



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

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(9 March 2015 to 19 April 2015)

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Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Settings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 9 March 2015

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Matter of the Day

James Molyneaux, Baron Molyneaux of Killead

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Mike Nesbitt has been given leave to make a statement on the death of James Molyneaux, Baron Molyneaux of Killead, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24(3)(b). If other Members wish to be called, they should rise in their place and continue to do so. All Members called will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject.

Mr Nesbitt: It is with huge sadness that I rise to pay tribute to Jim Molyneaux, James Henry Molyneaux, latterly Baron Molyneaux of Killead. Born in August 1920, Jim Molyneaux grew up in time to join the armed forces and serve in the Second World War. Famously, he was to be one of the first Allied troops to enter and liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, witnessing at first hand one of the worst examples in history of man's capacity for inhumanity to fellow man. I have no doubt that the experience cemented the values that were to guide his adult life, not least as a politician.

Let me place on record his formidable record as an elected representative. He was an Antrim Borough councillor from 1964 to 1973, the MP for South Antrim from 1970 to 1983 and then MP for Lagan Valley from 1983 to 1997. He was also an Assembly Member for South Antrim between 1982 and 1986, and he led the Ulster Unionist Party from 1979 to 1995. These statistics alone confirm that the Ulster Unionist Party has today lost one of its greatest, but there is so much more to say. His 16 years as leader followed a 16-year period when Ulster Unionism had no fewer than four leaders — Terence O'Neill, James Chichester-Clark, Brian Faulkner and then Harry West — so he brought much-needed stability to Ulster Unionism. That stability extended beyond the party. Unionism and Northern Ireland also needed calm, assured leadership in the face of the ongoing terrorist campaign, and, in 1985, the political threat that was the Anglo-Irish Agreement, a challenge of seismic proportions within unionism.

As a man regarded as more of an integrationist than one in favour of devolution, it would be hard to overestimate how painful it was for Jim Molyneaux to discover that he had been betrayed by the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her advisers when she signed the agreement in Hillsborough with Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald. Jim Molyneaux fought back with dignity. In his own words, he was not attracted to high-wire acts or media sound bites. Working closely with the DUP in the aftermath of

the agreement, Ian Paisley may have been the dominant media presence, but Jim Molyneaux was tireless behind the scenes. He was a man of immense political guile, playing the game of political chess, focused on strategic outcomes.

The sight of Lord Molyneaux as Ulster Unionist leader wearing his medals as he laid the wreath on behalf of the party at the cenotaph every Remembrance Sunday in London was a powerful image that epitomised the ideals of dignity and service, which he embodied. His service record is outstanding, militarily and politically. He stood down as unionist leader on his 75th birthday. The following year, he stood down as an elected representative, his values strong and intact. On behalf of the party, I give thanks for a long life well lived in the dedicated service of his people.

Mrs Foster: I feel very privileged today to pay tribute to a man for whom I have the utmost admiration — James H Molyneaux, the Baron Molyneaux of Killead, KBE, PC. Many of us knew that Jim's time was short on this earth, but, still, when the news came this morning, it came as a very heavy blow to those of us who knew and loved him. It is fitting that his death came on Commonwealth Day because he spent so much of his time upholding the values of the Commonwealth.

The first memories that I have of Jim are back at the time of the Anglo-Irish Agreement — the great betrayal — when I was just 15. I was a young unionist and enjoyed very much being in his company because he was very good company. He was interesting and was interested in you as an individual as well. He was interesting because of his life story, his wartime service, his UK national view of politics and because of those very famous anecdotes that he used to tell.

He was a great encourager to me personally when he was leader of the UUP and, indeed, later when he was Baron Molyneaux of Killead. He could see the shortcomings of the Belfast Agreement when others could not. He was a superb grass-roots campaigner; when canvassing with Jim, it was always a struggle to keep up. He always managed to survive a day of canvassing sustained only by a packet of Polo mints.

Most of all, today, I mourn his passing because he was a friend who gave advice when he was asked and a friend who often made me laugh. He had a mischievous, dry sense of humour, and I consider it a great honour to have known Jim Molyneaux personally. He was a gentleman; he was a leader of utmost integrity. He was a man who genuinely cared about Northern Ireland and its place in the United Kingdom, and he was a fabulous parliamentarian. I

pass on my deepest sympathy and prayerful support to his sister-in-law Agnes and to his two nephews and niece.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. On behalf of Sinn Féin, I want to extend our sympathies to the family and friends of Jim Molyneaux, Lord Killead, who died this morning. At 94 years of age, he lived a long and fulfilling life both politically and personally. Jim Molyneaux was undoubtedly a significant figure in unionism, having led the Ulster Unionist Party for almost two decades. The focus will be on his contribution as a political figure, and his loss to his family and friends can often take second place, so I want his family and friends to know that they are very much in our thoughts today and in the coming days.

To his colleagues in the Ulster Unionist Party, and from Mike Nesbitt's contribution, it is easy to appreciate the high esteem and fondness in which he is held, and we extend our sympathy to your party at your sense of loss of a valued colleague.

Whereas his political views were different from mine, I have no doubt that Jim Molyneaux would agree that he lived out the last years of his life in a more peaceful and stable place than would have been his experience in his active political life. He served as a constituency MP for some 27 years and enjoyed the obvious support and confidence of his constituents. Today, as we hear of his passing, we hope he finds restful peace. Agus mar sin, go ndéana trócaire ar a anam.

Mr Ramsey: On behalf of the SDLP, I want to extend our sadness and sympathy on the passing of Baron Molyneaux of Killead. I want to offer our sincere sympathy and condolences to the family and many friends of James Molyneaux.

To say that James Molyneaux has had a distinguished career would be accurate. For many years he was a household name and a key player in Northern Irish politics. I have listened to other Members talk with love, passion and emotion in their voice on the loss and the passing of someone who spent 27 years as an MP, elected initially to South Antrim and then to Lagan Valley. He was first elected as an MP in the 1970s, and, only four years later, he became the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party in Northern Ireland and in the House of Commons.

James Molyneaux had a formidable career. In 1979 he became the leader of the UUP, a position he held for 16 years; he was probably one of the longest serving leaders of the Ulster Unionist Party. He led the party, as many leaders have done in Northern Ireland, through many difficult, traumatic and awful experiences. He helped his own party, guiding it through many difficult and trying times for the party as well.

Finally, on behalf of the SDLP, I offer thoughts, prayers and sympathy to his immediate family, the community he represented, his friends and his unionist colleagues who have worked alongside him for many years.

Mr Ford: It gives me pleasure, though a degree of sadness, to add tributes to Lord Molyneaux on behalf of the Alliance Party, although it is hard to remember to call him Lord because locally he was always Jim. He was an assiduous worker in the constituency, previously as a councillor and then, for many years, as Member of Parliament for South Antrim — the largest constituency

in the UK — before he took on Lagan Valley following the reform of boundaries.

He certainly had an unusual experience as a leader of unionism, starting off in his early days being educated in St James' Catholic School, where, ironically, he struck up a lifelong friendship with the late councillor Bobby Burns, father of our former colleague, Thomas. It showed something of the reach he had that, as a unionist, even at that stage he appreciated the differences in this society.

As Mike Nesbitt mentioned, there is also no doubt, from some of his radio interviews, that his experience as a young RAF man at the liberation of Belsen must have touched him enormously and given him a commitment and drive to public service. He was, as others have said, the leader of his party for 16 years — something that few of us in this Chamber can appreciate exactly how it amounts to — and he certainly had a significant impact over some of the most turbulent years in this region, as he carried through that role of leadership.

Arlene Foster said that she remembered campaigning with Jim Molyneaux. I can also remember campaigns in which Jim Molyneaux was involved. The only difference was that, three times in a row in the 1970s, my efforts were to reduce the largest majority in the UK by one. That is a measure of the respect and the support that he had in the constituency. He was always a perfect gentleman — he treated others with respect; he had a personal reputation and, whether or not people agreed with him politically, he was Jim — and people saw that in him.

He was, in latter years, a constituent of mine, as a councillor and then as an MLA, but I think he will also be remembered locally by how he served his constituents, how he cared for the people of South Antrim and then Lagan Valley, and how he went out of his way to do what he thought best for all of them. Even in latter years, after he had retired, he would have been out and about for some time at the Antrim show and other public events, wanting to see what was going on in the locality.

On behalf of my party, I wish to express sympathy to his sister-in-law Agnes and to the other members of the family circle at Aldergrove and beyond.

Mr Allister: I readily join in the tributes to Lord Molyneaux.

He has been described variously as a true gentleman, and so he was. He was quiet and unassuming too, both about his military career and his political career. He was a giant on our political scene who moved through it in that quiet, unassuming way that characterised him. Above all, he was a unionist through and through. There was no hint of Ulster nationalism about Jim Molyneaux. He was a wholly committed believer in all the values and all the parts of the United Kingdom.

12.15 pm

I knew him somewhat and have had many conversations about him with the president of my party, Willie Ross, who held him in very high esteem. I have heard many accounts and stories of his steadfastness. If there is perhaps one word that sums up Jim Molyneaux, it is "steadfast". He was not easily blown off course. He stuck to his vision and his view of things and, in that, deserves the respect of us all. Although we have not seen and heard of him latterly, Ulster politics will now be the poorer for the passing of Lord

Molyneaux. I salute his memory and express condolences to his family and his party upon their loss.

Mr B McCrea: I knew him of course, but, to me, he was always Jim Molyneaux. The last time I spoke to him was at Westminster, where he courteously took the time to talk to me. It was a few years ago. The thing about Jim was that he always had time for people, no matter what you thought or where you were coming from, and, in my experience in the constituency, I do not think I ever heard anybody say anything bad about him. He was always our Jim and a great man. People talked about his majority. It was indeed a wonderful thing to behold.

It is sad when people must pass away, particularly people of his generation. Being involved in the war gave you a certain base for your thinking about the future. We are at the stage now where those who were actively involved have passed away. His biggest contribution was behind the scenes, and people have talked about him working tirelessly in the background. It is not easy to hold together the unionist community or even the Ulster Unionist Party. His great talent was that he was able to bring all strands of unionism together in such a way that, frankly, you were sometimes not quite sure how he did it, but he did it indeed. That is a great tribute. We are in a different place now. I offer my condolences to his family and, in his memory, offer thanks for his service to Northern Ireland.

Mr Kennedy: I join others in paying tribute to the life of James Henry Molyneaux, Baron Molyneaux of Killead, and I am deeply saddened at his passing. I well recall the encouragement and advice he gave me in my early days as a young political representative serving in local government. He had a very distinguished war record. He served this nation in war and gave very strong and determined leadership in the most difficult period of our country's history. He was a loyal Ulsterman but also a man who knew how important it was for Northern Ireland to contribute to the life of our nation at Westminster and, indeed, the affairs of our Commonwealth.

He also had a very wry sense of humour and, as leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, had a highly developed level of tolerance.

When he set his mind to something that he believed was in the best interests of unionism and of Northern Ireland, he displayed a steely determination. He was enormously hard-working as a constituency Member and a very popular party leader and Member of Parliament. The Ulster Unionist Party will genuinely grieve at the passing of Lord Molyneaux. I know that my Assembly colleague, Sam Gardiner, was with him in recent hours. The entire party will receive the news of his passing with great sorrow.

Lord Molyneaux was for a period the sovereign grand master of the Royal Black Institution. To see him on parade at Scarva on 13 July offered an insight into him, as he conversed and engaged with the people who attended, and still attend, that huge demonstration. He was very much on their level and was very warmly received. He will be greatly mourned as party leader. He was a one-party man: it was always only the Ulster Unionist Party for Jim Molyneaux. He was a highly regarded leader of our party, and his legacy is the values that he represented and passed on.

Mr Humphrey: I am deeply saddened at the loss of a great Ulsterman and true friend, Jim Molyneaux.

Jim Molyneaux was a man of integrity and honour, a true Christian and a great friend and encourager. He was awarded a knighthood by Her Majesty in 1996, and the following year became Baron Molyneaux of Killead. That was fitting, because Jim Molyneaux, as someone who had high regard for the royal family, was in every sense a Queen's man. He was sovereign grand master of the Royal Black Institution for 27 years and a deputy grand master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, of which he was also a trustee. He was most at home in the Diamond lodge at Aldergrove. He was a great Orangeman and a true inspiration to any young Orangeman.

He joined the RAF at the age of 21 and served this nation for five years during World War II. He was one of the first soldiers to arrive at Belsen, and I remember him telling me about the smell and the sights that met him when he arrived there, which were to remain with him for the rest of his life, a life that sadly ended this morning, when he was called home at 7:30 am.

He was interested in gardening, motorcycling, military history and the Royal British Legion. He was a great encourager of young people, as Arlene said. Indeed, Arlene, Peter and I all benefited from his encouragement and, at times, cajoling, as chair of the Young Unionist Council. Although small in stature, Jim Molyneaux was a political colossus. When I was a young member of the Ulster Unionist Party in North Belfast, Jim Molyneaux encouraged me in a way that others simply did not bother to. He encouraged many of us on these Benches to give leadership when we were members of the Young Unionist Council, and I will never, ever forget that.

I regarded Jim as a personal friend, a political mentor, a true unionist and an outstanding Ulsterman. I shadowed him for three days at Westminster, and I could not believe that someone of his age was so energetic: he was constantly working for Northern Ireland and the unionist cause. Although he was, as we have heard, a quiet man of Ulster politics, he was a man with a great sense of humour. He was a great leader and a superb party manager, with absolutely outstanding personal skills. He campaigned for me in 2007 for the Assembly election in North Belfast, and I will never forget his encouragement.

When I was deputy lord mayor of this city, I hosted a reception for his ninetieth birthday in the Lord Mayor's parlour. He was joined on that occasion by the former Archbishop of Armagh, because Jim was a great and committed Christian, a member of the Church Ireland and a lay reader in his parish of Killead. I, along with many of my colleagues, am deeply saddened at the loss of a true friend. Jim was an inspiration to me, as he was an inspiration and guide to people in the unionist community and, indeed, across Northern Ireland. His loss today is as absolute as it is sudden and tragic. I extend my sympathies to Agnes, Stephen, Ian and Janice, his nephews and nieces. Today, the community in Northern Ireland is weaker and sadder for the loss of James Henry Molyneaux.

Lord Morrow: I, too, would like to be associated with the remarks that have been made about Baron Molyneaux of Killead. He was certainly a man of integrity and principle. You would not have to be long in his company to realise that. He had a very good wry sense of humour, which I appreciate in people, too; I do not know why. You would

not be long in his company to discover that he was that type of person.

I was honoured to have him as one of my co-sponsors when I was elevated to the House of Lords in June 2006. I got to know him much better when I went over to the Lords and was often in his company, which I always found good company. He was a principled man and a man of integrity, as I stated. I have no doubt that this country will be the poorer because of his passing. Due to his age and health, he was not to the forefront like he used to be, but his influence somehow always seemed to be there, even in the House of Lords, where others would enquire about how he was doing. He was a man who was not out of people's minds, although he was not able to be in attendance.

He was certainly someone who led the Ulster Unionist Party during the worst excesses of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. He was a man who was steadfast and sure in everything he did. He was unflinching, and he was undoubtedly and unflinchingly a unionist in every sense of the word. He had no truck with anything that would be deemed to weaken the Union or to depart from it. He was steadfast in that.

No doubt the Ulster Unionists will miss him the most as he was their former leader, but I think that unionism in general, and Northern Ireland in general, will miss him because of the man who he was. I extend my sympathy and prayers to the Molyneaux family today. I wish them everything that is right in the days ahead.

Mr Givan: As an elected representative for Lagan Valley, I put on record a tribute to Lord Molyneaux. I did not know Lord Molyneaux; I never met him. However, as a Member for Lagan Valley, I feel as if I got to know him very well from his constituents. Every time that I am out on the doors, people bring up to me Jim Molyneaux and his work ethic in serving the people. He was a very faithful constituency Member of Parliament. My colleague Jeffrey Donaldson mourns his passing most keenly. Jeffrey continued Lord Molyneaux's legacy in the Houses of Parliament when he took over as the MP for the Lagan Valley constituency in 1997.

Lord Molyneaux served during the darkest days of the Troubles. I put on record my thanks to him. Today, my generation and the generation to follow have a legacy that is inherited from him whereby Northern Ireland, despite the most serious threat from terrorists, remains and will continue to remain part of the United Kingdom. I thank Lord Molyneaux for his stand during that time.

Mr Kinahan: I will be very brief. I am very lucky to have followed Lord Molyneaux in South Antrim, where he was known as a phenomenally hard worker. Others mentioned how much of a gentleman he was, as well as his great integrity, and how he really cared for Northern Ireland, especially Crumlin, and all his constituents. Like others who canvassed with him, I know how difficult it was to keep up with him. Everybody knew him and spoke to him. I echo what others have said. We all owe him a great sense of gratitude.

12.30 pm

Committee Business

Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly: Review Report

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

Mr Sheehan (The Deputy Chairperson of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on its Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly [NIA 224/11-16].

Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. As Deputy Chairperson of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee, I move the motion on the day following International Women's Day, which makes this debate more poignant.

The purpose of this debate is to approve the report, 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly', but, on this auspicious occasion, it is also an opportunity for the Assembly, political parties and the Executive to commit to turning the recommendations made in this report into meaningful actions that will address the lack of women in politics here in the North.

I will put in context why the Assembly and Executive Review Committee agreed to review this topic. In 2013, following a review of the responses received from political parties, the Committee commissioned a paper from the Assembly's Research and Information Service on one of the topics identified, entitled 'Women in Politics'. The paper summarised the background to women's representation or, more specifically, under-representation in politics here in the North. The stark facts outlined in the paper were enough for the Committee to consider prioritising this issue as its next review. With only 21 females out of 108 elected representatives in the Assembly, the North has one of the lowest levels of female representation of devolved and national legislatures in the UK and Ireland. If placed in international legislatures, the Assembly would rank 70th out of 189 countries.

In June 2014, the Committee agreed the terms of reference for the review and agreed to analyse barriers and challenges facing women seeking to enter political life, examine the potential of existing initiatives, explore the merits of positive action and, finally, provide recommendations and conclusions. The Committee listened to evidence on this issue from leading academics, representatives from the women's sector and a former Deputy Speaker of this House. The Committee received 20 substantial responses to the written call for evidence, including from academia, trade unions and the women's and youth sectors. Finally, 60 key stakeholders attended a round-table event in October 2014, which was opened by the two junior Ministers, Minister McCann and Minister Bell. I would like to take this opportunity to express the

Committee's appreciation to all those who contributed to the inquiry.

While encountering a wealth of knowledge within the North, it was important for the Committee to experience how other legislatures had approached increasing women's participation in politics and the Committee undertook a fact-finding visit to the National Assembly for Wales. During its visit, the Committee was able to explore how the National Assembly for Wales managed to maintain 42% of women Assembly Members. The Committee considered the impact of an initiative developed by the Presiding Officer for the National Assembly for Wales, Dame Rosemary Butler, in order to encourage more women into public life for the 2016 elections. Members were able to discuss future plans of the National Assembly for Wales in increasing women's participation in politics as well as taking evidence from academics and those who delivered the public life initiative.

The Committee was aware of the four Nordic countries that have consistently held the highest positions of gender equality in the world. One of those countries, Iceland, was considered a country to visit as the Icelandic Government have taken systematic steps to introduce and promote gender equality in all areas of society. One third of current Ministers are female and, in the Parliament, women hold nearly 40% of parliamentary seats. Iceland has had special legislation intended to ensure equality between women and men since 1976. The Icelandic Government and political parties have introduced a number of key actions to increase women's participation in the political, social and economic life of the country.

While undertaking the review, the Committee was made aware of a number of programmes, policies and strategies undertaken by the Assembly, political parties and Departments. It was apparent that, in order to increase women in politics, a more holistic approach across the Assembly, political parties and Departments is required.

The final report has made a series of recommendations for the Assembly, political parties and the Executive to assist women into politics and support our existing female politicians. Here are three of the recommendations demonstrating what would have a positive impact on addressing the barriers for women. The Assembly needs to establish a working group, made up of elected women and men, who will monitor and promote measures to ensure that the Assembly becomes a gender-sensitive Parliament. While no consensus was reached on mandatory quotas or financial penalties, many other recommendations to political parties, if adopted, could have a major impact. For example, given the vital role that the media can play in telling us more about the views of women in political life, parties should ensure that their internal media strategies give women greater visibility. Time and time again, childcare was named as one of the main barriers to women. A childcare strategy for the North needs to be a priority, as that issue will remain a challenge for women considering a political career.

I take this opportunity to thank both the previous and present Speakers for their letters to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee supporting and encouraging more women into politics and committing to be mindful in the conduct of the Speaker's responsibilities.

Finally, I would like to end by drawing attention to how the Assembly and Executive Review Committee reached consensus on all of the 29 recommendations; a clear indication as to how increasing women in politics should be a priority for political parties, the Executive and the Assembly. The Assembly and Executive Review Committee now requests that the Assembly approves the Committee's report.

Mr Ross: It has been mentioned by the Deputy Chair that yesterday was International Women's Day. I noticed the number of people who made reference to it on my Twitter feed and Facebook feed and put up women from right across the world who inspired people, whether they were in business, politics, sport or community activism. It was a very positive message and an indication of the positive role models that there are out there for young women. Sadly, I doubt that the report will get an awful lot of media coverage today, given the actions of Sinn Féin on welfare, which is disappointing, because I think that it is an important issue and one that should receive significant amounts of media coverage.

I only joined the Committee in the last number of months, so I did not have the advantage of the evidence sessions like other members did, but I have read through the report and some of the evidence sessions, and there are some stark findings. One would imagine that, given the fact that 50% of the population or thereabouts is female, a representative body such as the Assembly would also be around 50% female and that we would expect to have around 54 female Members of the House. The fact that we do not and that only a quarter of Members are female clearly says that there is a disconnect between the proportion of women in society and the proportion of women represented here in the Chamber, and that is something that is of concern. We are far from the worst Chamber anywhere in the world. There are Chambers much worse than ours in terms of their representative nature.

I was struck by looking at the particular areas. I know that the Committee went to Wales and to Iceland as part of its investigations. I notice that the Seychelles is much more representative in terms of females, and I wonder why the Committee did not take the opportunity to go for a study visit there. But why we have a lower number of women coming forward to put themselves up for election and, indeed, among those who are elected is a serious issue.

I read an article over the weekend in 'The Guardian'. It is not a newspaper that I read very often, but it said that there would be a significant number of female candidates for the Westminster election, which is only a number of weeks away, and they imagine that the next cohort of the House of Commons will have a significantly higher proportion of females.

I know that, at a local level, many of us will have the same experience of community groups or resident associations. When there is an issue in our local constituencies, it is often women who garner people together and are the drivers and force behind getting action taken in their local communities. It leads to this question: why are those women not putting themselves forward for their local council or, indeed, for the Assembly? Clearly there is an issue there, in that the electorate will pick who they want to represent them, but parties, too, have a responsibility in putting their candidates forward.

I know that it is not in the Committee recommendations — I am glad that it is not — but, during the evidence sessions, a number of people talked about quotas. I think that quotas can actually be a very dangerous thing if we want to have women who are empowered and put forward for election. What that means is that women may be put forward for reasons other than merit. I think that that actually does a disservice to females who want to come forward and stand for office. Therefore, I am glad that that is not part of the Committee's recommendations.

Ms Lo: I thank the Member for giving way. Dame Rosemary Butler was here last Friday and said, on quotas, that there has never been an issue about asking for merit in nominating men. That is a very interesting point that she put forward. We are always arguing that we should not have this issue about merit in nominating women, if you know what I mean.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Ross: Obviously, meritocracy is important. Anybody, whether male or female, who is put forward should be there on the basis of merit. I hold that view about young people going to grammar school and people joining the police. I take the same view about people standing for public office, namely that it should be based exclusively on merit. That is just the view that I take, and I think that most people would agree with that.

One of the other issues that was brought up was the culture of politics and how that can be off-putting to women. We need to be realistic that there is a certain adversarial type of politics in legislatures right across the world. That is what politics is. It is quite often a very passionate profession where arguments are put forward. We also have to realise that being a politician is not like any other job. It is not a 9.00 am to 5.00 pm job. It is not five days a week. All of us would appreciate that, most nights of the week, we are out at different community events. We get phone calls at all hours of the day. It is not a particularly family-friendly profession to be in.

That is not to say that we cannot mitigate some of those things. In the report, there were discussions about whether or not we would limit the number of late-night sittings and whether there could be pairing in voting and even job-sharing. Some of those suggestions are wholly unrealistic. You could not job-share in being a representative. I just do not think that it would work. There are also issues with pairing, particularly in the type of Assembly that we have here and the way that votes often break down. However, there are other areas that we could look at to try to make it more family-friendly.

In conclusion, I would say that one of the most important things that we could all do is encourage females in our local community to put themselves up for election. I have spoken to many women who are involved in community groups in east Antrim and asked them why they have never put themselves forward for election. Their simple message is that nobody has ever asked them. There is an important role for parties to talent-spot within their constituencies, look at people who play a positive role in their local communities, and ask them if they would stand for election. That would go a long way to encouraging more women.

Mr Speaker: Before I call the next Member, I remind Members of the Speaker's ruling on electronic devices.

Someone's phone is interfering with the speaker system, which, in turn, makes it very difficult for Hansard.

Mr Rogers: This is a very important report, and I am pleased that the House is discussing it in the wake of yesterday's International Women's Day. However, the debate is somewhat bittersweet. It is great that we are having a discussion on how to improve women's participation in politics, but it is disappointing that it is a discussion that still needs to take place in 2015.

This is a movement that is, and rightly should be, led by women, but men must recognise that they have a responsibility to celebrate and support gender equality. Men and women suffer from gender stereotypes and gender inequality. Yes, we may keep in mind our mothers, daughters, sisters and friends, but that is not the reason why we should fight for women's rights. It is a simple matter of equality. As the Committee report notes, this is an issue that requires a diverse range of actions across public life. We need a concentrated effort to increase and enhance women's participation in public bodies and to tackle gender stereotypes in schools as early as possible, and for this Assembly to recognise the added challenge for women to participate in politics arranged along communal and conflict lines.

Women's demonstrable participation in the Assembly will impact on the character of Northern Ireland's politics as a whole and will act as a positive signal to young women and girls within and beyond the Northern Ireland Assembly.

12.45 pm

Addressing the under-representation of women in politics will require a cultural shift, but that is not an excuse for us not to take action. The political system in Northern Ireland and across the world was largely created by men for men. Changing that system is not a patronising concession to women and should not be framed as such. We need to make progressive changes if we are ever to achieve a truly democratic and modern Parliament.

Many strategies and policies are in place in other parliamentary institutions that we can adopt and tailor to the Assembly. Those include the provision of on-site childcare and the mainstreaming of gender equality to all parliamentary work. A Member who spoke previously said that the role of a politician is not family-friendly. This institution needs to become more family-friendly. Voting at 1.00 am is just not on. In the short term, we should designate a time for votes on a Monday or Tuesday during Assembly time and, in the long term, we should be thinking about a more efficient electronic voting system.

Political parties also need to work with the Assembly to increase the number of women Members, the number of women who are selected for election and support those women when they are participating in public life. The centre for advancement of women in politics stated in a recent report that, of the 906 candidates who stood in Northern Ireland's local elections in 2014, less than a quarter were women. I am proud that 40% of the SDLP's new councillors in local government are women, yet we also realise that a lot more can be done and are examining the recommendations of the Committee's report with great interest. Most importantly, we need to listen to women in the Assembly about the barriers that they have overcome and those that they still face. They have the insight that will ensure that

the recommended general action plan is meaningful and worthwhile. The SDLP will support the report.

Mrs Dobson: I very much welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. At the outset, I join with others in welcoming the Assembly and Executive Review Committee's (AERC) review of women in politics and the Assembly. I also welcome the timely nature of the debate, given that, as Members who spoke previously said, yesterday was International Women's Day.

The Ulster Unionist Party welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the AERC's consultation, and my party has historical roots in promoting women. Indeed, the Ulster Women's Unionist Council continues to make an important contribution to this day, and I pay tribute to its officers and members. The council was established back in 1911 to encourage women to develop and contribute politically and to ensure representation at the highest levels within the party. I am proud to serve as the council's chair for my constituency of Upper Bann.

Every year, schools across Northern Ireland send pupils to take part in the Edgar Graham public speaking competition, which is held in the Senate Chamber. That is just one of many events that help to encourage and inspire young people — girls and boys alike — to engage with politics and play a role in society. I would also like to pay tribute to the staff of the Assembly's Education Service for the invaluable work that they do, and I know that their role is appreciated by Members across the House. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for pupils and their teachers to come to this Building, and I am pleased that the Committee's findings acknowledged the importance of the education sector in encouraging women to consider a career in politics.

I welcome the outcome and the recommendations of the review. If politics and political decision-making in Northern Ireland are to become more reflective of society, there is undoubtedly a greater requirement for female representation. It is only by making politics more attractive to young women that we will truly see that future becoming a reality for the next generation of our political leaders.

Another issue that Michael McGimpsey and I have raised on a number of occasions in the Chamber is the lack of female representation at the top of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. While I welcome the Committee's recommendation that Ministers commit to addressing inequality, this should be led from the top of the Civil Service; it is a job for the Finance Minister, and one that needs urgent action to address. That leadership should come from the top. My party will continue to assist and empower the next generation of politicians.

I want to pay tribute to the councillors who will take up their new roles in the super-councils on 1 April; many of them will be first-time councillors and many are women. In making my contribution on the motion, I would like to pay particular tribute to Abigail Taylor MYP. Abigail, who is studying at Lurgan College, was elected just last week as a Member of the UK Youth Parliament for Upper Bann. She is an example of a young woman engaging in public life. As Members, we all need to be conscious of nurturing that interest to create the public representatives of the future. I had the privilege of having Abigail shadow me at work at Stormont recently and of watching her campaign successfully. She has a bright future ahead of her and

I look forward to supporting her in that new role. I also pay tribute to the close runner-up, Adam Kinneen from Banbridge Academy, and all the entrants across Northern Ireland, candidates, teachers, teams and elected MYPs. They have done so much for their schools and have made Northern Ireland proud. What they have achieved is in the spirit of the Committee's report: increasing interest and representation amongst women.

In conclusion, young women will follow role models. I feel that it is for this House to lead by example. It is for Members to inspire and not to deflect young women, or indeed young men, from entering politics and to nurture their interest wherever we find it. I pay tribute to the Education Service, the teachers and pupils who come to Parliament Buildings, and also to the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for profiling issues that females are raising in Parliaments across the Commonwealth.

I welcome many of the Committee's recommendations, but the point that I make is that we must inspire change and not force it.

Mr Lunn: I am very happy to support the Committee report on this occasion. It makes a change from the last time that the Committee reported, which was on petitions of concern, when I used the word "rubbish" far too many times. I certainly will not be using the word "rubbish" in connection with this report because it is a good and thoughtful report. It has been argued over at the Assembly and Executive Review Committee for quite a long time. I am glad that we have come to this day. It is particularly appropriate that it happens to be the day after International Women's Day, as others have said. I note that the Building was coloured purple for the occasion. I note the fact that that was due to a recommendation by my colleague Judith, who is just behind me here. I hope that it carries through. Next week, we could perhaps see a green colour and, in two or three months' time, we might see an orange colour lighting up the Building. It is the way forward.

I want to quote a couple of lines from one of the people who gave evidence to us, which was Jane Morrice, a previous Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. She talked about her personal experience of being an MLA, particularly:

"the incessant attempts to demean, humiliate and treat with disdain."

She also said about the media that:

"most of the men in the building would not be treated in the way that some of the media treat the women."

I hope that, as time goes on, no other female Member ever has to say something like that again. It is a fact. There have been recent examples here of when female Members were abused. Abuse is common practice in this place, but, once or twice, there was perhaps an edge to it that did not need to be there just because it happened to be a female person.

The issue of co-options came up during our discussions. Since the last election, there have been 14 opportunities in the House to improve the balance. In all 14 co-options, the replacement Member was a man; even, on three of those occasions, when the Member who was being replaced was a woman. One of the suggestions that my party made was

that perhaps there may be some room for leeway there by way of, at least, a voluntary agreement to try to replace Members who are retiring or standing down with a member of the opposite sex. It would certainly have a beneficial effect with regard to what we are talking about today.

As part of the Committee's consideration of the issue, we went to Iceland. It was a very short and intensive trip. The culture in Iceland is completely different, and so is its voting system. Although they have been remarkably successful, some of the things that they do would not translate easily across to what we do here, because their voting system is different. They have a list system, and it is possible to arrange it in such a way that there will be a decent female representation.

The big issue of quotas came up as perhaps the most important issue that we talked about, and there is a recommendation here in respect of voluntary quotas for the parties. That is what this condenses down to, because there are recommendations here for the Assembly and how we could make it a bit more, dare I say it, female-friendly, but it would also become more male-friendly as a result of most of those recommendations. The real crux of it is this: how do parties bring forward their potential members? How do they cultivate them? How do they groom them? I use the word "groom" in its most polite sense. How do they go about changing the habit of ages, frankly, of making an assumption that it is a job for men only? That still applies in Northern Ireland culture, and it is something that we have to break through. Twenty-one out of 108 is not a proper representation. Women have a real contribution to make to our deliberations. They bring something to it — in some instances, common sense — that we can only dream about. I would absolutely —

Ms Lo: I thank the Member for giving way. Does the Member agree that a number of pieces of research have shown that female voters like to see more female candidates because they like to vote for female politicians.

Mr Lunn: I hope that they would vote for the politician who most meets the demands that they would place upon their politicians and not worry too much about whether it was a man or a woman. The point is to put a relevant number of females on the ballot so that the population has a choice. Then it is up to the females, just as it is up to the males, to make the right impression, to bring forward their policies and, hopefully, to obtain the vote.

