
Enniskillen	3,115	£968,176.63	£310.81
Lurgan	8,919	£990,301.91	£111.03
Newry	10,559	£1,211,203.88	£114.71
NW Portadown	2,704	£523,159.42	£193.48
Omagh	2,594	£932,994.83	£359.67
RDO Total	66,741	£9,174,526.20	£137.46

Notes:

1. Figures include; Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund capital expenditure, expenditure from physical regeneration programmes (Urban Development Grants, Comprehensive Development, Environmental Improvements Schemes and Public Realm).
2. Caution is advised in making comparisons of expenditure across Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. The expenditure is influenced by factors such as; the population of the area, the historic expenditure and/ or proposed capital and/ or revenue investment in an area from other initiatives or mainstream sources, geographical location and proximity to existing services and the needs identified in Action Plans. Some NRA's encompass their city centre or town centre and this has a significant impact on the level of expenditure reported for those areas.

Housing Executive: Spend on Properties

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development for a breakdown of the spend on properties by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each estate in the (i) Ards Borough Council; and (ii) North Down Borough Council areas, over the last three years.

(AQW 27920/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information by housing estate. However, the tables below details the spend on capital improvement and maintenance in each Housing Executive district office area covering both the Ards and North Down Borough Council areas over the last three years: -

2012/2013	Capital Improvement £k	Maintenance £k	Total
Bangor	20	2,521	2,541
Newtownards	480	7,433	7,913
Total	500	9,954	10,454

2011/2012	Capital Improvement £k	Maintenance £k	Total
Bangor	807	3854	4,661
Newtownards	577	6049	6,626
Total	1,384	9903	11,287

2010/2011	Capital Improvement £k	Maintenance £k	Total
Bangor	1,124	3,462	4,586
Newtownards	1,226	4,319	5,545
Total	2,350	7,781	10,131

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.

Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average time taken for a decision to be reached on Employment and Support Allowance appeals.

(AQW 27931/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In the period 1 April 2013 to 31 October 2013, the average time taken for a decision in an Employment and Support Allowance appeal from receipt of a valid appeal until the final tribunal determination is 19 weeks.

Social Housing: North Belfast

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of a letter from his Department to a residents' group in North Belfast in October 2013 which denied the existence of religious inequality in social housing, on what basis this assessment was made, especially in relation to social housing in North Belfast.

(AQW 27935/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In September the Department received a letter from five residents setting out a range of concerns about their current accommodation. While the letter made reference to religious inequality in social housing, no evidence was supplied to support this statement. The Department, in its response, explained that DSD and NIHE operate at a regional level across Northern Ireland, where housing services are widely recognised as being delivered on fair and equitable basis. Different geographical areas within Northern Ireland inevitably have their own localised housing issues, and the most appropriate solutions to these will vary.

All social housing in Northern Ireland is allocated using the Housing Selection Scheme. The selection scheme, which is maintained and administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, uses common criteria to assess the housing needs of all applicants. Applicants are awarded points based on an assessment of their individual housing need and then placed on the waiting list for the area of their choice.

Car Parking Spaces: DSD Spend

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the measures his Department is taking to reduce the amount it spends on car parking spaces.

(AQW 27950/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development introduced revised guidance with effect from 15 November 2010 for staff applying for, and using, officially provided car parking facilities in Belfast City Centre.

The revised guidance introduced a number of key changes relating to the qualifying criteria for car parking spaces, tighter administrative controls and the reduction and removal of leased spaces.

Double Glazing Schemes: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the expected completion date for Northern Ireland Housing Executive double glazing schemes in North Down.

(AQW 27966/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that they have two phases of double glazing still to go on site in the North Down area. In the current financial year a scheme for 244 dwellings in Bloomfield/Rathgill, Groomsport and Kilcooley is programmed to start in March 2014.

In 2014/15 a scheme for 196 dwellings in Holywood and Conlig is currently programmed to start in April 2014 but it is likely to slip to later in 2014. These schemes should address any remaining double glazing for Housing Executive homes in the North Down area.

Housing Debt

Ms Fearon asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total amount of housing debt for the most recent five years, including (i) how this compares with figures for Britain and the South of Ireland; and (ii) how this varies by constituency.

(AQW 27982/11-15)

Mr McCausland: According to statistics published by the Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) there are currently 11.2 million homeowners in the UK who have a residential mortgage, with loans worth £1.2 trillion. The numbers in mortgage arrears representing 2.5% or more of the outstanding balance for each of the last five years is as follows:

■	2012/13	159,700	■	2009/10	196,500
■	2011/12	159,100	■	2008/09	203,900
■	2010/11	171,900			

CML arrears data relates to the UK as a whole. No breakdown of data is available for the regions or for individual countries (or constituencies) within the UK however, it is estimated that Northern Ireland accounts for between 1.5 and 3% of the UK mortgage market. Should the proportion of homeowners in Northern Ireland that are in arrears mirror the proportion

of homeowners in Northern Ireland within the overall UK mortgage market, it could be estimated that at March 2013 there were between 2,396 and 4,791 homeowners in mortgage arrears of 2.5% or more of the outstanding balance, which could represent an estimated total outstanding mortgage balance of £0.5 billion.

Information available from the Central Bank of Ireland website indicates that there are currently 770,000 homeowners in the Republic of Ireland who have a residential mortgage, with loans worth €109.1 billion. The numbers in mortgage arrears of 90 days or more (and the estimated value of these mortgages) for each of the last four years (the data for 2008/09 is not available) is as follows:

- 2012/13 95,554 €18.1 billion
- 2011/12 75,679 €14.9 billion
- 2010/11 49,609 €9.6 billion
- 2009/10 32,321 €6.1 billion

The total rent and domestic rates arrears due to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each of the last five years are as follows:

- 2012/13 £14,604,000
- 2011/12 £13,988,000
- 2010/11 £12,567,000
- 2009/10 £13,412,000
- 2008/09 £13,923,000

The total rent arrears due to the Housing Associations in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years available (2012/13 data is not yet available) are as follows:

- 2011/12 £8,134,334
- 2010/11 £7,409,308
- 2009/10 £7,004,266
- 2008/09 £7,797,754
- 2007/08 £7,669,468

Information on the amount of domestic rate debt in each of the last five years is not available. Information is available for the last four financial years.

Information on the comparative figures for Britain and the South of Ireland is not available. No direct comparisons can be drawn. Information is also not available at constituency level.

The table below (supplied by the Department of Finance and Personnel) shows the domestic rate debt at the end of each rating year. The figures for the years ending 31st March 2012 and 31st March 2013 include debt arising from empty domestic property which became liable for rates on 1st October 2011. They are therefore not directly comparable with the two previous years.

Domestic Rating Debt at End of Year

Financial Year Ending:	NI Total
31st March 2010	£57,299,206
31st March 2011	£62,034,581
31st March 2012	£70,656,674
31st March 2013	£78,801,619

Housing Executive Properties: Ballymena

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 27342/11-15, to outline why 32 properties in the Ballymena District Office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are deemed difficult to let, having been void for at least four weeks and having no eligible applicants, given the large number of applicants on the housing waiting list.

(AQW 27984/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that 28 of the 32 properties that are deemed as “difficult to let” are located in the Drumtara, Doury Road and Dunclug estates in Ballymena. They advise that these estates are low demand where the turnover of properties is greater than the housing need. These estates are currently the subject of DSD/NIHE strategies to eliminate blight and encourage regeneration. With regard to the remaining four properties, they are situated in various estates in Ballymena town and have been offered to and refused by more than four waiting-list applicants, and are therefore coded as “difficult to let”.

Housing Executive Properties: Ballymena

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 27342/11-15, in relation to the 32 properties in the Ballymena District Office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive deemed 'difficult to let', to detail (i) the location of these properties; and (ii) the length of time these properties have been void.

(AQW 27985/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that of the 32 properties coded as difficult to let, nine are located in Drumtara, seven are in Doury Road and twelve are located in Dunclug.

Eight of the properties in Drumtara were subject to extensive vandalism and have been vacant for four years. The ninth property in Drumtara was void from June this year but has now been allocated.

The seven properties in Doury Road range from being void from two months to three years. The 12 properties in Dunclug range from being void from six months to three years. The remaining four properties are located in various estates in Ballymena town, one of which was allocated on 21 October 2013, and one is now being used for decanting purposes.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development what support is available to home owners who are in mortgage arrears; and for his assessment of the extent of the problem of mortgage arrears.

(AQW 28005/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am aware that a large number of people in Northern Ireland are experiencing difficulty in meeting mortgage payments which can lead to the distressing prospect of court action and possible repossession and I empathise with those finding themselves in this situation.

The most recent information from the Council of Mortgage Lenders in August 2013 indicated that, in the UK, the proportion of mortgages with arrears of three months or more stood at 1.85% of the total mortgages.

My Department funds the Mortgage Debt Advice Service and I would urge anyone experiencing mortgage difficulties to access the services available. This free advice service, operated by the Housing Rights Service, has received funding until March 2015. The service operates during office working hours and includes an online advisor and evening opening hours to 8.00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays and can be contacted directly on 0300 323 0310.

My Department also provides help through Support for Mortgage Interest to people receiving certain social security benefits.

Civil Service Posts: DSD

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development how many Civil Service posts existed in his Department on 1 January 2012 and 1 January 2013 at (i) Administrative Assistant; (ii) Administrative Officer; (iii) Executive Officer 2; (iv) Executive Officer 1; (v) Staff Officer; (vi) Deputy Principal; (vii) Grade 7; and (viii) Grade 6 levels, broken down by local council area.

(AQW 28013/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Programme for Government 2011-2015 provides the overarching direction for the Department's work which is organised across three areas, namely the Social Security Agency, Resources and Social Policy Group and Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group. As work is not organised by local council area it is not possible to provide staff information broken down on this basis.

The number of funded posts in the Department in January 2012 and January 2013, at the general service grades requested is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Grade	January 2012	January 2013
G6	11.00	12.00
G7	88.67	99.55
DP	199.30	206.22
SO	402.21	426.73
EO1	598.51	615.44
EO2/SSO1	1858.83	1955.04
AO/SSO2	3229.42	3222.14
AA	514.77	497.27
Total	6902.71	7034.39

Housing Executive Applicants: North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive applicants, who are in housing stress, in North Down are currently resident in hostel accommodation.

(AQW 28061/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the number of people with Full Duty Applicant status who were in temporary accommodation at 12 November 2013 was as follows:-

- In Housing Executive hostels 6
- In voluntary sector hostels 2

The Housing Executive has further advised that these figures only refer to applicants placed by them in response to their homelessness duties. They do not include those who self refer to the voluntary sector.

Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development when the 1 per cent pay rise awarded in July 2013 will be paid to Northern Ireland Housing Executive employees.

(AQW 28063/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My department has passed the pay increase request for Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff to the Finance Minister for his approval. Once approved any increase will be paid as soon as possible thereafter.

Housing Executive: Social Housing Reform Programme

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what is the cost of the new Project Director, Finance Adviser and Asset Management Adviser recruited by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as part of its Social Housing Reform Programme.

(AQW 28065/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The total cost of the new Project Director, Finance Adviser and Asset Manager is £1,407,000 (excluding National Insurance Contributions) over the four year period of the DSD Social Housing Reform Programme.

The post holders were recruited by the Strategic Investment Board Ltd (SIB) on four year fixed term contracts and are SIB employees.

Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development what action he is taking to ensure that Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff receive the 1 per cent pay increase awarded in July 2013.

(AQW 28073/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has passed the pay increase request for Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff to the Finance Minister for his approval. Once approved any increase will be paid as soon as possible thereafter.

Employment and Support Allowance: Work Related Activity Group/Support Group

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development what assessment or reviews take place of a person in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and in the Support Group before they are transferred to the Work Related Activity Group.

(AQW 28090/11-15)

Mr McCausland: All Employment and Support Allowance claimants are subject to the Work Capability Assessment process which determines their entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance by assessing their ability to work and carry out everyday tasks. Following participation in the initial Work Capability Assessment, claimants may be placed in the Work Related Activity Group or Support Group.

However, it is accepted that medical conditions can improve or deteriorate over time with treatment and therefore all claimants are subject to periodic reviews to ensure that they are receiving the correct amount of benefit and support.

Depending on the outcome of future reviews, claimants who were previously placed in the Support Group may be removed from that group and placed in the Work Related Activity Group and vice versa.

Project 24

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development what will happen to the Project 24 art pods after the two years is complete.

(AQW 28106/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department in partnership with North Down Borough Council undertook a Revitalisation Project on Queen's Parade with the aim of encouraging economic regeneration by encouraging increased footfall in the town centre. Project 24 aimed to build on the town's vibrant art and craft scene by creating a new space for artists to work and display their art. Project 24 was developed on the basis that it would be an interim project while plans were being prepared for the comprehensive development of the Queen's Parade site by the Department. Given the success of the project, Council has

agreed that Project 24 will then be relocated to another site within the borough when construction work commences on Queen's Parade development.

Project 24

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development what are the running costs of the Project 24 art pods.
(AQW 28108/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department in partnership with North Down Borough Council undertook a Revitalisation Project on Queen's Parade with the aim of encouraging economic regeneration by encouraging increased footfall in the town centre. DSD provided capital funding for the project and North Down Borough Council is responsible for the management of the project and the running costs.

Houses of Multiple Occupation: Review

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Social Development when his Department intends to commence and complete the review of Houses of Multiple Occupation; and (ii) for an update on the position and charge of owner-occupiers within a property which also comprises rented accommodation.
(AQW 28191/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The review of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) concluded in 2012 and found the definition and regulatory controls were inadequate. Consultation on a new regime of HMO control took place in late 2012 and my officials reported the outcome of that exercise to the Social Development Committee on 25 April 2013. Since then officials have been drafting legislative proposals which include a new HMO definition, mandatory and discretionary licensing schemes for HMOs and updated physical and management standards. This work is included in my "Facing the Future Housing Strategy" and is timetabled for completion in 2015/16.

The Housing Executive is reviewing its enforcement practices under the current HMO regulatory regime as far as they relate to converted owner occupied self-contained flats, with completion expected by the end of December. Pending the outcome of the review, the Housing Executive is not pursuing registration in respect of owner occupied properties.

Social Housing: Girdwood

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 27382/11-15, whether a planning application has been lodged for the development of social housing on the Girdwood site.
(AQW 28240/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A planning application for the Girdwood site was submitted on 27 June 2013 by Apex Housing Association and validated by the Department of Environment (Planning Service) on 03 July 2013.

The planning reference number is Z/2013/0726/F and the proposal was described as:

'Residential development comprising 19 three bedroom and 17 two bedroom dwellings, 20 duplex units, 4 apartments, construction of new access road and associated site works (60 residential units in total)'

Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) why the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has not yet paid members of staff the one percent pay increase awarded in July 2013; and (ii) when the pay increase will be actioned.
(AQW 28253/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) Approval for the 1% pay increase has been granted by the Finance Minister on 14 November 2013.
- (ii) The Northern Ireland Housing Executive intends to pay this as soon as possible.

Public Realm Scheme: Donaghadee

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the planned public realm works scheme for Donaghadee.
(AQW 28284/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Over the past 12 months my Department has been working with representatives from Ards Borough Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the local community to develop a major public realm scheme for Donaghadee.

The works will address all aspects of street design including paving, kerbstones, street furniture, lighting and planting. The total value of the works is estimated to be £2.4 million, with my Department investing £1.4 million and Council investing £1 million.

The design for each town was completed with the help of the many different stakeholders and these schemes will build upon the individuality and unique attributes of each town.

A contractor is due to be appointed in early June 2014 and construction work will commence in late June 2014. The scheme will take 1 year to complete.

Throughout the construction phase my Department will continue to work with the local representatives and the wider public to keep them fully informed about the programme of works.

DSD: Savings

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 26721/11-15, to detail the anticipated savings to his Department through outsourcing over each of the five years; and what these estimates are based on.

(AQW 28303/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The decision by the Department for Social Development to outsource its Soft Services was an operational one driven by a need to achieve efficiencies. It forms part of a wider NICS procurement exercise being taken forward by the Department of Finance and Personnel for the provision of Security and Ancillary Services within which departments specify their individual requirements. With the tendering process at an early stage, disclosure of the anticipated efficiencies at this point in time is likely to prejudice the Department's commercial interests. That said, significant efficiencies are anticipated.

Boiler Replacement Scheme: Disability Living Allowance

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development why Disability Living Allowance payments are considered as household income when calculating entitlement to the Boiler Replacement Scheme.

(AQW 28325/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The boiler replacement scheme was launched in September 2012 to help as many low to medium income owner occupier households as possible to replace their old inefficient boilers using the limited amount of money (£12 million) that was available to the scheme which had been provided by the NI Executive.

This is a totally new scheme unique to Northern Ireland, which falls outside any other Government scheme where receipt of Disability Living Allowance would be disregarded for other grant applications. The annual household income and grant limits were set for the scheme to provide an incentive to those low to medium income owner occupier households, including the working fuel poor who would not normally have access to energy efficiency grants, to replace their old inefficient boiler, thus improving the energy efficiency of their homes and saving them money in the long term. The criteria for the scheme is applied to each individual applicant equally.

The scheme was also never intended to provide the full cost of a replacement boiler for homeowners who may have been in receipt of a disregarded benefit for other Government grants. There is no provision within the legislation to disregard any income, therefore all income (including Disability Living Allowance) is counted towards the grant threshold.

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.

Regeneration: The Village

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Social Development what is the status of Phase 4 of the Village Regeneration programme; and when this phase will proceed.

(AQW 28337/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As I stated in my response to Mr J Allister on this matter (AQW 26652/11-15), it was always the intention to regenerate the Village with three phases of social housing followed by a fourth phase of private affordable housing. The Housing Executive has determined that three phases of social housing totalling 114 new homes will meet their current assessment of social housing need in the area.

The first two phases of 87 new homes are complete or nearing completion. The third phase of 27 houses will start in early 2014. Once planning approval is granted for the third phase, the Housing Executive will commence consultation with the local community about the provision of the affordable housing element.

The need for additional social housing will be reviewed in the event that affordable housing does not proceed as anticipated or there is a significant increase in demand for social housing in the area.

Helm Housing

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Social Development what assurance he can give that the £8 million grant provided to Helm Housing for 200 new homes in the Great George Street area will be recovered.

(AQO 5050/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department's position has always been that it will recover any payments of grant where these fall due - but will do so in a way that does not jeopardise the viability of an Association or services to tenants. The Housing Executive and Helm Housing are in discussions regarding the recovery of this grant at present and I will let you know the position when these discussions have concluded.

Housing-led Regeneration

Mr Milne asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the criteria used for the six regeneration schemes rolled out by his Department.

(AQO 5051/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The six areas chosen for the Building Successful Communities pilot were selected on the basis of the criteria set out last year in my housing strategy: Facing the Future: Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland, which was subject to public consultation.

In order to determine the areas for inclusion, my Department first selected areas of deprivation that are either Neighbourhood Renewal Areas or Areas at Risk. Indicators that reflect social housing market failure and the need for regeneration were then considered, that is, void stock, low or medium projected housing need and vacant land in the Housing Executive's ownership that could be utilised to develop new housing.

The six pilot areas were considered to be those that scored both amongst those most in need according to the regeneration indicators, and those that required additional intervention above that already planned or existing. To enable this approach to be fully tested the pilots also cover a range of contexts such as higher and lower population, urban and rural environments and differing housing problems.

Double Glazing Schemes: South Down

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the double glazing schemes planned for the South Down constituency.

(AQO 5052/11-15)

Mr McCausland: You may be interested to know that in relation to the Programme for Government target on double glazing, the Housing Executive has already carried out 8,856 double glazing window installations and despite the delay in awarding their new double glazing contracts, the Programme for Government target to ensure that all Housing Executive properties are double glazed by 2015 will be met.

In relation to the question the Housing Executive has advised me that the information is not available in the format requested as they do not routinely collate information by Parliamentary constituency. However, they have further advised that there are three phases of double glazing planned in their Downpatrick District office area as follows:-

- Phase 1 – Downpatrick town, Ardglass and Killough for 401 dwellings
- Phase 2 – Ballynahinch, Drumaness and Saintfield for 155 dwellings
- Phase 3 – Castlewellan and Newcastle for 303 dwellings

The first of these schemes is programmed to start in March 2014, with the others following later in the year.

Social Security: Fraud

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the new initiatives being pursued to combat Social Security fraud.

(AQO 5053/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The level of Fraud and Error at 0.9% of total expenditure on benefits administered by the Social Security Agency was the lowest ever level. Despite this success, my Department is not complacent and is developing a range of new initiatives to further enhance its counter fraud capabilities. This is in line with similar initiatives taken forward by the Department for Work and Pensions in Great Britain. Three main initiatives are currently being taken forward:

- First is the establishment of a new Single Investigation Service to tackle fraud across the benefit system and bring greater cohesion to counter-fraud operations;
- Secondly improved targeting of fraud through new IT systems with enhanced data matching; and
- Thirdly tougher penalties to deal with fraudulent behaviour are contained within the Welfare Reform Bill.

In addition, my Department is currently considering a number of future new measures including a Single Fraud Hotline phone number to report both benefit and tax credit fraud.

DSD: Procurement

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the action he is taking to ensure that procurement opportunities, created by his Department, maximise the opportunities for small local companies.

(AQO 5054/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My department's contracts are predominately awarded through the Department of Finance and Personnel's Central Procurement Directorate. We rely on their advice to ensure that small and medium sized businesses are not disadvantaged.

Welfare Reform

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the dates in 2013 that he, or his senior officials, met with each of the political parties represented in the Assembly in relation to the Welfare Reform Bill.

(AQO 5055/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The dates I and my officials met with political parties represented in the Assembly in relation to the Welfare Reform Bill are set out below:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| ■ 28 January 2013 | ■ 22 April 2013 |
| ■ 25 February 2013 | ■ 3 June 2013 |
| ■ 14 March 2013 | ■ 27 June 2013 |
| ■ 19 March 2013 | ■ 2 July 2013 |

Social Enterprise Hub: Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the proposed location of a Social Enterprise Hub in Enniskillen.

(AQO 5056/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is finalising lease negotiations on the preferred locations for the Social Economy Incubation Hub in Enniskillen. It is anticipated that the negotiations will be completed later this month, with the hub becoming operational in March 2014.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the introduction of a new Warm Homes scheme.

(AQO 5057/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The existing Warm Homes Scheme is administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and delivered by Bryson Energy and H&A Mechanical Services under contract. That contract will end on 30 June 2014 and there is no provision to extend it further. My Department in partnership with the Housing Executive, the mid Ulster cluster of Councils (Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt) and Newtownabbey Council are conducting a pilot exercise targeting households with low incomes to provide energy efficiency improvements. The findings of this pilot exercise will be evaluated and a public consultation on proposals for a new Warm Homes Scheme will be undertaken in early 2014. My Department intends to have a new scheme in place for 1 July 2014 which will target those householders most affected by fuel poverty and provide energy efficiency improvements.

Social Enterprises: County Down

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development, given that County Down accounts for 23 per cent of the population but only 13 per cent of departmental social enterprises, whether he will concentrate his efforts in the development of social enterprises in that county.

(AQO 5058/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment has lead policy responsibility for social enterprise. Whilst my Department does not have any departmental social enterprises, it does have a Programme for Government commitment to 'Invest in social enterprise growth to increase sustainability in the broad community sector.'

The figure of 13% which the member refers to relates to a recent report jointly commissioned by DETI and DSD, and refers to the number of third sector organisations located in County Down. It should also be noted that this figure excludes Belfast which was categorised separately in the report due to the volume of third sector organisations based there.

The mapping report looked at the potential of the third sector to become more enterprise driven. An action plan to implement the key recommendations from this report will be developed and agreed with DETI.

The focus of this action plan will be to develop and support social enterprise activity across the region to include County Down.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Northern Ireland Assembly: Insurance

Mr Brady asked the Assembly Commission what steps it has taken to ensure all Members are aware of the Assembly's public liability insurance policy.

(AQO 5065/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The provision of insurance for Members, in particular the annual Combined Employers' and Public Liability policy is set out at sub-paragraphs (3) to (5) of paragraph 28 of the Financial Support to Members Handbook. Sub-paragraph (5) states that "The Commission undertakes to provide insurance

cover annually for Employers' and Public liability. Details of the Assembly insurance policies are available from the Finance Office". Therefore, while a copy of the entire annual policy document is not routinely issued to Members it is available, on request, from the Finance Office.

The Combined policy covers Members in respect of their employees and, most notably for the public liability element, their constituency office. As required by Regulation 5 of the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998, a certificate is issued to Members each year for display in their constituency offices. For the current financial year, the certificates were emailed to Members on 12 April 2013 and a reminder letter was also issued to all Members on 23 May 2013.

Northern Ireland Assembly: Cycle to Work Scheme

Mr McAleer asked the Assembly Commission what plans are in place to encourage staff to cycle to work.
(AQO 5066/11-15)

Mr Cree (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): In an attempt to encourage Secretariat staff to cycle to work, the Assembly Commission introduced a Cycle to Work Scheme in February 2013. It is proposed that the Scheme will run annually with new applications accepted during February and March each year.

Following the introduction of the Cycle to Work Scheme the Sustainable Development Office has worked in conjunction with Cycling Ulster, DRD Travelwise NI and CTC (The National Cycling Charity) to provide cycling advice sessions. These sessions aim to provide information on safe cycling and encourage members of staff who would like to cycle but have yet to join the Cycle to Work Scheme.

Additional cycle racks have been located in the vicinity of Parliament Buildings and additional lockers have been provided in one of the shower rooms in Parliament Buildings.

The Sustainable Development Office also promotes the annual 10 Minute Cycle Challenge, organised by Smarter Travel Workplaces and Travelwise NI and the Active Belfast Workplace Cycle Challenge. Such events promote cycling to work, engage new participants through challenge incentives and continue encouragement through interactive websites.

Information on cycling is available to all staff via the Sustainable Development Office Cycle to Work Scheme page on the Assembly intranet, AsslSt.

Parliament Buildings: Security Staff

Mr Copeland asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the implementation of the changes to the Usher/Security Officer posts.
(AQO 5068/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): In March 2012, the Assembly's Business Efficiency Review project board approved a report produced by the Business Efficiency Review team, that concluded that the Assembly's Security Officer and Usher disciplines be amalgamated into a unified cadre of Security Operatives. The Board also approved a related recommendation that management consider whether special arrangements are required for control room roles.

Following further discussions and consultation between Management Side, Trade Union Side and staff, both recommendations were subsequently endorsed by the Director General. A small cross Directorate Amalgamation group was set up to oversee the transition to the new amalgamated model, and a planning process was put in place by the Assembly's Head of Security so that the necessary steps could be taken to deliver amalgamation as planned. The new amalgamated model rolled out on 28th October 2013, with the formation of new teams of Control Room Operatives and Ushers (amalgamated from existing Ushers and Security Officers).

Parliament Buildings: Union Flag

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission for an update on increasing the number of days on which the Union Flag is flown from Parliament Buildings.
(AQO 5069/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): At a meeting of the Assembly Commission held on 5 February 2013 the Commission tasked officials to:

- consult with Parties to review the number of days upon which the Union Flag flies from Parliament Buildings,
- to detail a range of options,
- and to set out how a process of public consultation could be carried out and arrangements for completing an Equality Impact Assessment.

On 6 March 2013 Parties were invited to submit written statements on this issue, with a closing date for comments of 10 April 2013. Seven Parties submitted written responses. A paper on the motion was listed for initial consideration at the Commission meeting on 26 June 2013. However, it was agreed that it would be brought back to the Commission following the summer recess. A paper, detailing a range of options, will be considered at the Assembly Commission meeting to be held on the 20 November 2013. This will be the first meeting of the Commission since June 2013.

Parliament Buildings: Drainage

Mr Agnew asked the Assembly Commission whether a drainage system will be required as a result of the work at the rear of Parliament Buildings.

(AQO 5071/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The construction work to the rear of Parliament Buildings was carried out to create a service yard for contractors during the forthcoming roof project in order to minimise the impact on access and car parking during the works. On completion of the roof project the area will be used to improve access, facilities for deliveries and recycling and to create a small number of additional car parking spaces.

The works were completed during the summer recess to minimise disruption to building users and, while a full drainage system was included in the scheme design, time did not permit the contractor to include this in the works. Subsequently, consideration has been given to how best to incorporate adequate drainage, to prevent the ponding that has occurred, without causing undue disruption to building users. It is proposed to install drainage of a temporary or semi-permanent nature at the next available opportunity.

Parliament Buildings: Security Procedures

Mr G Kelly asked the Assembly Commission to outline any changes to security procedures at Parliament Buildings.

(AQO 5072/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): A new amalgamated model for Security & Usher staff was rolled out on 28th October 2013, with the formation of new teams of Control Room Operatives and Ushers (amalgamated from existing Ushers and Security Officers).

This has not resulted in any significant changes to Assembly security procedures as such, as in essence it simply means that some staff are performing tasks and procedures that are already in existence, but that are new to them. Clearly we are at a very early stage in this new model, however early signs are most positive and encouraging.

Naturally the new model and all aspects of Assembly security procedures are kept under review as a matter of course.

Northern Ireland Assembly: Section 75

Ms Fearon asked the Assembly Commission to outline the steps it is taking to ensure it meets its statutory obligations under Section 75.

(AQO 5073/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Schedule 9 (4) (1) to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Assembly Commission, as a designated public authority, to set out how it proposes to fulfil its Section 75 duties through its Equality Scheme.

The Assembly Commission's current Equality Scheme was approved on 28 March 2012 and is based on a model equality scheme promulgated by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. It meets both the legal requirements of Schedule 9 of the 1998 Act and recommendations contained within the Equality Commission's "Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities" which was issued in 2010.

The Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme is a statement of the arrangements for fulfilling the statutory duties and it also the plan for their implementation. The arrangements for assessing the compliance with the statutory duties are outlined in relevant parts of the Equality Scheme. For example, it includes arrangements for monitoring, for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments, for dealing with complaints, and for ensuring access to information and services. Indeed the Commission recently received a very positive endorsement, in relation to its Section 75 Progress report for 2012/13, from the Equality Commission.

Revised Written Answers

This section contains the revised written answers to questions tabled by Members. The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Revised Written Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

In Bound Volume 88, page WA 371, please replace AQW 13169/11-15 with:

DRD: Appointments

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the findings by the Industrial Tribunal in Lennon-v-the Department for Regional Development, what steps will be taken to ensure that there is no material bias in Departments against the appointment of applicants, on the basis of community background.

(AQW 13169/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The Commissioner for Public Appointments, Mr John Keanie, makes clear in his Code of Practice that only those individuals judged to best meet the requirements of the post should be recommended to Ministers for appointment to public bodies. He underlines in his Code that the Departments must not discriminate unlawfully when fulfilling their duties.

Department of the Environment

In Bound Volume 88, page WA 430, please replace AQO 4793/11-15 with:

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Jobs

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment what issues he intends to raise with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport when he meets him in London in November.

(AQO 4793/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The purpose of my meeting with Robert Goodwill, the newly appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, on 6 November is to follow-up on a comprehensive response I made to his predecessor, Stephen Hammond, on the public consultation carried out by DVLA on the future of vehicle licensing in Northern Ireland.

As you know, since I came to office, I have continued my predecessor's robust opposition to the threatened centralisation of vehicle licensing services in Swansea and the closure of all motor tax offices here, which would result in the loss of over 300 jobs and the withdrawal of local services for motorists.