I end with this, Mr Speaker: it is up to the parties. We can do things up here to make the place a bit more user-friendly. I think it was Seán Rogers who talked about the voting system and the absurdity of having to sit here until 2.30 am to vote on something that you cannot even speak on. To have a set voting time on a Monday or a Tuesday, to tidy up the votes from the previous week, would, I think, be a major step forward for all concerned. I will leave it at that, Mr Speaker. I am very happy to support the motion; it will be a good day for the Assembly if we can carry it through.

Ms P Bradley: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I, too, welcome the opportunity, as one of the only two female representatives on the Assembly and Executive Review Committee, to talk about our review on women in the Northern Ireland Assembly. I thank everyone who was involved in what has culminated in what we have before us. I thank the Committee Clerks, those who provided us with written and oral evidence and the Icelandic Parliament and the

Welsh Parliament for their valuable help. I also say a big thank you to Michael Potter for the wonderful, wonderful research papers that he presented to the Committee on many occasions. No matter what we asked for, he seemed to be able to turn it up.

As others have done, I welcome the fact that we are having the debate today, the day after International Women's Day. I think I also need to give a vote of thanks to the Business Committee for tabling it today, because I know that there was a bit of difficulty in doing that.

As other Members have said, it is very timely that we are discussing this today, having seen over the weekend — on Saturday, in Belfast, and on Sunday, all around the world — women and men going out to join together to seek equality for women and to remember those wonderful pioneers in our history who came before us to make a difference, political and societal.

Therefore, it is very timely, albeit, as my colleague said, other issues will, I imagine, take up the news and media tonight. We will be very fortunate if we get as much as five seconds on the news tonight, but let us hope that someone out there actually sees that this issue is equally important to the others that will be discussed today.

1.00 pm

Under the terms of reference, we examined the barriers that women face when entering politics, with particular reference to the Northern Ireland Assembly, initiatives to assist women entering politics, including positive actions, and the role of current Members. You will note from the Committee's conclusions that it was agreed unanimously that under-representation of women must be addressed by the Assembly as a matter of urgency.

I will turn to the submissions received in relation to the barriers that women face when entering politics, which are under the following headings: institutional barriers; political barriers; socio-economic barriers; and individual or psychological barriers. Like many other female Members in the Chamber, I go out regularly to speak, especially to women's groups — especially to young women's groups — and the feedback I get time and again is the great barrier that women face and how we are projected as women in the Northern Ireland Assembly. I remember being at an event not that long ago that was run by the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) and Youth Action in the MAC, and Megan Fearon was with me at that event.

I sat with a group of young educated women, and their explanation of a politician was as follows: middle-aged, middle class, graduate and male. I thought, "Oh my goodness, is that the message we are putting out from the Assembly; is that a true representation of what we are in Northern Ireland?" I went on to tell them that I grew up in a working-class family, lived in a housing estate and was a single parent of two children by the age of 23, and still managed to break into political life and still managed to have an important role in the Assembly.

I think that we need to dispel a lot of the myths that surround politicians in Stormont. We also need to look at our culture in Northern Ireland. We have a culture where the woman's role is seen very much as the caring role, which we are, and, of course, I am happy to be that, but we are so much more than that. We are so much better — not

that we are better than that but that we are more than that. We have so much to say and so much to give.

Working with our local communities, I see an underlying current of strong, capable women who want to put their point of view across but are so much put off by this political institution and what it is. Time and again within those groups, women come and speak to me about the issues that matter to them. I recently went to see a cross-community group of women from Ardoyne.

If anybody would like to come in at any stage and intervene to give me an extra minute, I would appreciate it.

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Ms P Bradley: I certainly will.

Thank you very much for your intervention; it was very welcome.

As I said, I met a cross-community group of women from Ardoyne not that long ago. What did they want to talk to me about? They wanted to talk to me about health, education, suicide and legal highs — all the problems that are happening in their community. Way down at the bottom of their list were the orange and green issues of Twaddell and the parade. That was important to them, but other issues were much more important. We need to look at how we deliver our politics and send out the strong message that we, as an Assembly, do many more things than argue and debate over orange and green politics.

That leads me on to the press and the media. I think they have a lot to answer for, and this came up time and again in the submissions. The 10 minutes that people see on the news at night about this party, that party or other parties having debates and arguments is not really the life of an Assembly Member, and it does not show a true reflection of what we do and how we work together.

I will finish off, Mr Speaker, by saying that this is timely and that we do need to see changes. It also shows that we are debating this matter — albeit we debate it only once a year, and we need to debate it more than that — and that we are evolving and maturing as an Assembly where we can now put this on the table and say, “We need to make changes”. I would like to think, Mr Speaker — I know that I am very late — that this time next year or the year after, I will not be standing here having the same conversation.

Mr Speaker: As a man, I resisted telling you that your time was up.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I join my colleagues in welcoming the fact that the Assembly Commission unanimously supported Judith’s proposal that we be purple today. I also thank the Business Committee for its support in changing times, dates, and so on. I put that on record.

We had a very good few months in the Assembly and Executive Review Committee. It began when each party leader was asked to nominate some issues that they felt should be addressed. Our party leader proposed gender equality. I thank the Assembly and Executive Review Committee for supporting that recommendation and for the work that has been done in the past number of months.

I join Paula Bradley in thanking the officials who expertly facilitated the report. There have been some very thoughtful presentations from men and women in the

debate, but, despite Irish and British women leading the way in the suffragette movement, we are one of the worst in Europe. There is no point in us try to justify it: we are one of the worst. I am not going to cite loads of statistics, but I am going to give some. In the South of Ireland, 25 out of 166 Dáil seats are held by women, which is 15%. Some 91 women have been elected since the foundation of the Southern state. Since 1918, out of 4,744 Dáil seats, 260 have been held by women, which is 5.4%. Let us get too cocky here in the North, where we have a new institution and an opportunity to do things differently, 14% of seats were held by women in 1998; in 2003, it was 18%; in 2007, it was 18%; and, in 2011, it was 19.5%. As my colleague Trevor Lunn said, we have the potential to improve that through co-option. I hope that he does not take it the wrong way if I do a little correction and tell him that four out of our six co-optees were women: Maeve, Bronwyn, Megan and Rosie. That is good, but not good enough. We still need to be doing better.

I welcome the fact that our youngest MLA is a young, articulate woman. I also put on record that last week was not a good place to be in the Chamber, when some of our men, who should have known better — only some, thankfully — asked Megan whether she had written her own speech. That is ridiculous and should not have happened.

Anyway, on the international stage, the South — Megan, to whom I referred, has just entered the Chamber — is 106th out of 184 when it comes to representation of women in Parliament, and we are 24th out of 27 in Europe.

I welcome the report, and each and every one of its recommendations. I have a very short time to speak, so I will not deal with them all, but I will single out a couple of issues. We need political leadership from the top of every single party. Trevor Lunn is right: this is about parties taking action. The Assembly cannot take action, but parties can. Leadership is about promoting women but also about promoting feminist women. I leave that there, and we can debate it. It is about putting women into winnable seats. Let us look at the Westminster election, right across the board, and see how many women are standing in winnable seats. It is also about quotas, which I support. I will say that again in case anyone did not hear it: I support quotas. Unless we bring in things such as quotas and financial penalties, I do not believe that we will really have the change that we need.

Sinn Féin is a party in which women having political power is normal: our vice president is a woman; we have three Ministers who are women; three of our four MEPs are women; and our Chief Whip is a woman. However, that is not good enough. We need 50:50. We need women managers and strategists. I would like to see our public bodies constituted as those in Iceland, where a law has introduced quotas in public appointments. Boards of publicly owned and publicly limited companies with over 50 employees have to have at least 40% of either gender represented.

Adversarial politics is a turn-off. It is not that we are not capable of dealing with it —

Ms P Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Ms Ruane: I will.

Ms P Bradley: Would the Member like some extra time?

Ms Ruane: I would love some extra time. Thank you very much. I was hoping that I would be asked that.

Adversarial politics is about intimidation and fear, and about creating that culture.

We women are not afraid of that. We are bored by it. We are put off by it. We do not want it. It is the same with other women out there, so I hear from all parties that we want real change. We need to take a hard look at how we do our job and how we need to put the report's recommendations into action.

At the current rate of change, it will take 250 years to bring about 50:50. That is not good enough. None of us wants that, so it is now time for men and women to get off the fence and take the side of gender equality. No more ifs, buts, excuses or explanations. Please, do not quote the merit principle at us. We are sick of the merit principle. Seán Rogers hit the nail on the head on that. Well done, Seán.

We know the extent of the problem. Let us now change it together.

Mr Swann: As a new member of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee, I welcome the report. Unfortunately, I joined the Committee only at the end of the process when we were going through the report, so I missed all the evidence sessions. There is quite a lot of reading in the report. I am surprised that we are here today, given that we debated for 10 or 15 minutes whether a word in the report should be a "should" or could be a "could". Given that we got down to that level of detail and agreement, there is not a party in the House that has not agreed with the Committee's work and its remit to try to bring about gender balance in the Assembly.

Einstein said:

"The woman who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before."

On the Committee for Employment and Learning, our studies and work on increasing women's participation in STEM subjects and the sciences reflects where we are.

The report is about attracting women into elected politics. Members have touched on the perception of politicians being old men in grey suits with grey hair. Sorry, Trevor, that is no reflection on you; I just happened to look at you. That is the same as the perception of scientists.

Mr Lunn: Will the Member give way?

Mr Swann: I will certainly give way.

Mr Lunn: I just want to make sure that you get the extra minute. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Swann: We are all being very friendly today. Thank you.

As was mentioned, it is about role models in this place and in Northern Ireland society in general. There is a perception in Northern Ireland society, across even the whole island, about the paternal figure. That is a challenge that we face and a change that we must bring about not just in politics but in wider society.

I was glad to hear Caitríona talk about putting women into winnable seats. My party has definitely taken that on by putting Jo-Anne Dobson in as our candidate in Upper

Bann. That is the plug. When that fact came out earlier, I saw the Committee Chair grinning to himself because he knew exactly what would be said from this end of the Chamber.

Our party takes the issue quite seriously. Ms Ruane mentioned that we are fed up hearing about the merit principle and being elected on only the merit principle. The Ulster Women's Unionist Council has firmly expressed the wish of our female members to be selected and elected on merit and on no other stance. That is why we created and work through our Dame Dehra Parker programme, which has been in place for quite some time. Dehra Parker was our MP for Londonderry for a long time, so we have always had elected women officials in here.

Part of the report and the discussion was about civil servants coming before Committees. The Committee thought that there could be a greater gender balance. As Chair of a Committee, I would far rather see the appropriate officials than civil servants being taken from their work to make sure that there is a gender balance.

That reflects what Mrs Dobson said about the case that she and Michael McGimpsey put forward that more should be done to promote women in the Northern Ireland Civil Service so that gender balance is not enforced but is there, and we had a cross-section of male and female permanent secretaries. We have been critical about the percentage breakdown of men and women in the Chamber. All our permanent secretaries are and have been men.

1.15 pm

Ms P Bradley: Will the Member give way?

Mr Swann: I will.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Member for bringing that up, because it is a very important point. We were talking about meritocracy and the merit principle, but the merit principle has been in for some time in the Civil Service, and yet we still have not seen that increase in women promoted to the top jobs. Would you comment on that?

Mr Swann: The merit principle is there, but maybe the willingness to use it in some cases for promotion is the blockage within our Civil Service and is something that needs challenged.

In regard to encouraging women to be participants in active politics, as Mr Ross said, when we get down to community group level, women are the ones who are driving the community groups, the playgroups and everything else that we have in general society. That is where we are seeing the power of women. This place has a lot to do, and the parties in this House have a lot to do on top of the words in this report; they have a lot to do in how they portray themselves.

I do not want to break up the positive side of this report, but the issue is how parties interact with women and the general public. I reflect on the case of Maria Cahill and how she has been commented on and treated in social media. It is a discouragement to women when they see that sort of veiled attack coming from political parties.

Also, we talk about bringing women civil servants in front of Committees, but I despaired when I saw Jenny Palmer being brought in front of the Social Development Committee and nearly being left in tears by members.

If that is how we treat women when we think they are behind the scenes, are not in the public sphere or are standing in here for those five or 10 minutes, that is where we are failing women. That is where we, as elected representatives, can take the extra step and make sure that those women have an opportunity. As was already said by other Members, female Members seem to be an easy target for some. We, as an organisation and a corporate body of elected representatives, should not be treating women like that.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. A lot of this has been said, but I would like to make a few comments as the only female MLA in Derry and Foyle. Given the population mass there, that is a challenge to other parties equally. My colleague Megan Fearon had hoped to speak today, but unfortunately she has a sore throat. I hope that I will give voice to her radical, progressive and hard work on the issue.

First of all, I congratulate the AERC. I am pleased that we are having the opportunity to have the debate, but the proof will be in the pudding, and we need to see the recommendations being advanced and delivered. I have a sense that society and the wider community will watch this one very closely.

We should acknowledge that this place, whilst far from perfect, has changed. I reflect on coming to this Assembly as a PA to another very formidable MLA, Mary Nelis, at a time when women candidates and women MLAs were almost hissed at during their contributions to debates. So, whilst we have not got it perfect, we should reflect on the fact that this place has come so far from where it was back in 1998.

Hopefully, we will have actions coming out of the recommendations. As a party, we changed our constitution to tackle and properly reflect gender representation. Those recommendations need to be both progressive and radical, and we need to reflect on other parliamentary structures. For example, if we look at the South African model, we see that 45% of the Parliament is made up of women. So, we have a long way to go.

In relation to the role that we have played, whilst we have to do more, as Caitríona Ruane said, five of the last six co-options for Sinn Féin were women, three out of our four MEPs are women, and we have three female Ministers. So, certainly there has been a heavy lift and a lot of work done, not only to ensure that women are part of the process but that they are active participants in leadership and decision-making processes.

There are two important points that have come out of this discussion. The media's representation of this place, the media's rush to our male leadership and the negativity that comes from certain elements of the media will put wider society — of course, I include women in that — off the whole notion of active participation in politics and this place. There is a big lift there.

The bigger lift is within the leadership of the political parties. They have a responsibility to be proactive and radical in not only attracting female candidates but retaining them, and not in a tokenistic type of way but in a way that means that women actively participate in political leadership at the very top of structures.

I think that delivery will be key to these recommendations for our way forward. I also think that our society and community will monitor this one very closely.

Mrs McKeivitt: I am also delighted this afternoon to be able to speak on the review of women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly. I will begin by commending the Assembly and Executive Review Committee for undertaking this important and necessary review. I would like nothing more than to see more women of all ages and backgrounds entering politics. Indeed, the debate is very timely because, as has already been pointed out, yesterday we celebrated International Women's Day. I know that many women's organisations are keen to hear the recommendations that are outlined in the report.

The report makes a number of recommendations for the consideration of the political parties to increase female representation. The SDLP is certainly a female-friendly party, as demonstrated by the fact that we had the highest percentage of female candidates in the 2014 local government elections. However, we also acknowledge that we could do much more to reach 50% in female candidates and particularly to increase female representation in the Assembly and to ensure that more females hold high-profile positions.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the great work of my party colleague Nichola Mallon, who, during her current term as Lord Mayor of Belfast, has given young women the opportunity to shadow her as she carries out her mayoral duties. In doing so, Nichola has helped young females to consider politics as a career path.

The report outlines recommendations for the consideration of the Assembly and the Executive. Recommendation 15 refers to the establishment of:

"a working group on a gender sensitive parliament."

Indeed, a collective group of people will certainly be required to oversee and push many of the implementations that are needed for the many recommendations. Rather than a working group, I would have liked to see the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee. The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is to be applauded for the work that members and staff put in to the review. However, it already has many issues to address; therefore, it may not be possible for it to give its full attention to gender equality. I believe that the issue deserves full attention in 2015 going forward.

If an Ad Hoc Committee was established, its lifespan would run until there is 50% female participation in the Assembly. That would send a stronger message to women in our society that the Northern Ireland Assembly is serious about committing to gender equality. That Committee would then play a leading role in implementing the recommendations laid out in the review, such as the development of a gender action plan, the review of the voting mechanism for family-friendly sittings, the establishment of a women's parliamentary caucus and much more. If implemented, the recommendations in the report will bring us vastly closer to reaching our target for gender equality in politics, but we need to ensure that there is a powerful, authoritative body pushing the recommendations through.

If you want, I can add one further point. As a member of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, I have noticed

the male dominance in the artwork in Parliament Buildings and around the grounds. We have the paintings of the late Rev Ian Paisley. Indeed, we have one of David Trimble and, of course, our own Seamus Mallon and Mark Durkan, to name but a few. On the drive to the “house on the hill”, the statue of Carson is unmissable. We need to send a message about the role that women have played and, indeed, will continue to play in political life. We should have a permanent display of artwork or something to that effect that will complement the picture of Eileen Bell.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. First, I welcome the report. Indeed, I have been on the Assembly and Executive Review Committee since its inception a number of years ago, and I think that this will be seen as one of its better pieces of work.