I will be emphasising to Mr Goodwill the wider social, economic and political context of the decision facing him about the delivery of vehicle licensing. I will point out the disproportionate impact that the loss of over 300 jobs would have on the Northern Ireland economy, particularly on Coleraine but also on the other seven locations that have local offices.

I will remind the Minister of the exceptionally high and independently validated standards of service and quality of performance achieved by DVA and I will point out the unanimous, cross-party support in the Assembly against the centralisation proposal and assure him that this reflects the depth and range of opposition right across the community. I will explain to him that many customers in Northern Ireland clearly want to have the choice of dealing with DVA staff in relation to vehicle licensing and that it is unrealistic, especially given lower rates of uptake of online services here, to expect customers to be able to switch instantly to new delivery channels or to accept the remote delivery of services from Swansea.

I will also challenge Mr Goodwill to justify any cuts to jobs in Northern Ireland in the context of his Government's commitments to the Northern Ireland Executive to help in the stimulation and development of the economy here as we seek to move out of a recession that has been more acute and sustained than in other parts of the UK.

Finally, I will point out to Mr Goodwill the alternatives to cutting local jobs and services. I will demonstrate how the very able and committed staff in DVA could, with up-to-date technology that they have been denied through under investment by DVLA, continue to deliver high quality services to local customers and to customers across the UK.

In Bound Volume 88, page WA 212, please replace AQW 26038/11-15 with:

Planning Application: Regulation 10

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to planning application E/2013/0093/F, why it took two months from the receipt of the application for his Department to decide that it required EIA screening; and whether this decision was as a result of concerns raised by objectors over his Department's failure to carry out an EIA determination in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Planning (Environmental Impact) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

(AQW 26038/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): This 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.

As permitted in the Regulations, my officials have formally extended the timeframe for conducting this determination. This is to allow them to fully consult all relevant bodies and the determination will be made in due course.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

In Bound Volume 88, page WA 447, please replace AQW 27114/11-15 with:

Carer Assessments

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what proportion of carer assessments offered over the last three years were accepted, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 27114/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Information on accepted carers' assessments is not available centrally. However the Department holds figures on completed carers' assessments. Table 1 below sets out the completed assessments as a proportion of all carers' assessments offered. This information is available quarterly since June 2011 only.

Table 1. Proportion of Offered Carers' Assessments Completed

HSC Trust	Quarter Ending									Average
	Jun-11	Sep-11	Dec-11	Mar-12	Jun-12	Sep-12	Dec-12	Mar-13	Jun-13	
Belfast	69%	54%	56%	25%	61%	59%	51%	71%	58%	56%
Northern	55%	47%	50%	56%	50%	62%	50%	60%	53%	54%
South Eastern	31%	27%	32%	21%	31%	28%	27%	30%	32%	28%
Southern	39%	38%	39%	47%	46%	42%	47%	58%	50%	46%
Western	51%	60%	49%	55%	49%	38%	49%	37%	36%	46%
Northern Ireland	50%	40%	44%	36%	45%	45%	43%	50%	46%	45%

Source: Carers' Statistics for Northern Ireland (Community Information Branch)

Department for Social Development

In this Bound Volume, page WA 428, please replace AQW 27847/11-15 with:

Boiler Replacement Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what differences exist in the eligibility and financial assessment rules of the boiler replacement scheme compared with the rest of the UK.

(AQW 27847/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Boiler Replacement Scheme is currently the only Government grant funded scheme in the UK to replace boilers and is unique to Northern Ireland. Therefore differences in financial assessments and rules cannot be made with elsewhere in the UK.

In GB, there is an Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme which is funded by the energy/utility companies to help GB households lower their energy bills by becoming more energy efficient. However this is not a Government funded scheme. Under the ECO scheme some customers may be eligible for a boiler replacement/repair if they are in receipt of certain benefits. However to meet their obligation targets, energy companies are free to decide how best to deliver this obligation across GB as a whole, in a way that limits the costs to all consumers.

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.

In Bound Volume 88, page WA 498, please replace AQW 27149/11-15 with:

Social Housing: 2010 Funding

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development what area of Londonderry was subject to the policy ring-fencing funding for social housing in 2010.

(AQW 27149/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive applied an Equality Impact Assessment on the Strategic Guidelines in 2007/08. As a consequence of this ring fencing was removed in 2008/09. Therefore no area of Londonderry was subject to the policy of ring fencing funding housing in 2010.

Official Report
(Hansard)
Indexes

Members' Index

Agnew, Mr Steven

Matters of the Day

Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 326

Oral Answers

Employment and Learning

South Eastern Regional College: Theatre, 74

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Welfare Reform, 384

Regional Development

Consumer Council, 237, 238

Social Development

Bloomfield Estate: Historical Debt, 282

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 81, 82, 83, 85, 88, 90

Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 146, 147, 150, 153

Revised Written Answers

Environment

Planning Application: Regulation 10, RWA2

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Carer Assessments, RWA2

Written Answers

Assembly Commission

Parliament Buildings: Drainage, WA442

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Museums: Staff, WA148, WA149

Education

Common Funding Formula: Integrated Education, WA341

Curriculum: The Holocaust, WA362

Education Bill: Consideration Stage, WA155

Integrated Education, WA278

Phoenix Integrated Primary School, WA275

Shared Education Project, WA166

Shared Education: Consultation, WA277

Shared Schools: Anti-sectarian Work, WA166

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Consumer Council: Review, WA27, WA182

Departmental Funding: DETI, WA26

Invest NI: Review, WA26

Petroleum Licences, WA284

PL1/13: Executive, WA183

Environment

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations, WA33

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations: Judicial Reviews, WA186

Expert Review Report by Chris Mills, WA29, WA371

Hydroelectric Schemes, WA27, WA28

Hydroelectric Schemes: Fish Stocks, WA29

Minerals Applications, WA27, WA291

Planning Application: A/2009/0400/F, WA186, WA291, WA299

Planning Application: E/2013/0093/F, WA293

Planning Application: Z/2012/1387/F, WA203

Planning Permissions: Discharge Consents, WA292

Stop and Temporary Stop Notices, WA33

Water Framework Directive: Derogations, WA30

Finance and Personnel

Councils: Carbon Reduction Measures, WA374

Funding Applications: Single Online Portal, WA208

Legal Costs: DFP, WA35

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Blind or Partially Sighted People, WA387

Blood Donation: Legal Costs, WA382

Carer Assessments, WA379

Domiciliary Care, WA43

Domiciliary Care Workers: Training, WA392

Domiciliary Care: Agency Staff, WA394

Legal Cases: Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, WA310

Ulster Hospital: Allergy Treatment, WA389

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Assembly Questions, WA333

International Relations Strategy, WA266

Legal Case: OFMDFM, WA139

Programme for Government: Delivery Plans, WA265

Regional Development

Departmental Funding: DRD, WA116

Water Abstraction: River Faughan, WA412, WA417

Water Consumption: Flushing Options, WA415

Social Development

Departmental Funding: DSD, WA130

DSD: Savings, WA438

Housing Executive: Debt, WA118

Project 24, WA436, WA437

Allister, Mr Jim

Adjournment

Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 113

Assembly Business, 49, 257

Eddie McGrady, 158

Committee Business

Committee System Review, 63

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 195

Committee Stages

Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS10

Executive Committee Business

Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 119

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Accelerated Passage, 375

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 381, 382

Matter of the Day

Weekend Violence, 217

Matters of the Day

Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 116

Ministerial Statements

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 53

North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 373

North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 264

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 166

Oral Answers

Assembly Commission

Parliament Buildings: Car Parking, 286

Education

Common Funding Formula, 73

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Energy: Security of Supply, 135

Finance and Personnel

Rate Relief, 179

- Justice
 The Disappeared: Justice, 273
- Regional Development
 Ballymoney Railway Station, 27
- Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 87, 88, 93
 Oversubscribed Schools, 44, 46
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 243, 250, 251, 253
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 304, 312
- Revised Written Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 DRD: Appointments, RWA1
 Social Development
 Boiler Replacement Scheme, RWA3
- Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Gaelic Athletic Association Clubs: Funding, WA144
 Legal Costs: DARD, WA337
 Rural Development Programme: Funding, WA7
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Union Flag, WA441
 Education
 CCEA: A-level Chemistry Examination, WA163, WA279
 Kirkinriola Primary School, WA356
 Legal Costs: DE, WA346
 Mount St Catherine's Primary School, WA354
 Times Higher Education Article, WA166
 Employment and Learning
 Access to Work Programme: Advertising, WA13
 Education Maintenance Allowance: Fraud, WA365
 Queen's University: Pro-Vice-Chancellor, WA363, WA364
 Research Conduct, WA284
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Anti-fraud Unit: DET1, WA24
 Business Start-ups: North Antrim, WA25
 Energy: Review of Competition, WA366
 Invest NI and Foreign Investors, WA18
 Invest NI: Financial Assistance in North Antrim, WA25
 Invest NI: Land in North Antrim, WA25
 Invest NI: Venture Capital Funds, WA20
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: International Investors, WA22
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: Invest NI, WA21
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: Jobs Fund, WA25
 Trading Standards: Cigarettes, WA22, WA366
 Finance and Personnel
 Belfast Harbour Commissioners, WA208
 Capital Allocations, WA39
 Capital Awards, WA39
 Counsel Instructed from Outside the Jurisdiction, WA34
 Departmental Expenditure Limit: Capital, WA40
 Departmental Expenditure Limit: Resource, WA40
 Legal Costs: DFP, WA372
 NAMA, WA208
 Social Investment Fund, WA208
 Utility Regulator: Oversight, WA207
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Anti-fraud Unit: DHSSPS, WA44
 Ballymena Health and Care Centre, WA386
 Consultants: Hours Worked, WA220
 Legal Proceedings: Costs and Compensation, WA210
 Medical Services: Non-UK Citizens, WA216, WA380
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team, WA386
 Northern Ireland Ambulance Service: Poppies, WA394
- Justice
 Anti-fraud Unit: DOJ, WA109
 Taxed Legal Costs, WA52
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Anti-fraud Unit: OFMDFM, WA141
 Equality Commission Publication, WA139
 Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation:
 Chairperson's Expenses, WA144
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28B, WA142
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28C, WA142
 Ombudsman's Findings, WA142
 Public Prosecution Service: Attorney General Review, WA142
 Special Advisers: Termination of Appointment, WA269
- Regional Development
 Anti-fraud Unit: DRD, WA114
 Belfast Harbour Commissioners, WA415
 Maze/Long Kesh Site: Access, WA240
 Railways: Ballymena to Belfast, WA327
- Social Development
 Boiler Replacement Scheme, WA428
 Conflict of Interest: Glasgow Housing Association, WA134
 Development Trusts NI, WA262
 Double Glazing Contracts, WA244
 Golden Share Scheme, WA119
 Housing Executive: Contractors, WA428
 Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts, WA118
 Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Framework, WA330
 Housing Executive: Social Housing Reform Programme, WA436
 Plaque on Property Owned or Controlled by DSD, WA136
 Social Housing: Schemes Purchased, WA421
- Anderson, Mr Sydney**
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 165
 Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 City of Culture 2013, 352
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Exploris, 136
 Justice
 Dissident Unionists: Definition, 274
 Sick Leave: DOJ, 278
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Welfare Reform Bill, 235
 Social Development
 Energy Costs, 284
 Housing: Garden Maintenance, 282
 Private Members' Business
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 309
 Written Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Tourism, WA287
 Environment
 Waste: Fuel Laundering, WA370
 Regional Development
 Roads: Vehicle Damage Compensation, WA419

Attwood, Mr Alex

Matters of the Day
 Father Alec Reid, 323

Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 163

Private Members' Business
 Civic Forum, 220, 221
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 306, 307

Written Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Narrow Water Bridge, WA207

Beggs, Mr Roy

Committee Business
 Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 125

Executive Committee Business
 Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 119

Ministerial Statements
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 51
 Community Resuscitation Strategy, 266
 North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 262

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Poultry Litter, 343

Assembly Commission
 Outreach/Education: Update, 288

Employment and Learning
 Employment Law: Proposals, 390

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 185

Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 81, 83, 85
 International Mental Health Centre, 31, 36
 Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 203, 204

Written Answers
 Education
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, WA278, WA279

Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships, WA170

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Patients who are not Entitled to Free Health Care, WA44

Justice
 Sentencing: Murder, WA399, WA400

Regional Development
 A2: Shore Road Scheme, WA418

Beggs, Mr Roy (as Deputy Speaker)

Adjournment
 Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 405

Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 328, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 169, 171, 174
 Standing Order 20A(1), 168

Matters of the Day
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 325, 326
 Father Alec Reid, 323

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 163

Oral Answers
 Education
 Common Funding Formula, 69, 72
 Education and Skills Authority, 72
 Mobile Classrooms, 68
 Numeracy and Literacy, 68
 Pupils: Educational Attainment, 67
 School Starting Age, 68

Employment and Learning
 Employment: People with Disabilities, 80
 Living Wage, 75

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Desertcreat, 16
 Disclosure of Information, 17
 Executive Office: Brussels, 18
 Narrow Water Bridge, 16

Regional Development, 21
 A5: Public Consultations, 27
 Ballymoney Railway Station, 26
 Car Parking: Newry, 21
 Comber Greenway, 24
 NI Water: Chief Executive, 23
 Tourism: Strangford/Portaferry, 23

Private Members' Business
 Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 294, 296, 297
 Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 291, 292, 293, 294
 Oversubscribed Schools, 39
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 241, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 253, 254, 255, 256
 Single Farm Payments, 397, 400, 401, 402, 405

Bell, Mr Jonathan

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 112, 113

Executive Committee Business
 UK Intellectual Property Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 166

Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Rating Review, 177

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Together: Building a United Community, 232, 233

Boylan, Mr Cathal

Oral Answers
 Education
 Education and Skills Authority, 72

Employment and Learning
 North/South Cooperation, 77, 78

Environment
 Exploris, 140

Finance and Personnel
 Fiscal Powers, 179

Regional Development
 Unadopted Roads, 22

Private Members' Business
 Exploris, 97

Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships: Armagh, WA169

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Job Creation: Armagh, WA286
 Environment
 Local Government: Training, WA369
 Finance and Personnel
 European Funding: Community Groups, WA209
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Autism: Newry and Armagh, WA218
 Regional Development
 Roads: Capital Expenditure on Maintenance, WA235
 Traffic Congestion: Armagh, WA324

Boyle, Ms Michaela

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 108, 109, 110
 Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 211
 Committee Business
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 169, 171, 189
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 372
 Oral Answers
 Education
 Common Funding Formula, 69
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Energy: Security of Supply, 135
 Environment
 Anaerobic Digester: Sion Mills, 138, 139
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Waiting Times: OT Referrals, 183, 184
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Together: Building a United Community, 232
 Regional Development
 Traffic: Bridge Street, Strabane, 235, 236
 Private Members' Business
 Oversubscribed Schools, 41
 Written Answers
 Environment
 NIEA: West Tyrone, WA294
 Wind Farm: Upper Glenelly Valley, WA294
 Wind Farms: Planning Applications in West Tyrone, WA31
 Regional Development
 Dock Street Car Park, Strabane, WA114
 Social Development
 Housing Executive Properties and Land: Strabane, WA262

Bradley, Mr Dominic

Committee Business
 Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 127, 128
 Committee Stages
 Public Service Pensions Bill, CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4, CS5, CS6, CS7
 Matter of the Day
 Weekend Violence, 218
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 373
 Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 PRONI: Target Market, 347

Employment and Learning
 Higher Education: Update, 389
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Banking Task Force, 134
 Finance and Personnel
 Rating Review, 177
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Elective Care, 183
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Narrow Water Bridge, 15, 16
 Narrow Water Bridge: Funding Withdrawal, 235
 Regional Development, 21
 Car Parking: Newry, 21
 Private Members' Business
 Broadcasting Powers, 365, 366
 Oversubscribed Schools, 43
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 311
 Revised Written Answers
 Environment
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Jobs, RWA1
 Written Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Social Investment Fund, WA270

Bradley, Ms Paula

Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 C S Lewis, 352
 Commonwealth Games 2014, 348
 Employment and Learning
 Careers Guidance, 74, 75
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Elective Care, 183
 Social Development
 Housing: Shared Developments, 281
 Private Members' Business
 Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 154
 Written Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Office Accommodation, WA286
 Finance and Personnel
 Budgets: Current/Capital, WA305
 Social Development
 Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building, WA119, WA131
 Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building in North Belfast, WA245
 Social Housing Development Programme: Strategic Guidelines, WA121, WA126

Brady, Mr Mickey

Ministerial Statements
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 52
 Community Resuscitation Strategy, 266
 North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 263
 Oral Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Economic Growth, 131
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Planning Bill, 233
 Welfare Reform, 384

Regional Development
 Flood Alleviation: South Down, 239

Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 85
 Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 151
 International Mental Health Centre, 31
 Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 207, 208

Written Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Insurance, WA440
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Magdalene Laundries, WA3

Brown, Ms Pam

Ministerial Statements
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a
 Chairperson, 51

Oral Answers
 Education
 Mobile Classrooms, 68
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Waiting Times: OT Referrals, 184
 Regional Development
 NI Water: Chief Executive, 23

Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 84, 85
 Exploris, 98
 International Mental Health Centre, 30

Written Answers
 Education
 Education: Voluntary Provision, WA168

Buchanan, Mr Thomas

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 106, 107, 108, 109

Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 357

Matter of the Day
 Weekend Violence, 217

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Renewables: Funding, 340, 341
 Employment and Learning
 Employment: People with Disabilities, 79, 80
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Terrorist/Criminal Activity, 387

Private Members' Business
 Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 298
 Single Farm Payments, 401, 402

Written Answers
 Education
 Schools: Spend since Closure, WA150
 Environment
 Wind Farms: Environmental Impact Assessment,
 WA204
 Regional Development
 Housing Developments: Unadopted Roads, WA407

Byrne, Mr Joe

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 110

Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 213

Committee Business
 Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport
 Delivery Structures, 9

Executive Committee Business
 Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme
 (Northern Ireland) 2013, 54

Matter of the Day
 Weekend Violence, 217

Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 165

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Renewables: Funding, 341
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Utility Regulator, 131
 Environment
 Anaerobic Digester: Sion Mills, 139
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Haass Talks: Budget, 230
 Regional Development
 TEN-T Regulations, 25
 Traffic: Bridge Street, Strabane, 236

Campbell, Mr Gregory

Assembly Business, 80

Matter of the Day
 Weekend Violence, 215

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Farming: Fodder Supply, 342
 Farming: Winter Weather, 342
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 PRONI: Target Market, 347
 Education
 Education and Skills Authority, 72
 Employment and Learning
 Additional Support Fund, 77
 Apprenticeships, 391
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Energy: Security of Supply, 135
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 185
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Together: Building a United Community, 232
 Regional Development
 Roads: North-west, 22

Private Members' Business
 Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 150

Written Answers
 Education
 Common Funding Formula: Consultation, WA167
 DE: Recruitment, WA154, WA356
 Employment and Learning
 Disability Employment Service, WA284
 Skills Training, WA171
 Young People: Opportunities and Prospects, WA17

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Data Centre in Coleraine, WA23
 VAT: Hospitality Sector, WA26

Finance and Personnel
 Agrifood Loan Scheme, WA208
 Rating of Empty Homes, WA34

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Accident and Emergency: Waiting Times, WA395
 Diabetes: Prevalence, WA397
 Family Fund, WA309
 Physiotherapists: Prescription of Medicines, WA219
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Chief Executives: Waterways Ireland/Loughs Agency,
 WA265
 Culture Company: UK City of Culture, WA144
 Pensioners' Trust, WA3
 Regional Development
 Traffic Calming Measures, WA113
 Social Development
 Disability Living Allowance, WA260
 Rent Arrears, WA258

Clarke, Mr Trevor

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 109, 110
 Committee Business
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of
 Reply, 191, 194
 Standing Order 20A(1), 168
 Matters of the Day
 Tony McCoy, 117
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Rural Development Programme, 345
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Sports Facilities, 352
 Environment
 Waste Management, 138
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Children's Hospital, 186
 Private Members' Business
 Exploris, 95
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 313
 Written Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Independent Financial Review Panel, WA136
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Firefighters: Recruitment, WA218
 Regional Development
 Water Meters, WA325

Cochrane, Mrs Judith

Matters of the Day
 Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 116
 Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Fiscal Powers, 180
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Violence: Executive Separation, 234, 235
 Written Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Independent Financial Review Panel, WA136
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Insurance, WA440
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Section 75, WA442
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Tablet Contract, WA331
 Parliament Buildings: Drainage, WA442
 Education
 Curriculum: Business Skills, WA168

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Councils: Small Businesses and Independent Traders,
 WA184
 Small Business Saturday, WA287
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Belfast City Hospital: 5N Medical Assessment Unit,
 WA392
 Flu Pandemic: Preparations, WA394
 Social Development
 Houses of Multiple Occupation: Review, WA437

Copeland, Mr Michael

Committee Business
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of
 Reply, 192, 193
 Matters of the Day
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 325
 Oral Answers
 Education
 Dundonald High School, 67
 Justice
 Desertcreat Development, 279
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Planning Bill, 233
 Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 90
 International Mental Health Centre, 32
 Written Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Security Staff, WA441
 Finance and Personnel
 European Funding: Peace III and Peace IV, WA302
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Protect Life, WA309, WA382
 Justice
 CJINI: Report on Dealing with the Past, WA405
 Interfaces: Consultation, WA398
 Regional Development
 Parking Spaces: Belfast, WA327
 Transport Hub: Belfast, WA244
 Social Development
 Double Glazing Contracts, WA245
 Housing Executive: Belfast Response Maintenance
 Areas, WA255
 Housing Executive: Direct Labour Organisation, WA255
 Response Maintenance Contracts: Gateway Review,
 WA245
 Social Housing: Internet Connectivity, WA126
 Welfare Reform, WA440

Craig, Mr Jonathan

Matters of the Day
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 325
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 372
 Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 NAMA, 180
 Private Members' Business
 Oversubscribed Schools, 41, 42
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 247

Written Answers

- Education
 - Common Funding Formula: Special Educational Needs, WA341
- Environment
 - Planning Bill: Legal Advice, WA370
 - RPA: Planning Powers, WA298
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Lisburn Health Centre, WA380
- Justice
 - Sex Offenders, WA398
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, WA333
- Regional Development
 - A1: Speed Restrictions, WA419

Cree, Mr Leslie

- Executive Committee Business
 - Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 379
- Ministerial Statements
 - British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 260
- Oral Answers
 - Assembly Commission
 - Parliament Buildings: Car Parking, 286
 - Parliament Buildings: Roof Project, 288, 289
 - Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Commonwealth Games 2014, 349
 - Education
 - Schools Enhancement Programme, 70
 - Employment and Learning
 - Additional Support Fund, 77
 - Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Springfield Road/Woodvale Regeneration, 131
 - Justice
 - The Disappeared: Columba McVeigh, 275
 - Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Economic Pact, 18
 - Together: Building a United Community, 233
 - Social Development
 - Bloomfield Estate: Historical Debt, 282
- Private Members' Business
 - Civic Forum, 222
- Written Answers
 - Assembly Commission
 - Northern Ireland Assembly: Cycle to Work Scheme, WA441
 - Environment
 - Wind Turbines: Planning Applications in County Londonderry, WA185
 - Finance and Personnel
 - Air Passenger Duty, WA302
 - Budgets, WA304
 - Regional Development
 - Reservoirs at Ballysallagh, WA115, WA116

Dallat, Mr John

- Committee Business
 - Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 190, 198, 199
 - Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11
- Executive Committee Business
 - Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 378, 381

Matter of the Day

- Weekend Violence, 216

Ministerial Statements

- British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 259
- North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 373
- North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 166

Oral Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Going for Growth, 341
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Creative Industries Innovation Fund, 350
- Environment
 - Recycling: Targets, 142
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Waiting Times: OT Referrals, 184
- Justice
 - Dissident Unionists: Definition, 274
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Urban Village Regeneration, 19
- Regional Development
 - NI Water: Chief Executive, 23
 - Roads Service: Rural Support, 237
- Social Development
 - Housing: Repossessions, 285
- Private Members' Business
 - Civic Forum, 228
- Written Answers
 - Finance and Personnel
 - Utility Regulator: Appointment to Board, WA206, WA207
 - Justice
 - Coroners' Court: Historical Inquests, WA406

Dallat, Mr John (as Deputy Speaker)

- Adjournment
 - Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 106, 108, 109, 110, 113
 - Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 208, 214
- Committee Business
 - Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 354
 - Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 120, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130
- Oral Answers
 - Employment and Learning
 - Employment Law: Proposals, 390
 - Student Numbers: One Plan, 393
 - Theatre: SERC, 395
 - Unemployment: Young People, 392
 - Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, 383
 - Investment: USA Visit, 386, 387
 - Terrorist/Criminal Activity, 387
 - Together: Building a United Community, 384
- Private Members' Business
 - Broadcasting Powers, 359, 361, 362, 364, 366, 367
 - Exploris, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104
 - Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 268, 271, 272
 - Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 208

Dickson, Mr Stewart

- Assembly Business, 290
- Committee Business
 - Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 188

Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 6

Committee Stages
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS10

Ministerial Statements
Community Resuscitation Strategy, 266

Oral Answers
Employment and Learning
Assured Skills, 78, 79
Justice
Court Cases: Statutory Time Limits, 277
Social Development
Newtownards: Public Realm Funding, 286
Social Development Inquiry, 284

Private Members' Business
Civic Forum, 226
Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 149
Police Ombudsman's Office, 246, 247

Written Answers
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Care Homes, WA312
Regional Development
Flags: Health and Safety, WA317
Motorways: Hard Shoulder, WA409
Transport Hub: Belfast, WA242
Social Development
Community Asset Transfer: Carrickfergus Borough Council, WA136
Community Asset Transfer: Council Properties, WA262, WA263
Homes for a Pound Scheme, WA261
Housing Executive: Vacant Homes, WA261
Special Needs Management Allowance, WA135
Supported Living: Whiteabbey Hospital, WA119

Dobson, Mrs Jo-Anne

Ministerial Statements
North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 374

Oral Answers
Assembly Commission
Parliament Buildings: Car Parking, 286
Education
Schools: 14-19, 71
Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Banking Task Force, 133
Social Development
Housing: Garden Maintenance, 283

Private Members' Business
Oversubscribed Schools, 43
Single Farm Payments, 399, 400

Written Answers
Agriculture and Rural Development
Beef Supply System, WA146
Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and Johne's Disease Schemes, WA334
Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Programme, WA5
DARD: Headquarters, WA337
Johne's Disease Expert and Manager, WA4
Education
Common Funding Formula: Consultation, WA340
Pupils: Diabetes, WA346
Schools: Definition of Bilateral, WA149

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Diabetes: Prevalence, WA390
GP Practices: Removal of Patients, WA217
Health Care and Day Care Centres in Banbridge, WA222
Social Development
Employment and Support Allowance: Helpline, WA420

Douglas, Mr Sammy

Adjournment
C S Lewis, 316
Committee Business
Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 337
Matters of the Day
Father Alec Reid, 323
Oral Answers
Employment and Learning
Skills Gap, 75, 76
Regional Development
Giro d'Italia, 237
Written Answers
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Autism: Applied Behaviour Analysis, WA222

Dunne, Mr Gordon

Committee Stages
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill, CS15
Executive Committee Business
Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 380, 381
Ministerial Statements
Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 52
Community Resuscitation Strategy, 265
North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 262
Oral Answers
Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Banking Task Force, 134
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Executive Office: Brussels, 17
Regional Development
Craigantlet Crossroads, 239
Social Development
Bloomfield Estate: Historical Debt, 282
Private Members' Business
Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 83
International Mental Health Centre, 28
Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 204
Written Answers
Culture, Arts and Leisure
Suicide Awareness Training Programmes, WA147
Education
Holywood Nursery School, WA161
Priory Integrated College, Holywood, WA160
Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Energy: SME Assistance, WA287
Energy: Wind Turbine Grid Connections, WA367
Finance and Personnel
Digital Roll-out, WA305
Stormont Estate: Bus Service, WA209
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Ulster Hospital: Catheterisation Laboratory, WA311
Regional Development
Craigantlet Proposals, WA243

Social Development
Public Realm Scheme: Donaghadee, WA437

Durkan, Mr Mark H

Adjournment

Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 210

Oral Answers

Environment

Anaerobic Digester: Ballymena, 136, 137
Anaerobic Digester: Sion Mills, 138, 139
Climate Change, 137
Councils: Community Planning, 138
Exploris, 140
National Park: Causeway Coast, 141, 142
NIEA: Consultation Responses, 139
Partnership Panel, 141
Recycling: Targets, 142
Sellafield, 138
Taxis: Single-tier Licensing System, 137
Waste Management, 138

Revised Written Answers

Environment

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Jobs, RWA1
Planning Application: Regulation 10, RWA2

Written Answers

Environment

Anaerobic Digester: Mallusk, WA292
Biodiversity Strategy, WA32
Car Parking Spaces: DOE Spend, WA368
Car Parks, WA300
Carrier Bags, WA298, WA299
Councils: Chief Executives' Salaries, WA31
Councils: Debt, WA297
Dereliction Funding, WA289
Driving Licences, WA184, WA289, WA295, WA296
Entertainment Licences, WA297
Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations, WA33
Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations: Judicial Reviews, WA186
Expert Review Report by Chris Mills, WA29, WA371
Giant's Causeway: UNESCO Report, WA291
Hydroelectric Schemes, WA27, WA28
Hydroelectric Schemes: Fish Stocks, WA29
Local Government: Power Sharing, WA368
Local Government: Training, WA369
Minerals Applications, WA27, WA291
MOT Centres, WA293, WA294
MOTs, WA203, WA294
Natural Assets, WA185
NIEA, WA32
NIEA: West Tyrone, WA294
Outsourcing of Functions: DOE, WA291
Peatland, WA292, WA293
Planning Application: A/2009/0400/F, WA186, WA291, WA299
Planning Application: E/2013/0093/F, WA293
Planning Application: Z/2012/1387/F, WA203
Planning Bill: Legal Advice, WA370
Planning Conditions, WA289
Planning Permissions: Discharge Consents, WA292
Planning Policy Statement 21, WA369
Planning: Counter-fraud Arrangements, WA368
Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations, WA30, WA31, WA295, WA298

Public Consultations: DOE, WA187
Rates Convergence, WA29
RPA: Planning Powers, WA298
RPA: TUPE Regulations, WA295
Stop and Temporary Stop Notices, WA33
Taxi Industry, WA290
Taxis: Drivers, WA28, WA29
Taxis: Enforcement of Legislation, WA296
Taxis: Regulations, WA27, WA29
Taxis: Single-tier System, WA28, WA185, WA290, WA291, WA297, WA370, WA371
Traffic: Noise Levels, WA368
Tyres, WA204
Waste: Fuel Laundering, WA370
Water Framework Directive: Derogations, WA30
Weed Spraying: NIEA, WA296
Wind Farm: Upper Glenelly Valley, WA294
Wind Farms: Environmental Impact Assessment, WA204
Wind Farms: Planning Applications in West Tyrone, WA31
Wind Turbines, WA288, WA290
Wind Turbines: Planning Applications in County Londonderry, WA185

Written Ministerial Statements

Environment

Creation of a Network of Marine Protected Areas, WMS2

Easton, Mr Alex

Committee Business

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 171

Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 7

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 379

Private Members' Business

Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 145

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Bovine Tuberculosis, WA4
Cattle Smuggling, WA4
Flooding, WA335
Herds/Flocks Made Non-operational, WA145
Herds/Flocks Reduction: North Down and Ards, WA145