I think that it is a comprehensive report, and I echo the sentiments of other Members about the quality of the research. I was not on any of the trips, but the feedback from the trips showed us how other institutions can tackle this problem. The research was not just about pointing out where inequalities existed but gave us templates for how things could be changed. I think that the report is very important and provides an excellent snapshot of where the Assembly now sits. I think that from reading it, it is fair to say that, while there are positive aspects of the work carried out here in the Assembly, we could and should be doing better. That is the task ahead.

The other strength of the report is that we can see from the research and particularly the recommendations where we should go next. I think that the report would not have the same meaning, effect or deep purpose if there was not provision for how we can tackle the issue. I think that the question of how we change is the most important thing for the Committee, as it should be for all the parties in the Assembly. There are very clear recommendations on what the Assembly can do to make the place more approachable and better for people with caring responsibilities. Various parties have outlined some of the measures and some of the steps that can and should be taken in relation to this, which is very important.

I also think that we have to be very mindful and very careful that we do not believe that nothing needs to be changed or that, if we continue to do what we are doing, we will have different outcomes. If we do believe that, we are certainly deluding ourselves. Alastair Ross made the point that the population make-up is around 50:50, yet, when you look across many, many sectors — the Assembly is no different — you see a lower percentage of women. That has to put us in a position where we are asking questions. I do not think that you can retreat into the position where you say that it is all down to merit and that merit dictates it; that is too simplistic.

I think that we all know that, in certain institutions and with certain cultural values, you can use merit as a cover for prevailing and dominant views. Indeed, the Lord Chief Justice has been in front of our Justice Committee, and, particularly at senior level, the legal profession has a complete predominance of men. I think that he took the approach that, while he knows that people can retreat into saying that it is down to merit, there are certain procedures in place that can skew merit in a particular way. He invited the Committee to invite him back in a number of years, and he said that, if he had not changed that, he would be open to criticism. I think that that is the type of approach that we

have to take, because, where there is an obvious bias and an obvious inequality, it is appropriate to take steps. Other people in other institutions in other places have done that and done it quite successfully. I think that people who try to defend the merit principle are frightened of positive and affirmative action. I do not think affirmative action in any undermines anybody’s position, particularly —

Mr Lunn: I thank the Member for giving way. It allows me to correct the statement that I made earlier about co-options. The 14 co-options were in the last mandate, 2007 to 2011. Will the Member agree with me and encourage other parties to use the co-option process in the way that Sinn Féin appears to have done as a means of redressing the balance overall?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCartney: I think that every measure possible should be taken. I can say now that we had a very successful ard-fheis at the weekend in Derry. Where else to hold it, and why would it not be success? Our ard-chomhairle, or national executive, if you like, is made up by a quota. There is an open election by the membership, but we have to elect six men and six women. That is the type of thing that has done Sinn Féin no harm. Indeed, I could sit here and say that perhaps that is a good way to be because, after all, we are the largest party on the island of Ireland. Sometimes, positive and affirmative action can lead to positive and affirmative outcomes.

My general point is that it is very important to say that, if we retreat into old arguments, we will end up doing the same thing again.

We have to be positive; we have to look at all the measures that have been outlined in the report. Parties have to be bold. The position that Trevor Lunn outlined is also the way to do it. Where opportunities present themselves, we can be imaginative and innovative and have a very positive outcome as a result.

1.30 pm

Ms Sugden: I was giving off on Twitter, saying that I was going to be timed out and said “oh the irony” of that, but anyway. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the review of women in politics, and, like many others, I note the importance of the debate on the day after International Women’s Day. To pay my respects to the women in East Londonderry, Northern Ireland and across the world, I will quote a post from the timeline of another fantastic woman and Northern Ireland Assembly colleague Judith Cochrane. She said:

“Here’s to strong women. May we know them. May we be them. May we raise them.”

Women in politics are entirely necessary, not as a token, not as an antidote to men, not as colour in a sea of grey suits, but in our own right as capable representatives of half the population in Northern Ireland and across the world. I commend the instigators of the review because of the gross disproportion of women in this House. I am, however, somewhat disappointed with the recommendations. Generally, I support the messages, but I do not feel that they go far enough. I do not feel that there are specific targets, a time frame or rigour to ensure that it happens. It worries me that this will be just another tokenistic report.

I will, however, focus on one area of the report. It is the —

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Ms Sugden: Yes, go ahead.

Mr Swann: What sort of targets would she like to have seen? Can she give us a specific idea?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. You are not timed out.

Ms Sugden: I will come to that in my next point. One of the areas that the report focused on was the responsibility of the political parties to encourage women in politics. The Northern Ireland Assembly is a party house, and enhancing the participation of women in politics cannot happen without genuine leadership from the political parties — leadership that goes beyond mechanisms to ensure more women are selected for candidacy and the entire approach of politics. Today, we are aware of yet another merry dance of old, stale politics between the two main parties. How many women — how many women and men — will become involved in politics because of that? This House needs to get its act together to stop the rot of people turning off from politics so that we can encourage more young people and women into politics.

Women need to support women. I do not like to say that we are the fairer sex because we are much better than that; we are the fantastic sex. We are fantastic in that we hold ourselves to such high standards. I heard recently from a woman that females should be concerned only with business and not necessarily how they look. I say do both if that is what you want to do. A leader is not necessarily a woman in a suit; it is a woman not afraid to wear a dress and own it.

Men also need to support women. I was asked this morning about how my male colleagues treat me in the House, and I must admit that I have not really witnessed much of that nonsense, but, let us face it, that hostility is their insecurity, not mine, so I do not really pay much attention to it anyway.

My last point is that I will stand here and say that I am a feminist. Feminism is not about criticising men or about getting one over on men; it is about equality. It is brave, but, my goodness, is it necessary. So, in the last few seconds — maybe I do have a minute — I will ask how many Members — in particular, men — will use the opportunity of an intervention in my contribution to stand up and say that they are a feminist? Not one. OK.

Mr Speaker: I am a feminist. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Moutray (The Chairperson of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee): As Chair of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee, I rise to make the closing remarks on this debate on the report, 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly'. I do not propose to summarise all Members' contributions to the debate; they speak for themselves and will be available in the Hansard report. However, what I have heard today indicates that what this report has identified as key barriers and challenges need to be addressed with robust actions to encourage more women into politics.

The Assembly, political parties and the Executive cannot truly deliver for all their citizens if half the population remains underrepresented in the political arena. The

participation of women in politics and government is essential to building and sustaining peace and democracy.

As you have heard in the Chamber today and in the conclusions of this report, women face abundant barriers. Institutional barriers such as adversarial style of politics and unfriendly working hours; socio-cultural barriers such as childcare and caring responsibilities; political barriers such as the selection processes; and psychological barriers faced by individual women.

As noted in the report, and as we heard today, the Committee considered and put forward recommendations aiming to remove these barriers, including the establishment of a women's parliamentary caucus; a review of the voting times in the plenary sitting; greater engagement with young women and schoolgirls; and recommendations for political parties to review their membership and candidate selection strategies.

Increasing the number of women in politics will require the recommendations of this report to be turned into meaningful actions by the Assembly, political parties and Departments to address the lack of women in politics in Northern Ireland. With a joined-up approach, it can be achieved.

Finally, in the words of Madeleine Albright, Chairperson of the National Democratic Institute:

"Every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they're never allowed to compete in the electoral process then the countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent."

I believe that the Northern Ireland Assembly, political parties and the Executive should strive to ensure that women get the chance to compete.

The Assembly and Executive Review Committee now request that the Assembly approve the Committee's report.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on its Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly [NIA 224/11-16].

Executive Committee Business

Welfare Reform Bill: Final Stage

Mr Speaker: I inform Members that a valid petition of concern has been lodged.

The following motion stood in the Order Paper:

That the Welfare Reform Bill [NIA 13/11-15] do now pass. — [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Motion not moved.

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): Mr Speaker, I am seeking to reschedule the Bill.

Mr Allister: On a point of order.

Mr Speaker: I will take the point of order after we deal with this matter. The Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill is not being moved. The next matter of business is Question Time. Before we suspend for Question Time, I will take a point of order from Jim Allister.

Mr Allister: Is it in order to observe that Sinn Féin has obviously been following a strategy to subvert the supposed agreement at Stormont House, and should we not now move to an election for the House?

Mr Speaker: The Member will take his seat. A valid petition of concern: that is the information that answers your rhetorical question. I keep reminding people that they should not abuse the procedures of this House. If you want to make political points, join the debate. The sitting is suspended until Question Time at 2.00pm.

The sitting was suspended at 1.38 pm.

On resuming (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Environment

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Questions 2 and 10 have been withdrawn.

EU Emissions Trading System

1. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department will respond to the consultation on the review of the EU emissions trading system. (AQO 7733/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The EU emissions trading system has been a cornerstone of the European Union's policy to combat climate change, and it is a flagship tool for cost-effectively reducing greenhouse gas emissions from major industrial sources across Europe. The review is being undertaken as a result of the agreement on the 2030 framework for climate and energy, which contains a revised target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030. A reformed EU emissions trading scheme remains the main instrument to help achieve that reduction target, but the review also provides an opportunity to address some areas of concern with the existing scheme, most notably the issue of carbon leakage, as well as providing the opportunity to consider a number of ways in which the scheme could better support low-carbon innovation across the industrial sectors and modernisation of the energy industry.

I believe that a robust and reformed emissions trading system can play a significant part in reducing greenhouse gases at minimum cost, and will also contribute towards achieving our Programme for Government target of a reduction in emissions of 35% by 2025. However, while around 1,000 organisations across the UK are currently participating in the emissions trading system, there are only 23 participants registered here, and so it is vitally important to ensure that the review does not have a detrimental effect on local participants after 2020 when any proposed revisions are to be introduced.

My officials are in regular contact with their colleagues in the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) on the trading system and specifically on this review. They will provide me with advice later this month, following which I will provide a response on the current consultation on the review of the trading system.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his answer. Has he had any discussions on the matter with his Southern colleagues under the aegis of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC)?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question and his supplementary question on this extremely important and topical matter. Climate change knows no borders, and it is imperative that I engage in discussions not solely with our counterparts in the South, which I do on a regular basis, but with those in other jurisdictions. This comes up regularly at North/South Ministerial Council meetings,

and Alan Kelly, the Minister in the South, is committed to addressing it on a joined-up basis, as was his predecessor Phil Hogan. I am sure that it will be in a prominent place on the agenda of the next NSMC meeting in environmental format also, and I look forward to updating the Assembly on that meeting in due course.

Mr A Maginness: Climate change should not only be, as he pointed out, on the agenda of the North/South Ministerial Council but on agenda of the British-Irish council as well. Can joint efforts be made across these islands by all the Administrations to tackle climate change?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Maginness for his supplementary question. Yes, there can be, should be, and are, joined-up approaches to tackling climate change. While I have a close working relationship with my counterpart in the South, a lot of what we do on climate change is in partnership with our partners across the water and with DECC. In fact, it is through it that we make our representations in Europe and even further afield on this extremely important subject.

Ms Lo: Given that DOE will be merged with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and that there has always been, as the Minister knows, a tension between the environment and the interests of the farming industry, what steps is he taking to ensure that climate change mitigation stays in focus in Northern Ireland?

Mr Durkan: I thank Ms Lo, the Chairperson of the Environment Committee, for her question. I described this earlier today as important and topical, and it will become even more important. It is vital that climate change remain at the forefront of everything that we do following the, shall we say, amalgamation of the Departments. The Member refers to what she perceives as a tension between my Department and its regulatory arm, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), and the agricultural industry, but it is safe to say that both sectors' relationships have been improving and, hopefully, will continue to do so before amalgamation with the Department of Agriculture.

I have to put on record my delight that "Environment" has warranted a place in the name of the new Department. That is very important. Just last week, there took place the inaugural meeting of my new prosperity panel, which includes members of the very important agrifood industry. The input of agriculture here, into not just our economy but our environment through emissions, means that there are a lot more similarities between us and the Republic of Ireland. It is therefore vital that we work closely with that sector. As I said, we are much more similar to the Republic of Ireland than to England, Scotland and Wales. As such, I believe that we should look at it and learn lessons, not just from what it is doing right but from what it could be doing better.

Brandywell Stadium: Planning Application

3. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the planning application for the redevelopment of the Brandywell stadium. (AQO 7735/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The planning application for the redevelopment of the Brandywell stadium and showgrounds was submitted on 12 September 2014. The proposal comprises the demolition of the existing terraces and stand along the Lone Moor Road and

their replacement with a new 2,400-seated stand. The development also provides for the relocation of the existing dog track within the site.

My officials have met the agent to progress the application. However, some further details are required on a number of issues, including contamination, drainage and boundaries. A consultation response is also pending from the environmental health department of Derry City Council.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for his answer thus far. I am glad to hear that the application is progressing. Can he give us an idea of when it will be finalised and when we will see the long-overdue redevelopment of the Brandywell stadium?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Eastwood for his question. I know that the Brandywell is dear to his heart, as it is to mine. We are both regular attenders. I am sure that he will join me in congratulating Derry City on a winning start to the season against Galway on Friday night.

My officials are fully engaged and fully committed to pursuing the scheme to a positive conclusion. Meetings and discussions have already taken place on the information required to bring the application forward to approval. It is expected that, once the information necessary to address the issues raised by Transport NI and the NIEA has been submitted, and once the objectors, of whom there are a couple, have been notified and given the opportunity to comment, if they so desire, the application can proceed.

Given that planning powers are to be transferred to councils in a few weeks, on 1 April, most applications will be considered and finalised by councils. However, in this instance, as the applicant is a council — many instances of such applications will arise over the coming months and years — careful consideration will have to be given as to how such applications are processed, so as to address any issues of potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Waste Collection: Commingled Rubbish

4. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and local councils regarding the proposed changes to commingled waste collection, including the potential cost implications to councils and ratepayers of separate collections. (AQO 7736/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The European waste framework directive required member states to collect separately at least paper, glass, plastics and metal by 1 January this year. The directive was transposed into law here in 2011. When the Department was transposing the directive, it consulted councils in writing and held stakeholder events and bilateral meetings with councils and the three waste management groups. My officials have also had regular discussions with the waste management groups regarding the development and implementation of the food waste regulations, which were made last month. The regulations require councils to provide receptacles for the separate collection of food waste from householders. Councils may continue to provide commingled collections of food and other bio-waste when they are satisfied that the amount of food waste collected is not substantially reduced.

The issue of the separate collection of food waste from householders has been discussed as part of the formal

consultation process in 2013 and subsequently at meetings of the waste programme board, which I chair, and the waste coordination group, which involves officials from my Department and the three waste management groups. My officials have also had specific discussions on the issue with the SWaMP group, the shadow Fermanagh and Omagh council and Arc21.

The provisions of the new food waste regulations relating to householders come into effect on 1 April 2017. I anticipate that the discussions with waste management groups and councils will continue to ensure the appropriate implementation of the regulations by that date. To help councils to increase their levels of recycling, my Department has provided funding to councils and the waste management groups from the Rethink Waste fund. The fund covers the capital costs of improving or extending their existing waste collection and reuse and recycling infrastructure to meet their EU targets. Over the past four years, capital grants totalling in excess of £12.4 million have been made available to councils under the grant scheme.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answers today. Does he recognise that Arc21 has waste responsibility for 300,000-odd householders, which equates to approximately 54% of the Northern Ireland population? At present, it has a commingled waste system for garden and food waste. Does the Minister recognise the proposed impact of his changes on ratepayers in the new council areas? It is important that we get assurance that consultation on these issues will continue.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I think that we have had a question. Thank you.

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Dunne for that supplementary question. Without a doubt, there will be an initial impact on ratepayers. As I said, through the Rethink Waste fund, I have been able to mitigate many, if not most, of those costs to date through the funding of new receptacles, vehicles and so forth to councils. However, over time, there will be savings to councils as a result of those types of arrangements. It is anticipated that, over the next 10 years, there will be savings in excess of £12 million. It is safe enough to assume that those savings will be passed on to ratepayers.

Mr Cree: Minister, have you had any discussions with your colleague in DETI about the effect of the regulations on food businesses generally? It will work through to the rest of us who like to eat in places like that. Has any high-level consideration been given to combined heat and power biomass applications?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. While I have not had direct contact with Minister Foster on these issues, our officials are in regular contact on these and other matters. You quite rightly pointed out that opportunities can be created for businesses by initiatives such as this, whereas it has historically been perceived that any environmental regulation is perhaps a threat to economic development. We are moving onto a platform where the economy and the environment work together rather than being at loggerheads.

Work has been done with businesses, and it continues to be done through my Department and our sponsorship of programmes such as the ARENA Network and Business in the Community, which deals directly with businesses and

shows them not just the regulations to which they have to adhere but the way in which they can turn the obligations into opportunities.

2.15 pm

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas fosta leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Is é an rud a ba mhaith liom a fhiafraí den Aire: an raibh aon phlé ann idir na comhairlí áitiúla agus a Roinn féin mar gheall ar dhramh-bhia? I thank the Minister for his answer. What discussions have there been between councils and his Department about waste food?

Mr Durkan: Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil leis an Uasal Ó Brolacháin as an cheist sin. I thank the Member for his question. My Department engaged with councils and waste management groups on the general issue of placing restrictions on the landfilling of food waste through an initial consultation in 2010. Following that, there were opportunities to discuss aspects of the food waste restriction in greater detail during the development of the revised waste management strategy and the complementary development of revised waste management plans by waste management groups in 2013.

My Department consulted on the proposed food waste regulations between September and December 2013. There were 44 responses to the consultation, including 20 from local government. A stakeholder event held on 15 November 2013 attracted over 100 delegates, including many from local government. There were also further discussions on separate food collections with officials from the waste management groups at meetings of the waste coordination group held last year and at specific meetings, as I mentioned in my initial answer, with the shadow Fermanagh and Omagh council in July 2014 and with waste management groups, namely SWaMP2008 and Arc21, in August 2014.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Minister for his replies. Does he agree that Banbridge District Council, which went onto a monthly bin trial and showed a 35% increase in recyclables, a 35% decrease in the amount going into black bins and a 120% increase over Christmas —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member put his question, please?

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to you, Mr Deputy Speaker. That is a shining example of a policy that was working. Does the Minister share my regret that the council has now backed away from that?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr McCallister for his question. Obviously, I regret anything that could be seen as a retrograde step by any council in meeting their obligations or in failing to fulfil their obligations to meet their recycling targets. I am aware of the great work that had been ongoing in the Banbridge area, however different councils have different approaches to dealing with waste, and, as councils are now merging, we will see more of this after 1 April as they try to bring together different schemes from different areas. It is vital that I, as Minister, and my Department support councils to do so and ensure that the schemes that they eventually decide on are those that yield the type of results that Mr McCallister outlined.

Local Government Regulations

5. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of the Environment how he proposes to progress the draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. (AQO 7737/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is unfortunate that these draft regulations were not approved by the Assembly when they were debated on 24 February 2015. They would have ensured that the protections for the interests of minority communities in council decision-making, supported by the Assembly when it passed the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, were enshrined in statutory provision. In particular, the draft regulations made provision that a decision that had been called in on the grounds of disproportionate adverse impact would have to be taken by a qualified majority.

As a result of the regulations not being approved, there is no statutory basis for the process for reconsidering a decision beyond that specified in the 2014 Act. The absence of prescribed provisions in relation to the administrative arrangements for the call-in process and the specification of those decisions that must be taken by a qualified majority will mean that each council can determine its own arrangements. As a result, the key policy objective of ensuring a consistent approach to governance arrangements across all the councils is not guaranteed.

My officials are currently examining the options to provide a legislative basis for ensuring that the necessary provisions are included in council standing orders on a consistent basis across all the new councils. I will advise the Assembly of the outcome of that examination and how the matter will be progressed at the earliest opportunity. In the interim, my officials are also examining the approaches that may be available to provide a framework for councils that reminds them of the specific requirements of the 2014 Act in relation to matters that must be provided for in standing orders.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that answer. Is he aware if there may be any legal implications for either his Department or the councils from the non-implementation of the regulation?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Elliott for that question. As of yet, no such implications have been brought to my attention. However, I fear that, if there is a continued failure to adopt and approve, if not the regulations that I brought forward in their exact form, something very similar, doing what I set out to do, what the Department set out to do, and what the Assembly agreed to do in passing the 2014 Act, there could be ramifications, and they could manifest themselves in a legal challenge of some description.

Mr Attwood: Whilst I note what you say, Minister, in terms of what your own Department's officials are doing, it is three weeks today until the new councils go live. Is it not the case that there is going to be a free-for-all in many councils around Northern Ireland, given the failure of the regulations to pass and the reckless conduct of the DUP in that regard?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I think the Member has asked the question.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for the question. The free-for-all that the Member describes is not only something

that I fear but something that everyone in the Chamber should fear. I am sure that everyone outside the Chamber across the North — all the citizens of the North — will fear it. In what should be an exciting new era for local government, when local government and new councils have been empowered to make more decisions, to make more changes and to make more impact on the lives of the citizens within their areas, those citizens do not want their councils to be blighted from the outset by petty arguments, things being called in that should not be called in and a complete lack of progress in that regard. My officials continue to work on it and will engage with other parties, as will I, to ensure that we get something through in regulation, but we are going to have to rely on leadership from local government and locally elected councillors. I hope that they are able to show more leadership than many in the House often do.

EU Nature Legislation: Fitness Check

6. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has had any involvement with the fitness check of EU nature legislation (birds directive 2009/147/EC and habitats directives 92/43/EEC) in order to remain informed of any possible legislative changes. (AQO 7738/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The DOE is aware of the European Commission's fitness check of the birds and habitats directives. That is the latest part of the programme that is designed to determine the effectiveness of the directives in terms of implementation and outputs.

I understand that the Commission appointed consultants in late December last year to develop an evidence-based questionnaire for all member states to complete. The UK and nine other member states have been selected for greater in-depth follow-up action in relation to the programme. That action is to gain more detailed information on implementing the directives. DEFRA is leading on the UK response, with all three devolved Administrations feeding into the process. The DOE, as lead Northern Ireland competent authority under the directives, has engaged with the process and has provided input to DEFRA. The initial response is due with the consultants by mid-March. It is intended by the consultants to have a 12-week public consultation on the findings starting in April.

In addition to DEFRA etc detailed responses will be sought from specific bodies with experience of the directives. These bodies include the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the National Farmers' Union and the Seabed User and Developer Group. RSPB is coordinating the NGO response through Environment Link.

It is the intention of the Commission to get potentially differing views on the effectiveness of the directives from a number of perspectives.

DEFRA and the devolved Administrations are putting forward factual evidence based on scientific evidence and data, much of which has been shared previously with the Commission as part of our reporting obligations under the directives. In addition, links to respective planning policy documents, biodiversity strategies etc are being highlighted for the consultants to consider. Following consultation, it is likely that follow-up action with the consultants will be required during the second half of

this year. It is intended that the overall exercise will be completed with a final report published by March 2016. While it is the intention of REFIT to reduce the bureaucracy associated with EU laws, it is difficult to determine at this stage what, if any, legislative changes will result from the exercise.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his very detailed response. What impact, if any, will the recent Budget have on implementing these possible changes?

Mr Durkan: I thank Ms Boyle for the question and her supplementary. It is inevitable that the most recent Budget passed by the Executive and subsequently the Assembly will have an impact on many, if not most, areas of service across all Departments. My Department is no different. In fact, the cut administered to my Department's budget was greater in percentage terms than that to any other Department. However, that will not dilute my determination or my officials' enthusiasm to ensure that we do everything, and continue to work as hard as we have been doing, to meet these very strict targets that are set down to us from Europe. It is important that we do so in partnership with NGOs and so forth, who are those with great authority and knowledge of these matters.

Mr McCarthy: What is the Minister doing to ensure that the upcoming midterm review of the 2020 biodiversity strategy provides a strong opportunity to strengthen rather than dilute the birds and habitats directives?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr McCarthy for that question. It is important that the review is as wide as possible and that participation in the review is as wide as possible with, certainly in my opinion, an intention of strengthening the directives and the protections that we have in place, which, I dare say as it is regularly brought to my attention, are not quite strong enough. I see a review as an opportunity to improve, and I look forward to participating in it. I am sure that it will not be in a ministerial capacity at that stage, but it is extremely important that we get as much input as possible and as good an outcome as possible.

Mr Rogers: Minister, in an earlier response, you mentioned the NGOs. How are the environmental NGOs specifically being involved in this process?

Mr Durkan: The NGO sector is extremely important to many areas of life here in the North. The environmental NGO sector is certainly extremely important to the work that we do. It is important that we work in partnership with it. We will not always agree on everything. The environmental NGO sector here is understandably extremely keen to be involved in providing input to the Commission. To that end, Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) will be coordinating responses from local NGOs, and those responses will be fed through to NIEL's parent organisation, Environment Link. As I said, NGOs here are extremely keen, perhaps too keen in some cases, to participate, but, as I said, I welcome any participation in this.

Bonfires: Burning of Tyres

7. **Mr Dallat** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline what action he is taking, in conjunction with councils, concerning the burning of tyres on bonfires. (AQO 7739/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Burning tyres generates toxic fumes and by-products that can be extremely dangerous to humans

and animals. I am fully committed to working with and supporting local councils in reducing and ultimately eliminating the burning of tyres on bonfires. Whilst the legal position in relation to bonfires is complex and the relevant powers are exercised by a number of public bodies, including the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and local councils, I want to ensure that the environment is protected. Whilst I have directed the NIEA to seek to prevent the illegal dumping of tyres and to work with local councils to help progressively to reduce the number of tyres burned on bonfires, that is not enough.

2.30 pm

Let me be clear: where the NIEA obtains evidence that pertains to the identity of the producer or transporter of controlled waste who allows or transports tyres to be burned on a bonfire, investigations will be carried out. Any enforcement action will be taken against the producer or transporter of the waste and not against the landowner. Whilst the NIEA does not have powers to remove waste from bonfire sites, it can issue article 27 notices to landowners, directing them to dispose of the waste in a specified manner. However, in most cases, that would result in one public body taking legal action against another public body, and that is clearly in no one's interest.

A complex problem needs us all to show willingness to develop a resolution. To that end, I will be hosting a used tyre/bonfire forum early next month and will invite all local councils in the North with a role to play in helping to deliver a solution to that intricate dilemma.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): As that is the end of the period allotted for listed questions, we are unable to take supplementary questions. We move on to topical questions.

Taxi Driver Licences: Renewal

T1. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the current waiting time for the renewal of taxi driver licences. (AQT 2221/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for the question. While I do not have the information as to the exact waiting time to hand, I have been contacted over a number of months by a number of, shall we say, irate tax drivers about the wait that they have had for their licence.

I stood in the Assembly a couple of months ago and outlined the importance of the taxi industry to Northern Ireland. It is very important that we do all that we can to facilitate the drivers, who are the drivers of that industry, who get people to work every morning and who make transport possible for those who may not be able to make it from A to B. That is why I was keen to get the regulations on single-tier taxiing through, which the Member's party blocked. Apologies, I digressed. It is vital that we ensure that taxi drivers do not have to wait an undue length of time for their licences and are allowed to go about their business in an expedient fashion.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. Like him, I have had taxi drivers in my office who have applied for licences and have been left in debt because of the Department. What measures can he put in place to speed up the process or even to compensate those taxi drivers

who applied in plenty of time and who, because of delays in the Department, are left unable to work?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary question. While I would be loath to get into the realm of compensation on the Floor of the Assembly, I have spoken to my officials about the need to expedite the process and will do so again. Just last week, I got another call from a constituent about that issue.

As I said, it is vital. Those people are in a very difficult industry in which the fares — I know from my constituency — have been the same for some 10 or 15 years, while all other prices have increased, although there has been a slight drop in the price of diesel. I will endeavour to ensure that those cases are dealt with quickly.

I say to the Member, and to any Member, that, if there are specific cases, they should feel free to lift the phone or come to my office and we will deal with them case by case, although I know that that is by no means a satisfactory approach. It will get the outcome that that person desires, although you will not catch everyone that is affected by doing so.

Driving Licences: Union Flag

T2. **Mr Humphrey** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has made any progress in seeking an amicable solution to the placing of the Union flag on driving licences. (AQT 2222/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. I thought that the solution that we had reached was a fairly amicable one in that there should not be a flag on the licence due to the division that that will and would cause in the North.

For too long, flags have been used here as tools by some and targets by others. While our debate on the issue in the Assembly was very good and very frank, it might not always have been “amicable”, which is the term that the Member uses. I outlined quite clearly that day and in previous and subsequent media interviews that the decision had been made and that it was here to stay.

I know that one of the Member’s party colleagues had outlined what his party would do when it gets this ministry, but, as this ministry will not exactly exist after this mandate, that will remain to be seen.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his answer. As he has already indicated, no amicable solution was reached on that day. Certainly, we, on these Benches, did not see it as amicable that the flag would be excluded from licences. There should be opt in.

Has the Minister arranged a meeting with the national Transport Minister, who, I understand, has written to him to seek a meeting with him to take this matter forward? Has he arranged that meeting? Has he been in contact?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. To date, that meeting has not been arranged. He referred to an opt-in option. I would certainly be happy to explore that option. However, due to the costs of it, it was not actually presented as an option. As I coined it in the Chamber in my answer to a question from Mrs Overend, the option option was not an option. If it becomes an option, it is an option that I will consider.

Voluntary Exit Scheme: DOE Staff

T3. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he can give the House a cast-iron guarantee that he will be able to meet his Department’s budget commitments, given that he has said that he expects one third of his staff to leave through the voluntary exit scheme. (AQT 2223/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. Obviously, I outlined in response to an earlier question the impact of budget cuts on all Departments and the fact that — I can never resist saying it — my Department has been hit harder than any other. In order for my Department to continue its service as it has done up until this point, we would require somewhere in the region of 500 people to leave their posts. I have stated publicly — and here, in fact — that there will be no compulsory redundancies in my Department. I know that the voluntary exit scheme opened recently. To date, I have heard of some interest in it in my Department and wider interest across other Departments. It is vital that we concentrate on delivering the same level of service, ensuring the protection and promotion of the environment, albeit with what will inevitably be a reduced workforce. It remains to be seen whether it will be reduced by the requisite number.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Minister for his answer. Since he has not been willing or able to give that cast-iron guarantee, what contingency will he be able to make in his incredibly optimistic budget plans?

Mr Durkan: I am not sure whether Mr Dickson has looked at my budget plans. If he has, he will be just about the only person whom I have heard describe them as “optimistic”, that is for sure. We have not budgeted on the fact of anyone leaving the Department. You cannot budget on the assumption that people will leave, so the figure that we have set aside for salaries next year is the same figure for salaries this year. If and when people leave throughout the year — and it will also depend on when they leave — money will become available which will be able to go into the functions that I outlined earlier.

Kelly’s Cellars: Delisting

T4. **Dr McDonnell** asked the Minister of the Environment to explain why Kelly’s Cellars, an important historic building in Belfast, has been proposed for delisting. (AQT 2224/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank Dr McDonnell for that question. The NIEA has been undertaking a review of the historic buildings of the North since 1997. This second survey provides detailed information and records. Its aim is to help improve the protection of historic listed buildings.

Over the last three years, this work has been under way in Belfast. As part of this process, the Department is consulting on delisting a number of buildings. I have been advised that Kelly’s Cellars was subjected to the same review as all other listed buildings. Although it has important historical connections, it was found to have changed significantly over the years: walls have been rebuilt due to bomb damage and internal fittings have been removed. Its authenticity as a historic building was, therefore, considered to have reduced. It is clear however that there is widespread public interest in the building and that the majority of comments and articles have expressed

a desire to see that the heritage that remains continues to enjoy the protection of listing. I can assure the Member that no decision will be taken until all views have been received and carefully considered.

Dr McDonnell: Does the Minister agree that to delist the building would be counterproductive for heritage tourism in Belfast?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary question. The short answer is yes, I do agree. I am also aware that Belfast City Council was opposed to the decision. Clearly, local views such as those will be very important when decisions are finally taken.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Question 5 has been withdrawn by the Member listed.

Planning: New Councils

T6. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the transfer of planning functions to the new council structures. (AQT 2226/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for the question. The transfer of planning draws ever closer; in fact, many councils have had their last planning committee meetings in their old form. It is, of course, my hope, and the hope of everyone here, that the new councils will be able to hit the ground running as of 1 April with their new planning function.

There has been an awful lot of investment. First, there has been the investment of money that has been sanctioned by the Executive, and, secondly, there has been a huge investment of time in the training of the new councils and councillors, with specific attention paid to the new function that they will have of planning. I remember sitting on Derry City Council not that long ago, and many of the councillors were rubbing their hands at the prospect of getting the planning power. However, I think it is fair to say that I have seen, in my interaction with councillors and councils, the realisation that with that power is going to come a great responsibility, and there is a wee bit more trepidation about it now.

In my opinion, we have done everything we can do, as a Department, to ensure that councillors will have not just the competence to take on and make these planning decision, but the confidence. It is vitally important that they have the competence and confidence. If they have that, they will have the confidence of the public.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his response. As he is the Minister responsible for local government, is he content that the amount of training that has been allocated is sufficient? Going forward, is he confident that it will be successful?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary. As I said, I am confident that, as a Department, we have done all that we could and should have done to date in order to build the competence levels of councillors to deal with this extremely important function. However, I have no doubt that there will be further requirements for continued professional development, if you want to call it that. Problems will arise, no doubt, across the councils; decisions will be made; and, sometimes, decisions will be unmade. Due to the failure of the Assembly to approve the regulations I brought last week, I fear that some councils will start calling in planning decisions that had been

passed. I think that that is very dangerous. They will not be cut adrift. The Department will retain oversight and a close relationship with planners in all of the council areas. I anticipate that a lot of hand-holding will need to be done, but it is important that the councils are allowed time to make their own decisions and, in some instances, learn from their own mistakes.