Education

Classroom Assistants: North Down, WA164
DE: Minister in Bangor, WA348
Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Pupil Awareness, WA276
Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor, WA358
Preschool Funded Places: North Down, WA348
Primary Schools in North Down: Budget, WA12
Primary Schools in North Down: Number of Teachers, WA13
Redburn Primary School Site, WA348
Schools: Mobile Phones, WA362
Schools: Newbuild in Holywood, WA154
Schools: Newbuilds, WA341
St Columbanus' College, WA358

Employment and Learning

Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Student Awareness, WA362

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Jobs Fund, WA286

Tourism Infrastructure, WA22	Regional Development
Environment	Wind Turbines, 26
MOT Centres, WA293, WA294	Social Development
MOTs, WA203, WA294	Social Development: Pilot Schemes, 280
Finance and Personnel	Private Members' Business
Public Prosecution Service: Staff, WA208	Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 86, 87
Shared Services, WA303	Civic Forum, 226
Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Police Ombudsman's Office, 248, 249, 250
Hospitals: Car Parking Charges, WA396	Written Answers
Justice	Agriculture and Rural Development
Prisons: Drugs, WA315	Civil Service Posts: DARD, WA335
Self-defence Classes, WA397	Outsourcing of Functions: DARD, WA6
Regional Development	Culture, Arts and Leisure
Belfast Rapid Transport System, WA327	City of Culture: Contingency Fund, WA339
Cycle Lanes, WA236	Civil Service Posts: DCAL, WA273
Cycling, WA236	DCAL: Capital Projects, WA339
Donaghadee Harbour, WA231	Education
Ferry Service: Strangford Lough, WA240	Buddy Bear School, Dungannon, WA165
Footpaths: Towerview, Bangor, WA114	Civil Service Posts: DE, WA279
NI Water: Burst Pipes, WA415, WA416	Outsourcing of Functions: DE, WA153
NI Water: Complaints, WA417	Primary Schools: Foyle, WA163
NI Water: Reservoirs, WA414, WA416	Employment and Learning
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, WA230	Civil Service Posts: DEL, WA364
Parking: Spencer Street, WA317	Outsourcing of Functions: DEL, WA16
Roads Service: Salt and Grit, WA411	University of Ulster: Campuses, WA366
Roads Service: Winter Service Vehicles, WA411	Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Sewerage System in Millisle, WA116	Electricity: Renewable Sources, WA182, WA367
Speed Limits on Roads, WA115	Outsourcing of Functions: DETI, WA25
Street Lighting: Bayview Road, Bangor, WA114	Tourism 2020: Northern Ireland Hotels Federation Report, WA23
Translink: Profitability, WA410	Environment
Translink: Revenue Reserves, WA116	Outsourcing of Functions: DOE, WA291
Translink: Stock Disposal, WA409	Finance and Personnel
Weed Spraying: North Down, WA114	Outsourcing of Functions: DFP, WA207
Social Development	Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Disability Living Allowance, WA135	Buddy Bear School, Dungannon, WA378
Disability Living Allowance/Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA427	Civil Service Posts: DHSSPS, WA386
Disability Living Allowance: Appeals, WA260	Dentistry Appointments: Altnagelvin Area Hospital, WA392
Employment and Support Allowance, WA134	Dentistry Appointments: Hospitals, WA393
Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA132, WA260	Outsourcing of Functions: DHSSPS, WA210
Housing Executive Properties: Double Glazing in North Down, WA129	Paediatric Cardiac Services, WA310
Housing Executive Properties: Gas in Donaghadee, WA126	Personality Disorder Service, WA46
Housing Executive Properties: Insulation in North Down, WA245, WA246	Justice
Housing Executive: Heating Systems, WA120	Civil Service Posts: DOJ, WA401
Housing Executive: Resident Parking, WA129	Outsourcing of Functions: DOJ, WA109
Social Housing Newbuilds, WA245	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Social Housing Newbuilds: North Down, WA128	Cooperative and Social Enterprise Hub, WA143
Tenants: Antisocial Behaviour, WA246	Positive Relations Project, WA139
	Programme for Government: Jobs in Derry, WA143
	Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse: Support Service, WA265
Eastwood, Mr Colum	Regional Development
Adjournment	A6: Derry to the M22, WA407
Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 212	Civil Service Posts: DRD, WA412
Oral Answers	Outsourcing of Functions: DRD, WA230
Agriculture and Rural Development	SmartPass, WA235
Agrifood Sector: Young People, 343, 344	TEN-T Core Network: A6 and Foyle Port, WA117
Employment and Learning	TEN-T Core Network: Belfast-Derry Line, WA117
Student Numbers: One Plan, 392, 393	TEN-T Core Node: Derry, WA113
Justice	Train Station: Derry, WA240, WA241
Solicitors: Fees, 279	Transport Links: Projects, WA113
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Social Development
Together: Building a United Community, 383	Boiler Replacement Scheme: Disability Living Allowance, WA438

Civil Service Posts: DSD, WA435
 Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA436
 Housing Waiting List, WA329
 Housing-led Regeneration, WA263
 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas: Funding, WA428
 Outsourcing of Functions: DSD, WA131

Elliott, Mr Tom

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Farming: DARD Legal Action, 346
 Renewables: Funding, 341
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ballynagross Football Club, 346, 347
 Education
 Education and Skills Authority, 73
 Justice
 The Disappeared: Justice, 273
 Social Development
 Housing Executive: Maintenance Contracts, 280

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 291
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 250, 251, 253
 Single Farm Payments, 401
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 313

Written Answers

Environment
 Driving Licences, WA184, WA289, WA295, WA296
 Peatland, WA292, WA293
 Rates Convergence, WA29
 Weed Spraying: NIEA, WA296
 Finance and Personnel
 Banks, WA35
 Equal Pay, WA303
 Occupational Health Service, WA209
 Public Sector Employment, WA34
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Enniskillen Ambulance Station: Capital Funding, WA51
 Justice
 Security Alerts on the M1, WA107
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Commissioner for Public Appointments:
 Recommendations, WA1
 Regional Development
 Roads: Republic of Ireland Funding, WA417
 Social Development
 Housing Executive: Reduced Requirements, WA255
 Housing Grants: Rejections, WA256

Farry, Dr Stephen

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 354

Oral Answers

Employment and Learning
 Additional Support Fund, 76, 77
 Apprenticeships, 390, 391
 Assured Skills, 78, 79
 BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot
 Training, 73
 Careers Guidance, 74, 75
 Careers Review, 74
 Careers System, 394
 Confucius Institute, 394

Employment Law: Proposals, 390
 Employment: People with Disabilities, 79, 80
 Higher Education, 393
 Higher Education: Update, 389
 Investment: DEL Support, 73, 74
 Living Wage, 75
 North/South Cooperation, 77, 78
 Open University, 393
 Skills Gap, 75, 76
 South Eastern Regional College: Theatre, 74
 Student Numbers: One Plan, 392, 393
 Theatre: SERC, 395
 Unemployment: Young People, 391, 392
 Youth Employment Scheme, 394, 395

Private Members' Business

Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 299

Written Answers

Employment and Learning
 Access to Work Programme: Advertising, WA13
 Apprenticeships, WA169, WA170
 Apprenticeships: Armagh, WA169
 Apprenticeships: Construction Industry, WA364
 Car Parking Spaces: DEL Spend, WA283
 Civil Service Posts: DEL, WA364
 Colleges: Budgets, WA171
 DEL Provision: Disability, WA14
 Disability Employment Service, WA284
 Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Student Awareness, WA362
 Education Maintenance Allowance: Fraud, WA365
 Employment Appeals Tribunal, WA17
 EU: Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs, WA366
 Further and Higher Education: Disability Discrimination
 Act, WA363
 Further and Higher Education: Students with Learning
 Disabilities, WA15
 Further Education: Students with Learning Disabilities,
 WA170, WA365
 GCSE/A-level Review, WA173
 Management and Leadership Development
 Programme Initiatives, WA17
 Outsourcing of Functions: DEL, WA16
 Public Consultations: DEL, WA281
 Queen's University: Pro-Vice-Chancellor, WA363, WA364
 Research Conduct, WA284
 Skills and Employment Liaison Officer, WA173
 Skills Training, WA171
 South West College: Audit on Learning Disability
 Provision, WA17
 South West College: Beacon Centre, WA15
 South West College: Students with a Learning Difficulty
 and/or Disability, WA18
 Student Support Entitlement, WA169
 Teacher Training, WA171, WA363
 Universities: Entrants, WA15
 Universities: Maximum Student Number, WA16, WA362
 University of Ulster: Campuses, WA366
 Young People: Opportunities and Prospects, WA17
 Youth Employment Scheme, WA170
 Youth Employment Scheme: Upper Bann, WA173
 Youth Unemployment, WA172, WA281

Fearon, Ms Megan

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Farmers: Literacy, 339, 340

Education
 Schools Enhancement Programme, 70

Private Members' Business
 Civic Forum, 222

Written Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Section 75, WA442
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Economy, WA367
 Finance and Personnel
 NAMA, WA302
 Tax, WA372
 Regional Development
 Cycling: Safety, WA243
 Social Development
 Housing Debt, WA433

Flanagan, Mr Phil

Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 337

Oral Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Additional Support Fund, 77
 Higher Education: Update, 389
 Regional Development
 Parking: Ballymena, 240
 Parking: Christmas Period, 240

Private Members' Business
 Exploris, 96, 101, 102, 103
 Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 291, 292

Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Business: Irvinestown, WA338
 Cooperatives, WA7
 Dairy Processing Plant in County Fermanagh, WA8
 Farming Restrictions, WA338
 Sugar Beet, WA6
 Sugar Industry, WA7
 Education
 Curriculum: Science, WA153
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Cooperatives, WA182
 InterTradeIreland, WA24
 Finance and Personnel
 Businesses: Closed/Ceased Trading/Bankrupt, WA300
 Cooperatives, WA373
 Emigration Figures, WA36
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Acute Mental Health Beds: Western Health and Social
 Care Trust, WA309
 Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, WA391
 Cigarettes, WA394
 Citizens Advice: Funding, WA383
 Clinical Trials, WA48
 Co-codamol Addiction, WA384
 Fire Sprinklers, WA392
 Foster Parents, WA381
 G8 Summit: Western Health and Social Care Trust,
 WA309
 Home Help, WA391
 Smoking, WA395
 Smoking-related Illness, WA396
 South West Acute Hospital: Medical School, WA383

South West Acute Hospital: Medical Staff, WA380,
 WA383
 Western Health and Social Care Trust: Budgetary
 Position, WA383

Justice
 Crime: Border Areas, WA405
 Hate Crimes, WA403
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Energy Wise Campaign, WA2
 Older People's Commissioner, WA3
 Regional Development
 Hydraulic Fracturing: Water Supplies, WA415
 Social Development
 Mortgage Arrears, WA435
 Social Enterprise Hub: Enniskillen, WA440

Ford, Mr David

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 111, 112

Assembly Business
 Eddie McGrady, 158

Matters of the Day
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 326
 Father Alec Reid, 324

Oral Answers
 Justice
 Court Cases: Statutory Time Limits, 277
 Desertcreat Development, 279
 Dissident Republican Threat, 279
 Dissident Unionists: Definition, 274
 Human Trafficking, 276, 277
 Judges: Complaints, 273, 274
 Maghberry: Death in Custody, 275
 National Crime Agency, 278
 PCSP: Paramilitary Members, 275, 276
 PSNI: Agency Staff, 278
 Sick Leave: DOJ, 278
 Solicitors: Fees, 279
 The Disappeared: Columba McVeigh, 274, 275
 The Disappeared: Justice, 273
 Victims: Parole Commissioner Consultation, 277

Private Members' Business
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 251, 253, 255

Written Answers
 Justice
 Access NI, WA314, WA315
 Anti-fraud Unit: DOJ, WA109
 Appeals Service, WA399
 Car Parking Spaces: DOJ Spend, WA401
 Children in Care, WA314
 Civil Service Posts: DOJ, WA401
 CJINI: Report on Dealing with the Past, WA405
 Coroners, WA111
 Coroners' Court: Historical Inquests, WA406
 Courts: Registered Intermediary Scheme, WA102,
 WA403
 Courts: Victim Statements, WA400, WA406
 Crime: Border Areas, WA405
 Criminal Justice Inspection Reports, WA52, WA228
 Domestic Violence, WA223, WA229, WA314, WA316
 Driving Offences, WA102
 Driving without Insurance, WA102
 Firearms: Age Restrictions, WA405
 Hate Crimes, WA403

Historical Sexual Abuse Cases, WA110
 Human Trafficking, WA224, WA405
 Human Trafficking: Review of Case, WA223, WA402
 Interfaces: Consultation, WA398
 Investigation Findings, WA111
 Legal Aid, WA405
 Legal Aid Certificates, WA227
 Legal Aid: Budget, WA103, WA107, WA108
 Legal Aid: Offender Levy, WA313
 Legal Aid: Payments to Law Firms, WA103, WA228
 Legal Aid: Spend, WA103
 Mixed Committal: Costs, WA225
 Mixed Committals, WA228, WA402
 National Crime Agency, WA226
 Offences: Bail, WA398
 Offences: Specific Case, WA402
 Outsourcing of Functions: DOJ, WA109
 Parades Commission, WA226
 Police Part-time Reserve, WA316
 Policing and Community Safety Partnerships: MLAs, WA52, WA229
 Prison Officers: Personal Security, WA317
 Prison Officers: Severance Package, WA109, WA110
 Prison Officers: Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings, WA316
 Prison Service College Site at Millisle, WA110
 Prison Service Procedures, WA107
 Prison Service: Access to Prisons for Research, WA227
 Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013, WA108, WA111, WA227, WA228, WA229, WA316, WA317, WA404
 Prison Service: Notification of Suspension, WA108
 Prison Service: Nurses, WA404
 Prison Service: Professional Codes, WA108
 Prison Service: Release of Prisoner, WA225, WA313, WA315
 Prison Service: Scanning Technology, WA403
 Prison Service: STORM, WA107, WA108, WA227
 Prisoner Ombudsman: Reports, WA314
 Prisoners: Keys, WA110, WA399
 Prisoners: Nutrition, WA227
 Prisoners: Reviews, WA402
 Prisoners: Strip-searching, WA229
 Prisons: Drugs, WA315, WA406
 Prostitution and Human Trafficking Regulation: Swedish Government, WA403
 Public Prosecution Service, WA52
 Security Alerts on the M1, WA107
 Self-defence Classes, WA397
 Sentencing: Murder, WA399, WA400
 Sex Offenders, WA398
 Sex Offenders Register, WA316
 Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008: Article 64A, WA404
 Sexual Offences Cases, WA223, WA224, WA225, WA228
 Sexual Offences Prevention Orders, WA399, WA404
 Sham Marriage Cases, WA223, WA225
 Supporting Prisoners at Risk Procedures, WA110
 Taxed Legal Costs, WA52

Foster, Mrs Arlene

Adjournment

Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 406, 410

Oral Answers

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Banking Task Force, 133, 134

Business Start-ups, 132
 Economic Growth, 131, 132
 Energy: Security of Supply, 134, 135
 Exploris, 135, 136
 Flag-related Protests, 131
 Insolvency, 132, 133
 Narrow Water Bridge, 132
 Sporting Events, 136
 Springfield Road/Woodvale Regeneration, 131
 Tourism: Successes, 130
 Utility Regulator, 131

Written Answers

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Anti-fraud Unit: DETI, WA24
 Broadband: North Down, WA26
 Business Start-ups: North Antrim, WA25
 Car Parking Spaces: DETI Spend, WA286
 Consumer Council: Review, WA27, WA182
 Cooperatives, WA182
 Councils: Small Businesses and Independent Traders, WA184
 Data Centre in Coleraine, WA23
 Departmental Funding: DETI, WA26
 Economic Strategy: Fiscal Levers, WA288
 Economy, WA367
 Electricity Interconnectors, WA285
 Electricity: Renewable Sources, WA182, WA367
 Energy Prices, WA285
 Energy: Community Energy Strategy and Support, WA184
 Energy: Price Freeze, WA287
 Energy: Review of Competition, WA366
 Energy: SME Assistance, WA287
 Energy: Wind Turbine Grid Connections, WA367
 Flights: Germany/Belgium, WA287
 Free Derry Museum, WA366
 G8 Summit 2013: Legacy, WA181
 Giro d'Italia 2014, WA23
 Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland: Prosecutions, WA24
 InterTradeIreland, WA24
 Invest NI and Foreign Investors, WA18
 Invest NI: Financial Assistance in North Antrim, WA25
 Invest NI: Land in North Antrim, WA25
 Invest NI: Manufacturing and Engineering Companies in County Tyrone, WA173
 Invest NI: Review, WA26
 Invest NI: Venture Capital Funds, WA21
 Job Creation: Armagh, WA286
 Job Creation: Foreign Trade Missions, WA183
 Jobs, WA181
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: International Investors, WA22
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: Invest NI, WA21
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: Jobs Fund, WA25
 Jobs Fund, WA286
 Milk Cup, WA183
 Mobile Infrastructure Project, WA285
 NI Small Business Loan Fund, WA21
 Northern Ireland Electricity: Investigation, WA286
 Northern Ireland Events Company, WA183
 Northern Ireland Tourist Board: Flag Protests, WA182, WA367
 Office Accommodation, WA286
 Outsourcing of Functions: DETI, WA25
 Petroleum Licences, WA284

PL1/13: Executive, WA183
 Regional Start Initiative, WA21
 Small Business Saturday, WA182, WA288
 Smart Region Project, WA18
 Smart Region Project: Omagh and Fermanagh, WA18
 Tourism, WA287
 Tourism 2020: Northern Ireland Hotels Federation Report, WA23, WA24
 Tourism Infrastructure, WA22
 Trading Standards: Cigarettes, WA22, WA366
 VAT: Hospitality Sector, WA26

Written Ministerial Statements

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Wider Tourism Structures, WMS1

Frew, Mr Paul

Executive Committee Business

Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013, 54

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Lough Neagh Working Group, 339
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Insolvency, 133
 Environment
 Anaerobic Digester: Ballymena, 136, 137

Private Members' Business

Exploris, 99
 Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 292, 293, 294
 Single Farm Payments, 397, 404, 405

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Bovine Tuberculosis, WA5
 Lough Neagh Working Group, WA146
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Milk Cup, WA272
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Milk Cup, WA183
 Environment
 Car Parks, WA299
 Wind Turbines, WA288, WA290
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Care Homes: Respite Beds, WA222
 Residential Homes, WA389
 Justice
 Driving Offences, WA102
 Driving without Insurance, WA102
 Legal Aid: Budget, WA107, WA108
 Regional Development
 NI Water: Reservoirs, WA410
 Parking for Tradespeople, WA112
 Social Development
 Double Glazing Schemes: North Antrim, WA257
 Housing Executive Properties: Ballymena, WA434, WA435
 Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Antrim, WA247
 Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition in North Antrim, WA256
 Housing Executive Schemes: Ballymena, Ballymoney, Moyle, WA130
 Housing Executive Spend, WA247

Housing Waiting List: North Antrim, WA130
 Rent Arrears: North Antrim, WA257
 Social Housing Newbuilds: North Antrim, WA256
 Social Housing Stock: North Antrim, WA258
 Temporary Accommodation: North Antrim, WA257

Gardiner, Mr Samuel

Ministerial Statements

Community Resuscitation Strategy, 267

Oral Answers

Assembly Commission
 Ormiston House, 289, 290
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Insolvency, 132
 Environment
 NIEA: Consultation Responses, 139
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Children's Hospital, 186
 Justice
 Judges: Complaints, 274
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Haass Talks, 387
 Investment: USA Visit, 387
 Welfare Reform, 384
 Regional Development
 Traffic: Bridge Street, Strabane, 236

Private Members' Business

Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 205

Written Answers

Environment
 Carrier Bags, WA298, WA299
 Planning: Counter-fraud Arrangements, WA368
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Carrier Bags, WA382
 Regional Development
 Lurgan Railway Station, WA328, WA410

Girvan, Mr Paul

Committee Business

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 189, 190

Committee Stages

Public Service Pensions Bill, CS2, CS3

Oral Answers

Finance and Personnel
 Rating Review, 177

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 271, 272

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Land Owned or Controlled by DARD in South Antrim, WA6
 Livestock Stolen in South Antrim, WA5
 Education
 Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Antrim, WA362
 Classroom Assistants: South Antrim, WA357
 Regional Development
 Cycle Lanes: South Antrim, WA230
 Drainage Network: Ballyclare, WA414
 Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim, WA115
 Waste Water: Ballynure, WA414

Social Development
 Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessments, WA261

Givan, Mr Paul

Committee Business

Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage, 56

Ministerial Statements

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 52

Oral Answers

Employment and Learning
 Unemployment: Young People, 391
 Justice
 Judges: Complaints, 274

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 65, 82, 83, 84, 86, 88
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 242, 243, 245, 248, 250, 253, 254, 255, 256
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 308, 312, 313

Written Answers

Finance and Personnel
 Public Prosecution Service: Governance, WA34
 Justice
 Police Part-time Reserve, WA316
 Prison Officers: Personal Security, WA317
 Prison Officers: Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings, WA316
 Public Prosecution Service, WA52

Hale, Mrs Brenda

Committee Business

Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 8

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 380

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Renewables: Farm Businesses, 344
 Employment and Learning
 Open University, 393
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Haass Talks: Budget, 230
 The Disappeared, 16
 Regional Development
 A1: Hillsborough, 24

Written Answers

Environment
 Traffic: Noise Levels, WA368
 Social Development
 DSD: Procurement, WA439

Hamilton, Mr Simon

Adjournment

Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 212, 213, 214

Committee Business

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 195, 198

Oral Answers

Finance and Personnel

Air Passenger Duty, 176
 Civil Service: Car Parking Costs, 175
 Civil Service: Jobs in Derry, 174, 175
 Fiscal Powers, 179, 180
 NAMA, 180, 181
 Rate Relief, 178, 179
 Rating Review, 176, 177
 Ulster Bank, 175, 176

Written Answers

Finance and Personnel

Agrifood Loan Scheme, WA208
 Air Passenger Duty, WA301, WA302, WA305, WA374
 Banks, WA35
 Banks: European Investment Bank, WA303
 Banks: Green Investment Bank, WA303
 Belfast Harbour Commissioners, WA208
 Budgets, WA304
 Budgets: Current/Capital, WA305
 Businesses: Closed/Ceased Trading/Bankrupt, WA300
 Capital Allocations, WA39
 Capital Awards, WA39
 Car Parking Spaces: DFP Spend, WA372
 Car Parking Spaces: Government, WA33, WA372
 Civil Servants: Flights, WA204
 Civil Servants: Promotions, WA373
 Civil Servants: Sickness Absence, WA38
 Civil Service Pensions, WA39, WA301, WA302
 Civil Service: Salaries, WA304
 Cooperatives, WA373
 Councils: Carbon Reduction Measures, WA374
 Counsel Instructed from Outside the Jurisdiction, WA34
 Cross-border Cooperation, WA304
 Departmental Expenditure Limit: Capital, WA40
 Departmental Expenditure Limit: Resource, WA40
 Departmental Spending, WA304
 Digital Roll-out, WA305
 Emigration Figures, WA36
 Employment, WA305
 Equal Pay, WA303
 European Funding: Community Groups, WA209
 European Funding: Peace III and Peace IV, WA302
 Exports, WA205
 Funding Applications: Single Online Portal, WA208
 Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA373, WA374
 Land Law, WA207
 Legal Costs: DFP, WA35, WA372
 Lending Data, WA304
 NAMA, WA208, WA302
 Narrow Water Bridge, WA207
 Occupational Health Service, WA209
 October Monitoring Round and Capital Reallocation Exercise, WA303
 Office Accommodation: Foyle, WA209
 Outsourcing of Functions: DFP, WA207
 Port of Belfast, WA36
 Procurement Spend, WA374
 Programme for Government: Addressing Regional Imbalances, WA209
 Public Consultations: DFP, WA37
 Public Prosecution Service: Governance, WA34
 Public Prosecution Service: Staff, WA208
 Public Sector Employment, WA34
 Rates Arrears, WA373
 Rates Collection, WA210

Rates Initiatives, WA371
 Rating of Empty Homes, WA34
 Shared Services, WA303
 Social Investment Fund, WA208
 Special EU Programmes Body: Recruitment Embargo, WA36
 Stormont Estate: Bus Service, WA209
 Tax, WA372
 Utility Regulator: Appointment to Board, WA206, WA207
 Utility Regulator: Oversight, WA207
 Vacant Domestic Dwellings, WA208, WA302

Hazzard, Mr Christopher

Adjournment
 Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 408
 Committee Business
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 189
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 372
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Going for Growth, 342
 Education
 Common Funding Formula, 71
 Education and Skills Authority, 72
 Numeracy and Literacy, 68
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Exploris, 135
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Play and Leisure Strategy, 20
 Social Development
 Social Development: Pilot Schemes, 279, 280
 Private Members' Business
 Exploris, 99, 101
 Oversubscribed Schools, 38
 Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Broadband: South Down, WA8
 Education
 Autism Spectrum Disorder: Educational Experience, WA275
 Autism Spectrum Disorder: Teacher Training, WA165
 Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Down, WA275
 DE: Youth Capital Funding Scheme, WA360
 Examination Fees for Pupils, WA12
 School Councils, WA163
 Schools: Charges to Pupils, WA164
 Schools: Fresh Drinking Water, WA163
 Schools: Promotion of Respect and Inclusion, WA358
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Downe Hospital: Cardiac Ambulance, WA311
 Hospitals: Coffee and Confectionery Outlets, WA392
 Legal Fees: DHSSPS, WA219
 Ulster Hospital: Mental Health Services, WA389
 Regional Development
 A5 Western Transport Corridor: Public Consultation, WA420

Hilditch, Mr David

Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 330
 Committee System Review, 60

Oral Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Investment: USA Visit, 386
 Social Development
 Social Development: Pilot Schemes, 280
 Welfare Reform Bill, 285
 Private Members' Business
 Broadcasting Powers, 363
 Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 298
 Written Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Windsor Park Stadium, WA273
 Education
 Examinations, WA165
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Medical Checks, WA389

Humphrey, Mr William

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 107, 109
 Committee Business
 Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 124, 125, 129
 Ministerial Statements
 Community Resuscitation Strategy, 267
 North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 263
 Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Ormiston House, 290
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Creative Industries Innovation Fund, 350
 Cultural Bursaries, 349
 Finance and Personnel
 Fiscal Powers, 179
 Private Members' Business
 Broadcasting Powers, 361
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 304, 311
 Revised Written Answers
 Social Development
 Social Housing: 2010 Funding, RWA3
 Written Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Cricket Strategy, WA148
 Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships, WA169
 Justice
 National Crime Agency, WA226
 Parades Commission, WA226
 Prisons: Drugs, WA406
 Social Development
 North Belfast Housing Strategy, WA125, WA128, WA129, WA131
 Social Housing: North Belfast Housing Strategy, WA122

Hussey, Mr Ross

Adjournment
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 110, 112
 Committee Business
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 173

Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport
Delivery Structures, 5, 6

Matter of the Day
Weekend Violence, 215

Matters of the Day
Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 115

Oral Answers
Regional Development
NI Water: Chief Executive, 23

Written Answers
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh, WA50

Justice
Courts: Victim Statements, WA400

Irwin, Mr William

Committee Business
Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and
Leisure Remit, 143

Oral Answers
Regional Development
Roads Service: Rural Support, 236

Private Members' Business
Broadcasting Powers, 362
Single Farm Payments, 400

Written Answers
Education
Teachers: Accumulated Leave Entitlement, WA278
Teachers: Compensation and Pre-claim Settlements,
WA159

Kelly, Mrs Dolores

Committee Business
Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport
Delivery Structures, 5

Oral Answers
Agriculture and Rural Development
Lough Neagh Working Group, 339

Education
Common Funding Formula, 68, 69, 72

Employment and Learning
Additional Support Fund, 76
Confucius Institute, 394
Unemployment: Young People, 392

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Welfare Reform, 384

Social Development
Housing Executive: Maintenance Contracts, 281

Private Members' Business
Civic Forum, 223, 224, 227, 228
Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 148, 149, 153
Police Ombudsman's Office, 243, 244, 249, 255
The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 304, 306, 307

Written Answers
Education
St Francis' Primary School, Loughbrickland, WA356

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland:
Prosecutions, WA23

Finance and Personnel
Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA374

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Inpatients Registered with a GP, WA43
Lurgan Health Treatment Centre, WA395

Justice
Appeals Service, WA399

Social Development
Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA433
Girdwood Regeneration Scheme, WA132
Homelessness: Upper Bann, WA256
Housing Benefit: Underoccupancy Penalty, WA256
Housing-led Regeneration, WA331
Social Housing: Girdwood, WA437
Social Housing: North Belfast, WA433

Kelly, Mr Gerry

Committee Business
Standing Order 20A(1), 168

Matters of the Day
Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 115
Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 325

Oral Answers
Agriculture and Rural Development
Rural White Paper, 344

Education
Pupils: Educational Attainment, 67

Written Answers
Assembly Commission
Parliament Buildings: Security Procedures, WA442

Kennedy, Mr Danny

Adjournment
C S Lewis, 316

Committee Business
Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport
Delivery Structures, 9, 10

Executive Committee Business
Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Accelerated Passage,
374, 376
Road Races (Amendment) Bill: First Stage, 219
Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 377, 395

Oral Answers
Regional Development
A1: Hillsborough, 24
A5: EU Habitats Directive, 240
A5: Public Consultations, 27
Ballymoney Railway Station, 26, 27
Car Parking: Newry, 21
Comber Greenway, 23, 24
Consumer Council, 238
Craigantlet Crossroads, 239
Flood Alleviation: South Down, 238, 239
Giro d'Italia, 21, 22, 237
NI Water: Chief Executive, 23
Parking: Ballymena, 240
Parking: Belfast City Centre, 241
Parking: Christmas Period, 240
Roads Service: Rural Support, 236, 237
Roads: North-west, 22
TEN-T Regulations, 25
Tourism: Strangford/Portaferry, 23
Traffic: Bridge Street, Strabane, 236
Unadopted Roads, 22
Wind Turbines, 25, 26

Written Answers

Regional Development

A1: Speed Restrictions, WA419
 A2: Landslides, WA328
 A2: Shore Road Scheme, WA418
 A4 Dual Carriageway: Street Lighting, WA411
 A5 Western Transport Corridor: Public Consultation, WA420
 A6: Derry to the M22, WA407
 Adopted Roads: Donaghadee and Millisle, WA409
 Anti-fraud Unit: DRD, WA114
 Ballynahinch Bypass, WA232
 Belfast Harbour Commissioners, WA409, WA415
 Belfast Rapid Transport System, WA328
 Blue Badge Scheme: Veterans, WA229, WA230
 Bus Lanes: Belfast City Centre, WA232
 Car Parking Spaces: DRD Spend, WA412
 Carnet Tickets for Rail and Bus Journeys, WA117
 Civil Service Posts: DRD, WA412
 Compensation Claims: DRD, WA243
 Craigtanlet Proposals, WA244
 Cycle Lane: Upper Arthur Street, Belfast, WA406
 Cycle Lanes, WA236
 Cycle Lanes and Boxes, WA408
 Cycle Lanes: South Antrim, WA230
 Cycle Path between Lisburn and Belfast, WA232
 Cycling, WA236, WA419
 Cycling Group, WA232, WA325
 Cycling: Minister for Regional Development's London Visit, WA325
 Cycling: Safety, WA243
 Departmental Funding: DRD, WA116
 Dock Street Car Park, Strabane, WA114
 Donaghadee Harbour, WA231
 Drainage Network: Ballyclare, WA414
 DRD: Income-generating Capital Assets, WA414
 DRD: Minister's London Visit, WA325
 Ferry Service: Strangford Lough, WA240
 Flags: Health and Safety, WA317
 Flooding: North Down, WA324
 Footpaths, WA326
 Footpaths: North Down, WA113
 Footpaths: Replacement of Pavement Stones, WA115
 Footpaths: Towerview, Bangor, WA114
 Housing Developments: Unadopted Roads, WA407
 Hydraulic Fracturing: Water Supplies, WA415
 Link Road from Coolnagard Housing Development to Dromore Road, Omagh, WA231
 Lurgan Railway Station, WA328, WA410
 Maze/Long Kesh Site: Access, WA240
 Metrobus 23 Service to the Stormont Estate, WA115
 Motorways: Hard Shoulder, WA409
 NI Water: Burst Pipes, WA415, WA416
 NI Water: Complaints, WA417
 NI Water: Reservoirs, WA410, WA415, WA416
 Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, WA230
 Outsourcing of Functions: DRD, WA231
 Parking for Tradespeople, WA112
 Parking Restrictions, WA327
 Parking Spaces: Belfast, WA327
 Parking: Spencer Street, WA317
 Penalty Charge Notices: Appeals, WA235, WA324
 Penalty Charge Notices: North Down, WA323, WA408, WA411
 Public Consultations: DRD, WA233
 Railways: Ballymena to Belfast, WA327

Reservoirs at Ballysallagh, WA116
 Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim, WA115
 Road Bonds, WA241, WA325
 Road Safety: Junctions, WA418
 Roads Service: Far Circular Road, Dungannon, WA111
 Roads Service: Grass Cutting, WA407
 Roads Service: Salt and Grit, WA411
 Roads Service: Winter Service Vehicles, WA411
 Roads: Capital Expenditure on Maintenance, WA235
 Roads: Republic of Ireland Funding, WA417
 Roads: Vehicle Damage Compensation, WA419
 Sewerage System in Millisle, WA116
 Signage: Bilingual Road Signs, WA231
 Signage: Irish/Bilingual Destination Signs, WA319
 SmartPass, WA235, WA328
 Speed Limits on Roads, WA115
 Street Lighting, WA326, WA408
 Street Lighting Scheme: Bleary, County Down, WA232
 Street Lighting: Bayview Road, Bangor, WA114
 Street Lighting: North Down, WA112
 Street Lighting: Urban Areas, WA112
 TEN-T Core Network: A6 and Foyle Port, WA117
 TEN-T Core Network: Belfast-Derry Line, WA117
 TEN-T Core Node: Derry, WA113
 TEN-T: Roads in County Fermanagh and County Tyrone, WA116
 Traffic Calming Measures, WA113
 Traffic Calming: North Down, WA317
 Traffic Calming: Vertical Deflection, WA319
 Traffic Congestion: Armagh, WA324
 Traffic Flow, WA318
 Train Passenger Numbers, WA241
 Train Station: Derry, WA241
 Train Station: Derry/Londonderry, WA242
 Train Use, WA318
 Translink: Privatisation, WA417
 Translink: Profitability, WA410
 Translink: Revenue Reserves, WA116
 Translink: Stock Disposal, WA409
 Transport Hub: Belfast, WA242, WA244
 Transport Links: Projects, WA114
 Unadopted Roads: Inquiry Recommendations, WA231
 Urban Clearway: South Belfast, WA418
 Waste Water: Ballynure, WA414
 Water Abstraction: River Faughan, WA412, WA417
 Water Consumption: Flushing Options, WA415
 Water Meters, WA325
 Weed Spraying: North Down, WA114
 Weed Spraying: Urban Footpaths, WA112
 Weed Spraying: Urban Settings, WA112

Written Ministerial Statements

Regional Development

A26 Dualling — Glarryford to Drones Road —
 Publication of Notice of Intention to Proceed and
 Making of Statutory Orders, WMS4

Kinahan, Mr Danny

Adjournment

C S Lewis, 317

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 335

Matters of the Day

Tony McCoy, 117

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 371

Oral Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Lough Neagh Working Group, 339
- Assembly Commission
 - Committees: Paperless Packs, 287
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Tourism: Successes, 130
- Environment
 - National Park: Causeway Coast, 141
- Finance and Personnel
 - Rating Review, 177
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Elective Care, 183
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Social Investment Fund, 232
 - Teachers: Signature Project, 21
- Regional Development
 - Roads Service: Rural Support, 237

Private Members' Business

- Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 149
- Oversubscribed Schools, 40
- Police Ombudsman's Office, 245

Written Answers

- Assembly Commission
 - Northern Ireland Assembly: Tablet Contract, WA331
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Salmon Fishing, WA274
- Education
 - Annahilt Primary School, WA155
 - Ballyclare Primary School, WA275
 - Common Funding Formula: Consultation Responses, WA166
 - Crumlin Integrated College, WA162
 - Education and Library Boards: Resources, WA347
 - Education Bill, WA280, WA347
 - Graduate Teacher Scheme, WA155
 - School Transport: Crumlin to Belfast and Lisburn, WA162
 - Schools: Enrolment Numbers, WA342
 - Schools: Savings from Closures, WA342
- Employment and Learning
 - Teacher Training, WA363
- Environment
 - Anaerobic Digester: Mallusk, WA292
- Finance and Personnel
 - Lending Data, WA304
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Abortion: Guidelines, WA312
 - Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Development Proposals, WA212

Lo, Ms Anna

Committee Business

- Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 124
- Committee System Review, 60

Committee Stages

- Carrier Bags Bill, CS13, CS14

Matters of the Day

- Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 327

Ministerial Statements

- British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 259
- North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 263

Oral Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Cycling: DCAL Funding, 351
- Employment and Learning
 - Careers Review, 74
- Environment
 - NIEA: Consultation Responses, 139
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Abortion: Guidelines, 186
 - City Hospital: Medical Assessment Unit, 182
- Justice
 - Human Trafficking, 277
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Planning Bill, 233
- Private Members' Business
 - Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 84
 - Broadcasting Powers, 361, 362
 - Exploris, 104, 105

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Wind Farm Development, WA8
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Energy: Community Energy Strategy and Support, WA184
 - Free Derry Museum, WA366
- Environment
 - Biodiversity Strategy, WA32
 - Giant's Causeway: UNESCO Report, WA291
 - Local Government: Power Sharing, WA368
 - Natural Assets, WA185
- Finance and Personnel
 - Special EU Programmes Body: Recruitment Embargo, WA36
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - IVF Treatment, WA308
 - Royal Victoria Hospital: Genito-urinary Medicine Clinic, WA389
- Social Development
 - Houses of Multiple Occupancy: Antisocial Behaviour, WA428
 - Regeneration: The Village, WA438

Lunn, Mr Trevor

Ministerial Statements

- North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 372

Oral Answers

- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Narrow Water Bridge, 132
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Homosexuality: Treatment, 182

Private Members' Business

- Oversubscribed Schools, 40

Written Answers

- Education
 - Controlled Sector Body and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools: Budget, WA8
 - Education and Library Boards: Staff Redundancies, WA340
 - Lisanelly Campus, WA153
 - Schools: Development Proposals, WA150
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Flights: Germany/Belgium, WA287

Lynch, Mr Seán

- Committee Business
 - Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 4
- Executive Committee Business
 - Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 378
- Ministerial Statements
 - North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 373
- Oral Answers
 - Assembly Commission
 - Outreach/Education: Update, 289
 - Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Banking Task Force, 134
 - Justice
 - Human Trafficking, 276
 - Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Investment: USA Visit, 386
 - Regional Development
 - A5: Public Consultations, 27
 - Giro d'Italia, 237
- Written Answers
 - Social Development
 - Warm Homes Scheme, WA440

Lyttle, Mr Chris

- Adjournment
 - C S Lewis, 318
- Committee Business
 - Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 332, 333
- Matter of the Day
 - Devastation in the Philippines, 160
 - Weekend Violence, 215
- Ministerial Statements
 - North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 163
- Oral Answers
 - Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Rural Cohesion, 346
 - Employment and Learning
 - Higher Education: Update, 389
 - North/South Cooperation, 78
 - Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Energy: Security of Supply, 134
 - Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Services, 185
 - Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Economic Pact, 18
 - Haass Talks: Budget, 230
 - Social Development
 - Housing: Regeneration Schemes, 283
- Private Members' Business
 - Civic Forum, 221, 223, 226, 227
 - Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 297
 - International Mental Health Centre, 33, 36
 - The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 307, 308
- Written Answers
 - Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Foyle Valley Plan, WA147
 - Employment and Learning
 - DEL Provision: Disability, WA14

- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Tourism 2020: Northern Ireland Hotels Federation Report, WA24
- Finance and Personnel
 - Departmental Spending, WA304
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - NICE: Fertility Guidelines, WA222
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Children and Young People: Delivery of Strategy, WA266
 - European Affairs: Public Awareness, WA141
 - Flags Protocol Working Group, WA2
 - Social Investment Fund, WA143
 - Suicide Prevention, WA140
 - Together: Building a United Community, WA141
 - UK Diplomatic Cables, WA269
 - Victims and Survivors Service, WA3

McAleer, Mr Declan

- Committee Business
 - Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 7
- Matter of the Day
 - Weekend Violence, 216
- Oral Answers
 - Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Lough Neagh Working Group, 339
 - Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Cultural Bursaries, 349
 - Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Together: Building a United Community, 383
 - Regional Development
 - Roads Service: Rural Support, 236
 - TEN-T Regulations, 25
- Private Members' Business
 - Single Farm Payments, 402
- Written Answers
 - Assembly Commission
 - Northern Ireland Assembly: Cycle to Work Scheme, WA441
 - Education
 - Holy Trinity College, Cookstown, WA154
 - Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - South West Acute Hospital: Parking, WA50
 - Regional Development
 - Link Road from Coolnagard Housing Development to Dromore Road, Omagh, WA231
 - TEN-T: Roads in County Fermanagh and County Tyrone, WA116
 - Unadopted Roads: Inquiry Recommendations, WA231

McCallister, Mr John

- Assembly Business
 - Eddie McGrady, 158
- Committee Business
 - Committee System Review, 62, 63
- Committee Stages
 - Public Service Pensions Bill, CS2, CS3
- Matter of the Day
 - Devastation in the Philippines, 160
- Matters of the Day
 - Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 116
 - Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 326

Father Alec Reid, 324
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 165
 Oral Answers
 Justice
 Judges: Complaints, 273
 Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 87
 Civic Forum, 227, 228
 International Mental Health Centre, 32, 33
 Written Answers
 Environment
 Planning Policy Statement 21, WA369
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Internet Safety Strategy for Children, WA4

McCann, Mr Fra

Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance,
 333, 334, 335
 Committee Stages
 Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS10
 Oral Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Skills Gap, 76
 Finance and Personnel
 Air Passenger Duty, 176
 Ulster Bank, 176
 Private Members' Business
 Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 147, 148
 Written Answers
 Justice
 Human Trafficking, WA405

McCann, Ms Jennifer

Executive Committee Business
 UK Intellectual Property Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 167
 Oral Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Play and Leisure Strategy, 20
 Teachers: Signature Project, 20, 21
 Together: Building a United Community, 383
 Urban Village Regeneration, 19

McCarthy, Mr Kieran

Adjournment
 Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 405, 406
 Assembly Business
 Public Petition: Exploris, 49
 Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 332
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of
 Reply, 188, 192
 Standing Order 20A(1), 168
 Executive Committee Business
 Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 119
 Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern
 Ireland) 2013, 56
 Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 379
 Matters of the Day
 Tony McCoy, 118

Ministerial Statements
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a
 Chairperson, 51
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Going for Growth, 342
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Creative Industries Innovation Fund, 350
 Education
 Education and Skills Authority, 72
 Employment and Learning
 Unemployment: Young People, 392
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Exploris, 136
 Environment
 Exploris, 140
 Finance and Personnel
 Rate Relief, 178
 Justice
 Court Cases: Statutory Time Limits, 277
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Together: Building a United Community, 383
 Regional Development
 Comber Greenway, 24
 Private Members' Business
 Exploris, 93, 95, 100, 104, 105
 International Mental Health Centre, 29, 30
 Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 204
 Single Farm Payments, 400
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 307
 Written Answers
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Chestnut Grove Residential Home, WA379
 Community Pharmacies: Emergency Prescriptions,
 WA45
 Health Care Workers: Qualifications, WA308
 Residential Homes, WA379
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Together: Building a United Community, WA270

McCartney, Mr Raymond

Adjournment
 Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 211
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Crime: Rural Areas, 345
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Elective Care, 183
 Justice
 Maghberry: Death in Custody, 275
 Private Members' Business
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 244, 245, 246, 250, 255
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 308, 309
 Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Youth Unemployment, WA172
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Legal Aid Certificates, WA222
 Justice
 Legal Aid Certificates, WA227

McCausland, Mr Nelson

Executive Committee Business

- Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, 1
- Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, 219, 220

Matters of the Day

- Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 327

Oral Answers

Social Development

- Bloomfield Estate: Historical Debt, 282
- Energy Costs, 284
- Housing Executive: Maintenance Contracts, 280, 281
- Housing: Garden Maintenance, 282, 283
- Housing: Regeneration Schemes, 283
- Housing: Repossessions, 283, 284, 285
- Housing: Shared Developments, 281
- Newtownards: Public Realm Funding, 285
- Social Development Inquiry, 284
- Social Development: Pilot Schemes, 279, 280
- Welfare Reform Bill, 285

Private Members' Business

- Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 151, 153

Revised Written Answers

Social Development

- Boiler Replacement Scheme, RWA3
- Social Housing: 2010 Funding, RWA3

Written Answers

Social Development

- Benefit Appeals Tribunals: Audio Recording, WA132
- Boiler Replacement Scheme, WA428
- Boiler Replacement Scheme: Disability Living Allowance, WA438
- Car Parking Spaces: DSD Spend, WA433
- Civil Service Posts: DSD, WA435
- Community Asset Transfer: Carrickfergus Borough Council, WA136
- Community Asset Transfer: Council Properties, WA262, WA263
- Conflict of Interest: Glasgow Housing Association, WA134
- Departmental Funding: DSD, WA130
- Development Trusts NI, WA262
- Disability Living Allowance, WA135, WA260
- Disability Living Allowance/Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA427
- Disability Living Allowance: Appeals, WA260, WA427
- Disability Living Allowance: Appeals Upheld, WA249
- Disability Living Allowance: Oral Appeals, WA132
- Double Glazing, WA119
- Double Glazing Contracts, WA244, WA245
- Double Glazing Schemes: North Antrim, WA257
- Double Glazing Schemes: North Down, WA433
- Double Glazing Schemes: South Down, WA439
- Double Glazing: Roe Mill Gardens, Limavady, WA260
- DSD: Procurement, WA439
- DSD: Savings, WA438
- Employment and Support Allowance, WA135
- Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA132, WA260, WA426, WA433
- Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals Upheld, WA132
- Employment and Support Allowance: Helpline, WA420

- Employment and Support Allowance: Oral Appeals, WA132
- Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessments, WA261
- Employment and Support Allowance: Work Related Activity Group/Support Group, WA436
- Girdwood Regeneration Scheme, WA132
- Golden Share Scheme, WA119
- Helm Housing, WA438
- Homelessness: Upper Bann, WA256
- Homes for a Pound Scheme, WA261
- Houses of Multiple Occupancy: Antisocial Behaviour, WA428
- Houses of Multiple Occupation: Review, WA437
- Housing Benefit: Underoccupancy Penalty, WA256
- Housing Debt, WA433
- Housing Executive Applicants: North Down, WA436
- Housing Executive Properties and Land: Strabane, WA262
- Housing Executive Properties: Ballymena, WA434, WA435
- Housing Executive Properties: Double Glazing in North Down, WA129
- Housing Executive Properties: Gas in Donaghadee, WA126
- Housing Executive Properties: Insulation in North Down, WA245, WA246
- Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Antrim, WA247
- Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Down, WA254
- Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition, WA254
- Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition in North Antrim, WA256
- Housing Executive Schemes: Ballymena, Ballymoney, Moyle, WA130
- Housing Executive Spend, WA247
- Housing Executive: Belfast Response Maintenance Areas, WA255
- Housing Executive: Contractors, WA428
- Housing Executive: Debt, WA118
- Housing Executive: Direct Labour Organisation, WA255
- Housing Executive: Heating Systems, WA120
- Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts, WA118
- Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Framework, WA330
- Housing Executive: Reduced Requirements, WA255
- Housing Executive: Resident Parking, WA129
- Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building, WA119, WA131
- Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building in North Belfast, WA245
- Housing Executive: Social Housing Reform Programme, WA436
- Housing Executive: Spend on Properties, WA432
- Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA436, WA437
- Housing Executive: Stock Transfer, WA133
- Housing Executive: Vacant Homes, WA261
- Housing Grants: Rejections, WA256
- Housing Stress: Dungannon District, WA331
- Housing Waiting List, WA329
- Housing Waiting List: North Antrim, WA130
- Housing Waiting List: North Down, WA253

Housing-led Regeneration, WA133, WA263, WA331, WA439
 Mortgage Arrears, WA435
 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas: Funding, WA429
 North Belfast Housing Strategy, WA126, WA128, WA129, WA131
 Outsourcing of Functions: DSD, WA131
 Plaque on Property Owned or Controlled by DSD, WA136
 Project 24, WA436, WA437
 Public Consultations: DSD, WA249
 Public Realm Scheme: Donaghadee, WA437
 Regeneration: The Village, WA438
 Rent Arrears, WA259
 Rent Arrears: North Antrim, WA257
 Response Maintenance Contracts: Gateway Review, WA245
 Social Enterprise Hub: Enniskillen, WA440
 Social Enterprises: County Down, WA440
 Social Housing Development Programme: Strategic Guidelines, WA121, WA126
 Social Housing Newbuilds, WA245
 Social Housing Newbuilds: North Antrim, WA256
 Social Housing Newbuilds: North Down, WA128, WA426
 Social Housing Stock: North Antrim, WA258
 Social Housing Stock: North Down, WA328
 Social Housing/Affordable Housing, WA120
 Social Housing: Girdwood, WA437
 Social Housing: Internet Connectivity, WA126
 Social Housing: North Belfast, WA433
 Social Housing: North Belfast Housing Strategy, WA122
 Social Housing: Schemes Purchased, WA421
 Social Security: Fraud, WA439
 Special Needs Management Allowance, WA135
 Subcontractor Payment, WA131
 Supported Living: Whiteabbey Hospital, WA119
 Temporary Accommodation: North Antrim, WA257
 Temporary Accommodation: North Down, WA262
 Tenants: Antisocial Behaviour, WA246
 The Venue, WA136
 Twaddell Avenue, WA329
 Warm Homes Scheme, WA331, WA440
 Welfare Reform, WA440

McClarty, Mr David

Written Answers

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Freedom of Information Response, WA310
 Health and Social Care Trusts: Financial Accounts, WA310
 Late Payment of Commercial Debts (No. 2) Regulations 2013, WA48
 Supply Contract SS16A, WA48
 Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a), WA47, WA388

McCorley, Ms Rosaleen

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 122, 123

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 164

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 PRONI: Target Market, 347
 Justice
 PCSP: Paramilitary Members, 276
 Regional Development
 A5: EU Habitats Directive, 240
 Social Development
 Housing: Repossessions, 283, 284
 Private Members' Business
 Broadcasting Powers, 359
 Written Answers
 Environment
 Taxis: Single-tier System, WA369
 Justice
 Human Trafficking, WA224

McCrea, Mr Basil

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 336, 337

Matter of the Day

Weekend Violence, 217

Oral Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Economic Powers, 388
 Regional Development
 TEN-T Regulations, 25

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 292, 293

Written Answers

Education
 Free School Meals Indicator: Transfer of Funding, WA12
 Employment and Learning
 Youth Unemployment, WA172
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Abortion: Guidelines, WA310
 Adoption Bill, WA221
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Ministerial Code: High Court Ruling, WA141

McCrea, Mr Ian

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Farmers: Literacy, 340
 Employment and Learning
 Youth Employment Scheme, 394, 395
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Services, 186
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Desertcreat, 16
 Social Development
 Housing Executive: Maintenance Contracts, 280

Written Answers

Justice
 Firearms: Age Restrictions, WA405

McDonnell, Dr Alasdair

Matters of the Day

Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 116

Oral Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Social Investment Fund, 231

Private Members' Business

The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 310

McElduff, Mr Barry

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 259

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
Farming: Fodder Supply, 342

Employment and Learning
Careers System, 394
Investment: DEL Support, 73, 74

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Business Start-ups, 132

Finance and Personnel
Civil Service: Car Parking Costs, 175
Rating Review, 176

Private Members' Business

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 270,
271, 292, 294

Written Answers

Environment
Entertainment Licences, WA297
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh, WA49
Legal Highs, WA49
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Hydraulic Fracturing, WA333

McGahan, Ms Bronwyn

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 331

Oral Answers

Assembly Commission
Ormiston House, 289, 290

Culture, Arts and Leisure
Eoghan Ruadh Hurling Club, 352

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Executive Office: Brussels, 18
Investment: USA Visit, 231

Private Members' Business

Civic Forum, 223
Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 300

Written Answers

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Invest NI: Manufacturing and Engineering Companies
in County Tyrone, WA173
Finance and Personnel
Cross-border Cooperation, WA304
Social Development
Housing Stress: Dungannon District, WA330

McGimpsey, Mr Michael

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and
Leisure Remit, 128

Oral Answers

Education
Primary School: South Belfast, 67

Regional Development

Parking: Belfast City Centre, 241

Written Answers

Finance and Personnel
Civil Servants: Promotions, WA372

McGlone, Mr Patsy

Committee Business

Committee System Review, 59, 60

Ministerial Statements

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a
Chairperson, 52

Oral Answers

Assembly Commission
Committees: Paperless Packs, 287

Education
Education and Skills Authority, 73

Employment and Learning
North/South Cooperation, 78

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Insolvency, 133

Justice

The Disappeared: Columba McVeigh, 274

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Economic Pact, 19
Investment: USA Visit, 231

Regional Development
Consumer Council, 238

Private Members' Business

Exploris, 102
Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 268,
269, 292

Written Answers

Education
Education and Skills Authority: Cost, WA167
Primate Dixon Primary School, Coalisland, WA154

Finance and Personnel
Banks: Green Investment Bank, WA303
Civil Servants: Flights, WA204

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service, WA305, WA306,
WA376

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Health Pillar, WA140
Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Skills Pillar, WA2

Social Development
Subcontractor Payment, WA131

McGuinness, Mr Martin

Matters of the Day

Father Alec Reid, 323

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 161, 162, 163,
164, 165, 166

Oral Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Desertcreat, 16
Disclosure of Information, 17
Economic Pact, 18, 19
Economic Powers, 388
Executive Office: Brussels, 17, 18
Executive Office: China, 385, 386
Flag Protests: Belfast City Centre, 388

Haass Talks, 387
 Investment: USA Visit, 386
 Narrow Water Bridge, 15, 16
 Play and Leisure Strategy, 20
 Shackleton Barracks, 388
 Teachers: Signature Project, 20
 Terrorist/Criminal Activity, 387
 The Disappeared, 16
 Together: Building a United Community, 383
 Urban Village Regeneration, 19
 Welfare Reform, 384

Revised Written Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 DRD: Appointments, RWA1

Written Answers

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Anti-fraud Unit: OFMDFM, WA141
 Assembly Questions, WA333
 Car Parking Spaces: OFMDFM Spend, WA271
 Chief Executives: Waterways Ireland/Loughs Agency, WA265
 Childcare Strategy, WA270
 Children and Young People: Delivery of Strategy, WA266
 Children and Young People: Safeguarding, WA269
 Commissioner for Public Appointments: Recommendations, WA1
 Cooperative and Social Enterprise Hub, WA143
 Culture Company: UK City of Culture, WA144
 Energy Wise Campaign, WA2
 Equality Commission Publication, WA139
 European Affairs: Public Awareness, WA141
 Executive Office: China, WA270
 Flags Protocol Working Group, WA3
 Good Relations Strategy, WA139
 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, WA333
 Hydraulic Fracturing, WA333
 International Relations Strategy, WA266
 Internet Safety Strategy for Children, WA4
 Investment Conference, WA141
 Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Health Pillar, WA140
 Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Skills Pillar, WA2
 Legal Case: OFMDFM, WA139
 Magdalene Laundries, WA3
 Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation: Chairperson's Expenses, WA144
 Ministerial Code: High Court Ruling, WA142
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28B, WA142
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28C, WA142
 OFMDFM Funding: Breaches of Company Law, WA266
 Older People's Commissioner, WA3
 Ombudsman's Findings, WA142
 Pensioners' Trust, WA3
 Planning Appeals Commission, WA270
 Police Stations, WA266
 Positive Relations Project, WA139
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA271, WA333
 Programme for Government: Delivery Plans, WA265
 Programme for Government: Jobs in Derry, WA143
 Public Assemblies, Parades and Protest Body, WA2
 Public Consultations: OFMDFM, WA267
 Public Prosecution Service: Attorney General Review, WA142
 Social Investment Fund, WA143, WA270
 Special Advisers: Termination of Appointment, WA269

Strategic Investment Board, WA140
 Suicide Prevention, WA140
 Together: Building a United Community, WA141, WA270
 Transgender Community, WA2
 Translation Costs: Departmental Letters and Documents, WA1
 Tribunal Panels, WA142
 UK Diplomatic Cables, WA269
 VAT: Hospitality Sector, WA270
 Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse: Support Service, WA265
 Victims and Survivors Service, WA3, WA143
 Victims and Survivors Service: Funding, WA269

McIlveen, Mr David

Ministerial Statements

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 51
 Community Resuscitation Strategy, 266
 North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 263

Oral Answers

Regional Development
 Parking: Ballymena, 240

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 85, 86
 International Mental Health Centre, 31, 32
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 241, 242, 244

Written Answers

Education
 Child Protection: DE, WA167
 Employment and Learning
 Employment Appeals Tribunal, WA16
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 NI Small Business Loan Fund, WA21
 Regional Start Initiative, WA21
 Environment
 Councils: Debt, WA297
 Planning Conditions, WA289
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Multiple Sclerosis Specialist Nurses, WA217
 NICE: Lenalidomide Guidelines, WA396

Justice

Domestic Violence, WA229, WA316
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Police Stations, WA266
 Regional Development
 Bus Lanes: Belfast City Centre, WA232
 Roads Service: Grass Cutting, WA407
 Traffic Flow, WA318

McIlveen, Miss Michelle

Adjournment

Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 406

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 333
 Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 120
 Committee System Review, 58

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Fishing: Lough Neagh, 348
 Sports Hub: UJJ, 351
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Sporting Events, 136
 Justice
 The Disappeared: Justice, 273
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Social Investment Fund, 232
 Regional Development
 Comber Greenway, 23, 24
 Social Development
 Newtownards: Public Realm Funding, 285

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers, 361
 Exploris, 96, 97

Written Answers

Education
 School Starting Age, WA168
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 DHSSPS: Arm's-length Bodies, WA311
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Children and Young People: Safeguarding, WA269

McKay, Mr Daithí

Committee Business

Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 191, 192, 198

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Car Parking Spaces: DARD Spend, WA334
 Assembly Commission
 Public Transport: MLAs, WA263
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Car Parking Spaces: DCAL Spend, WA273
 Education
 Car Parking Spaces: DE Spend, WA278
 Schools: Cycle Parking, WA278
 Employment and Learning
 Car Parking Spaces: DEL Spend, WA283
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Car Parking Spaces: DETI Spend, WA286
 Northern Ireland Tourist Board: Flag Protests, WA182, WA367
 Environment
 Car Parking Spaces: DOE Spend, WA368
 Finance and Personnel
 Air Passenger Duty, WA301, WA374
 Car Parking Spaces: DFP Spend, WA372
 Car Parking Spaces: Government, WA33, WA372
 Civil Service Pensions, WA301, WA302
 Land Law, WA207
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Car Parking Spaces: DHSSPS Spend, WA310
 Care Homes, WA211, WA307
 Care Homes: Pinewood, WA211
 Justice
 Car Parking Spaces: DOJ Spend, WA401
 Coroners, WA111
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Car Parking Spaces: OFMDFM Spend, WA271
 Regional Development
 Car Parking Spaces: DRD Spend, WA412

Cycle Lane: Upper Arthur Street, Belfast, WA406
 Cycle Lanes and Boxes, WA408
 Cycle Path between Lisburn and Belfast, WA232
 Cycling Group, WA232
 Cycling: Minister for Regional Development's London Visit, WA325
 DRD: Minister's London Visit, WA325
 Metrobus 23 Service to the Stormont Estate, WA115
 Traffic Calming: Vertical Deflection, WA319
 Train Passenger Numbers, WA241
 Train Use, WA318
 Social Development
 Car Parking Spaces: DSD Spend, WA433
 Double Glazing, WA119
 Double Glazing Contracts, WA244

McKevitt, Mrs Karen

Adjournment

C S Lewis, 317

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 123

Matters of the Day

Tony McCoy, 117

Ministerial Statements

Community Resuscitation Strategy, 267

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Farming: Fodder Supply, 343
 Assembly Commission
 Outreach/Education: Update, 287, 288
 Education
 Schools Enhancement Programme, 70
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Services, 186
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Play and Leisure Strategy, 20
 Regional Development
 Flood Alleviation: South Down, 238, 239

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers, 360
 Exploris, 98

Written Answers

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Multiple Sclerosis: Prescription Drugs, WA374, WA375, WA376
 Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder, WA391
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Investment Conference, WA140
 VAT: Hospitality Sector, WA270
 Social Development
 Double Glazing Schemes: South Down, WA439
 Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA437
 Social Housing/Affordable Housing, WA120

McKinney, Mr Fearghal

Ministerial Statements

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 51
 Community Resuscitation Strategy, 266
 North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 262

Oral Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Commonwealth Games 2014, 349
- Education
 - School Starting Age, 68
- Employment and Learning
 - Skills Gap, 76
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 185
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Executive Office: Brussels, 18

Private Members' Business

- Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 83, 84
- Exploris, 103
- Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 269
- International Mental Health Centre, 29
- Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 202

Written Answers

- Employment and Learning
 - Teacher Training, WA171

McLaughlin, Ms Maeve

Adjournment

- Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 208

Committee Stages

- Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill, CS15

Executive Committee Business

- Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 118
- Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013, 55

Ministerial Statements

- Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 50
- Community Resuscitation Strategy, 265
- North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 262

Oral Answers

- Education
 - Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 66
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Insolvency, 133
- Environment
 - Partnership Panel, 141

Private Members' Business

- Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 65
- International Mental Health Centre, 28

Written Answers

- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Jobs, WA181
- Finance and Personnel
 - Exports, WA205
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Blood Donation: Legal Advice, WA378
 - Domiciliary Care, WA307
 - Health Service: Experior Medical System, WA396
 - IVF Treatment, WA308
 - Legal Costs: Blood Donation and Adoption, WA51
 - Ovarian Cancer, WA378
 - Safeguarding Board, WA307
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Programme for Government 2011-15, WA333
 - Transgender Community, WA1

McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel

Committee Stages

- Public Service Pensions Bill, CS2, CS4, CS5, CS6

Matters of the Day

- Tony McCoy, 117

Oral Answers

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Fishing: Lough Neagh, 347, 348
- Environment
 - Councils: Community Planning, 138
- Finance and Personnel
 - Civil Service: Jobs in Derry, 174
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Shackleton Barracks, 388

Private Members' Business

- The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 304, 305

Written Answers

- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Brooklands Care Home, Antrim, WA380
 - Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Headquarters Relocation, WA50
 - Vulnerable People: Accommodation, WA380
- Justice
 - Legal Aid, WA405
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Executive Office: China, WA270

McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel (as Principal Deputy Speaker)