Alien Species: Northern Ireland

T7. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister of the Environment what his Department is doing through the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to combat evasive and alien species that are threatening our natural wildlife across Northern Ireland. (AQT 2227/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. My Department, under the auspices of the NIEA, remains committed to tackling invasive and alien species, which are manifold and take many forms.

At a recent meeting that I had with the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime, it was a real education for me to learn what some of our alien species are. What may seem like a harmless deer is actually very detrimental to the ecosystem and to the food chain of other native or indigenous species. We work with partners in the NGO sector to identify species, the harm that they do and humane ways of dealing with problems as they arise.

2.45 pm

Finance and Personnel

Corporation Tax: Credit Unions

1. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how credit unions and mutual building societies could benefit from any changes to corporation tax. (AQO 7747/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Credit unions already benefit from special corporation tax rules that mean that, where a credit union makes a loan to its members, the related income is not subject to the tax. Those rules would not be altered by the Corporation Tax (Northern Ireland) Bill. More generally, and in order to manage the potential for artificial profit shifting, certain tradable activities, including those related to lending, leasing and certain types of insurance, are to be excluded from the Northern Ireland corporation tax rate. Nevertheless, mutual building societies and other firms that may be affected by those exclusions can elect to have back-office activities included in a new Northern Ireland regime. Furthermore, all organisations that service the local marketplace stand to benefit from the significantly increased activity that a lower rate of corporation tax will bring.

I have plans to engage with representatives of local credit unions and the Progressive Building Society to discuss how a lower corporation tax rate can deliver benefits for them, for their members and for Northern Ireland more generally.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister for his response. I am sure that you will agree that we must secure a good, fair deal on corporation tax, one that delivers for SMEs and works

for all our people. From your perspective, can you give me more detail on how we can ensure that that can be achieved?

Mr Hamilton: The Member's question appears to be about SMEs more broadly and not specifically on credit unions and mutuals.

I am aware of the issues that have been raised about credit unions and mutuals. In the next 24 hours, I will be engaging with the Progressive Building Society, which is our only building society based in Northern Ireland. I also plan to engage in some way or other with credit unions in the next number of weeks.

A lot of SMEs in Northern Ireland would not benefit directly from a reduction in corporation tax because of the way in which they are structured, but the hope and the expectation, based on the evidence, is that the creation of 37,500 net new jobs over the next 10 years and a growth in our economy of around 10% will assist all businesses in Northern Ireland, whether they are small, medium-sized or large enterprises and whether they are indigenous firms, firms that already invest in Northern Ireland or firms that are investing because of a lower rate of corporation tax. It is that growth in the economy, with more jobs and more high-paying jobs, that we hope will benefit all businesses in Northern Ireland. Some of the larger firms that are already here and some of the indigenous firms that will see the release of additional capital into their accounts as a result of a lower rate of corporation tax will take a decision to invest and to create more jobs. It is that sort of virtuous circle that we hope to achieve by lowering the rate of corporation tax.

Mr Wilson: Does the Minister agree with me that the previous question illustrates the Alice in Wonderland world that Sinn Féin is living in at present? Either the Member does not know that her party has reneged on the Stormont House Agreement, and no corporation tax will be devolved to the Assembly as a result —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I take it that that is the question.

Mr Wilson: Will he outline to the Members opposite just what the consequences are of their disgraceful and dishonest behaviour this morning? *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Order. The Member has asked a question.

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. He is right: there was an air of unreality coming from the opposite Benches in asking a question about the benefit of devolving and lowering corporation tax in Northern Ireland for small to medium-sized enterprises here. As the Member, the House and, more importantly, those outside the House will appreciate, the devolution of corporation tax was dependent on getting a Budget agreed, which we did, and getting welfare reform legislation through the House, which was proceeding. Devolution of corporation tax was contingent on both those things happening. Given the actions of Sinn Féin in welshing on the agreement that was made at Stormont House and at Stormont Castle, the welfare reform element is clearly not happening now. My party — the Member's party, our party — has kept its side of the deal. We stand by every word and number in the Stormont House Agreement and the Stormont Castle agreement because of the many benefits that those

agreements brought to Northern Ireland, not least the fact that they were securing the rate of corporation tax and our ability to lower it.

From his membership of another place, the Member will know that that Bill has been proceeding through that House at a pace. It was likely to come on to the statute book in the next number of weeks. The campaign that we have been waging, for I do not know how many years, was about to become successful. It seems that, moments and days away from grasping what some people thought was the impossible, Sinn Féin, which I thought supported the devolution of corporation tax and lowering of the rate of corporation tax to bring those 37,500 new jobs to Northern Ireland and increase our economy by an estimated 10%, is now going to back away from that opportunity, and we are going to lose the opportunity of a lifetime to change the Northern Ireland economy for the better.

It is up to Sinn Féin to explain not only why it has welshed on the agreement on welfare reform but why it has walked away from corporation tax, which is the inevitable result of what it has done today.

Mr Dallat: I am more than keen to return to the question of corporation tax and how it can be used to affect credit unions. The Assembly has a good relationship with credit unions. Will the Minister perhaps tell us, or at least undertake to look at, how the millions of pounds that are invested by credit unions and banks could be lent to people in the wider world who depend on payday loans, loan sharks, moneylenders and others, who rip them off?

Mr Hamilton: I am not surprised that the Member does not want to talk about corporation tax because his party is no better than Sinn Féin in that regard.

Mr Dallat: Shame on you.

Mr Wilson: Shame on you.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Order.

Mr Hamilton: There is no sense of shame from me or anybody on this side of the House today. We have stuck to our word and to what we agreed. I do not think —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I ask that all remarks be made through the Chair, please.

Mr Hamilton: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am more than happy to say that my party has stuck to every word and number that it agreed to in the Stormont House Agreement. To be fair, it took Sinn Féin several weeks to back away from the agreement. It was several hours before Mr Dallat's party backed away from what was agreed at Stormont House.

I am content, however, and prepared to work with credit unions, building societies and anybody else to deal with the issues that the Member raises. Perhaps as a result of the discussions that we will now inevitably have with credit unions because of this issue, an opportunity — an unwitting opportunity, perhaps — may present itself to discuss other opportunities for that movement. In fact, in recent times, the Minister for Social Development and I have discussed how we might assist the credit unions to move to another level. He may wish to continue to discuss that with me at this minute, if he is not distracted by other matters.

Mr Swann: May I return to the main subject? I declare an interest as a member of Slemish n' tha Braid Credit Union. The FSA undertook a review of the powers and abilities of credit unions in GB within the last two to three years. Does the Minister see any opportunity for the powers that were devolved to credit unions in the rest of the UK coming to Northern Ireland credit unions?

Mr Hamilton: Responsibility for credit unions rests with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. I was a member of its Committee at that time. It was a period when a lot of financial institutions were having difficulties, and there was an attempt to get the cover of the protection scheme for savings. That required regulation by what was then the FSA. One of the other objectives at that time was to be able to expand what credit unions in Northern Ireland are able to do and the products that they are able to offer. Compared with their counterparts in mainland Britain, they are unable, or have not traditionally been able, to offer current accounts, mortgages and those sorts of financial products. I think that there is a view that it would be beneficial, even if some credit unions do not want to offer those things, for the option to be there for them.

I would certainly support that expansion of their role.

The Member has declared his interest as a member of a credit union, and I am sure that he is not the only one in the House. Around 20% to 25% of people in Northern Ireland are members of a credit union, yet across the water it is around 4%, so the opportunity to offer those additional financial products is much greater in Northern Ireland. That could address some of the issues that Mr Dallat raised in respect of people having to borrow from moneylenders and having low levels of financial capability in Northern Ireland.

Defamation: Legislative Changes

2. Ms Lo asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on proposed changes to the law on defamation. (AQO 7748/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Law Commission was asked to review the law on defamation and, on 27 November 2014, issued a consultation paper that invited views on a range of issues. The consultation ran until 20 February of this year.

The commission is to close on 31 March 2015. Although it is hoping to produce an analysis of the responses by that date, it will not have produced its final report, which will contain any recommendations for legislative reform. It may be possible to retain the services of the lawyer who is leading the review project for a further short period to allow for the completion of the final report. My officials are exploring the options with the commission and officials from the Department of Justice.

Ms Lo: I thank the Minister for his response. Given that the law in England and Wales has helped to ensure free speech and deter reckless defamation claims, which specific clauses does the Minister object to being implemented here?

Mr Hamilton: I am concerned that the Member is seeking to curtail my right to free speech by suggesting that there are elements of the proposed defamation reforms or what is now the law in England and Wales and elsewhere that I object to. I asked the Law Commission to step in and do its

work, and at that time there was no threat to the existence of the Law Commission. The Member's party colleague, the Minister of Justice, has signalled his intention for the Law Commission to be done away with at the end of this year, and I understand why he is doing that. I referred the issue to the Law Commission because there were strong arguments on both sides about whether we should adopt what has happened in England and Wales, retain the current position in Northern Ireland or go for some middle way.

Mr Nesbitt, who is in the House, was bringing forward legislation in respect of the issue. Whilst he was in favour of adopting the England and Wales position, others were stridently against moving in that direction. I thought that it was important to get an independent voice and perspective from the Law Commission, which is what has been done through the consultation that has been carried out. I want to complete the work of bringing out a final report that may or may not contain recommendations for legislation that I would then consider.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his responses. How many people or groups responded to the consultation, and what was the range of those groups?

Mr Hamilton: My understanding is that there were 32 responses. The last update I received was that there were two pending, so whether they have come in or not I do not know. Thirty-two is not what I would consider a large volume of responses. As they come, as you might expect, more from those in the legal community and the media who have a particular interest in the issue, it has not exactly set the heather on fire for public discourse in Northern Ireland.

Not a single constituent has raised the issue with me, and I think that many of us in the House would be able to say that. It seems not to be an issue at the top of people's agenda in any way, shape or form. That does not mean that it is an issue that we should not take an interest in, which is why I asked the Law Commission to do the work that it did. Whether we get that work completed before the end of this year — I suspect that we will not — or have to extend the lead lawyer's work by a number of weeks, I am keen to see what recommendations for reform come back. Whilst 32 responses is not a large volume, the more important piece of work is any recommendations suggesting where we in Northern Ireland might change the law on defamation.

3.00 pm

Mr Nesbitt: I preface my remarks by assuring the Minister that I am not wedded to cutting and pasting the Westminster legislation, but I am wedded to the idea of reforming our libel laws.

The Minister makes it clear that corporation tax could yield 37,500 new jobs. Has he any idea how many jobs will be lost if we stick with our current defamation regime across sectors including new creative media, academia and, of course, the media themselves?

Mr Hamilton: The Member has taken a clear position that one might expect him to take, given his professional background in journalism. There are a range of arguments that he has put forward, just as there are a range of arguments that others have put forward from a contrary position that I am keen to explore rather than just slavishly adopting what has happened in England and Wales. That is

the essence of devolution: it is up to us to examine, from the particular perspective of Northern Ireland, what we want.

In respect of estimates of job losses and whether that would happen — I am not entirely sure that that would be the case — that is exactly the sort of issue that I want to see teased out through the work of the Law Commission. In some ways, it is unfortunate that the Law Commission is going out of existence in a number of weeks, because that has disrupted the work that it has been doing on our behalf on defamation. I am keen that, in the limited time available to us in this mandate, we continue to move forward with the work and consider what changes to our law, if any, we should implement here in Stormont.

Voluntary Exit Scheme: Business Case

3. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when a business case, associated with the voluntary exit scheme for a 20,000 staff reduction in the public service, was produced. (AQO 7749/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There is no single business case for the public sector voluntary exit scheme. Each public sector organisation will prepare individual business cases to support bids to the public sector restructuring fund. The Northern Ireland Civil Service business case for the voluntary exit scheme covers the Northern Ireland Civil Service only. That business case was developed over a period of months before being approved by the project board and senior officials in January 2015. The Executive agreed the preferred option at their meeting on 5 February 2015.

Mr Allister: The exit scheme was part of what was hitherto optimistically called the “Stormont House Agreement”. Now that the central plank of that agreement has been demolished by Sinn Féin over welfare reform, does this part of the agreement still stand? Will the exit scheme proceed? In light of what he said about corporation tax, is he confirming to the House that he does not now expect that legislation to proceed? What is the impact of all this further untrustworthiness of Sinn Féin as a partner on his Budget?

Mr Hamilton: The Member raises a good point in respect of the financial consequences of not proceeding with welfare reform. Those in this House or elsewhere who think that not moving forward with welfare reform impacts only on welfare reform are kidding themselves. I have already described the impact that it will inevitably have on corporation tax. It could well — this is something that I will have to consider, not least in tandem with conversations with Treasury counterparts over the next number of days — have an impact on the available funding that was agreed through the Stormont House Agreement for a voluntary exit scheme.

There has been reasonable debate in the House between me and the Member and other Members about whether we should have been borrowing that amount of money, but in all of those discussions I do not think that anybody believed that we should not proceed with a voluntary exit scheme of some kind, in some way or another, to relieve pressure on budgets in future years. I will have to clarify with Treasury very urgently the financial consequences of not proceeding with welfare reform on that element of the Stormont House Agreement, as indeed I will have to clarify the implications for our Budget of not moving forward with other aspects of the Stormont House Agreement. Members will recall that large elements of what we are

moving forward with in what is a difficult year in 2015-16 was predicated on a degree of flexibility, not least around a voluntary exit scheme. That is every bit as urgent to me as not moving forward with any other element of the Stormont House Agreement.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Can he give an indication of the other measures that are being taken to reduce the public sector pay bill? In light of today's announcement, they are all the more important.

Mr Hamilton: A lot of misinformation has been put out, either deliberately or otherwise, about the voluntary exit scheme. For example, one piece of misinformation is that 20,000 jobs will be lost and that the figure that the Executive parties agreed at Stormont Castle was the target for getting rid of 20,000 individuals from their jobs. That was not the objective; it was about getting rid of that number of posts from the broad public sector. We have already been acting to do that in a range of different ways and through a lot of different strategic personnel interventions that will reduce our pay bill.

Whilst a voluntary exit scheme will certainly reduce the size of our public sector and help to rebalance our economy, the overriding objective is a permanent pay bill reduction. You can see how that would obviously happen through a voluntary exit scheme, but we have been conducting and acting on other strategic personnel interventions, including a freeze on new recruits. The headcount in the public sector has already been reduced by around 1,000 by just suppressing those vacancies. We have also been suppressing what are called funded vacancies, which are already in the system. There has been an embargo on substantive promotion, and I am still committed to bringing forward to the Executive a paper on further pay restraint in future years.

We hope that all those issues, plus the voluntary exit scheme, will help to achieve the 20,000 target but, more importantly, will suppress and lower on a permanent basis the pay bill. Given the very difficult financial circumstances that Northern Ireland faces not just next year but for several years into the future, that is the overriding and most important factor.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. The original voluntary exit scheme was announced as being open to all grades, except permanent secretaries. Why was it then skewed towards the lower ranks by an enhancement offer? Was that to make sure that we did not lose all the experience and skills?

Mr Hamilton: A range of factors in skills and experience will have to be dealt with. It is a completely open scheme, with the exception of permanent secretaries, which the Member noted. Even they will be dealt with, because there are a few acting permanent secretaries at the minute, and the reorganisation of Departments will obviously deal with that situation. Officials from my Department have been on the record saying where people will exit the public sector, and at this minute in time, that will principally be from the Civil Service because that is the main scheme that is out there. That could leave issues with skills and experience in certain parts, and we will have to redeploy people from elsewhere in the system to those areas so that there can be continuity of business. An incredibly important issue in all this is that we continue to provide services at the standard and level that people expect. That will be difficult and

incredibly challenging, and there will be some change for people that they would perhaps rather not undertake, but those are, unfortunately, the circumstances that we are in.

I will correct this for the Member in writing if I get it wrong in any way, but the enhancement for those on lower pay as a result of a superannuation Act that my predecessor took through the House some years ago ensured that those who were lowest paid had some degree of protection if, in the sort of situation that we are now in, there is a voluntary exit scheme or, indeed, a voluntary redundancy scheme.

Ms Sugden: In conjunction with the Finance Minister, the Environment Minister announced in June last year that a geographical voluntary exit scheme would be run to generate vacancies for those who lost their jobs in the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) Coleraine. Can the Minister give me an indication of how many jobs from the scheme will go to Coleraine?

Mr Hamilton: I am not sure; I think that the Member has conflated two issues, but I am happy to come back to her. I think that elements of what she is talking about probably concern jobs that have moved. I know that the Environment Minister moved a small number of jobs from Belfast and other parts of driver vehicle licensing to the Coleraine area. I think that a very small number moved from Belfast for that.