Assembly Business, 290

Committee Business

- Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 188, 189, 190, 192, 193, 194, 195, 198, 199

Executive Committee Business

- Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Accelerated Passage, 376
- Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 382

Oral Answers

- Assembly Commission
 - Committees: Paperless Packs, 287
 - Outreach/Education: Update, 289
 - Parliament Buildings: Roof Project, 288
- Justice, 273
 - Court Cases: Statutory Time Limits, 277
 - Dissident Unionists: Definition, 274
 - Judges: Complaints, 273, 274
 - PCSP: Paramilitary Members, 276
 - The Disappeared: Justice, 273
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, 230
 - Planning Bill, 233
- Regional Development, 235
 - Flood Alleviation: South Down, 239
 - Parking: Belfast City Centre, 241
- Social Development
 - Housing: Regeneration Schemes, 283
 - Housing: Repossessions, 285
 - Newtownards: Public Realm Funding, 285, 286
- Private Members' Business
 - Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 145, 148, 149, 150, 153
 - International Mental Health Centre, 30, 31, 33
 - Oversubscribed Schools, 37
 - Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 201, 202, 204

McMullan, Mr Oliver

Committee Business
 Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 126, 127

Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Roof Project, 288

Environment
 National Park: Causeway Coast, 141
 Taxis: Single-tier Licensing System, 137

Private Members' Business
 Broadcasting Powers, 366
 Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 201, 202
 Single Farm Payments, 398

Written Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Forest Service's Business Plan 2013-14: Tree Disease Resistance, WA5

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Economic Strategy: Fiscal Levers, WA288
 Giro d'Italia 2014, WA23

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Day Care Provision: Rathmoyle, WA43
 Mental Health Services, WA217

Justice
 Courts: Victim Statements, WA406

Regional Development
 A2: Landslides, WA328
 Road Bonds, WA241, WA325

Social Development
 Helm Housing, WA438
 Twaddell Avenue, WA329

McNarry, Mr David

Executive Committee Business
 Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 382

Matter of the Day
 Weekend Violence, 217

Matters of the Day
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 327

Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 PRONI: Target Market, 347
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Executive Office: China, 386
 Terrorist/Criminal Activity, 387

Private Members' Business
 Exploris, 99

Written Answers
 Education
 Schools: Budgets, WA167

Employment and Learning
 Colleges: Budgets, WA171

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Northern Ireland Events Company, WA183

Finance and Personnel
 Civil Service: Salaries, WA304
 Port of Belfast, WA36

Regional Development
 Belfast Harbour Commissioners, WA409
 Blue Badge Scheme: Veterans, WA229, WA230
 Signage: Bilingual Road Signs, WA231

Social Development
 Social Enterprises: County Down, WA440

McQuillan, Mr Adrian

Committee Business
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 193

Oral Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Rate Relief, 178

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Jobs: Health Sector, 182

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Investment: USA Visit, 231
 Union Flag: Belfast City Hall, 234

Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Skills and Employment Liaison Officer, WA173

Finance and Personnel
 Air Passenger Duty, WA305

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Cystic Fibrosis, WA312

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Strategic Investment Board, WA140

Maginness, Mr Alban

Committee Business
 Committee System Review, 62

Matter of the Day
 Devastation in the Philippines, 160

Matters of the Day
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 325

Ministerial Statements
 British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 259
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 53

Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Roof Project, 289

Employment and Learning
 Employment Law: Proposals, 390

Finance and Personnel
 NAMA, 180
 Ulster Bank, 175, 176

Justice
 PCSP: Paramilitary Members, 275, 276

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Flag Protests: Belfast City Centre, 388

Social Development
 Housing: Shared Developments, 281

Private Members' Business
 Civic Forum, 221, 228
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 245, 254

Written Answers
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Asthma Standards, WA49
 Mater Hospital: Maternity Service, WA45
 Mater Hospital: MRI Scanner Service, WA42, WA45
 Mater Hospital: Samples, WA40
 Mater Hospital: X-ray Service, WA41

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Victims and Survivors Service, WA143

Victims and Survivors Service: Funding, WA269
 Regional Development
 Compensation Claims: DRD, WA243

Maskey, Mr Alex

Committee Business
 Committee System Review, 57
 Committee Stages
 Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS9, CS10, CS11
 Executive Committee Business
 Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, 1
 Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, 219
 Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Committees: Paperless Packs, 286, 287
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Flag-related Protests, 130, 131
 Finance and Personnel
 Rate Relief, 178
 Justice
 PSNI: Agency Staff, 278
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Haass Talks: Budget, 230
 Private Members' Business
 Civic Forum, 225, 227

Milne, Mr Ian

Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Draperstown Library, 350, 351
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Executive Office: China, 385
 Private Members' Business
 Single Farm Payments, 400, 401
 Written Answers
 Finance and Personnel
 Civil Servants: Sickness Absence, WA38
 Social Development
 Housing-led Regeneration, WA439

Morrow, The Lord

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Crime: Rural Areas, 345
 Assembly Commission
 Parliament Buildings: Roof Project, 288
 Education
 Common Funding Formula, 72
 Environment
 Anaerobic Digester: Sion Mills, 139
 Justice
 Human Trafficking, 276
 The Disappeared: Columba McVeigh, 274
 Private Members' Business
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 310, 311

Written Answers

Education
 Stateminting: Southern Education and Library Board, WA153
 Employment and Learning
 Further and Higher Education: Disability Discrimination Act, WA363
 Further and Higher Education: Students with Learning Disabilities, WA15
 Further Education: Students with Learning Disabilities, WA170, WA365
 South West College: Audit on Learning Disability Provision, WA17
 South West College: Beacon Centre, WA15
 South West College: Students with a Learning Difficulty and/or Disability, WA17
 Environment
 Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations, WA30, WA31, WA295, WA298
 Taxis: Single-tier System, WA290, WA291
 Justice
 Children in Care, WA314
 Courts: Registered Intermediary Scheme, WA102, WA403
 Criminal Justice Inspection Reports, WA52, WA228
 Domestic Violence, WA314
 Historical Sexual Abuse Cases, WA110
 Human Trafficking: Review of Case, WA223, WA402
 Investigation Findings, WA111
 Legal Aid: Offender Levy, WA313
 Legal Aid: Payments to Law Firms, WA228
 Mixed Committal: Costs, WA225
 Mixed Committals, WA228, WA402
 Offences: Bail, WA398
 Offences: Specific Case, WA402
 Prison Service Procedures, WA107
 Prison Service: Access to Prisons for Research, WA227
 Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013, WA108, WA111, WA227, WA228, WA316, WA317, WA404
 Prison Service: Notification of Suspension, WA108
 Prison Service: Nurses, WA404
 Prison Service: Professional Codes, WA108
 Prison Service: Release of Prisoner, WA225, WA313, WA315
 Prison Service: STORM, WA107, WA108, WA227
 Prisoner Ombudsman: Reports, WA314
 Prisoners: Keys, WA110, WA399
 Prisoners: Reviews, WA402
 Prisoners: Strip-searching, WA229
 Prostitution and Human Trafficking Regulation: Swedish Government, WA403
 Sex Offenders Register, WA316
 Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008: Article 64A, WA404
 Sexual Offences Cases, WA223, WA224, WA225, WA228
 Sexual Offences Prevention Orders, WA399, WA404
 Sham Marriage Cases, WA223, WA225
 Supporting Prisoners at Risk Procedures, WA110
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Social Investment Fund, WA270
 Regional Development
 A4 Dual Carriageway: Street Lighting, WA411
 Roads Service: Far Circular Road, Dungannon, WA111
 Social Development
 Benefit Appeals Tribunals: Audio Recording, WA132

Employment and Support Allowance: Work Related
Activity Group/Support Group, WA436

OFMDFM Funding: Breaches of Company Law,
WA266
Public Assemblies, Parades and Protest Body, WA2

Moutray, Mr Stephen

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 258
North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 163

Oral Answers

Education
Schools: 14-19, 70

Private Members' Business

Civic Forum, 221

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
Farm Safety, WA339
Employment and Learning
Youth Employment Scheme: Upper Bann, WA173
Regional Development
Carnet Tickets for Rail and Bus Journeys, WA117
Street Lighting Scheme: Bleary, County Down, WA232

Nesbitt, Mr Mike

Adjournment

Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 407
Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 112

Assembly Business

Eddie McGrady, 158

Executive Committee Business

UK Intellectual Property Bill: Legislative Consent Motion,
167

Matter of the Day

Devastation in the Philippines, 160

Matters of the Day

Father Alec Reid, 324

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 258
North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 162

Oral Answers

Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Exploris, 136
Environment
Exploris, 140
Justice
Maghaberry: Death in Custody, 275
Victims: Parole Commissioner Consultation, 277
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Haass Talks: Budget, 230
Together: Building a United Community, 383
Urban Village Regeneration, 19
Regional Development
Tourism: Strangford/Portaferry, 23

Private Members' Business

Civic Forum, 226, 227
Exploris, 95, 96
International Mental Health Centre, 13, 30, 32, 33
The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 302, 304

Written Answers

Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Belfast City Hospital: Security Staff, WA50
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Good Relations Strategy, WA139

Newton, Mr Robin

Adjournment

C S Lewis, 319, 320

Matter of the Day

Weekend Violence, 216

Matters of the Day

Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 115

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 372

Oral Answers

Education
Common Funding Formula, 69
Employment and Learning
Living Wage, 75
Environment
Recycling: Targets, 142
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Heart Attack Survival Rates, 181
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Executive Office: China, 385

Private Members' Business

Exploris, 93, 98
Oversubscribed Schools, 46, 47

Written Answers

Education
Education Made More Accessible Report, WA348
Pupils: Support, WA349, WA350
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Sexual Assault, WA312

Ní Chuilín, Ms Carál

Adjournment

C S Lewis, 320

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and
Leisure Remit, 128, 129, 130

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
Ballynagross Football Club, 346
Brighter Hoard: Limavady, 351, 352
C S Lewis, 352
City of Culture 2013, 352
Commonwealth Games 2014, 348, 349
Creative Industries Innovation Fund, 349, 350
Cultural Bursaries, 349
Cycling: DCAL Funding, 351
Draperstown Library, 350, 351
Eoghan Ruadh Hurling Club, 352
Fishing: Lough Neagh, 347, 348
PRONI: Target Market, 347
Sports Facilities, 352, 353
Sports Hub: UJJ, 351

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers, 364

Written Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
Car Parking Spaces: DCAL Spend, WA273
City of Culture: Contingency Fund, WA339

Civil Service Posts: DCAL, WA273
 Commonwealth Games 2014: Cycling, WA148
 Cricket Strategy, WA148
 DCAL: Capital Projects, WA339
 Foyle Valley Plan, WA147
 Hollywood Library, WA273
 Milk Cup, WA272
 Museums: Staff, WA148, WA149
 Netball, WA272
 Public Consultations: CAL, WA147
 Salmon Fishing, WA274
 Suicide Awareness Training Programmes, WA147
 Windsor Park Stadium, WA273

Ó hOisín, Mr Cathal

Committee Business

Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 125
 Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 8

Executive Committee Business

Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 379

Matter of the Day

Devastation in the Philippines, 159

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 164

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ballynagross Football Club, 346
 Finance and Personnel
 NAMA, 180

Private Members' Business

Broadcasting Powers, 362

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development
 Single Farm Payments, WA271, WA334

O'Dowd, Mr John

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374

Oral Answers

Education
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 66
 Common Funding Formula, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73
 Dundonald High School, 67
 Education and Skills Authority, 72, 73
 GCSEs/A Levels, 66, 67
 Mobile Classrooms, 68
 Numeracy and Literacy, 68
 Primary School: South Belfast, 67
 Pupils: Educational Attainment, 67
 School Starting Age, 68
 Schools Enhancement Programme, 70
 Schools: 14-19, 70, 71

Private Members' Business

Oversubscribed Schools, 44, 45, 46, 47

Written Answers

Education
 Annahilt Primary School, WA155
 Area Planning Steering Group, WA351
 Autism Spectrum Disorder: Educational Experience, WA275

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Teacher Training, WA165
 Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Antrim, WA362
 Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Down, WA275
 Ballyclare Primary School, WA275
 Buddy Bear School, Dungannon, WA165
 Car Parking Spaces: DE Spend, WA278
 CCEA: A-level Chemistry Examination, WA163, WA279
 Child Protection: DE, WA167
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, WA278, WA279
 Civil Service Posts: DE, WA279
 Classroom Assistants: North Down, WA164
 Classroom Assistants: South Antrim, WA357
 Common Funding Formula: Consultation, WA167, WA340, WA341, WA347
 Common Funding Formula: Consultation Responses, WA166
 Common Funding Formula: Financial Impact, WA155
 Common Funding Formula: Integrated Education, WA341
 Common Funding Formula: Schools in North Down, WA11
 Common Funding Formula: Special Educational Needs, WA341
 Controlled Sector Body and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools: Budget, WA8
 Crumlin Integrated College, WA162
 Curriculum: Business Skills, WA168
 Curriculum: Entrepreneurship, WA354
 Curriculum: Science, WA153, WA347
 Curriculum: The Holocaust, WA361, WA362
 Cycling: Schoolchildren, WA362
 DE: Aggregated Schools Budget, WA353
 DE: Central Procurement Directorate, WA353
 DE: Minister in Bangor, WA348
 DE: Recruitment, WA154, WA356
 DE: Youth Capital Funding Scheme, WA360
 Down High School, WA166
 Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Pupil Awareness, WA276
 Education and Library Boards: Job Evaluation, WA161, WA359
 Education and Library Boards: Resources, WA347
 Education and Library Boards: Staff Redundancies, WA340
 Education and Skills Authority: Cost, WA167
 Education and Skills Authority: Senior Management, WA359
 Education and Training Inspectorate, WA354, WA355
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Complaints, WA157
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Underachieving Schools, WA156, WA161, WA359
 Education Bill, WA280, WA347
 Education Bill: Consideration Stage, WA155
 Education Made More Accessible Report, WA348
 Education: Voluntary Provision, WA168
 Examination Fees for Pupils, WA12
 Examinations, WA165
 Free School Meals Indicator: Transfer of Funding, WA12
 Graduate Teacher Scheme, WA155
 Holy Trinity College, Cookstown, WA154
 Hollywood Nursery School, WA161
 Integrated Education, WA278
 Key Stage 1: Baseline Assessment, WA281
 Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor, WA358

Kirkinriola Primary School, WA356
 Legal Costs: DE, WA346
 Lisanelly Campus, WA153
 Mount St Catherine's Primary School, WA354
 Outsourcing of Functions: DE, WA153
 Phoenix Integrated Primary School, WA275
 Preschool Funded Places: North Down, WA348
 Primary Schools in North Down: Budget, WA12
 Primary Schools in North Down: Number of Teachers, WA13
 Primary Schools: Foyle, WA163
 Primate Dixon Primary School, Coalisland, WA154
 Priory Integrated College, Holywood, WA160
 Public Consultations: DE, WA9
 Pupils: Diabetes, WA346
 Pupils: Support, WA349, WA350
 Redburn Primary School Site, WA348
 School Councils, WA163
 School Crossing Patrol Guards, WA356
 School Enhancement Criteria, WA162
 School Starting Age, WA168
 School Transport: Crumlin to Belfast and Lisburn, WA162
 Schools Enhancement Programme, WA277
 Schools: Boards of Governors, WA277
 Schools: Budgets, WA167
 Schools: Charges to Pupils, WA164
 Schools: Cycle Parking, WA279
 Schools: Definition of Bilateral, WA149
 Schools: Development Proposals, WA150
 Schools: Enrolment Numbers, WA342
 Schools: Fresh Drinking Water, WA163
 Schools: Inspection Reports, WA158
 Schools: Mobile Phones, WA362
 Schools: Newbuild at Belfast City Hospital Site, WA350
 Schools: Newbuild in Holywood, WA154
 Schools: Newbuilds, WA341
 Schools: Promotion of Respect and Inclusion, WA358
 Schools: Savings from Closures, WA342
 Schools: Spend since Closure, WA150
 Shared Education Project, WA166
 Shared Education: Consultation, WA277
 Shared Schools: Anti-sectarian Work, WA166
 St Columbanus' College, WA358
 St Francis' Primary School, Loughbrickland, WA356
 Statementing: Southern Education and Library Board, WA153
 Teachers for Literacy and Numeracy: North Down, WA11
 Teachers: Accumulated Leave Entitlement, WA278
 Teachers: Compensation and Pre-claim Settlements, WA160
 Teachers: Substitute Teacher Register, WA11, WA350
 Times Higher Education Article, WA166

O'Neill, Mrs Michelle

Executive Committee Business

Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013, 53, 54

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Agrifood Sector: Young People, 343, 344
 Crime: Rural Areas, 345
 Farmers: Literacy, 340
 Farming: DARD Legal Action, 346

Farming: Fodder Supply, 342, 343
 Going for Growth, 341, 342
 Lough Neagh Working Group, 339
 Poultry Litter, 343
 Renewables: Farm Businesses, 344
 Renewables: Funding, 341
 Rivers Agency: Transfer of Functions, 344
 Rural Cohesion, 346
 Rural Development Programme, 345
 Rural White Paper, 344

Private Members' Business

Single Farm Payments, 402

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Asset Transfer: Surplus Land or Property, WA146
 Beef Supply System, WA146
 Bovine Tuberculosis, WA4, WA5
 Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and Johne's Disease Schemes, WA334
 Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Programme, WA5
 Broadband: North Down, WA145
 Broadband: South Down, WA8
 Business: Irvinestown, WA338
 Car Parking Spaces: DARD Spend, WA334
 Cattle Smuggling, WA4
 Civil Service Posts: DARD, WA335
 Cooperatives, WA7
 Dairy Processing Plant in County Fermanagh, WA8
 DARD: Headquarters, WA337
 Farm Businesses: North Down, WA144
 Farm Safety, WA339
 Farming Restrictions, WA338
 Flooding, WA335
 Forest Service's Business Plan 2013-14: Tree Disease Resistance, WA5
 Gaelic Athletic Association Clubs: Funding, WA144
 Herds/Flocks Made Non-operational, WA145
 Herds/Flocks Reduction: North Down and Ards, WA145
 Johne's Disease Expert and Manager, WA4
 Land Owned or Controlled by DARD in South Antrim, WA6
 Legal Costs: DARD, WA337
 Livestock Stolen in South Antrim, WA5
 Livestock: Ear Tags, WA338
 Lough Neagh Working Group, WA146
 Meat Plants, WA338
 Outsourcing of Functions: DARD, WA6
 Rural Development Programme: Funding, WA7
 Single Farm Payments, WA271, WA334
 Sugar Beet, WA7
 Sugar Industry, WA7
 Wind Farm Development, WA8

Overend, Mrs Sandra

Adjournment

Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 210

Ministerial Statements

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 52

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 165

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Farmers: Literacy, 340

Assembly Commission

Parliament Buildings: Roof Project, 288

- Culture, Arts and Leisure
Creative Industries Innovation Fund, 349
- Employment and Learning
Assured Skills, 79
Higher Education: Update, 389
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Executive Office: China, 385
- Regional Development
Comber Greenway, 24
Giro d'Italia, 21, 22
- Private Members' Business
Exploris, 104
Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 271
- Written Answers
Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Smart Region Project, WA18
Smart Region Project: Omagh and Fermanagh, WA18
- Environment
Taxis: Single-tier System, WA371
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Childcare Strategy, WA270
- Regional Development
Cycling, WA419
- Poots, Mr Edwin**
- Executive Committee Business
Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 118, 119
Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013, 55, 56
- Matter of the Day
Devastation in the Philippines, 159
- Ministerial Statements
Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 50, 51, 52, 53
Community Resuscitation Strategy, 264, 265, 266, 267
North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 261, 262, 263, 264
- Oral Answers
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Abortion: Guidelines, 187
Accident and Emergency: Recommendations, 181
Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 184, 185
Children's Hospital, 186
City Hospital: Medical Assessment Unit, 182
Elective Care, 183
Heart Attack Survival Rates, 181
Homosexuality: Treatment, 182
Jobs: Health Sector, 182
Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Services, 185, 186
Waiting Times: OT Referrals, 183, 184
- Private Members' Business
Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 88, 92, 93
International Mental Health Centre, 34
Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 206
The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 308, 313
- Revised Written Answers
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Carer Assessments, RWA2
- Written Answers
Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Abortion: Guidelines, WA311, WA312
Accident and Emergency: Children with Alcohol Intoxication, WA397
- Accident and Emergency: Waiting Times, WA395
Acute Mental Health Beds: Western Health and Social Care Trust, WA309
Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh, WA49, WA50
Adoption Bill, WA221
Anti-fraud Unit: DHSSPS, WA44
Antrim Area Hospital: Accident and Emergency, WA385
Antrim Area Hospital: Inpatient Beds, WA385
Antrim Area Hospital: Short Stay Ward, WA385
Asthma Standards, WA49
Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, WA391
Autism Strategy, WA397
Autism: Applied Behaviour Analysis, WA222
Autism: Newry and Armagh, WA218
Ballymena Health and Care Centre, WA386
Belfast City Hospital: 5N Medical Assessment Unit, WA392
Belfast City Hospital: Security Staff, WA50
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Freedom of Information Response, WA310
Blind or Partially Sighted People, WA387
Blood Donation: Legal Advice, WA378
Blood Donation: Legal Costs, WA383
Brooklands Care Home, Antrim, WA380
Buddy Bear School, Dungannon, WA378
Car Parking Spaces: DHSSPS Spend, WA310
Care Homes, WA211, WA307, WA312
Care Homes: Pinewood, WA211
Care Homes: Respite Beds, WA222
Carer Assessments, WA379
Carrier Bags, WA382
Chestnut Grove Residential Home, WA379
Cigarettes, WA395
Citizens Advice: Funding, WA383
Civil Service Posts: DHSSPS, WA386
Clinical Trials, WA48
Co-codamol Addiction, WA384
Community Pharmacies: Emergency Prescriptions, WA45
Consultants: Hours Worked, WA220
Craigavon Area Hospital: Stroke Patients, WA378
Cystic Fibrosis, WA312
Day Care Provision: Rathmoyle, WA43
Dentistry Appointments: Altnagelvin Area Hospital, WA392
Dentistry Appointments: Hospitals, WA393
DHSSPS: Arm's-length Bodies, WA311
Diabetes: Prevalence, WA390, WA397
Domiciliary Care, WA43, WA307
Domiciliary Care Workers: Training, WA392
Domiciliary Care: Agency Staff, WA394
Downe Hospital: Cardiac Ambulance, WA311
Emergency Services: Non-emergency Telephone Number, WA395
Enniskillen Ambulance Station: Capital Funding, WA51
Family Fund, WA309
Fire and Rescue Service: Firefighters' Ages, WA387
Fire and Rescue Service: Fitness Test, WA387
Fire Sprinklers, WA392
Firefighters: Recruitment, WA218
Flu Pandemic: Preparations, WA394
Foster Carers, WA391
Foster Parents, WA381
G8 Summit: Western Health and Social Care Trust, WA309
Gastroenteritis-type Illnesses: Passenger Ships, WA51

GP Practices: Removal of Patients, WA217
 Greenmount Agricultural College, WA48, WA306
 Health and Social Care Trusts: Financial Accounts, WA310
 Health Care and Day Care Centres in Banbridge, WA222
 Health Care Workers: Qualifications, WA308
 Health Service: Exporior Medical System, WA396
 Home Help, WA392
 Hospitals: Car Parking Charges, WA396
 Hospitals: Coffee and Confectionery Outlets, WA392
 Inpatients Registered with a GP, WA43
 IVF Treatment, WA308
 Late Payment of Commercial Debts (No. 2) Regulations 2013, WA49
 Legal Aid Certificates, WA222
 Legal Cases: Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, WA310
 Legal Costs: Blood Donation and Adoption, WA51
 Legal Fees: DHSSPS, WA220
 Legal Highs, WA49
 Legal Proceedings: Costs and Compensation, WA210
 Lisburn Health Centre, WA380
 Lurgan Health Treatment Centre, WA395
 Macular Degeneration, WA218
 Mater Hospital: Maternity Service, WA45
 Mater Hospital: MRI Scanner Service, WA42, WA45
 Mater Hospital: Samples, WA40
 Mater Hospital: X-ray Service, WA41
 Medical Checks, WA389
 Medical Services: Non-UK Citizens, WA216, WA380
 Mental Health Services, WA217
 Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service, WA305, WA306, WA376
 Multiple Sclerosis Specialist Nurses, WA217
 Multiple Sclerosis: Prescription Drugs, WA374, WA375, WA376
 NICE: Fertility Guidelines, WA222
 NICE: Lenalidomide Guidelines, WA396
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Development Proposals, WA212
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Headquarters Relocation, WA50
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Hospital Beds, WA220
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Intermediate Care Beds, WA386
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team, WA46, WA47, WA307, WA386
 Northern Ireland Ambulance Service: Poppies, WA394
 Outsourcing of Functions: DHSSPS, WA210
 Ovarian Cancer, WA378
 Paediatric Cardiac Services, WA310
 Paediatric Cardiac Surgery, WA216, WA217
 Paediatric Psychologists, WA42
 Patients who are not Entitled to Free Health Care, WA44
 Patients: Treatment outside Northern Ireland, WA221
 Personality Disorder Service, WA46
 Physiotherapists: Prescription of Medicines, WA219
 Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder, WA391
 Protect Life, WA309, WA382
 Public Consultations: DHSSPS, WA212
 Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, WA47
 Residential Homes, WA379, WA389

Royal Hospital for Sick Children, WA221
 Royal Victoria Hospital: Genito-urinary Medicine Clinic, WA389
 Safeguarding Board, WA307
 Sexual Assault, WA312
 Smoking, WA395
 Smoking-related Illness, WA396
 South West Acute Hospital: Medical School, WA383
 South West Acute Hospital: Medical Staff, WA380, WA383
 South West Acute Hospital: Parking, WA50
 Suicide Prevention, WA309
 Supply Contract SS16A, WA48
 Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a), WA47, WA388
 Ulster Hospital: Allergy Treatment, WA389
 Ulster Hospital: Catheterisation Laboratory, WA311
 Ulster Hospital: Mental Health Services, WA389
 Vulnerable People: Accommodation, WA380
 Waiting Times: Anti-TNF Drugs, WA311
 Western Health and Social Care Trust: Budgetary Position, WA383
 Written Ministerial Statements
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Rare Diseases: UK Strategy, WMS5

Ramsey, Mr Pat

Written Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships: Construction Industry, WA364
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Job Creation: Foreign Trade Missions, WA183
 Northern Ireland Electricity: Investigation, WA286
 Finance and Personnel
 Banks: European Investment Bank, WA303
 Civil Service Pensions, WA39, WA301
 October Monitoring Round and Capital Reallocation Exercise, WA303
 Office Accommodation: Foyle, WA209
 Programme for Government: Addressing Regional Imbalances, WA209
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Autism Strategy, WA397
 Gastroenteritis-type Illnesses: Passenger Ships, WA51
 Justice
 Prison Service: Scanning Technology, WA403
 Prisoners: Nutrition, WA226
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA271
 Regional Development
 DRD: Income-generating Capital Assets, WA414
 Train Station: Derry/Londonderry, WA242
 Social Development
 The Venue, WA136
 Warm Homes Scheme, WA331

Robinson, Mr George

Adjournment
 Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 209
 Ministerial Statements
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 164
 Oral Answers
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Brighter Hoard: Limavady, 351

Employment and Learning
 BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training, 73

Private Members' Business
 Civic Forum, 223
 Oversubscribed Schools, 42
 Single Farm Payments, 402
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 311, 312

Written Answers
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Small Business Saturday, WA182

Environment
 Taxis: Enforcement of Legislation, WA296
 Taxis: Single-tier System, WA296

Regional Development
 Road Safety: Junctions, WA418

Social Development
 Double Glazing: Roe Mill Gardens, Limavady, WA260

Robinson, Mr Peter

Ministerial Statements
 British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 258, 259, 260

Oral Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Fiscal Powers, 234
 Haass Talks: Budget, 230
 Investment: USA Visit, 231
 Narrow Water Bridge: Funding Withdrawal, 235
 Planning Bill, 233
 Social Investment Fund, 231, 232
 Together: Building a United Community, 232
 Union Flag: Belfast City Hall, 234
 Violence: Executive Separation, 234, 235
 Welfare Reform Bill, 235

Revised Written Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 DRD: Appointments, RWA1

Written Answers
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Anti-fraud Unit: OFMDFM, WA141
 Assembly Questions, WA333
 Car Parking Spaces: OFMDFM Spend, WA271
 Chief Executives: Waterways Ireland/Loughs Agency, WA265
 Childcare Strategy, WA270
 Children and Young People: Delivery of Strategy, WA266
 Children and Young People: Safeguarding, WA269
 Commissioner for Public Appointments:
 Recommendations, WA1
 Cooperative and Social Enterprise Hub, WA143
 Culture Company: UK City of Culture, WA144
 Energy Wise Campaign, WA2
 Equality Commission Publication, WA139
 European Affairs: Public Awareness, WA141
 Executive Office: China, WA270
 Flags Protocol Working Group, WA3
 Good Relations Strategy, WA139
 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, WA333
 Hydraulic Fracturing, WA333
 International Relations Strategy, WA266
 Internet Safety Strategy for Children, WA4
 Investment Conference, WA141
 Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Health Pillar, WA140

Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Skills Pillar, WA2
 Legal Case: OFMDFM, WA139
 Magdalene Laundries, WA3
 Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation:
 Chairperson's Expenses, WA144
 Ministerial Code: High Court Ruling, WA142
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28B, WA142
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28C, WA142
 OFMDFM Funding: Breaches of Company Law, WA266
 Older People's Commissioner, WA3
 Ombudsman's Findings, WA142
 Pensioners' Trust, WA3
 Planning Appeals Commission, WA270
 Police Stations, WA266
 Positive Relations Project, WA139
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA271, WA333
 Programme for Government: Delivery Plans, WA265
 Programme for Government: Jobs in Derry, WA143
 Public Assemblies, Parades and Protest Body, WA2
 Public Consultations: OFMDFM, WA267
 Public Prosecution Service: Attorney General Review, WA142
 Social Investment Fund, WA143, WA270
 Special Advisers: Termination of Appointment, WA269
 Strategic Investment Board, WA140
 Suicide Prevention, WA140
 Together: Building a United Community, WA141, WA270
 Transgender Community, WA2
 Translation Costs: Departmental Letters and Documents, WA1
 Tribunal Panels, WA142
 UK Diplomatic Cables, WA269
 VAT: Hospitality Sector, WA270
 Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse:
 Support Service, WA265
 Victims and Survivors Service, WA3, WA143
 Victims and Survivors Service: Funding, WA269

Rogers, Mr Sean

Adjournment
 Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 409

Assembly Business
 Eddie McGrady, 157

Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 331
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 172

Executive Committee Business
 Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013, 54

Ministerial Statements
 British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 260
 North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 372
 North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 264
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 165

Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Farmers: Literacy, 340
 Culture, Arts and Leisure
 Ballynagross Football Club, 346
 Education
 Common Funding Formula, 71
 Employment and Learning
 Apprenticeships, 391

Justice

Maghaberry: Death in Custody, 275

Private Members' Business

Exploris, 102

Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 296, 297

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 272

Oversubscribed Schools, 39

Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 205

Single Farm Payments, 398

Written Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development

Livestock: Ear Tags, WA338

Meat Plants, WA338

Education

Common Funding Formula: Consultation, WA347

Curriculum: Science, WA347

Key Stage 1: Baseline Assessment, WA280

Ross, Mr Alastair

Committee Business

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 334, 335, 336

Committee System Review, 61, 62

Oral Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Commonwealth Games 2014, 348

Employment and Learning

Employment Law: Proposals, 390

Private Members' Business

Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 296

Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 293

Written Answers

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Public Consultations: CAL, WA147

Education

Public Consultations: DE, WA9

Employment and Learning

Public Consultations: DEL, WA281

Environment

Councils: Chief Executives' Salaries, WA31

Public Consultations: DOE, WA187

Finance and Personnel

Public Consultations: DFP, WA37

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Public Consultations: DHSSPS, WA212

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Public Consultations: OFMDFM, WA266

Regional Development

Public Consultations: DRD, WA233

Social Development

Public Consultations: DSD, WA249

Ruane, Ms Caitríona

Assembly Business

Eddie McGrady, 157

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 163

Oral Answers

Assembly Commission

Committees: Paperless Packs, 286, 287

Outreach/Education: Update, 287, 288, 289

Environment

Sellafield, 138

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Accident and Emergency: Recommendations, 181

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 184

Private Members' Business

Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 88, 91, 92, 93

Police Ombudsman's Office, 243, 250, 253, 254, 255

The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 313

Sheehan, Mr Pat

Oral Answers

Education

GCSEs/A Levels, 66, 67

Schools: 14-19, 70

Employment and Learning

Apprenticeships, 390, 391

Assured Skills, 79

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Children's Hospital, 186

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Social Investment Fund, 232

Teachers: Signature Project, 21

Regional Development

Consumer Council, 238

Private Members' Business

Oversubscribed Schools, 42

Police Ombudsman's Office, 247, 248, 250

Written Answers

Employment and Learning

Youth Unemployment, WA281

Speaker, The (Mr William Hay)

Adjournment

C S Lewis, 316, 317, 320

Assembly Business, 49, 80, 257, 302, 315, 338

Eddie McGrady, 157

Public Petition: Exploris, 49

Committee Business

Committee System Review, 57, 60, 62, 63

Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport

Delivery Structures, 2, 5, 6, 12

Matter of the Day

Devastation in the Philippines, 159

Weekend Violence, 215, 216

Matters of the Day

Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 115

Tony McCoy, 117

Oral Answers

Agriculture and Rural Development, 339

Farming: DARD Legal Action, 346

Farming: Fodder Supply, 342, 343

Poultry Litter, 343

Renewables: Funding, 341

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Ballynagross Football Club, 346, 347

Creative Industries Innovation Fund, 350

Draperstown Library, 351

Eoghan Ruadh Hurling Club, 352

Enterprise, Trade and Investment, 130

Narrow Water Bridge, 132

Environment, 136

Councils: Community Planning, 138
 Exploris, 140
 National Park: Causeway Coast, 141
 Recycling: Targets, 142
 Sellafield, 138
 Taxis: Single-tier Licensing System, 137

Finance and Personnel
 Air Passenger Duty, 176
 Rating Review, 176, 177, 178
 Ulster Bank, 176

Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 181
 Abortion: Guidelines, 187
 Jobs: Health Sector, 183
 Waiting Times: OT Referrals, 184

Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 65, 66, 84, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93
 Broadcasting Powers: Petition of Concern, 369
 Civic Forum, 220, 221, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229
 Exploris, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98
 International Mental Health Centre, 13, 15
 Oversubscribed Schools, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 302, 303, 305, 307, 308, 310, 311, 312, 313, 315

Speaker's Business, 218

Spratt, Mr Jimmy

Assembly Business, 315

Committee Business
 Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 2, 6, 11, 12

Executive Committee Business
 Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Accelerated Passage, 375
 Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 377, 378, 379, 380

Matters of the Day
 Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 116
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 326

Ministerial Statements
 British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 259
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 164

Oral Answers
 Employment and Learning
 Higher Education, 393
 Justice
 Maghaberry: Death in Custody, 275
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Fiscal Powers, 234
 Urban Village Regeneration, 19
 Regional Development
 Consumer Council, 238

Private Members' Business
 Civic Forum, 224, 228
 Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 269

Written Answers
 Education
 Schools: Newbuild at Belfast City Hospital Site, WA350
 Employment and Learning
 Student Support Entitlement, WA169
 Regional Development
 Roads Service: Grass Cutting, WA407
 Urban Clearway: South Belfast, WA418

Social Development
 Disability Living Allowance: Appeals Upheld, WA249
 Disability Living Allowance: Oral Appeals, WA132
 Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals Upheld, WA132
 Employment and Support Allowance: Oral Appeals, WA132

Storey, Mr Mervyn

Committee Business
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 353, 354
 Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 126, 127

Ministerial Statements
 Community Resuscitation Strategy, 267

Oral Answers
 Assembly Commission
 Outreach/Education: Update, 289
 Education
 Common Funding Formula, 72
 Schools Enhancement Programme, 70
 Environment
 National Park: Causeway Coast, 141
 Justice
 National Crime Agency, 278
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Disclosure of Information, 16, 17
 Teachers: Signature Project, 20
 Regional Development
 Ballymoney Railway Station, 26
 Flood Alleviation: South Down, 239

Private Members' Business
 Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 90, 91
 Oversubscribed Schools, 37, 39, 44, 45, 46

Written Answers
 Education
 Area Planning Steering Group, WA351
 DE: Aggregated Schools Budget, WA353
 DE: Central Procurement Directorate, WA353
 Education and Library Boards: Job Evaluation, WA161, WA359
 Education and Skills Authority: Senior Management, WA359
 Education and Training Inspectorate, WA354, WA355
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Complaints, WA157
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Underachieving Schools, WA156, WA161, WA358, WA359
 School Enhancement Criteria, WA161
 Schools: Inspection Reports, WA158
 Teachers: Substitute Teacher Register, WA11, WA350
 Employment and Learning
 GCSE/A-level Review, WA172
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 Energy: Price Freeze, WA287
 Mobile Infrastructure Project, WA285
 Environment
 Dereliction Funding, WA288

Swann, Mr Robin

Committee Business

- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 328
- Committee System Review, 63
- Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 12

Oral Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Farming: Fodder Supply, 343
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Fishing: Lough Neagh, 348
- Employment and Learning
 - Skills Gap, 76
 - Unemployment: Young People, 392
- Regional Development
 - Ballymoney Railway Station, 26
- Social Development
 - Housing: Shared Developments, 281

Private Members' Business

- Broadcasting Powers, 363
- Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 294, 296

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Asset Transfer: Surplus Land or Property, WA146
- Education
 - Curriculum: Entrepreneurship, WA354
- Employment and Learning
 - EU: Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs, WA366
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Electricity Interconnectors, WA285
 - Energy Prices, WA285
 - G8 Summit 2013: Legacy, WA181
- Finance and Personnel
 - Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA373
 - Rates Collection, WA209
 - Rates Initiatives, WA371
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 - Accident and Emergency: Children with Alcohol Intoxication, WA397
 - Antrim Area Hospital: Accident and Emergency, WA385
 - Antrim Area Hospital: Inpatient Beds, WA385
 - Antrim Area Hospital: Short Stay Ward, WA385
 - Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Hospital Beds, WA220
 - Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Intermediate Care Beds, WA386
 - Paediatric Cardiac Surgery, WA216, WA217
 - Paediatric Psychologists, WA42
 - Patients: Treatment outside Northern Ireland, WA220, WA221
 - Royal Hospital for Sick Children, WA221
- Justice
 - Policing and Community Safety Partnerships: MLAs, WA52, WA229
- Regional Development
 - Parking Restrictions, WA327
 - Translink: Privatisation, WA417
- Social Development
 - Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition, WA254
 - Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA436
 - Housing Executive: Stock Transfer, WA133
 - Housing-led Regeneration, WA133

Weir, Mr Peter

Committee Stages

- Carrier Bags Bill, CS13

Ministerial Statements

- Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 52

Oral Answers

- Assembly Commission
 - Ormiston House, 289, 290
- Education
 - Common Funding Formula, 71
- Employment and Learning
 - Theatre: SERC, 395
- Justice
 - Dissident Republican Threat, 279
- Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 - Planning Bill, 233
- Social Development
 - Housing: Regeneration Schemes, 283

Private Members' Business

- Exploris, 95, 96, 97, 100, 101, 103, 104
- The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 305, 306

Written Answers

- Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Broadband: North Down, WA145
 - Farm Businesses: North Down, WA144
- Assembly Commission
 - Parliament Buildings: Security Procedures, WA442
 - Parliament Buildings: Security Staff, WA441
 - Parliament Buildings: Union Flag, WA441
 - Public Transport: MLAs, WA263
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
 - Commonwealth Games 2014: Cycling, WA148
 - Hollywood Library, WA273
 - Netball, WA272
- Education
 - Common Funding Formula: Financial Impact, WA155
 - Common Funding Formula: Schools in North Down, WA11
 - Curriculum: The Holocaust, WA361
 - Cycling: Schoolchildren, WA362
 - School Crossing Patrol Guards, WA355, WA356
 - Schools Enhancement Programme, WA277
 - Schools: Boards of Governors, WA277
 - Teachers for Literacy and Numeracy: North Down, WA11
- Employment and Learning
 - Management and Leadership Development Programme Initiatives, WA17
 - Universities: Entrants, WA15
 - Universities: Maximum Student Number, WA16, WA362
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
 - Broadband: North Down, WA26
- Environment
 - NIEA, WA32
 - RPA: TUPE Regulations, WA295
 - Taxi Industry, WA290
 - Taxis: Drivers, WA28
 - Taxis: Regulations, WA27, WA29
 - Taxis: Single-tier System, WA28, WA185
- Finance and Personnel
 - Procurement Spend, WA374
 - Rates Arrears, WA373

Vacant Domestic Dwellings, WA208, WA302
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Emergency Services: Non-emergency Telephone Number, WA395
 Fire and Rescue Service: Firefighters' Ages, WA387
 Fire and Rescue Service: Fitness Test, WA387
 Foster Carers, WA391
 Macular Degeneration, WA218
 Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, WA47
 Suicide Prevention, WA309
 Justice
 Domestic Violence, WA223
 Prison Officers: Severance Package, WA109, WA110
 Prison Service College Site at Millisle, WA110
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Translation Costs: Departmental Letters and Documents, WA1
 Tribunal Panels, WA142
 Regional Development
 Adopted Roads: Donaghadee and Millisle, WA409
 Cycling Group, WA325
 Flooding: North Down, WA324
 Footpaths, WA326
 Footpaths: North Down, WA113
 Footpaths: Replacement of Pavement Stones, WA115
 Penalty Charge Notices: Appeals, WA235, WA324
 Penalty Charge Notices: North Down, WA323, WA408, WA411
 Street Lighting, WA326, WA408
 Street Lighting: North Down, WA112
 Street Lighting: Urban Areas, WA112
 Traffic Calming: North Down, WA317
 Weed Spraying: Urban Footpaths, WA112
 Weed Spraying: Urban Settings, WA112
 Social Development
 Disability Living Allowance: Appeals, WA427
 Double Glazing Schemes: North Down, WA433
 Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA426
 Housing Executive Applicants: North Down, WA436
 Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Down, WA254
 Housing Executive: Spend on Properties, WA432
 Housing Waiting List: North Down, WA253
 Social Housing Newbuilds: North Down, WA426
 Social Housing Stock: North Down, WA328
 Social Security: Fraud, WA439
 Temporary Accommodation: North Down, WA261
 Tenants: Antisocial Behaviour, WA245

Wells, Mr Jim

Assembly Business
 Eddie McGrady, 157
 Executive Committee Business
 Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 119
 Oral Answers
 Agriculture and Rural Development
 Rivers Agency: Transfer of Functions, 344
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Abortion: Guidelines, 187
 Private Members' Business
 Civic Forum, 227
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 248
 Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 202, 205
 Written Answers

Education
 Down High School, WA166
 Employment and Learning
 Youth Employment Scheme, WA170
 Finance and Personnel
 Employment, WA304
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Craigavon Area Hospital: Stroke Patients, WA378
 Waiting Times: Anti-TNF Drugs, WA311
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
 Planning Appeals Commission, WA269
 Regional Development
 Ballynahinch Bypass, WA231
 Signage: Irish/Bilingual Destination Signs, WA318
 SmartPass, WA328

Wilson, Mr Sammy

Committee Business
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 190, 191, 193
 Committee Stages
 Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS9, CS10
 Oral Answers
 Environment
 Climate Change, 137
 NIEA: Consultation Responses, 139
 Regional Development
 Wind Turbines, 25, 26
 Written Answers
 Environment
 Tyres, WA204
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety
 Greenmount Agricultural College, WA48, WA306
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior Management Team, WA46, WA47, WA306
 Justice
 Access NI, WA314, WA315
 Legal Aid: Budget, WA103
 Legal Aid: Payments to Law Firms, WA103
 Legal Aid: Spend, WA103

Business Index

A

A1: Hillsborough, 24
A1: Speed Restrictions, WA419
A2: Landslides, WA328
A2: Shore Road Scheme, WA418
A4 Dual Carriageway: Street Lighting, WA411
A5 Western Transport Corridor: Public Consultation, WA420
A5: EU Habitats Directive, 240
A5: Public Consultations, 27
A6: Derry to the M22, WA407
A26 Dualling — Glarryford to Drones Road — Publication of Notice of Intention to Proceed and Making of Statutory Orders, WMS4
Abortion: Guidelines, 186, 187, WA310, WA311, WA312
Access NI, WA314, WA315
Access to Work Programme: Advertising, WA13
Accident and Emergency: Children with Alcohol Intoxication, WA397
Accident and Emergency: Recommendations, 181
Accident and Emergency: Waiting Times, WA395
Acute Mental Health Beds: Western Health and Social Care Trust, WA309
Addiction Treatment Unit in Omagh, WA49, WA50
Additional Support Fund, 76, 77
Adopted Roads: Donaghadee and Millisle, WA409
Adoption Bill, WA221
Agriculture and Rural Development, 339
Agrifood Loan Scheme, WA208
Agrifood Sector: Young People, 343, 344
Air Passenger Duty, 176, WA301, WA302, WA305, WA374
Anaerobic Digester: Ballymena, 136, 137
Anaerobic Digester: Mallusk, WA292
Anaerobic Digester: Sion Mills, 138, 139
Annahilt Primary School, WA155
Anti-fraud Unit: DETI, WA24
Anti-fraud Unit: DHSSPS, WA44
Anti-fraud Unit: DOJ, WA109
Anti-fraud Unit: DRD, WA114
Anti-fraud Unit: OFMDFM, WA141
Antrim Area Hospital: Accident and Emergency, WA385
Antrim Area Hospital: Inpatient Beds, WA385
Antrim Area Hospital: Short Stay Ward, WA385
Appeals Service, WA399
Apprenticeships, 390, 391, WA169, WA170
Apprenticeships: Armagh, WA169
Apprenticeships: Construction Industry, WA364
Ards Peninsula: Economic Development, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410
Area Planning Steering Group, WA351
Assembly Business, 49, 80, 257, 290, 302, 315, 338
Assembly Questions, WA333
Asset Transfer: Surplus Land or Property, WA146
Assured Skills, 78, 79
Asthma Standards, WA49
Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, WA391
Autism Spectrum Disorder: Educational Experience, WA275
Autism Spectrum Disorder: Teacher Training, WA165
Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Antrim, WA362
Autism Spectrum Disorder: Units in South Down, WA275
Autism Strategy, WA397
Autism: Applied Behaviour Analysis, WA222
Autism: Newry and Armagh, WA218

B

BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training, 73
Ballyclare Primary School, WA275
Ballymena Health and Care Centre, WA386
Ballymoney Railway Station, 26, 27
Ballynagross Football Club, 346, 347
Ballynahinch Bypass, WA231, WA232
Banking Task Force, 133, 134
Banks, WA35
Banks: European Investment Bank, WA303
Banks: Green Investment Bank, WA303
Beef Supply System, WA146
Belfast City Hospital: 5N Medical Assessment Unit, WA392
Belfast City Hospital: Security Staff, WA50
Belfast Harbour Commissioners, WA208, WA409, WA415
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Freedom of Information Response, WA310
Belfast Rapid Transport System, WA327, WA328
Benefit Appeals Tribunals: Audio Recording, WA132
Biodiversity Strategy, WA32
Blind or Partially Sighted People, WA387
Blood Donation: Legal Advice, WA378
Blood Donation: Legal Costs, WA382, WA383
Blood Donations: Ban on Gay Men, 65, 66, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93
Bloomfield Estate: Historical Debt, 282
Blue Badge Scheme: Veterans, WA229, WA230
Boiler Replacement Scheme, WA428, RWA3
Boiler Replacement Scheme: Disability Living Allowance, WA438
Bomb Attack: Retired Police Officer, 115, 116
Bovine Tuberculosis, WA4, WA5
Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and John's Disease Schemes, WA334
Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Programme, WA5
British-Irish Council: Summit Meeting, 258, 259, 260
Broadband: North Down, WA26, WA145
Broadband: South Down, WA8
Broadcasting Powers, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367
Broadcasting Powers: Petition of Concern, 369
Brighter Hoard: Limavady, 351, 352
Brooklands Care Home, Antrim, WA380
Buddy Bear School, Dungannon, WA165, WA378
Budgets, WA304
Budgets: Current/Capital, WA305
Bus Lanes: Belfast City Centre, WA232
Business Start-ups, 132
Business Start-ups: North Antrim, WA25
Business: Irvinestown, WA338
Businesses: Closed/Ceased Trading/Bankrupt, WA300

C

Capital Allocations, WA39
Capital Awards, WA39
Car Parking Spaces: DARD Spend, WA334
Car Parking Spaces: DCAL Spend, WA273
Car Parking Spaces: DE Spend, WA278
Car Parking Spaces: DEL Spend, WA283
Car Parking Spaces: DETI Spend, WA286

- Car Parking Spaces: DFP Spend, WA372
 Car Parking Spaces: DHSSPS Spend, WA310
 Car Parking Spaces: DOE Spend, WA368
 Car Parking Spaces: DOJ Spend, WA401
 Car Parking Spaces: DRD Spend, WA412
 Car Parking Spaces: DSD Spend, WA433
 Car Parking Spaces: Government, WA33, WA372
 Car Parking Spaces: OFMDFM Spend, WA271
 Car Parking: Newry, 21
 Car Parks, WA299, WA300
 Care Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 118, 119
 Care Homes, WA211, WA307, WA312
 Care Homes: Pinewood, WA211
 Care Homes: Respite Beds, WA222
 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, 328, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 353, 354, 357
 Careers Guidance, 74, 75
 Careers Review, 74
 Careers System, 394
 Carer Assessments, WA379, RWA2
 Carnet Tickets for Rail and Bus Journeys, WA117
 Carrier Bags, WA298, WA299, WA382
 Carrier Bags Bill, CS13, CS14
 Cattle Smuggling, WA4
 CCEA: A-level Chemistry Examination, WA163, WA279
 Chestnut Grove Residential Home, WA379
 Chief Executives: Waterways Ireland/Loughs Agency, WA265
 Child Protection and Safeguarding: Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit, 120, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 143
 Child Protection: DE, WA167
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, 66, 184, 185, WA278, WA279
 Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry: Appointment of a Chairperson, 50, 51, 52, 53
 Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, 1
 Childcare Strategy, WA270
 Children and Young People: Delivery of Strategy, WA266
 Children and Young People: Safeguarding, WA269
 Children in Care, WA314
 Children's Hospital, 186
 Cigarettes, WA394, WA395
 Citizens Advice: Funding, WA383
 City Hospital: Medical Assessment Unit, 182
 City of Culture 2013, 352
 City of Culture: Contingency Fund, WA339
 Civic Forum, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229
 Civil Servants: Flights, WA204
 Civil Servants: Promotions, WA372, WA373
 Civil Servants: Sickness Absence, WA38
 Civil Service Pensions, WA39, WA301, WA302
 Civil Service Posts: DARD, WA335
 Civil Service Posts: DCAL, WA273
 Civil Service Posts: DE, WA279
 Civil Service Posts: DEL, WA364
 Civil Service Posts: DHSSPS, WA386
 Civil Service Posts: DOJ, WA401
 Civil Service Posts: DRD, WA412
 Civil Service Posts: DSD, WA435
 Civil Service: Car Parking Costs, 175
 Civil Service: Jobs in Derry, 174, 175
 Civil Service: Salaries, WA304
 CJINI: Report on Dealing with the Past, WA405
 Classroom Assistants: North Down, WA164
 Classroom Assistants: South Antrim, WA357
 Climate Change, 137
 Clinical Trials, WA48
 Co-codamol Addiction, WA384
 Colleges: Budgets, WA171
 Comber Greenway, 23, 24
 Commissioner for Public Appointments: Recommendations, WA1
 Committee System Review, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63
 Committees: Paperless Packs, 286, 287
 Common Funding Formula, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73
 Common Funding Formula: Consultation, WA167, WA340, WA341, WA347
 Common Funding Formula: Consultation Responses, WA166
 Common Funding Formula: Financial Impact, WA155
 Common Funding Formula: Integrated Education, WA341
 Common Funding Formula: Schools in North Down, WA11
 Common Funding Formula: Special Educational Needs, WA341
 Commonwealth Games 2014, 348, 349
 Commonwealth Games 2014: Cycling, WA148
 Community Asset Transfer: Carrickfergus Borough Council, WA136
 Community Asset Transfer: Council Properties, WA262, WA263
 Community Pharmacies: Emergency Prescriptions, WA45
 Community Resuscitation Strategy, 264, 265, 266, 267
 Compensation Claims: DRD, WA243
 Conflict of Interest: Glasgow Housing Association, WA134
 Confucius Institute, 394
 Consultants: Hours Worked, WA220
 Consumer Council, 237, 238
 Consumer Council: Review, WA27, WA182
 Controlled Sector Body and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools: Budget, WA8
 Cooperative and Social Enterprise Hub, WA143
 Cooperatives, WA7, WA182, WA373
 Coroners, WA111
 Coroners' Court: Historical Inquests, WA406
 Councils: Carbon Reduction Measures, WA374
 Councils: Chief Executives' Salaries, WA31
 Councils: Community Planning, 138
 Councils: Debt, WA297
 Councils: Small Businesses and Independent Traders, WA184
 Counsel Instructed from Outside the Jurisdiction, WA34
 Court Cases: Statutory Time Limits, 277
 Courts: Registered Intermediary Scheme, WA102, WA403
 Courts: Victim Statements, WA400, WA406
 Craigtlet Crossroads, 239
 Craigtlet Proposals, WA243, WA244
 Craigavon Area Hospital: Stroke Patients, WA378
 Creation of a Network of Marine Protected Areas, WMS2
 Creative Industries Innovation Fund, 349, 350
 Cricket Strategy, WA148
 Crime: Border Areas, WA405
 Crime: Rural Areas, 345
 Criminal Justice Inspection Reports, WA52, WA228
 Cross-border Cooperation, WA304
 Crumlin Integrated College, WA162
 C S Lewis, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 352
 Cultural Bursaries, 349
 Culture Company: UK City of Culture, WA144
 Curriculum: Business Skills, WA168
 Curriculum: Entrepreneurship, WA354
 Curriculum: Science, WA153, WA347
 Curriculum: The Holocaust, WA361, WA362
 Cycle Lane: Upper Arthur Street, Belfast, WA406

Cycle Lanes, WA236
 Cycle Lanes and Boxes, WA408
 Cycle Lanes: South Antrim, WA230
 Cycle Path between Lisburn and Belfast, WA232
 Cycling, WA236, WA419
 Cycling Group, WA232, WA325
 Cycling: DCAL Funding, 351
 Cycling: Minister for Regional Development's London Visit, WA325
 Cycling: Safety, WA243
 Cycling: Schoolchildren, WA362
 Cystic Fibrosis, WA312

D

Dairy Processing Plant in County Fermanagh, WA8
 DARD: Headquarters, WA337
 Data Centre in Coleraine, WA23
 Day Care Provision: Rathmoyle, WA43
 DCAL: Capital Projects, WA339
 DE: Aggregated Schools Budget, WA353
 DE: Central Procurement Directorate, WA353
 DE: Minister in Bangor, WA348
 DE: Recruitment, WA154, WA356
 DE: Youth Capital Funding Scheme, WA360
 DEL Provision: Disability, WA14
 Dentistry Appointments: Altnagelvin Area Hospital, WA392
 Dentistry Appointments: Hospitals, WA393
 Departmental Expenditure Limit: Capital, WA40
 Departmental Expenditure Limit: Resource, WA40
 Departmental Funding: DETI, WA26
 Departmental Funding: DRD, WA116
 Departmental Funding: DSD, WA130
 Departmental Spending, WA304
 Dereliction Funding, WA288, WA289
 Desertcreat, 16
 Desertcreat Development, 279
 Devastation in the Philippines, 159, 160
 Development Trusts NI, WA262
 DHSSPS: Arm's-length Bodies, WA311
 Diabetes: Prevalence, WA390, WA397
 Digital Roll-out, WA305
 Disability Employment Service, WA284
 Disability Living Allowance, WA135, WA260
 Disability Living Allowance/Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA427
 Disability Living Allowance: Appeals, WA260, WA427
 Disability Living Allowance: Appeals Upheld, WA249
 Disability Living Allowance: Oral Appeals, WA132
 Disclosure of Information, 16, 17
 Dissident Republican Threat, 279
 Dissident Unionists: Definition, 274
 Dock Street Car Park, Strabane, WA114
 Domestic Violence, WA223, WA229, WA314, WA316
 Domiciliary Care, WA43, WA307
 Domiciliary Care Workers: Training, WA392
 Domiciliary Care: Agency Staff, WA394
 Donaghadee Harbour, WA231
 Double Glazing, WA119
 Double Glazing Contracts, WA244, WA245
 Double Glazing Schemes: North Antrim, WA257
 Double Glazing Schemes: North Down, WA433
 Double Glazing Schemes: South Down, WA439
 Double Glazing: Roe Mill Gardens, Limavady, WA260
 Down High School, WA166
 Downe Hospital: Cardiac Ambulance, WA311

Drainage Network: Ballyclare, WA414
 Draperstown Library, 350, 351
 DRD: Appointments, RWA1
 DRD: Income-generating Capital Assets, WA414
 DRD: Minister's London Visit, WA325
 Driver and Vehicle Agency: Jobs, RWA1
 Driving Licences, WA184, WA289, WA295, WA296
 Driving Offences, WA102
 Driving without Insurance, WA102
 Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Pupil Awareness, WA276
 Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Student Awareness, WA362
 DSD: Procurement, WA439
 DSD: Savings, WA438
 Dundonald High School, 67

E

Economic Growth, 131, 132
 Economic Pact, 18, 19
 Economic Powers, 388
 Economic Strategy: Fiscal Levers, WA288
 Economy, WA367
 Eddie McGrady, 157, 158
 Education and Library Boards: Job Evaluation, WA161, WA359
 Education and Library Boards: Resources, WA347
 Education and Library Boards: Staff Redundancies, WA340
 Education and Skills Authority, 72, 73
 Education and Skills Authority: Cost, WA167
 Education and Skills Authority: Senior Management, WA359
 Education and Training Inspectorate, WA354, WA355
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Complaints, WA157
 Education and Training Inspectorate: Underachieving Schools, WA156, WA161, WA358, WA359
 Education Bill, WA280, WA347
 Education Bill: Consideration Stage, WA155
 Education Made More Accessible Report, WA348
 Education Maintenance Allowance: Fraud, WA365
 Education: Voluntary Provision, WA168
 Elective Care, 183
 Electricity Interconnectors, WA285
 Electricity: Renewable Sources, WA182, WA367
 Emergency Services: Non-emergency Telephone Number, WA395
 Emigration Figures, WA36
 Employment, WA304, WA305
 Employment and Support Allowance, WA134, WA135
 Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals, WA132, WA260, WA426, WA433
 Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals Upheld, WA132
 Employment and Support Allowance: Helpline, WA420
 Employment and Support Allowance: Oral Appeals, WA132
 Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessments, WA261
 Employment and Support Allowance: Work Related Activity Group/Support Group, WA436
 Employment Appeals Tribunal, WA16, WA17
 Employment Law: Proposals, 390
 Employment: People with Disabilities, 79, 80
 Energy Costs, 284
 Energy Prices, WA285
 Energy Wise Campaign, WA2
 Energy: Community Energy Strategy and Support, WA184
 Energy: Price Freeze, WA287
 Energy: Review of Competition, WA366
 Energy: Security of Supply, 134, 135
 Energy: SME Assistance, WA287

Energy: Wind Turbine Grid Connections, WA367
 Enniskillen Ambulance Station: Capital Funding, WA51
 Enterprise, Trade and Investment, 130
 Entertainment Licences, WA297
 Environment, 136
 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations, WA33
 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Habitats Regulations: Judicial Reviews, WA186
 Eoghan Ruadh Hurling Club, 352
 Equal Pay, WA303
 Equality Commission Publication, WA139
 EU: Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs, WA366
 European Affairs: Public Awareness, WA141
 European Funding: Community Groups, WA209
 European Funding: Peace III and Peace IV, WA302
 Examination Fees for Pupils, WA12
 Examinations, WA165
 Executive Office: Brussels, 17, 18
 Executive Office: China, 385, 386, WA270
 Expert Review Report by Chris Mills, WA29, WA371
 Exploris, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 135, 136, 140
 Explosion: Belfast City Centre, 325, 326, 327
 Exports, WA205

F

Family Fund, WA309
 Farm Businesses: North Down, WA144
 Farm Safety, WA339
 Farmers: Literacy, 339, 340
 Farming Restrictions, WA338
 Farming: DARD Legal Action, 346
 Farming: Fodder Supply, 342, 343
 Farming: Winter Weather, 342
 Father Alec Reid, 323, 324
 Ferry Service: Strangford Lough, WA240
 Fire and Rescue Service: Firefighters' Ages, WA387
 Fire and Rescue Service: Fitness Test, WA387
 Fire Sprinklers, WA392
 Firearms: Age Restrictions, WA405
 Firefighters: Recruitment, WA218
 Fiscal Powers, 179, 180, 234
 Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013, 53, 54
 Fishing: Lough Neagh, 347, 348
 Flag Protests: Belfast City Centre, 388
 Flag-related Protests, 130, 131
 Flags Protocol Working Group, WA2, WA3
 Flags: Health and Safety, WA317
 Flights: Germany/Belgium, WA287
 Flood Alleviation: South Down, 238, 239
 Flooding, WA335
 Flooding: North Down, WA324
 Flu Pandemic: Preparations, WA394
 Footpaths, WA326
 Footpaths: North Down, WA113
 Footpaths: Replacement of Pavement Stones, WA115
 Footpaths: Towerview, Bangor, WA114
 Forest Service's Business Plan 2013-14: Tree Disease Resistance, WA5
 Foster Carers, WA391
 Foster Parents, WA381
 Foyle Valley Plan, WA147
 Free Derry Museum, WA366

Free School Meals Indicator: Transfer of Funding, WA12
 Funding Applications: Single Online Portal, WA208
 Further and Higher Education: Disability Discrimination Act, WA363
 Further and Higher Education: Students with Learning Disabilities, WA15
 Further Education: Students with Learning Disabilities, WA170, WA365

G

G8 Summit 2013: Legacy, WA181
 G8 Summit: Western Health and Social Care Trust, WA309
 Gaelic Athletic Association Clubs: Funding, WA144
 Gastroenteritis-type Illnesses: Passenger Ships, WA51
 GCSE/A-level Review, WA172, WA173
 GCSEs/A Levels, 66, 67
 Giant's Causeway: UNESCO Report, WA291
 Girdwood Regeneration Scheme, WA132
 Giro d'Italia, 21, 22, 237
 Giro d'Italia 2014, WA23
 Going for Growth, 341, 342
 Golden Share Scheme, WA119
 Good Relations Strategy, WA139
 GP Practices: Removal of Patients, WA217
 Graduate Teacher Scheme, WA155
 Greenmount Agricultural College, WA48, WA306