This voluntary exit scheme is for the whole Civil Service across Northern Ireland. It is open to civil servants wherever they are based, whether that is Belfast, Coleraine or wherever it might be. In that sense, there is no specific targeting of numbers for the Coleraine area, just as there is not a targeting of numbers for the Belfast area. That is because, as I said, the principle is to reduce the pay bill permanently. In that respect, it is not a targeted scheme on a particular number of grades or a particular location or a particular section of the Civil Service. I am happy to follow up with the Member on the fallout or the outflow or what happened in respect of the DOE-run scheme that took place last year to respond to the shift of work from Coleraine to Swansea.

EU Investment Plan

4. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what engagement his Department has had with the European Union regarding the €300 billion investment plan. (AQO 7750/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has submitted an initial list of infrastructure projects that has been included in the EU investment pipeline along with projects from the rest of the UK and other member states. Whilst not all the projects included in the pipeline will be suitable for financing under the EU investment plan, work is ongoing to identify those projects best placed to benefit from financing available. I have also invited EU vice-president Jyrki Katainen to Northern Ireland with the intention of promoting the investment plan. I want to ensure that the local business community is well placed to benefit from the financing opportunities arising from the investment plan for Europe, and I believe that an information event involving the EU vice-president would greatly assist in that.

Mr Irwin: I thank the Minister for his response. What are the implications for the planned Northern Ireland investment fund?

Mr Hamilton: There may be positive implications; I do not think that there any negative ones. There is potential for hugely positive implications for the creation of a Northern Ireland investment fund, and, when I look at the timeline of the EU's investment plan and our own Northern Ireland investment fund, it looks as if our decision in the Budget to create an investment fund and to stimulate that with some of our own capital and to draw down finance from the European Investment Bank might work in our favour.

The European Investment Bank (EIB), as the EU's own bank, is heavily involved in financing the EU investment plan. The fact that it is involved in the EU-wide fund and in our investment fund may mean that there are ample opportunities for us to work together to improve the investment fund. We are already working with the EIB to try to draw down substantial millions into our investment fund, but the fact that this EU-wide supported fund — the Juncker plan — is in place may help us to draw down even more. That may well be on top of other schemes, perhaps in the energy sector, and, indeed, others, where we could draw funds that would help the private sector to develop those infrastructure projects in Northern Ireland to enhance our economy.

Mr Cree: The Minister will know that there are three basic elements in the plan. Minister, how would the high-risk project funding work in Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: We have to be careful in seeking investment from the plan. I am glad that we have been able to input into the UK-wide pipeline of projects, and I do not think that we should miss an opportunity to fly Northern Ireland's flag for particular projects that we have here that may be able to avail themselves of funding.

Obviously, there are some projects that we may instinctively think of as high risk. A big roads infrastructure project, for example, may not be as suitable for this type of financing because it requires a private-sector element. That does not mean that such projects are out, but they may be a bit more difficult to realise than others, particularly those in the energy sector, where, because of the heavy involvement of the private sector in our energy infrastructure, there may be better opportunities.

However, some of the projects that I can think of are high risk in the sense that they are good projects but are very novel; they are trailblazers, not only in a UK sense but across Europe, so there is perhaps a degree of risk. What is being taken forward here by the European Union is precisely as the Member identified. These are the types of projects that the EU wants to back: those that are perhaps a little risky and that the market, therefore, is not fully behind or finds difficult to back. This cheaper financing from the EU would take away some of that risk and make those propositions a lot easier to bank or finance from conventional sources for whatever is left over. It may help with those higher-risk projects, and I think that, when we have the opportunity at least to find out from Europe whether we can avail ourselves of them or not and, therefore, enhance our infrastructure, we should take those opportunities.

3.15 pm

Social Clauses: Government Contracts

5. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many government contracts, issued since May 2011, include social clauses. (AQO 7751/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: All contracts that are based on Central Procurement Directorate's (CPD) standard forms of contract will contain social clauses that relate to equality and health and safety. Departments can also include additional social clauses intended to deliver their departmental responsibilities and policy priorities and support the Programme for Government commitment.

The first year of reporting on the Programme for Government commitment was 2012-13. Reports provided by Departments show that, for financial years 2012-13 and 2013-14, 1,914 contracts included additional social clauses. However, not all Departments provided a report. It is disappointing that reporting is therefore incomplete. CPD will ask Departments to provide figures for 2014-15 in April.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That ends our period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Revenue Generation: DFP Proposals

T1. **Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline his Department's proposals for revenue generation, given the constraints on the local Budget. (AQT 2231/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Again, there is an air of unreality. The House will know that, tomorrow, we will bring forward our Regional Rates Order, which is the largest source of local revenue that this Executive rely on. That is about 5% of our total Budget. It raises over £1 billion a year, which goes to central and local government. I am very pleased that the Executive have agreed to freeze in real terms the regional rate for the eighth consecutive year, which ensures that Northern Ireland continues to have the lowest level of household taxes in all of the UK.

The House had a debate around revenue raising a fortnight ago, and one of the things that I found enlightening about that debate was that no one was prepared to enlighten me about areas in which they would support the raising of substantial revenue. Some proposals came forward, but, to be perfectly frank and honest, many of them were messing around the edges and would not have had a significant impact on our Budget.

Ms Ruane: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Maybe he will widen his horizon and re-examine the debate. It would be interesting for us to know if you have any proposals for ensuring that we can maximise the potential for the European Investment Bank to drive local infrastructure development.

Mr Hamilton: The first question was about revenue raising and, indeed, the second question started off about raising revenue. Going to the European Investment Bank for support is not revenue raising. In fact, anything that we would raise would have to be repaid by the Executive.

I am not surprised that, not for the first time perhaps, Sinn Féin are slow learners. I went to the European Investment

Bank about a year ago and started a conversation that has ultimately led to agreement by the Executive to create an investment fund for Northern Ireland. The objective of that fund, which I referenced in response to Mr Irwin a few moments ago, is to pump-prime that with roughly £100 million of our own financing and to draw down close to £1 billion from the European Investment Bank. To do so in that way and support a range of infrastructure projects in social housing, urban regeneration, energy efficiency and energy production will ensure that we get around the very strict Treasury rules about borrowing for conventional capital projects like roads and hospital expansions.

I am very happy to do that, and I will continue to do that. I will avail myself of any opportunity to bring in finance that is suitable for Northern Ireland. I encourage the Member and all sides of the House that, when we talk about revenue raising in the traditional sense, let us not forget that someone has to pay. There are people in Northern Ireland, whether in businesses or in the community, in households, who are still suffering and still finding it hard to make ends meet. I am very proud of the fact that, even in those very difficult years, in the face of a very difficult Budget over the last number of years, we have maintained our record of having the lowest household bills in the whole of the United Kingdom.

Public-sector Strike: Friday 13 March

T2. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans are in place to deal with the public-sector strike planned for Friday. (AQT 2232/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: It is difficult to estimate at this stage in the week what the complete impact of the strike will be. As the House will expect, we will continue to monitor, over the next number of days, what the likely impact on public services, particularly key public services, will be as a result of the strike that is proposed for Friday.

Whilst I cannot predict the actual impact, the one thing I can predict with a degree of confidence is that services will suffer and that it is the public who will feel the ill effects of a strike of our public sector. It will be felt in hospitals, with delayed or cancelled appointments, or surgery, and it could well be felt in schools, if they have to close.

Sometimes, we forget that there will be a knock-on impact on the private sector as a result of strike action, particularly around school closures. Parents who work part-time and are reliant on putting their kids into school in the morning may have to take the day off. There will be revenue and income lost to households that rely on that work and rely on the schools to be there, and be open, every day of the week.

I am not entirely sure what the impact will be, but one thing I am absolutely certain of is that the people who will suffer in Northern Ireland will be those who use our public services and rely on them every day.

Miss M McIlveen: Further to that, can I ask the Minister for his view on the strike action and whether he considers it to be counterproductive?

Mr Hamilton: It is, in many respects, counterproductive. Not only do I not think that strike action is justified, it would appear that, if the ballot for NIPSA, the largest public sector union in Northern Ireland, is anything to go by — where the vote was 52% in favour of strike, and 47% against strike action — that not all of the members of the

trade union movement are convinced of the need to go on strike. It is not a hugely convincing win for strike action, particularly when you consider that it was voted for by only about 10% of all of NIPSA's members.

I can understand that there is concern within trade unions, just as there is concern across society at large, that we are facing a very difficult Budget situation next year, but whenever I hear — as I do frequently on the radio and television — unions talking about job losses in the public sector, let us bear in mind that, as I said in response to questions earlier, no one is being forced to leave the public sector in Northern Ireland. The voluntary exit scheme is exactly that: a voluntary exit scheme.

I can inform the house that, as of midday today, 3,774 expressions of interest have been made for the voluntary exit scheme, and that is just within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Roughly 15% of the Civil Service have expressed an initial interest in the scheme. Many of those people are NIPSA members, volunteering to come forward to see whether they might want to leave the public sector. This is not something that is being forced on anybody. If there is protesting, disagreement or anger to be put in any direction, it should be put in the direction of 10 Downing Street. That is where 95% of the Budget for Northern Ireland comes from. We have to make the best of what we have. We have a good Budget that is focused on key public services and economic growth. If the unions have anger and want to direct it somewhere, direct it where it should go.

Welfare Reform: Budget Implications

T3. **Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether today's failure to progress the Welfare Reform Bill has any implications for the 2014-15 Budget, given his earlier reference to the impact on the 2015-16 Budget. (AQT 2233/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The welshing, today, on the Agreement that all five Executive parties — including that which the Member leads — agreed to before Christmas and have been implementing post-Christmas, has a lot of implications flowing from it, not least budgetary implications and financial consequences. I will be studying that very carefully for the remainder of today and probably into tomorrow and will want, as I said in response to Mr Allister earlier, to take that up with my Treasury counterparts.

I do not foresee any implications for this financial year, but I can certainly see consequences for the next financial year and beyond.

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Minister. He will be aware of the letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the First Minister, dated 9 October 2014, in which the Chancellor notes that the Executive will be unable to live within its 2014-15 Budget without an extraordinary loan of £100 million, and the number of bullet points that represent the conditions attached to that £100 million surely has implications, given today's decision on welfare reform.

Mr Hamilton: It is one of the factors, in my head, where there will definitely be a consequence.

That consequence could be the withdrawal of the available funding, which would have serious implications for the Executive's block grant and whether we could live within it or not. I do not suspect — I am guessing at this stage

— that that would happen, but, irrespective of whether it did or not, there is an implication for how we repay the loan next year, because, as the Member and the House will recall, flexibility has been given to the Executive over how and from where we repay it. That was part of the agreement that was reached at Stormont House, and, if the Stormont House Agreement is out the window, so is that flexibility, and it will have very serious implications for our Budget, if not for this year, certainly for next year and definitely for years beyond that.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Members listed for topical questions 4 and 5 have had their names withdrawn.

Equal Pay Settlement: PSNI/Courts Service/NIO

T6. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the equal pay settlement for staff from the PSNI, the Courts Service and the NIO who did not qualify for Civil Service equal pay. (AQT 2236/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I responded on that issue to Mr Elliott's colleague Mr Hussey at my previous Question Time a few weeks ago, and the situation has not changed since then. For the Member's benefit, I will reiterate the point that I made to Mr Hussey.

As the Member and the House will be aware, there is no equal pay issue here. That was settled by the court in the judgement made roughly a couple of years ago that there was no equal pay issue in that case. However, I and others were convinced of the moral case for the staff who were not able to avail themselves of the Northern Ireland Civil Service equal pay scheme. I developed with officials a scheme that I thought capable of resolving the issue, not to everybody's satisfaction, I am sure, but it is a scheme that would go some way to resolving the issue and addressing the moral argument put forward. That paper has been with the Executive since roughly this time last year. It has not been tabled, because Sinn Féin has not agreed to table it. I believe that I have done everything that I can to produce a solution. I think that it is a viable solution, and I am sure that, if I were to reveal it to the House, people would ask about this and about that, but it is, I think, the best stab at a solution that is available in the circumstances.

I had hoped that the changes to the process for bringing business on to the Executive agenda that were agreed at Stormont House would allow the issue to be brought forward to the Executive in the not-too-distant future and allow those who, I thought, supported the claims being made by the members of staff whom the Member talks about to put their money where their mouth is and back the solution that I had put forward. However, given today's events, I am not even sure where those procedures will now be at.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that update. He said that the issue has been with the Executive — I assume that he means ministerial colleagues — for a year now, and he hinted that there was maybe a mechanism in the Stormont House proposals to get it to the Executive. Is there no existing mechanism under which you as Minister can bring the matter to the Executive table without the agreement of other Ministers?

Mr Hamilton: There is a convention that allows me to bring it for discussion but not for agreement. We could do

that and have a discussion, but it will not go anywhere. I had hoped that the agreement reached at Stormont House would allow us to put the item on the agenda for a decision, and I will proceed on that basis in the next number of weeks, if we are still able to do that. I hope that, by doing that, the solution will be put on the table and Executive members can vote it up or down. The solution is probably far from perfect in the eyes of those whom it is targeted at, but it is at least a solution. I know from talking to many members of the PSNI and former NIO staff that they just want some form of resolution, because the situation has gone on for so long. I have done all that I can, and I hope, in spite of everything else, that in the next number of weeks we are at least able to table the paper and see where people really stand on it when the cookie crumbles.

Rates: Small Businesses

T7. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to comment on the fact that, at a recent meeting with young directors through the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust, one of the issues raised was the high business rate in comparison to rent paid for business premises. (AQT 2237/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I will make two points in the limited time that is available to me. First, the small business rate relief scheme, which is targeted specifically at small business properties, has been extended for a further year from 2015-16, giving £20 million support to small businesses across Northern Ireland. Secondly, non-domestic properties were revalued, both to adapt better and to distribute the rates burden, which has not increased, more fairly across businesses, using analysis of more current rents than for previous rates. It will not be the case in every instance, but I hope that many of those who were bending the Member's ear last week will see an improvement when the new rates bills are issued in the next number of days, not just because of the small business rate relief scheme but because the revaluation reflects more accurately their rates liability and the rates valuation compared with the rental value.

Adjourned at 3.30 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 10 March 2015

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill: Second Stage

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Iarraim cead an Bille seo a mholadh. I beg to move

That the Second Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill [NIA Bill 46/11-16] be agreed.

Fáiltím roimh an deis labhairt libh inniu faoi mo mholtaí le hathruithe a dhéanamh ar na socruithe le tacú le páistí le riachtanais speisialta oideachais. I welcome the opportunity today to speak about my proposals for changes to the current arrangements for supporting children with special educational needs (SEN). The Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill represents the first component in delivering the change required in that area. It will be followed by new regulations and a revised statutory code of practice. The Bill, therefore, sets the foundations for the much-needed change to the current policy framework for special educational needs.

The basis for the existing framework dates back to 1986. Although the Education Order 1996 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 made some important changes to the inclusive aspects of that framework, I need to recognise and overcome the barriers imposed by the framework initially developed some 30 years ago.

We now have the opportunity to move forward with a modernised approach so that schools and the Education Authority are certain about the duties and responsibilities that they carry, and that, together, they can provide a more responsive, effective framework of support for children with special educational needs.

We need to move from a past system that recognised inherent difference as being something unusual, where children with special needs in ordinary schools were the exception and not the norm, and where, often, the child was viewed as the problem. I intend that the framework will truly promote improvement and inclusive practices so that schools and the authority can make effective decisions and to ensure that all schools have the capacity to develop a whole-school acceptance of SEN children in the work and life of the school.

In 2005-06, over 54,000 children had special educational needs, of whom almost 12,000 had statements. Compare those with current figures, which show that there are almost 74,000 children with special educational needs

and almost 16,000 with statements. These are significant increases in anyone's terms.

While the number of children educated in special schools has risen by almost 500 to just over 5,000 in the same period, the most significant increase has been in the number of children educated in mainstream schools. Children with statements of special educational needs now represent 4.9% of the total school population. We have ample evidence of the geographical integration of pupils in mainstream schools, but I recognise that not all schools operate fully inclusive practices and, therefore, legislation is required to ensure that all can make special education provision at the highest standards of the best. We all must recognise the rights of children with special needs, along with society's increased expectations of inclusion, and we must rise to the challenge of providing the correct teaching and learning environments for every child regardless of their circumstances.

Moving forward, the wider education system needs to embrace diversity and to recognise that while we all have different learning styles and challenges, we still enjoy the right to education. Throughout the course of the review of special educational needs and inclusion, there has been extensive consultation with parents, children, young people, educationalists and many other interested parties. In my summary report of the responses to the formal consultation in 2012, I reflected on the broad spectrum of opinions expressed. The fact that people with differing experiences of and perspectives on special educational needs expressed diverse views and opinions is not, in itself, unexpected or surprising, but it presents real challenges in moving forward to shape the changes to existing policies.