H

Haass Talks, 387
 Haass Talks: Budget, 230
 Hate Crimes, WA403
 Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland: Prosecutions, WA23, WA24
 Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill, CS15
 Health and Social Care Trusts: Financial Accounts, WA310
 Health Care and Day Care Centres in Banbridge, WA222
 Health Care Workers: Qualifications, WA308
 Health Service: Exporior Medical System, WA396
 Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 181
 Heart Attack Survival Rates, 181
 Helm Housing, WA438
 Herds/Flocks Made Non-operational, WA145
 Herds/Flocks Reduction: North Down and Ards, WA145
 Higher Education, 393
 Higher Education Sector: Support and Investment, 294, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300
 Higher Education: Update, 389
 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, WA333
 Historical Sexual Abuse Cases, WA110
 Holy Trinity College, Cookstown, WA154
 Hollywood Library, WA273
 Hollywood Nursery School, WA161
 Home Help, WA391, WA392
 Homelessness: Upper Bann, WA256
 Homes for a Pound Scheme, WA261
 Homosexuality: Treatment, 182
 Hospitals: Car Parking Charges, WA396
 Hospitals: Coffee and Confectionery Outlets, WA392
 Houses of Multiple Occupancy: Antisocial Behaviour, WA428
 Houses of Multiple Occupation: Review, WA437
 Housing Benefit: Underoccupancy Penalty, WA256
 Housing Debt, WA433
 Housing Developments: Unadopted Roads, WA407
 Housing Executive Applicants: North Down, WA436

Housing Executive Properties and Land: Strabane, WA262
 Housing Executive Properties: Ballymena, WA434, WA435
 Housing Executive Properties: Double Glazing in North Down, WA129
 Housing Executive Properties: Gas in Donaghadee, WA126
 Housing Executive Properties: Insulation in North Down, WA245, WA246
 Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Antrim, WA247
 Housing Executive Properties: Occupancy Rates in North Down, WA254
 Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition, WA254
 Housing Executive Properties: Proposed Demolition in North Antrim, WA256
 Housing Executive Schemes: Ballymena, Ballymoney, Moyle, WA130
 Housing Executive Spend, WA247
 Housing Executive: Belfast Response Maintenance Areas, WA255
 Housing Executive: Contractors, WA428
 Housing Executive: Debt, WA118
 Housing Executive: Direct Labour Organisation, WA255
 Housing Executive: Heating Systems, WA120
 Housing Executive: Maintenance Contracts, 280, 281
 Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts, WA118
 Housing Executive: Planned Maintenance Framework, WA330
 Housing Executive: Reduced Requirements, WA255
 Housing Executive: Resident Parking, WA129
 Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building, WA119, WA131
 Housing Executive: Ring-fencing of House Building in North Belfast, WA245
 Housing Executive: Social Housing Reform Programme, WA436
 Housing Executive: Spend on Properties, WA432
 Housing Executive: Staff Pay Increase, WA373, WA374, WA436, WA437
 Housing Executive: Stock Transfer, WA133
 Housing Executive: Vacant Homes, WA261
 Housing Grants: Rejections, WA256
 Housing Stress: Dungannon District, WA330, WA331
 Housing Waiting List, WA329
 Housing Waiting List: North Antrim, WA130
 Housing Waiting List: North Down, WA253
 Housing: Garden Maintenance, 282, 283
 Housing: Regeneration Schemes, 283
 Housing: Repossessions, 283, 284, 285
 Housing: Shared Developments, 281
 Housing-led Regeneration, WA133, WA263, WA331, WA439
 Human Trafficking, 276, 277, WA224, WA405
 Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage, 56
 Human Trafficking: Review of Case, WA223, WA402
 Hydraulic Fracturing, WA333
 Hydraulic Fracturing: Water Supplies, WA415
 Hydroelectric Schemes, WA27, WA28
 Hydroelectric Schemes: Fish Stocks, WA29

I

Independent Financial Review Panel, WA136
 Infrastructure: Effective Delivery of Major Projects, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 291, 292, 293, 294
 Inpatients Registered with a GP, WA43
 Insolvency, 132, 133

Insulation: Housing Executive Properties, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154
 Integrated Education, WA278
 Interfaces: Consultation, WA398
 International Mental Health Centre, 13, 15, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36
 International Relations Strategy, WA266
 Internet Safety Strategy for Children, WA4
 InterTradelreland, WA24
 Invest NI and Foreign Investors, WA18
 Invest NI: Financial Assistance in North Antrim, WA25
 Invest NI: Land in North Antrim, WA25
 Invest NI: Manufacturing and Engineering Companies in County Tyrone, WA173
 Invest NI: Review, WA26
 Invest NI: Venture Capital Funds, WA20, WA21
 Investigation Findings, WA111
 Investment Conference, WA140, WA141
 Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Health Pillar, WA140
 Investment Strategy 2011-2021: Skills Pillar, WA2
 Investment: DEL Support, 73, 74
 Investment: USA Visit, 231, 386, 387
 IVF Treatment, WA308

J

Job Creation: Armagh, WA286
 Job Creation: Foreign Trade Missions, WA183
 Jobs, WA181
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: International Investors, WA22
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: Invest NI, WA21
 Jobs Created in North Antrim: Jobs Fund, WA25
 Jobs Fund, WA286
 Jobs: Health Sector, 182, 183
 John's Disease Expert and Manager, WA4
 Judges: Complaints, 273, 274
 Justice, 273
 Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113

K

Key Stage 1: Baseline Assessment, WA280, WA281
 Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor, WA358
 Kirkinriola Primary School, WA356

L

Land Law, WA207
 Land Owned or Controlled by DARD in South Antrim, WA6
 Late Payment of Commercial Debts (No. 2) Regulations 2013, WA48, WA49
 Legal Aid, WA405
 Legal Aid Certificates, WA222, WA227
 Legal Aid: Budget, WA103, WA107, WA108
 Legal Aid: Offender Levy, WA313
 Legal Aid: Payments to Law Firms, WA103, WA228
 Legal Aid: Spend, WA103
 Legal Case: OFMDFM, WA139
 Legal Cases: Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, WA310
 Legal Costs: Blood Donation and Adoption, WA51
 Legal Costs: DARD, WA337
 Legal Costs: DE, WA346
 Legal Costs: DFP, WA35, WA372

Legal Fees: DHSSPS, WA219, WA220
 Legal Highs, WA49
 Legal Proceedings: Costs and Compensation, WA210
 Lending Data, WA304
 Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS9, CS10, CS11
 Link Road from Coolnagard Housing Development to
 Dromore Road, Omagh, WA231
 Lisanelly Campus, WA153
 Lisburn Health Centre, WA380
 Livestock Stolen in South Antrim, WA5
 Livestock: Ear Tags, WA338
 Living Wage, 75
 Local Government: Power Sharing, WA368
 Local Government: Training, WA369
 Lough Neagh Working Group, 339, WA146
 Lurgan Health Treatment Centre, WA395
 Lurgan Railway Station, WA328, WA410

M

Macular Degeneration, WA218
 Magdalene Laundries, WA3
 Maghaberry: Death in Custody, 275
 Management and Leadership Development Programme
 Initiatives, WA17
 Mater Hospital: Maternity Service, WA45
 Mater Hospital: MRI Scanner Service, WA42, WA45
 Mater Hospital: Samples, WA40
 Mater Hospital: X-ray Service, WA41
 Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation: Chairperson's
 Expenses, WA144
 Maze/Long Kesh Site: Access, WA240
 Meat Plants, WA338
 Medical Checks, WA389
 Medical Services: Non-UK Citizens, WA216, WA380
 Mental Health Services, WA217
 Metrobus 23 Service to the Stormont Estate, WA115
 Milk Cup, WA183, WA272
 Minerals Applications, WA27, WA291
 Ministerial Code: High Court Ruling, WA141, WA142
 Mixed Committal: Costs, WA225
 Mixed Committals, WA228, WA402
 Mobile Classrooms, 68
 Mobile Infrastructure Project, WA285
 Mortgage Arrears, WA435
 MOT Centres, WA293, WA294
 Motorways: Hard Shoulder, WA409
 MOTs, WA203, WA294
 Mount St Catherine's Primary School, WA354
 Multiple Sclerosis Nursing Service, WA305, WA306, WA376
 Multiple Sclerosis Specialist Nurses, WA217
 Multiple Sclerosis: Prescription Drugs, WA374, WA375,
 WA376
 Museums: Staff, WA148, WA149

N

NAMA, 180, 181, WA208, WA302
 Narrow Water Bridge, 15, 16, 132, WA207
 Narrow Water Bridge: Funding Withdrawal, 235
 National Crime Agency, 278, WA226
 National Park: Causeway Coast, 141, 142
 Natural Assets, WA185
 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas: Funding, WA428, WA429
 Netball, WA272
 Newtownards: Public Realm Funding, 285, 286

NI Small Business Loan Fund, WA21
 NI Water: Burst Pipes, WA415, WA416
 NI Water: Chief Executive, 23
 NI Water: Complaints, WA417
 NI Water: Reservoirs, WA410, WA414, WA415, WA416
 NICE: Fertility Guidelines, WA222
 NICE: Lenalidomide Guidelines, WA396
 NIEA, WA32
 NIEA: Consultation Responses, 139
 NIEA: West Tyrone, WA294
 North Belfast Housing Strategy, WA125, WA126, WA128,
 WA129, WA131
 North/South Cooperation, 77, 78
 North/South Ministerial Council: Education, 370, 371, 372,
 373, 374
 North/South Ministerial Council: Health and Food Safety, 261,
 262, 263, 264
 North/South Ministerial Council: Plenary, 161, 162, 163, 164,
 165, 166
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Development
 Proposals, WA212
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Headquarters
 Relocation, WA50
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Hospital Beds,
 WA220
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Intermediate Care
 Beds, WA386
 Northern Health and Social Care Trust: Relocation of Senior
 Management Team, WA46, WA47, WA306, WA307, WA386
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28B, WA142
 Northern Ireland Act 1998: Section 28C, WA142
 Northern Ireland Ambulance Service: Poppies, WA394
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Cycle to Work Scheme, WA441
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Insurance, WA440
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Section 75, WA442
 Northern Ireland Assembly: Tablet Contract, WA331
 Northern Ireland Electricity: Investigation, WA286
 Northern Ireland Events Company, WA183
 Northern Ireland Tourist Board: Flag Protests, WA182, WA367
 Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, WA230
 Numeracy and Literacy, 68

O

Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic
 Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland)
 2013, 219, 220
 Occupational Health Service, WA209
 October Monitoring Round and Capital Reallocation Exercise,
 WA303
 Offences: Bail, WA398
 Offences: Specific Case, WA402
 Office Accommodation, WA286
 Office Accommodation: Foyle, WA209
 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, 230, 383
 OFMDFM Funding: Breaches of Company Law, WA266
 Older People's Commissioner, WA3
 Ombudsman's Findings, WA142
 Open University, 393
 Ormiston House, 289, 290
 Outreach/Education: Update, 287, 288, 289
 Outsourcing of Functions: DARD, WA6
 Outsourcing of Functions: DE, WA153
 Outsourcing of Functions: DEL, WA16
 Outsourcing of Functions: DETI, WA25
 Outsourcing of Functions: DFP, WA207

Outsourcing of Functions: DHSSPS, WA210
 Outsourcing of Functions: DOE, WA291
 Outsourcing of Functions: DOJ, WA109
 Outsourcing of Functions: DRD, WA230, WA231
 Outsourcing of Functions: DSD, WA131
 Ovarian Cancer, WA378
 Oversubscribed Schools, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47

P

Paediatric Cardiac Services, WA310
 Paediatric Cardiac Surgery, WA216, WA217
 Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Services, 185, 186
 Paediatric Psychologists, WA42
 Parades Commission, WA226
 Parking for Tradespeople, WA112
 Parking Restrictions, WA327
 Parking Spaces: Belfast, WA327
 Parking: Ballymena, 240
 Parking: Belfast City Centre, 241
 Parking: Christmas Period, 240
 Parking: Spencer Street, WA317
 Parliament Buildings: Car Parking, 286
 Parliament Buildings: Drainage, WA442
 Parliament Buildings: Roof Project, 288, 289
 Parliament Buildings: Security Procedures, WA442
 Parliament Buildings: Security Staff, WA441
 Parliament Buildings: Union Flag, WA441
 Partnership Panel, 141
 Patients who are not Entitled to Free Health Care, WA44
 Patients: Treatment outside Northern Ireland, WA220, WA221
 PCSP: Paramilitary Members, 275, 276
 Peatland, WA292, WA293
 Penalty Charge Notices: Appeals, WA235, WA324
 Penalty Charge Notices: North Down, WA323, WA408, WA411
 Pensioners' Trust, WA3
 Personality Disorder Service, WA46
 Petroleum Licences, WA284
 Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013, 55, 56
 Phoenix Integrated Primary School, WA275
 Physiotherapists: Prescription of Medicines, WA219
 PL1/13: Executive, WA183
 Planning Appeals Commission, WA269, WA270
 Planning Application: A/2009/0400/F, WA186, WA291, WA299
 Planning Application: E/2013/0093/F, WA293
 Planning Application: Regulation 10, RWA2
 Planning Application: Z/2012/1387/F, WA203
 Planning Bill, 233
 Planning Bill: Legal Advice, WA370
 Planning Conditions, WA289
 Planning Permissions: Discharge Consents, WA292
 Planning Policy Statement 21, WA369
 Planning: Counter-fraud Arrangements, WA368
 Plaque on Property Owned or Controlled by DSD, WA136
 Play and Leisure Strategy, 20
 Police Ombudsman's Office, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 253, 254, 255, 256
 Police Part-time Reserve, WA316
 Police Stations, WA266
 Policing and Community Safety Partnerships: MLAs, WA52, WA229
 Port of Belfast, WA36
 Positive Relations Project, WA139
 Poultry Litter, 343
 Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder, WA391
 Preschool Funded Places: North Down, WA348
 Primary School: South Belfast, 67
 Primary Schools in North Down: Budget, WA12
 Primary Schools in North Down: Number of Teachers, WA13
 Primary Schools: Foyle, WA163
 Primate Dixon Primary School, Coalisland, WA154
 Priory Integrated College, Holywood, WA160
 Prison Officers: Personal Security, WA317
 Prison Officers: Severance Package, WA109, WA110
 Prison Officers: Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings, WA316
 Prison Service College Site at Millisle, WA110
 Prison Service Procedures, WA107
 Prison Service: Access to Prisons for Research, WA227
 Prison Service: Code of Conduct 2013, WA108, WA111, WA227, WA228, WA229, WA316, WA317, WA404
 Prison Service: Notification of Suspension, WA108
 Prison Service: Nurses, WA404
 Prison Service: Professional Codes, WA108
 Prison Service: Release of Prisoner, WA225, WA313, WA315
 Prison Service: Scanning Technology, WA403
 Prison Service: STORM, WA107, WA108, WA227
 Prisoner Ombudsman: Reports, WA314
 Prisoners: Keys, WA110, WA399
 Prisoners: Nutrition, WA226, WA227
 Prisoners: Reviews, WA402
 Prisoners: Strip-searching, WA229
 Prisons: Drugs, WA315, WA406
 Private Hire Taxis: Breaches of Regulations, WA30, WA31, WA295, WA298
 Procurement Spend, WA374
 Programme for Government 2011-15, WA271, WA333
 Programme for Government: Addressing Regional Imbalances, WA209
 Programme for Government: Delivery Plans, WA265
 Programme for Government: Jobs in Derry, WA143
 Project 24, WA436, WA437
 PRONI: Target Market, 347
 Prostate Cancer: Public Awareness Campaign, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208
 Prostitution and Human Trafficking Regulation: Swedish Government, WA403
 Protect Life, WA309, WA382
 PSNI: Agency Staff, 278
 Public Accounts Committee: Reports and Memoranda of Reply, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 198, 199
 Public Assemblies, Parades and Protest Body, WA2
 Public Consultations: CAL, WA147
 Public Consultations: DE, WA9
 Public Consultations: DEL, WA281
 Public Consultations: DFP, WA37
 Public Consultations: DHSSPS, WA212
 Public Consultations: DOE, WA187
 Public Consultations: DRD, WA233
 Public Consultations: DSD, WA249
 Public Consultations: OFMDFM, WA266, WA267
 Public Petition: Exploris, 49
 Public Prosecution Service, WA52
 Public Prosecution Service: Attorney General Review, WA142
 Public Prosecution Service: Governance, WA34
 Public Prosecution Service: Staff, WA208
 Public Realm Scheme: Donaghadee, WA437
 Public Sector Employment, WA34

Public Sector Jobs: North-west, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214
 Public Service Pensions Bill, CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4, CS5, CS6, CS7
 Public Transport: MLAs, WA263
 Pupils: Diabetes, WA346
 Pupils: Educational Attainment, 67
 Pupils: Support, WA349, WA350

Q

Queen's University: Pro-Vice-Chancellor, WA363, WA364

R

Railways: Ballymena to Belfast, WA327
 Rare Diseases: UK Strategy, WMS5
 Rate Relief, 178, 179
 Rates Arrears, WA373
 Rates Collection, WA209, WA210
 Rates Convergence, WA29
 Rates Initiatives, WA371
 Rating of Empty Homes, WA34
 Rating Review, 176, 177, 178
 Recycling: Targets, 142
 Redburn Primary School Site, WA348
 Regeneration: The Village, WA438
 Regional Development, 21, 235
 Regional Start Initiative, WA21
 Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, WA47
 Renewables: Farm Businesses, 344
 Renewables: Funding, 340, 341
 Rent Arrears, WA258, WA259
 Rent Arrears: North Antrim, WA257
 Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
 Research Conduct, WA284
 Reservoirs at Ballysallagh, WA115, WA116
 Residential Homes, WA379, WA389
 Residents Parking Schemes: Antrim, WA115
 Response Maintenance Contracts: Gateway Review, WA245
 Review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Wider Tourism Structures, WMS1
 Rivers Agency: Transfer of Functions, 344
 Road Bonds, WA241, WA325
 Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Accelerated Passage, 374, 375, 376
 Road Races (Amendment) Bill: First Stage, 219
 Road Races (Amendment) Bill: Second Stage, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 395
 Road Safety: Junctions, WA418
 Roads Service: Far Circular Road, Dungannon, WA111
 Roads Service: Grass Cutting, WA407
 Roads Service: Rural Support, 236, 237
 Roads Service: Salt and Grit, WA411
 Roads Service: Winter Service Vehicles, WA411
 Roads: Capital Expenditure on Maintenance, WA235
 Roads: North-west, 22
 Roads: Republic of Ireland Funding, WA417
 Roads: Vehicle Damage Compensation, WA419
 Royal Hospital for Sick Children, WA221
 Royal Victoria Hospital: Genito-urinary Medicine Clinic, WA389
 RPA: Planning Powers, WA298
 RPA: TUPE Regulations, WA295
 Rural Cohesion, 346

Rural Development Programme, 345
 Rural Development Programme: Funding, WA7
 Rural White Paper, 344

S

Safeguarding Board, WA307
 Salmon Fishing, WA274
 School Councils, WA163
 School Crossing Patrol Guards, WA355, WA356
 School Enhancement Criteria, WA161, WA162
 School Starting Age, 68, WA168
 School Transport: Crumlin to Belfast and Lisburn, WA162
 Schools Enhancement Programme, 70, WA277
 Schools: 14-19, 70, 71
 Schools: Boards of Governors, WA277
 Schools: Budgets, WA167
 Schools: Charges to Pupils, WA164
 Schools: Cycle Parking, WA278, WA279
 Schools: Definition of Bilateral, WA149
 Schools: Development Proposals, WA150
 Schools: Enrolment Numbers, WA342
 Schools: Fresh Drinking Water, WA163
 Schools: Inspection Reports, WA158
 Schools: Mobile Phones, WA362
 Schools: Newbuild at Belfast City Hospital Site, WA350
 Schools: Newbuild in Holywood, WA154
 Schools: Newbuilds, WA341
 Schools: Promotion of Respect and Inclusion, WA358
 Schools: Savings from Closures, WA342
 Schools: Spend since Closure, WA150
 Security Alerts on the M1, WA107
 Self-defence Classes, WA397
 Sellafield, 138
 Sentencing: Murder, WA399, WA400
 Sewerage System in Millisle, WA116
 Sex Offenders, WA398
 Sex Offenders Register, WA316
 Sexual Assault, WA312
 Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008: Article 64A, WA404
 Sexual Offences Cases, WA223, WA224, WA225, WA228
 Sexual Offences Prevention Orders, WA399, WA404
 Shackleton Barracks, 388
 Sham Marriage Cases, WA223, WA225
 Shared Education Project, WA166
 Shared Education: Consultation, WA277
 Shared Schools: Anti-sectarian Work, WA166
 Shared Services, WA303
 Sick Leave: DOJ, 278
 Signage: Bilingual Road Signs, WA231
 Signage: Irish/Bilingual Destination Signs, WA318, WA319
 Single Farm Payments, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 404, 405, WA271, WA334
 Skills and Employment Liaison Officer, WA173
 Skills Gap, 75, 76
 Skills Training, WA171
 Small Business Saturday, WA182, WA287, WA288
 SmartPass, WA235, WA328
 Smart Region Project, WA18
 Smart Region Project: Omagh and Fermanagh, WA18
 Smoking, WA395
 Smoking-related Illness, WA396
 Social Development Inquiry, 284
 Social Development: Pilot Schemes, 279, 280
 Social Enterprise Hub: Enniskillen, WA440

Social Enterprises: County Down, WA440
 Social Housing Development Programme: Strategic Guidelines, WA121, WA126
 Social Housing Newbuilds, WA245
 Social Housing Newbuilds: North Antrim, WA256
 Social Housing Newbuilds: North Down, WA128, WA426
 Social Housing Stock: North Antrim, WA258
 Social Housing Stock: North Down, WA328
 Social Housing/Affordable Housing, WA120
 Social Housing: 2010 Funding, RWA3
 Social Housing: Girdwood, WA437
 Social Housing: Internet Connectivity, WA126
 Social Housing: North Belfast, WA433
 Social Housing: North Belfast Housing Strategy, WA122
 Social Housing: Schemes Purchased, WA421
 Social Investment Fund, 231, 232, WA143, WA208, WA270
 Social Security: Fraud, WA439
 Solicitors: Fees, 279
 South Eastern Regional College: Theatre, 74
 South West Acute Hospital: Medical School, WA383
 South West Acute Hospital: Medical Staff, WA380, WA383
 South West Acute Hospital: Parking, WA50
 South West College: Audit on Learning Disability Provision, WA17
 South West College: Beacon Centre, WA15
 South West College: Students with a Learning Difficulty and/or Disability, WA17, WA18
 Speaker's Business, 218
 Special Advisers: Termination of Appointment, WA269
 Special EU Programmes Body: Recruitment Embargo, WA36
 Special Needs Management Allowance, WA135
 Speed Limits on Roads, WA115
 Sporting Events, 136
 Sports Facilities, 352, 353
 Sports Hub: UUJ, 351
 Springfield Road/Woodvale Regeneration, 131
 St Columbanus' College, WA358
 St Francis' Primary School, Loughbrickland, WA356
 Standing Order 20A(1), 168
 Statementing: Southern Education and Library Board, WA153
 Stop and Temporary Stop Notices, WA33
 Stormont Estate: Bus Service, WA209
 Strategic Investment Board, WA140
 Street Lighting, WA326, WA408
 Street Lighting Scheme: Bleary, County Down, WA232
 Street Lighting: Bayview Road, Bangor, WA114
 Street Lighting: North Down, WA112
 Street Lighting: Urban Areas, WA112
 Student Numbers: One Plan, 392, 393
 Student Support Entitlement, WA169
 Subcontractor Payment, WA131
 Sugar Beet, WA6, WA7
 Sugar Industry, WA7
 Suicide Awareness Training Programmes, WA147
 Suicide Prevention, WA140, WA309
 Supply Contract SS16A, WA48
 Supply Contracts: Special Conditions of Contract (SS17a), WA47, WA388
 Supported Living: Whiteabbey Hospital, WA119
 Supporting Prisoners at Risk Procedures, WA110
 Taxis: Drivers, WA28, WA29
 Taxis: Enforcement of Legislation, WA296
 Taxis: Regulations, WA27, WA29
 Taxis: Single-tier Licensing System, 137
 Taxis: Single-tier System, WA28, WA185, WA290, WA291, WA296, WA297, WA369, WA370, WA371
 Teacher Training, WA171, WA363
 Teachers for Literacy and Numeracy: North Down, WA11
 Teachers: Accumulated Leave Entitlement, WA278
 Teachers: Compensation and Pre-claim Settlements, WA159, WA160
 Teachers: Signature Project, 20, 21
 Teachers: Substitute Teacher Register, WA11, WA350
 Temporary Accommodation: North Antrim, WA257
 Temporary Accommodation: North Down, WA261, WA262
 Tenants: Antisocial Behaviour, WA245, WA246
 TEN-T Core Network: A6 and Foyle Port, WA117
 TEN-T Core Network: Belfast-Derry Line, WA117
 TEN-T Core Node: Derry, WA113
 TEN-T Regulations, 25
 TEN-T: Roads in County Fermanagh and County Tyrone, WA116
 Terrorist/Criminal Activity, 387
 The Disappeared, 16
 The Disappeared: BBC/RTÉ Documentary, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 315
 The Disappeared: Columba McVeigh, 274, 275
 The Disappeared: Justice, 273
 The Venue, WA136
 Theatre: SERC, 395
 Times Higher Education Article, WA166
 Together: Building a United Community, 232, 233, 383, 384, WA141, WA270
 Tony McCoy, 117, 118
 Tourism, WA287
 Tourism 2020: Northern Ireland Hotels Federation Report, WA23, WA24
 Tourism Infrastructure, WA22
 Tourism: Strangford/Portaferry, 23
 Tourism: Successes, 130
 Trading Standards: Cigarettes, WA22, WA366
 Traffic Calming Measures, WA113
 Traffic Calming: North Down, WA317
 Traffic Calming: Vertical Deflection, WA319
 Traffic Congestion: Armagh, WA324
 Traffic Flow, WA318
 Traffic: Bridge Street, Strabane, 235, 236
 Traffic: Noise Levels, WA368
 Train Passenger Numbers, WA241
 Train Station: Derry, WA240, WA241
 Train Station: Derry/Londonderry, WA242
 Train Use, WA318
 Transgender Community, WA1, WA2
 Translation Costs: Departmental Letters and Documents, WA1
 Translink: Privatisation, WA417
 Translink: Profitability, WA410
 Translink: Revenue Reserves, WA116
 Translink: Stock Disposal, WA409
 Transport Hub: Belfast, WA242, WA244
 Transport Links: Projects, WA113, WA114
 Tribunal Panels, WA142
 Twaddell Avenue, WA329
 Tyres, WA204

T

Tax, WA372
 Taxed Legal Costs, WA52
 Taxi Industry, WA290

U

UK Diplomatic Cables, WA269

UK Intellectual Property Bill: Legislative Consent Motion, 166, 167
 Ulster Bank, 175, 176
 Ulster Hospital: Allergy Treatment, WA389
 Ulster Hospital: Catheterisation Laboratory, WA311
 Ulster Hospital: Mental Health Services, WA389
 Unadopted Roads, 22
 Unadopted Roads: Inquiry Recommendations, WA231
 Unemployment: Young People, 391, 392
 Union Flag: Belfast City Hall, 234
 Universities: Entrants, WA15
 Universities: Maximum Student Number, WA16, WA362
 University of Ulster: Campuses, WA366
 Urban Clearway: South Belfast, WA418
 Urban Village Regeneration, 19
 Utility Regulator, 131
 Utility Regulator: Appointment to Board, WA206, WA207
 Utility Regulator: Oversight, WA207

Y

Young People: Opportunities and Prospects, WA17
 Youth Employment Scheme, 394, 395, WA170
 Youth Employment Scheme: Upper Bann, WA173
 Youth Unemployment, WA172, WA281, WA281

V

Vacant Domestic Dwellings, WA208, WA302
 VAT: Hospitality Sector, WA26, WA270
 Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse:
 Support Service, WA265
 Victims and Survivors Service, WA3, WA143
 Victims and Survivors Service: Funding, WA269
 Victims: Parole Commissioner Consultation, 277
 Violence: Executive Separation, 234, 235
 Vulnerable People: Accommodation, WA380

W

Waiting Times: Anti-TNF Drugs, WA311
 Waiting Times: OT Referrals, 183, 184
 Warm Homes Scheme, WA331, WA440
 Waste Management, 138
 Waste Water: Ballynure, WA414
 Waste: Fuel Laundering, WA370
 Water Abstraction: River Faughan, WA412, WA417
 Water Consumption: Flushing Options, WA415
 Water Framework Directive: Derogations, WA30
 Water Meters, WA325
 Weed Spraying: NIEA, WA296
 Weed Spraying: North Down, WA114
 Weed Spraying: Urban Footpaths, WA112
 Weed Spraying: Urban Settings, WA112
 Weekend Violence, 215, 216, 217, 218
 Welfare Reform, 384, WA440
 Welfare Reform Bill, 235, 285
 Western Health and Social Care Trust: Budgetary Position, WA383
 Wind Farm Development, WA8
 Wind Farm: Upper Glenelly Valley, WA294
 Wind Farms: Environmental Impact Assessment, WA204
 Wind Farms: Planning Applications in West Tyrone, WA31
 Wind Turbines, 25, 26, WA288, WA290
 Wind Turbines: Planning Applications in County Londonderry, WA185
 Windsor Park Stadium, WA273

Strangers' Index

Ball, Mr Stephen

Committee Stages

Public Service Pensions Bill, CS5, CS6

Committee Clerk, The

Committee Stages

Public Service Pensions Bill, CS3, CS5

McAlorum, Mr Gary

Committee Stages

Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS9, CS10

Nesbitt, Mrs Grace

Committee Stages

Public Service Pensions Bill, CS5, CS6

Quinn, Mr Liam

Committee Stages

Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, CS9, CS10

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 4 November 2013

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Executive Committee Business

2.1 **Motion: The Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013**

Proposed:

That the Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Minister for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3. Committee Business

3.1 **Motion: Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures**

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the Report of the Committee for Regional Development on its Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with the relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations.

Chairperson, Committee for Regional Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division).

4. Private Members' Business

4.1 **Motion – International Mental Health Centre**

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the high prevalence of poor mental health in Northern Ireland; notes that a previous World Mental Health survey stated that the Province has the world's highest recorded rate of post-traumatic stress disorder and that violence had been a distinctive cause of mental health problems here; acknowledges that trauma is one of the most hidden legacy issues of the Troubles; accepts the need to support and restore good mental health for people with difficulties; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to support the creation of a new International Mental Health Centre for Northern Ireland that would be a world class facility for all.

Mr M Nesbitt

Mr R Beggs

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Questions were put to, and answered by, the deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness. The junior Minister, Ms Jennifer McCann, also answered a number of questions.

5.2 Regional Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

6. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

6.1 Motion - International Mental Health Centre

Debate resumed on the Motion.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6.2 Motion – Over Subscribed Schools

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the increase in the number of children who are seeking a place in primary schools; and calls on the Minister of Education to review the current enrolment procedures to ensure that all children are able to attend their local schools.

Mr M Storey

Miss M McIlveen

Mr J Craig

Mrs B Hale

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 6.10pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

4 November 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

4 November 2013

Division

Motion – Report on the Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the Report of the Committee for Regional Development on its Inquiry into Comprehensive Transport Delivery Structures; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with the relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations.

Chairperson, Committee for Regional Development

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 84

Noes: 14

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Attwood, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Byrne, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCreagh, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Newton, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Lynch and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Beggs, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Elliott, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McGimpsey, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mrs Dobson and Mrs Overend

The Motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 23 October – 4 November 2013

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Northern Ireland Audit Office Financial Auditing and Reporting: General Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland - 2013 (NIAO)

Southern Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts of the Trust Funds Held by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust year ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)

Northern Health and Social Care Trust - The Accounts of the Charitable Trust Funds for the year ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts of the Trust Funds held by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Year Ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Charitable Trust Funds Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)

5. Assembly Reports

Report of the Committee Review Group Review of the Committee System of the Northern Ireland Assembly October 2013 (NIA 135/11-15) Committee Review Group

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2013/247 The Health and Personal Social Services (Superannuation), Health and Social Care (Pension Scheme) (Amendment No 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

S.R. 2013.248 The Waste (Fees and Charges) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

S.R. 2013/249 The Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Reviews of Sentencing) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013

S.R. 2013/250 The Jobseeker's Allowance (Domestic Violence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

S. R. 2013/253 The Fruit Juices and Fruit Nectars Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DHSSPS)

S. R. 2013/256 The M2/Trunk Road T7 Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

For Information Only:

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

9. Departmental Publications

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 5 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Public Petition

2.1 Public Petition – Save Exploris, the Northern Ireland Aquarium, Portaferry

Mr Kieran McCarthy was granted leave, in accordance with Standing Order 22, to present a Public Petition entitled 'Save Exploris, the Northern Ireland Aquarium, Portaferry'.

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 Statement - Appointment of the Chair of the Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots, made a statement regarding the Appointment of the Chair of the Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry, following which he replied to questions.

3.2 Motion – Fishing Boats (Satellite-Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013

Proposed:

That the Fishing Boats (Satellite - Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3.3 Motion – The draft Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013

Proposed:

That the draft Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4. Committee Business

4.1 Motion - Extension of Committee Stage: The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill (NIA Bill 26/11-15)

Proposed:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 11 April 2014, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill (NIA Bill 26/11-15).

Chairperson, Committee for Justice

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4.2 Motion - Report of the Committee Review Group on the Review of the Committee System

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee Review Group entitled Review of the Committee System (NIA 135/11-15).

Mr A Maskey

Mr P McGlone

Ms A Lo

Mr R Swann

Miss M McIlveen

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5. Private Members' Business

5.1 Motion – Ban on Blood Donations from Gay Men

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the ruling of the High Court on the decision to ban blood donations from gay men; further notes with concern that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's decision was found to be 'irrational', and to have been taken 'in breach of the Ministerial Code'; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to lift the ban and outline what steps he will take to build public confidence in relation to statutory equality duties.

Ms M McLaughlin

Mr M Brady

Ms C Ruane

5.2 Amendment 1

Proposed:

After second 'ban' insert:

'from gay men who have been sexually inactive for more than twelve months'

Mr R Beggs

Mr S Gardiner

5.3 Amendment 2**Proposed:**

At end insert:

'or resign if he feels unable to do so.'

Mr S Agnew

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.30pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

6. Question Time**6.1 Education**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd.

6.2 Employment and Learning

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry.

The Speaker took the Chair.

7. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)**7.1 Motion – Ban on Blood Donations from Gay Men**

Debate resumed on the Motion.

The Question being put, Amendment No. 1 was **carried** without division.

The Question being put, Amendment No. 2 was **carried** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** without division.

7.2 Motion – Exploris – Northern Ireland Aquarium**Proposed:**

That this Assembly acknowledges the regional significance of Exploris - the Northern Ireland Aquarium in terms of tourism, culture, science, education and environmental protection; recognises its importance to the economy on the Ards Peninsula and across Northern Ireland; calls upon Ards Borough Council, working with the local community and businesses, to formulate urgently a coherent plan for investment and financial support; calls upon the relevant Ministers to offer assistance in developing a plan; and further calls on the Executive to respond quickly and positively to such a proposal, with a view to ensuring this facility has a sustainable basis.

Mr K McCarthy

Ms A Lo

Mr S Dickson

7.3 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after the second 'Northern Ireland;' and insert:

'and calls on the relevant Executive Departments to provide the regional funding, resource and support required by Ards Borough Council to maximise the benefit of Exploris to the economy of the Ards Peninsula and to Northern Ireland.'

Mr M Nesbitt

Ms S Overend

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Amendment was **made** (Division 1).

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** (Division 2).

8. Adjournment

Mr Tom Buchanan spoke to his topic regarding Justice for Derg Valley Victims Voice.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 8.08pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

5 November 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

5 November 2013

Division 1

Motion – Exploris – Northern Ireland Aquarium – Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after the second 'Northern Ireland;' and insert:

'and calls on the relevant Executive Departments to provide the regional funding, resource and support required by Ards Borough Council to maximise the benefit of Exploris to the economy of the Ards Peninsula and to Northern Ireland.'

Mr M Nesbitt
Ms S Overend

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 45

Noes: 38

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Copeland, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hussey, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Milne, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ni Chuilin, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Mrs Overend, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Nesbitt and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson and Mr G Robinson.

The Amendment Was **Made**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

5 November 2013

Division 2

Motion – Exploris – Northern Ireland Aquarium

Proposed:

That this Assembly acknowledges the regional significance of Exploris — the Northern Ireland Aquarium in terms of tourism, culture, science, education and environmental protection; recognises its importance to the economy on the Ards peninsula and across Northern Ireland; and calls on the relevant Executive Departments to provide the regional funding, resource and support required by Ards Borough Council to maximise the benefit of Exploris to the economy of the Ards peninsula and to Northern Ireland.

The Question, as amended, was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 52

Noes: 31

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hussey, Mrs D Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Milne, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Mrs Overend, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Nesbitt and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Clarke and Mr G Robinson.

The Motion, as amended was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 5 November 2013

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
 2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
 3. Orders in Council
 4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service Trust Fund Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)
 5. Assembly Reports
 6. Statutory Rules
S. R. 2013/257 The Traffic Signs (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)
- For Information Only:**
7. Written Ministerial Statements
 8. Consultation Documents
 9. Departmental Publications
 10. Agency Publications
 11. Westminster Publications
 12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 6 November 2013

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13				
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13					
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13					
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13					
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13					

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	12.11.13					
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14					

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14					

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 11 November 2013

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Matter of the Day

2.1 Attempted Bomb Attack on Retired Police Officer

Mr Ross Hussey made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to an attempted bomb attack on a retired police officer. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

2.2 Accomplishments of Mr Tony McCoy

Mr Danny Kinahan made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the accomplishments of Mr Tony McCoy. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 Legislative Consent Motion – Care Bill (Continuity of Care Provision)

Proposed:

That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension to Northern Ireland of the provisions of the Care Bill, as introduced in the House of Commons on 30 October 2013, contained in clauses 49 to 53 dealing with cross-border provider failure.

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4. Committee Business

4.1 Motion: Report on the Investigation into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure on its investigation into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit (NIA 140/11-15); and calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to implement the recommendations contained in the Report.

Chairperson, Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Speaker took the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster.

5.2 Environment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark H Durkan.

6. Committee Business (Cont'd)

6.1 Motion - Report on the Investigation into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit

Debate resumed on the Motion.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Private Members' Business

7.1 Motion – Insulation in Housing Executive Properties

Proposed:

That this Assembly calls on the Minister for Social Development to initiate a review of the range of insulation materials used in Housing Executive homes, to assess the heat retention properties of the materials used and to maximise the cost effectiveness of insulating the homes.

Mr A Easton

Mr G Campbell

Mr P Weir

Ms P Bradley

7.2 Amendment 1

Proposed:

Leave out all after the second 'used' and insert:

'and to ensure that they are environmentally sustainable and provide value for money over their lifespan.'

Mr S Agnew

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, Amendment was **made** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** without division.

8. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.03pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

11 November 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 6 - 11 November 2013

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Western Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts of the Trust Funds held by the Western Health and Social Care Trust for the year ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust Charitable Trust Fund Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)

Safefood 2012 Annual Report (DHSSPS)

Southern Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31 March 2013 (DHSSPS)

5. Assembly Reports

Investigation into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit (NIA 140/11-15)

6. Statutory Rules

S. R. 2013/255 The Controlled Waste and Duty of Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DOE)

For Information Only:

S. R. 2013/254 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Belfast) (Amendment No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

Noise Policy Statement for Northern Ireland A Consultation Paper 4 November 2013 (DOE)

Department of Education Disability Action Plan 2013 – 2015 (DE)

Five Year Review of Disability Action Plans (DE)

Draft Social and Environmental Guidance for Water & Sewerage Services (2015-21) (DRD)

9. Departmental Publications

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

Department for Work and Pensions Government response to the consultation Supporting separated families; securing children's futures (DWP)

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 12 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

The Speaker announced the death of Mr Eddie McGrady, a former Member for the South Down Constituency.

Members paid tribute to Mr McGrady on behalf of their parties.

3. Matter of the Day

3.1 Devastation in the Philippines

Mr Cathal Ó hOisín made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the devastation in the Philippines. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement – North South Ministerial Council Plenary meeting

The deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council Plenary meeting, held on 8 November 2013, following which he replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

4.2 Legislative Consent Motion – Intellectual Property Bill (Freedom of Information Pre-Publication Exemption)

Proposed:

That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension of the Freedom of Information provisions in the UK Intellectual Property Bill on the protection of pre-publication research to Northern Ireland.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5. Committee Business

5.1 Motion - Amend Standing Order 20A(1)

Proposed:

In Standing Order 20A(1) leave out 'first' and insert 'last'.

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

The Question being put, the Motion was carried with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

5.2 Motion - Public Accounts Committee Reports and Memoranda of Reply**Proposed:**

That this Assembly takes note of the following Public Accounts Committee Reports:

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report (NIA 43/11-15)

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners (NIA 45/11-15)

Report on The Bioscience and Technology Institute (NIA 48/11-15)

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010 - 2011 (NIA 58/11-15)

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings (NIA 64/11-15)

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009 -10 and 2010 -11 (NIA 88/11-15)

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts (NIA 99/11-15)

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts (NIA 102/11-15)

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools (NIA 116/11-15)

Report on InvestNI: A Performance Review (NIA 109/11-15)

and the following Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda of Reply:

Report on the Use of External Consultants by Northern Ireland Departments: Follow-up Report

Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners

Report on The Bioscience and Technology Institute

Report on the Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive and Ilex Accounts 2010 - 2011

Report on Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Listed Buildings

Report on Statements of Rate Levy and Collection 2009 -10 and 2010 -11

Report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Management of Response Maintenance Contracts

Report on the Safety of Services Provided by Health and Social Care Trusts

Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools

Report on Invest NI: A Performance Review

Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.31pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Speaker in the Chair.

6. Question Time**6.1 Finance and Personnel**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton.

6.2 Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots.

7. Committee Business (Cont'd)

7.1 Motion – Public Accounts Committee Reports and Memoranda of Reply

Debate resumed on the Motion.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

8. Private Members' Business

8.1 Motion – Public Awareness Campaign on Prostate Cancer

Proposed:

That this Assembly expresses its concern at the rates of prostate cancer; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to introduce a public awareness campaign to raise awareness of the disease and to introduce a screening programme.

Mr O McMullan

Ms M McLaughlin

Mr M Brady

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

9. Adjournment

Ms Maeve McLaughlin spoke to her topic regarding public sector jobs in the North West.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 6.43pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

12 November 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

**Papers Presented to the Assembly on
12 November 2013**

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
 - South Eastern Education and Library Board Annual Report and Accounts 2012/2013 (DE)
 - Southern Education and Library Board Annual Report and Accounts 2012/2013 (DE)
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
 - For Information Only:**
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
 - Annual Report and Financial Statements for Middletown Centre for Autism 2013 (DE)
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 13 November 2013

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13				
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13					
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13					
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13					
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13					

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13					
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14					

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14					

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 18 November 2013

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Matter of the Day

2.1 Violent events in Northern Ireland over the weekend

Mr Gregory Campbell made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the violent events in Northern Ireland over the weekend. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 First Stage – Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15)

The Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy, introduced a Bill to amend the Road Races (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 to provide for contingency days to be specified in an order authorising the use of roads in connection with road races and for the substitution of a contingency day for a day specified in such an order.

The Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15) passed First Stage and ordered to be printed.

3.2 Motion – The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Proposed:

That the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 be approved.

Minister for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4. Private Members' Business

4.1 Motion – Recall of the Civic Forum

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes its decision of 9 April 2013 on the recall of the Civic Forum and the lack of progress to date; further notes that there are over 500 submissions to “Haass/O’Sullivan” from civic organisations, victims groups, individuals and the wider community, and the authority of that input; believes that the Civic Forum can further capture this input, thereby building inclusion and helping to remedy the failures of politics; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to recall the Civic Forum by the end of January 2014.

*Mr A Attwood
Mrs D Kelly
Mr C Eastwood*

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division 1).

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Questions were put to, and answered by, the First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson. The junior Minister, Mr Bell, also answered a number of questions.

5.2 Regional Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

6. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

6.1 Motion – Police Ombudsman's Office

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the consultation paper from the Department of Justice on the Powers of the Police Ombudsman's Office; and calls on the Minister of Justice to bring forward proposals that will ensure an effective organisation that commands broad public support.

*Mr D McIlveen
Mr J Wells
Mr P Givan
Mr J Craig*

6.2 Amendment 1

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'will' and insert:

'build on the powers and effectiveness of the organisation, including statutory requirements in relation to the co-operation of current and former police service personnel with the investigations of the Police Ombudsman.'

*Mrs D Kelly
Mr A Attwood*

6.3 Amendment 2**Proposed:**

Leave out all after 'organisation' and insert:

'which is properly resourced and fully independent; and further calls on all members of the public or public authorities with information which would assist investigations by the Police Ombudsman to bring forward that information and co-operate fully with the Office.'

Mr G Kelly

Mr R McCartney

Ms C Ruane

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, Amendment No. 1 **fell** (Division 2).

The Question being put, Amendment No. 2 **fell** (Division 3).

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Adjournment**Proposed:**

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.46pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

18 November 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

18 November 2013

Division 1

Motion – Recall of the Civic Forum

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes its decision of 9 April 2013 on the recall of the Civic Forum and the lack of progress to date; further notes that there are over 500 submissions to “Haass/O’Sullivan” from civic organisations, victims groups, individuals and the wider community, and the authority of that input; believes that the Civic Forum can further capture this input, thereby building inclusion and helping to remedy the failures of politics; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to recall the Civic Forum by the end of January 2014.

*Mr A Attwood
Mrs D Kelly
Mr C Eastwood*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 48

Noes: 45

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs O’Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Eastwood and Mrs McKeivitt.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Hussey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

The Motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

18 November 2013

Division 2

Motion – Police Ombudsman’s Office - Amendment 1

Proposed:

Leave out all after ‘will’ and insert:

‘build on the powers and effectiveness of the organisation, including statutory requirements in relation to the co-operation of current and former police service personnel with the investigations of the Police Ombudsman.’

Mrs D Kelly

Mr A Attwood

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 37

Noes: 54

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs O’Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McKinney and Mr Rogers.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr D McIlveen and Mr G Robinson.

The Amendment **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

18 November 2013

Division 3

Motion – Police Ombudsman’s Office - Amendment 2

Proposed:

Leave out all after ‘organisation’ and insert:

‘which is properly resourced and fully independent; and further calls on all members of the public or public authorities with information which would assist investigations by the Police Ombudsman to bring forward that information and co-operate fully with the Office.’

*Mr G Kelly
Mr R McCartney
Ms C Ruane*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 37

Noes: 53

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs O’Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Ms Ruane and Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr D McIlveen and Mr G Robinson.

The Amendment **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 13 - 18 November 2013

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

An Inspection of Approved Premises in Northern Ireland November 2013 (DOJ)

Northern Ireland Fishery Authority Report and Accounts year ended 31 March 2012 (DARD)

Northern Ireland Fishery Authority Report and Accounts year ended 31 March 2013 (DARD)

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

S. R. 2013/258 The Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DHSSPS)

S. R. 2013/259 The Health and Personal Social Services (Superannuation Scheme and Additional Voluntary Contributions), Health and Social Care (Pension Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DHSSPS)

S. R. 2013/260 The Controlled Waste (Seizure of Property) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DOE)

For Information Only:

7. Written Ministerial Statements

Review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Wider Tourism Structures (DETI)

Creation of a Network of Marine Protected Areas (DOE)

8. Consultation Documents

Consultation on the designation of provisions of EU Regulations No.714/2009 and No.715/2009 as relevant requirements (DETI)

Consultation - Energy - Draft Equality Impact Assessment Extension of the Gas Network to the West and North-West of Northern Ireland November 2013 (DETI)

Call for Evidence on the Review of the Balance of Competencies between the United Kingdom and the European Union Fundamental Rights 21 October 2013 (DSD)

9. Departmental Publications

Northern Ireland Museums Council Annual Report & Financial Statements 2012/2013 (DCAL)

Annual Report and Accounts 2013-13 National Museums Northern Ireland (DCAL)

10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 19 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Executive Committee Business

2.1 Statement - British Irish Council Summit meeting

The First Minister, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson, made a statement regarding the British Irish Council Summit meeting, following which he replied to questions.

2.2 Statement - North South Ministerial Council meeting in Health and Food Safety Sectoral format

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting in Health and Food Safety Sectoral format following which he replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

2.3 Statement - Community Resuscitation Strategy

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots, made a statement regarding the Community Resuscitation Strategy, following which he replied to questions.

3. Private Members' Business

3.1 Motion – Effective Delivery of Major Infrastructure Work

Proposed:

That this Assembly calls on the Executive to take all necessary steps to create an effective delivery pipeline of major infrastructure work to alleviate the current economic and social difficulties being faced across the community.

Mr P McGlone

Mr P Frew

Mr B McElduff

Mr D Kinahan

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.28pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) in the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Justice

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford.

4.2 Social Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Social Development, Mr Nelson McCausland.

4.3 Assembly Commission

Questions were put to, and answered by, members of the Assembly Commission.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

5. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Effective Delivery of Major Infrastructure Work

Debate resumed on the motion.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5.2 Motion – Support and Investment for the Higher Education Sector

Proposed:

That this Assembly acknowledges the key role of higher education in growing the local economy and helping to realise the Programme for Government's cross-cutting priorities in health, social development, agri-food, education and skills, and research and innovation; and calls on the Executive to affirm its commitment to supporting and investing in the local higher education sector.

Mr P Ramsey

Mr A Ross

Mr S Agnew

Mr B McCrea

Ms B McGahan

Mr R Swann

Debate ensued.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5.3 Motion – BBC/RTE Documentary on 'The Disappeared'

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the recent BBC/RTE documentary on 'The Disappeared' which outlined the harrowing practice of republican terrorists in abducting, killing and secretly burying people; further notes with extreme concern allegations of the involvement of the President of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams TD, in the murder of one of these people, namely Jean McConville; stands firmly with the families of the Disappeared who have suffered greatly as a result of the actions of republican terrorists; recognises the work of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) in providing a mechanism whereby information can be obtained; and calls on all those with information to co-operate fully with the latest appeal from the ICLVR in the aftermath of this programme in order to bring some level of comfort to the families.

Mr M Nesbitt

Mr T Elliott

5.4 Amendment 1**Proposed:****Proposed: Leave out all after first 'Disappeared' and insert:**

‘; acknowledges the pain and anguish of the families whose loved ones were killed and secretly buried during the course of the conflict and offers them our full support; commends the work of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims’ Remains (ICLVR) in providing a mechanism whereby information relating to the location of the remains of the victims can be obtained; notes previous acknowledgments by the members of the Commission’s forensic team of the co-operation and assistance they received from republicans in their efforts to locate the remains of the victims; calls on all those with information to co-operate fully with the latest appeal from the ICLVR in the aftermath of the documentary, in order to bring some level of comfort to the families; and further calls on anyone who has previously been in touch with the Commission to contact them again in order to assist the Commission to reassess the information available to it.’

Mr M McLaughlin

Mr A Maskey

Ms C Ruane

5.5 Amendment 2**Proposed:**

At end insert:

‘and anyone with information on the disappearance and whereabouts of Lisa Dorrian to immediately bring that forward to either the PSNI or the ICLVR; and further calls on the Minister of Justice to ensure that the necessary resources are available to the relevant criminal justice agencies to bring to justice those responsible for the murders of the Disappeared.’

Mr P Givan

Mr P Weir

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, Amendment No. 1 **fell** without division.

The Question being put, Amendment No. 2 was **carried** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** without division.

6. Adjournment

Mr Sammy Douglas spoke to his topic regarding the 50th Anniversary of the death of C.S. Lewis.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 7.41pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

19 November 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 19 November 2013

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules

For Information Only:

S. R. 2013/264 The Off-Street Parking (Amendment No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

7. Written Ministerial Statements

A26 Dualling — Glarryford to Drones Road — Publication of Notice of Intention to Proceed and Making of Statutory Orders (DRD)

8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 20 November 2013

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13				
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13					
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13					
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13					
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13					

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13					
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14					
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13							

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14					

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 25 November 2013

The Assembly met at noon, the Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Matter of the Day

2.1 The death of Father Alec Reid

Mr Martin McGuinness made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the death of Father Alec Reid. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

2.2 Explosion in Belfast City Centre

Mr Jonathan Craig made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the explosion in Belfast City Centre. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

3. Committee Business

3.1 Motion – Report of the Committee for Employment and Learning on its Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the Report of the Committee for Employment and Learning on its Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland (NIA 141/11-15); and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the Report.

Chairperson, Committee for Employment and Learning

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Speaker took the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Agriculture and Rural Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill.

4.2 Culture, Arts and Leisure

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín.

5. Committee Business (Cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Report of the Committee for Employment and Learning on its Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Northern Ireland

Debate resumed on the Motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6. Private Members' Business

6.1 Motion – Transfer of Broadcasting Powers

Following receipt of valid Petitions of Concern (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) under Standing Order 28, Members were informed that the votes would be taken on Tuesday 26 November.

Proposed:

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed.

*Mr C Ó hOisín
Ms R McCorley
Mr O McMullan*

6.2 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after the second 'Department' and insert:

'through the establishment of an independent advisory panel in order to assess the viability of any potential transfer and of the transfer and mainstreaming of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund.'

*Mrs K McKeivitt
Mr D Bradley*

Debate ensued.

7. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.11pm.

**Mr William Hay
The Speaker**

25 November 2013

Appendix 1

Northern Ireland Assembly

The undersigned Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly presented a Petition of Concern, in accordance with Standing Order 28, on Monday 25 November 2013 in relation to the following amendment:

Transfer of Broadcasting Powers - Amendment

Leave out all after the second 'Department' and insert:

'through the establishment of an independent advisory panel in order to assess the viability of any potential transfer and of the transfer and mainstreaming of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund.'

- Mr Sydney Anderson
- Mr Jonathan Bell
- Ms Paula Bradley
- Ms Pam Brown
- Mr Thomas Buchanan
- Mr Gregory Campbell
- Mr Trevor Clarke
- Mr Jonathan Craig
- Mr Sammy Douglas
- Mr Gordon Dunne
- Mr Alex Easton
- Mrs Arlene Foster
- Mr Paul Frew
- Mr Paul Girvan
- Mr Paul Givan
- Mrs Brenda Hale
- Mr Simon Hamilton
- Mr David Hilditch
- Mr William Humphrey
- Mr William Irwin
- Mr Nelson McCausland
- Mr Ian McCrea
- Mr David McIlveen
- Miss Michelle McIlveen
- Mr Adrian McQuillan
- The Lord Morrow
- Mr Stephen Moutray
- Mr Robin Newton
- Mr Edwin Poots
- Mr George Robinson
- Mr Peter Robinson
- Mr Alastair Ross
- Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Mr Mervyn Storey
- Mr Peter Weir
- Mr Jim Wells
- Mr Sammy Wilson

Appendix 1

Northern Ireland Assembly

The undersigned Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly presented a Petition of Concern, in accordance with Standing Order 28, on Monday 25 November 2013 in relation to the following motion:

Transfer of Broadcasting Powers

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed.

- Mr Sydney Anderson
- Mr Jonathan Bell
- Ms Paula Bradley
- Ms Pam Brown
- Mr Thomas Buchanan
- Mr Gregory Campbell
- Mr Trevor Clarke
- Mr Jonathan Craig
- Mr Sammy Douglas
- Mr Gordon Dunne
- Mr Alex Easton
- Mrs Arlene Foster
- Mr Paul Frew
- Mr Paul Girvan
- Mr Paul Givan
- Mrs Brenda Hale
- Mr Simon Hamilton
- Mr David Hilditch
- Mr William Humphrey
- Mr William Irwin
- Mr Nelson McCausland
- Mr Ian McCrea
- Mr David McIlveen
- Miss Michelle McIlveen
- Mr Adrian McQuillan
- The Lord Morrow
- Mr Stephen Moutray
- Mr Robin Newton
- Mr Edwin Poots
- Mr George Robinson
- Mr Peter Robinson
- Mr Alastair Ross
- Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Mr Mervyn Storey
- Mr Peter Weir
- Mr Jim Wells
- Mr Sammy Wilson

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 20 - 25 November 2013

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

North Eastern Education and Library Board Annual Report and Accounts 2012-2013 (DE)

A Review of the Cost and Impact of Dealing with the Past on Criminal Justice Organisations in Northern Ireland November 2013 (DOJ)

Northern Ireland Tourist Board Annual Report 2012/2013 (DETI)

Office of the Social Fund Commissioner for Northern Ireland Annual Report 2012-2013 (DSD)

Social Fund Annual Report 2012/2013 (DSD)

InterTradeIreland - Annual Review of Activities and Annual Accounts 2012 (DETI)

Land and Property Services Trust Statement - Rate Levy Accruals Account 2011-12 Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31 March 2012 (DFP)

5. Assembly Reports

6. Statutory Rules

S. R. 2013/261 The Weights and Measures (Specified Quantities) (Unwrapped Bread and Intoxicating Liquor) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DETI)

S. R. 2013/262 The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DOE)

S. R. 2013/265 The Galwally Avenue, Belfast (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

S. R. 2013/266 The Route U6005 Quoile Brae, Downpatrick (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

S. R. 2013/272 Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DOJ)

For Information Only:

S. R. 2013/263 The Pensions (2005 Order) (Code of Practice) (Governance and Administration of Occupational Defined Contribution Trust-based Pension Schemes) (Appointed Day) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DSD)

S. R. 2013/267 The Loading Bays on Roads (Amendments No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

S. R. 2013/268 The Waiting Restrictions (Bangor) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

S. R. 2013/269 The Waiting Restrictions (Crumlin) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

S. R. 2013/270 The Waiting Restrictions (Bushmills) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

S. R. 2013/271 The Waiting Restrictions (Ballycastle) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)

7. Written Ministerial Statements

Publication of UK Strategy for Rare Diseases (DHSSPS)

8. Consultation Documents

Draft for Consultation - A Community Resuscitation Strategy for Northern Ireland November 2013 (DHSSPS)

Public Consultation Proposals for a Pensions Bill Equality Impact Assessment November 2013 (DSD)

Consultation by the Department of Finance and Personnel on the Draft Legal Complaints and Regulations Bill (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DFP)

Consultation on Proposed increases to Contributions for Members of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) November 2013 (DE)

9. Departmental Publications

The General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 (DETI)

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 26 November 2013

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Private Members' Business

2.1 Motion - Transfer of Broadcasting Powers

The motion was debated on 25 November 2013. Valid Petitions of Concern were presented under Standing Order 28 on 25 November 2013 in relation to the motion and the amendment. The votes on the motion and the amendment were therefore taken on 26 November 2013.

Proposed:

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed.

*Mr C Ó hOisín
Ms R McCorley
Mr O McMullan*

2.2 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after the second 'Department' and insert:

'through the establishment of an independent advisory panel in order to assess the viability of any potential transfer and of the transfer and mainstreaming of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund.'

*Mrs K McKeivitt
Mr D Bradley*

The Question being put, the Amendment **fell** on a cross-community vote (Division 1).

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote (Division 2).

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 Statement - North South Ministerial Council Meeting in Education Sectoral Format

The Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting in Education Sectoral Format following which he replied to questions.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

3.2 Motion – Accelerated Passage: Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15)**Proposed:**

That the Road Races (Amendment) Bill proceed under the accelerated passage procedure.

Minister for Regional Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support.

3.3 Second Stage: Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15)

The Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy, moved the Second Stage of the Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15).

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.43pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Questions were put to, and answered by, the deputy First Minister, Mr Martin McGuinness. The junior Minister, Ms Jennifer McCann, also answered a number of questions.

4.2 Employment and Learning

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

5. Executive Committee Business (Cont'd)

5.1 Second Stage: Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15)

Debate resumed on the Bill.

The Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15) passed Second Stage without division.

6. Private Members' Business

6.1 Motion – Review of Decisions of Single Farm Payments**Proposed:**

That this Assembly notes, with concern, the rising number of Reviews of Decisions regarding Single Farm Payments; further notes, with concern, the time it takes to process these reviews; and calls on the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that her Department adequately resourced the processing of the reviews to ensure expeditious outcomes.

Mr D McIlveen

Mr P Frew

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

7. Adjournment

Mr Kieran McCarthy spoke to his topic regarding economic development in the Ards Peninsula.

The Speaker took the Chair.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.31pm.

Mr William Hay

The Speaker

26 November 2013

Northern Ireland Assembly

26 November 2013

Division 1

Motion - Transfer of Broadcasting Powers – Amendment (vote on the amendment without further debate)

Proposed:

Leave out all after the second 'Department' and insert:

'through the establishment of an independent advisory panel in order to assess the viability of any potential transfer and of the transfer and mainstreaming of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund.'

Mrs K McKeivitt

Mr D Bradley

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 44

Noes: 47

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Unionist

Mr B McCrea.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mrs McKeivitt and Mr McKinney.

NOES

Unionist

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Anderson and Mr Clarke.

Total Votes	91	Total Ayes	44	[48.4%]
Nationalist Votes	36	Nationalist Ayes	36	[100.0%]
Unionist Votes	48	Unionist Ayes	1	[2.1%]
Other Votes	7	Other Ayes	7	[100.0%]

The Amendment **fell** on a cross-community vote.

Northern Ireland Assembly

26 November 2013

Division 2

Motion - Transfer of Broadcasting Powers (vote on the motion without further debate)

Proposed:

That this Assembly calls on the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to explore with the Secretary of State the potential for transferring broadcasting powers from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to her Department and for funds for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund to be transferred and mainstreamed.

Mr C Ó hOisín
Ms R McCorley
Mr O McMullan

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 36

Noes: 56

AYES

Nationalist

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Ms McCorley and Mr Ó hOisín.

NOES

Unionist

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Ms Brown, Mr Buchanan, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Other

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr McCarthy.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Anderson and Mr Clarke.

Total Votes	92	Total Ayes	36	[39.1%]
Nationalist Votes	36	Nationalist Ayes	36	[100.0%]
Unionist Votes	49	Unionist Ayes	0	[0.0%]
Other Votes	7	Other Ayes	0	[0.0%]

The Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 26 November 2013

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Northern Ireland 2012 (DHSSPS)
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
For Information Only:
S. R. 2013/273 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Omagh) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)
S. R. 2013/274 The Roads (Speed Limit) (No.3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 (DRD)
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 27 November 2013

2011-2015 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13				
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13					
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13					
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13					
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13					

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13					
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14					
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/				

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14					

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.