As have others, I have been much saddened by the views expressed by some parents about the battles that they face in order to get the right support for their children. The challenge for me has been in trying to arrive at proposals that will provide the right support for children, meet the needs of schools and reduce the administrative burden associated with the current framework. While my proposals place an emphasis on support for children in mainstream settings, they do not dilute in any way the important role played by special schools in meeting the needs of many SEN children.

Let me reflect on the reasons for undertaking the review of SEN and inclusion. The review was undertaken because of the inconsistencies in provision, delays in assessment, significant increases in children recorded with SEN, increasing numbers of children with complex needs, and evidence of increasing pressures on parents, teachers,

schools and boards. The principles that underpin the review aim to address these issues. The review has never been about saving money or reducing budgets but has had a strong focus on promoting efficient and effective systems within the resources available. Throughout the review, I have also been mindful of the complexities of the existing legislative framework, and I recognise that agreement may be difficult to achieve. However, by presenting the Bill to the Assembly for scrutiny, I hope to move the debate forward.

In reaching this point, I have already placed a strong emphasis on working through the issues with colleagues in the Assembly and the Education Committee, and I hope that this approach can continue. I have listened to stakeholders' views and have made some considerable revisions to the original proposals. I have also looked to the changing environment in other jurisdictions and have tried to incorporate into domestic legislation key elements called for in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I believe that we can produce an Act that is fit for purpose and meets the needs of pupils, parents and schools in today's modern society.

I turn now to the contents of the Bill. There are 16 clauses and one schedule. Clause 1 places a duty on the Education Authority to have regard to the views of the child. Clause 2 places a duty on the authority to publish a plan of its arrangements for special educational provision and, in particular, a description of the resources and advisory and support services to be made available. Regulations will outline the content of the plan and the procedures that the authority will follow in preparing the plan.

Clause 3 places a duty on the boards of governors of grant-aided schools, including a requirement for a personal learning plan for each child on the school SEN register and to raise awareness of those involved in supporting pupils. A revised code of practice will provide guidance on the format and content of, and arrangements for a review of, the personal learning plan. Clause 3 also ensures that teachers take the necessary actions to actively identify and provide for the needs of SEN pupils. This clause also places a duty on schools to designate a teacher as a learning support coordinator with responsibilities for coordinating provision for SEN pupils. Regulations will provide for the experience and qualifications required for a learning support coordinator.

Clause 4 places a duty on the authority to request help from a health and social care body in all cases where it considers that the body could help in the exercise of its functions.

Clause 5 contributes to the wider policy aim of reducing the time frame for the completion of statutory assessment and the issue of a final statement by the authority from the current 26 weeks to 20 weeks. It reduces, from 29 days to 22 days, the period during which evidence can be provided to the authority and sets out circumstances that allow the authority to proceed with the statutory assessment before the expiry of the 22 days. Revised regulations will achieve the remaining reduction of five weeks.

Clause 6 provides a new right of appeal to the special educational needs and disability tribunal following a decision of the authority not to amend a statement following an annual review.

Clause 7 provides a new right of appeal to the parent of a child under the age of two against the contents of a statement or the failure to make a statement.

Clause 8 places a duty on the authority to provide an independent mediation service to a person who intends to make a SEN appeal to the tribunal and for the authority to participate should that person wish to pursue mediation. Regulations will set out arrangements for the issue of notices, time limits, advocacy provision and the qualifications of mediators.

Clause 9 confers on a child over compulsory school age who has special educational needs rights within the SEN framework previously exercisable by a parent. That includes the right to request a statutory assessment and the right to appeal to the tribunal against certain decisions of the authority. The clause also provides for regulation-making powers for a case where a child over compulsory school age lacks or may lack capacity to exercise the new rights. Regulations will also make provision for the assistance and support of the child.

Clause 10 confers on a child over compulsory school age the right to make a claim to the tribunal that a school or the authority has unlawfully discriminated against him or her on the grounds of disability. That right was previously exercisable by a parent. The clause also provides for regulation-making powers for cases where a child over compulsory school age lacks or may lack capacity to exercise the new right.

Clause 11 provides a power to the Department of Education to establish and conduct a pilot scheme for children who have not reached the upper limit of compulsory school age to make a SEN appeal or disability discrimination claim to the tribunal.

Clause 12 provides a power to the Department of Education for children who have not reached the upper limit of compulsory school age to make a SEN appeal or disability discrimination claim to the tribunal. The Department cannot exercise that power until a pilot scheme established under clause 11 has been in place for at least two years.

Clause 13 makes provision to allow the authority to maintain a SEN statement until the end of the school year following the child's 19th birthday.

Clause 15 makes provision for the commencement of the legislation, and clause 16 provides the short title.

The schedule makes amendments to the 1996 Education Order in relation to the child who is over compulsory school age. In particular, it transfers rights exercisable within the existing SEN framework from the parent to the child over compulsory school age. Those rights include the right to request a statutory assessment and to make representations to the authority. The schedule also imposes duties on the authority to serve notices on the child instead of on his or her parent, to provide advice and information to the child, and to make arrangements for avoiding or resolving disputes that arise between the child and the authority or his or her school.

I believe that the Bill, combined with the development of associated regulations and a statutory code of practice, will bring forward a rounded and considered package of proposals to improve the management by schools and

the authority of children's special educational needs. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Miss M McIlveen (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I will speak initially as Chair of the Education Committee and later as an MLA.

The Committee received briefings on the special educational needs and inclusion consultation about two and a half years ago. A significant number of concerns were identified by stakeholders, and those manifested themselves in a sometimes lively exchange between them and the Department.

On 18 February, the Department provided an update briefing on what is now the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill. The Committee has received further written clarification from the Department. Members are looking forward to more extensive departmental briefings after Easter, assuming of course that the Bill proceeds as expected today.

10.45 am

The Minister has helpfully set out the content of the Bill and referenced the relevant context. During the debate, we may well hear more about the latter than the former. I am sure that Members will share a great deal of detail regarding the numbers involved and a lot about the importance of special educational needs provision. The numbers are quite stark. The Department's most recent figures show an increase in the number of children with special educational needs from around 16% of the school population 10 years ago to 22% now. Those figures mean, incredibly, that there is a total of 73,000 children with special educational needs, of which about 16,000 have a formal statement. A recent report also showed that the number of pupils presenting with autism spectrum disorder has increased by 67% in around five years.

So, what is going on in our schools? Certainly, some of this increase is down to an improved capacity in schools to identify and correctly route children with SEN. This improvement is a positive thing. If the issues that prevent or limit our children's access to the curriculum are caught early and addressed, this is very much to be welcomed. There have been a number of excellent programmes: Sure Start, community education initiatives, and the extended schools programme. It is also worthy of note that all of the above and some SEN budget lines have been cut back in the 2015-16 Department of Education budget. This is disappointing in the context of what we are dealing with today. The growth in demand for SEN support services has placed a considerable burden on the budgets of the education and library boards. The boards have also struggled with the interface with the health and social care trusts, which provide many of the supporting services. The Committee has previously taken evidence about the unsatisfactory relationship between Health and Education and will do more work on this in the coming weeks.

At one time or another, most MLAs will have been contacted by constituents with problems relating to obtaining a statement of special educational needs for a child, the content of such a statement, or the nature of the SEN provision. It is self-evident that the statementing process is complex, confusing, overly bureaucratic and, therefore, ripe for reform, as referred to by the Minister. Ideally, that reform will lead to a welcome reduction in

some statementing timescales. However, I note that the Bill before us only reduces the timescales for parents' participation in the statement assessment process. I understand that other changes will be made in secondary legislation affecting the Education Authority, the overall idea being to simplify and speed up the whole process. These aspects of the Bill and the other anticipated changes to secondary legislation, which I understand are to deal with statementing, appear to be well-intentioned, though, in the absence of the necessary detail, it is not completely clear.

As well as statementing and changing the role, qualifications and title of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), the Bill intends to do a number of other things. In line with international accords and new legislation in other jurisdictions, the Bill will require relevant authorities to have regard to the views of the child in respect of SEN provision. There is also a requirement to undertake a pilot project to allow for appeals and claims by children below compulsory school age. Additionally, children and young people above compulsory school age will acquire rights that previously resided with their parents or carers.

The majority of Committee members may well wonder about the value of much of this. Obviously, we all want children to get the best start in life through a good education. I am not sure, however, that these proposals will significantly change that. I suspect that they might entertain lawyers and, more worryingly, add to the general Department of Education bureaucracy. I understand that a similar pilot scheme has been completed in another jurisdiction and that almost identical legislation has been passed elsewhere. That being the case, I anticipate that the Committee may well feel that the Department should simply study the results in those other places and seriously evaluate whether these pilot schemes provisions are actually necessary at this time.

The Bill also places obligations on boards of governors and on the Education Authority in respect of special educational needs. I am a member of a number of boards of governors, and I declare an interest at this time in respect of my membership on the boards of governors of Castle Gardens Primary School in Newtownards, Killinchy Primary School and Nendrum College in Comber. My experience and, I am sure, that of other school governors in the Chamber, is that obligations on schools and even the education and library boards are all very well. However, to make a difference, appropriate support and guidance will be required for SENCOs, teachers and school leaders. Statutory agreements between the Education Authority and the health and social care trusts will also be needed.

The Committee welcomes the work that has done in improving teachers' SEN capacity. It has also noted the ongoing reviews of the multidisciplinary support teams and the allied health professionals. Members look forward to a standardised regional SEN support service, which will give more certainty to parents and children on the help that they can expect to receive.

The Bill also proposes changes to the appeals mechanism for SEN. In particular, an independent mediation service has been proposed, and I expect that the Committee may take the view that the intervention of a trusted and informed third party may prove to be a boon to would-be appellants and might help them to resolve disagreements more

efficiently and effectively. The Committee will, of course, wish to study the detail and, in particular, the relevant regulation-making powers that the Department seeks.

I have mentioned the lack of clarity and the absence of the anticipated secondary legislation a number of times. While the debate is about the principles of the SEND Bill, it is timely to reference the balance between the primary legislation that is before us, the anticipated secondary legislation, and the consequent impact on the statutory SEN code of practice that the House might not see until the next mandate. It is difficult for us to debate the principles of the Bill when its impact cannot be fully set out and cannot yet be fully understood. It will be even more difficult to put the Bill through its amending stages without that clarity.

The Committee may also struggle to accept the very wide-ranging regulation-making powers that the Department is seeking in the Bill. It is hoped that, during the anticipated Committee Stage, the Department will fully disclose all the planned ramifications for statementing and all the other parts of the SEN framework. As Chair of the Committee, I am concerned about the absence of clarity and the balance of the Bill. I would like to hear reassurance from the Minister that my concerns and those of stakeholders will not simply be brushed aside.

I would now like to add a few words as my party's spokesperson on education. A major problem hangs over the Bill, and I am concerned about the absence of detail in the absence of the secondary legislation that will flow from it. The Chamber is being asked to take a leap in the dark. That is an unsatisfactory situation, and while I support the general principle of the Bill, in that I recognise the real need for the reform of SEN in Northern Ireland, I will need clear direction from the Department about what will come next. It will be no good if the Bill merely moves the deckchairs on the Titanic. Its purpose and outcome must be to address the needs of children.

The number of children who need assistance is increasing; the Department's statistics are a clear indication of that fact. That may be down to good work in identifying and diagnosing, but we must assume that the Bill is about moving forward and improving the provision for children with special educational needs. In saying that, we are seeing cuts to the very bodies that identify and remediate those needs and the Department is not creating a supportive environment. We can pass all the legislation we want, but unless adequate funding is in place for the purposes of diagnosing, supporting and addressing those needs, it will seem that we are merely shuffling those proverbial deckchairs.

The weighty, over-bureaucratic and lengthy statementing process is ripe for reform, but the question that must be asked and fully investigated is how the Bill proposes to sort out that problem. It is difficult to make an assessment of that from the Bill and, while there is a proposed reduction in the waiting period from 29 days to 22 days, following the decision of the board to undertake a statutory assessment, it appears rather arbitrary simply to reduce it by seven days. Why not reduce it to 14, seven or no days? That period is to allow parents to make representations about whether or not they are content for an assessment to take place, but it is a concern where parents are not willing to engage when the child has a clear need. A reduction of seven days merely tinkers around the edges when

one considers that the average length of time for the assessment of a child is six months. As the Bill moves into Committee Stage, that period will have to be looked at carefully, particularly in the context of placing the needs of the child first. Is there more that could be done to streamline the process to ensure that the child is receiving the assistance and support that he or she needs more quickly?

One of the major problems to date has been levels of inconsistency in policy across the five boards. Hopefully, that will be eradicated as a result of the creation of the Education Authority. That pre-existing inconsistency caused greater confusion and, in some cases, higher expectancy. The movement towards consistency will undoubtedly encounter similar difficulties.

The Bill brings into legislation rights for children and young people that previously rested with their parents or carers. It is important, however, that those rights are balanced against those of teachers, carers and parents. It is even more important that those rights do not detract from addressing the paramount needs of the child.

In conclusion, to continue the Titanic theme, at present this appears to be iceberg legislation. The majority of it, which is yet unseen, is contained in the forthcoming secondary legislation. The potential dangers of what lies hidden are of the greatest concern, and I ask the Minister and the Department to provide the clarity needed as we go into the Committee Stage of the Bill.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. As a member of the Education Committee, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this stage of the Bill. It is suggested that the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill will give effect to the legislative changes necessary to support the revised SEN and inclusion framework.

It is important to reflect on the steady increase in the number of our young people with SEN over the last 10 years. The Minister alluded to some of the statistics, but it is worth reflecting that, in 2014-15, 74,435 pupils had special educational needs, and 15,972 had a statement. As the Minister pointed out, children with special educational needs now represent 4.9% of the total school population. Therefore, we must rise to that challenge.

It is important to reflect on two of the principles of the Bill. The first is the enhanced duties for boards of governors, which will be required to prepare and keep under review a personal learning plan for each pupil with SEN. The Bill also places a duty on boards of governors to designate a teacher, as the Chair said, as a learning support coordinator. That role is currently filled by special educational need coordinators.

One of the key pieces of the proposed legislative framework requires the Education Authority to request help where it believes that the Health and Social Care Board could help in the discharge of duties. This is an important area, and I certainly want to explore that principle in more detail. A survey in 2010 found that just 14% of teachers thought that there was a coherent approach across health and social care, and education. Whilst we recognise that no single Department can impose a duty on another, I would welcome the Minister's thoughts about how we can explore increased cooperation or coordination or how the system can be streamlined.

Three quarters of teachers who responded to the survey — again, I ask the Minister to comment on this — indicated at the time that they did not have the expertise to take on additional responsibilities relating to SEN, and they stated that schools do not have the resources.

I think that, given increasing need and the rise in the number of pupils with SEN, we have the opportunity through this Bill to modernise the approach taken so that schools, and educationalists generally, are clear and certain about their duties.

11.00 am

Mr Rogers: I welcome the opportunity to discuss the Bill today and look forward to its coming to the Committee. At the outset, I thank the Department for the extra briefing that it provided us with last week.

The number of children and young people with special educational needs and statements is rising, and, with it, the number of concerned parents. With the new Education Authority coming into place on 1 April, this is an opportunity for us to enhance education for all our children and young people. As I said, the number of people on the SEN register and those with statements has increased since 2009-2010. In fact, even when school numbers were declining, the number of students with special educational needs was on the rise. Improvements in the methods used and approach taken for pupils with special educational needs have helped ensure that children with those needs are identified. The challenge now is to ensure that the right support is there. Pupils with special educational needs cannot be left behind. Early intervention is vital.

At this stage, I am largely in support of the Bill's policy intention and the number of proposals. As a previous contributor to the debate said, it is important that the system be transparent and that we see the whole package. It is particularly important that it is navigable for parents and young people. That is important in the light of proposals that pupils who are over the compulsory school age will have rights conferred on them that were previously exercised by parents. I must say that I hope that the Committee will fully scrutinise the pros and cons of that proposal.

I am broadly supportive of the legislation, which will help to support our young people. However, there are a number of clauses that I feel could be improved. I note that clause 5 involves reducing from 29 days to 22 days the period during which the relevant evidence can be provided to the authority. I understand the policy intention behind that, which is to reduce bureaucracy and tackle delays in the system. I sympathise, but I also worry that it will put extra pressure on the SENCOs, or learning support coordinators, who are already under strain. The shortened period may prove to be even more challenging, given all the new changes that the Bill may bring. I hope that, as the Bill progresses, the Minister and the Committee can consider the best ways in which to address unnecessary delays in the process while avoiding putting extra strain on schools and staff.

I would welcome some clarity on how the added duties will impact on schools' boards of governors. I declare an interest as the chair of the board of governors of Grange Primary School. Last week, we attended fantastic child-protection training to upskill us all. You have to think of all

the other committees, and so on, that school governors are on, whether they concern finance, selection, recruitment or whatever, and the training that they require. That is being added to, so we need a lot of clarity on how it will impact on boards of governors.

When we look back on the responses to the consultation on Every School a Good School around three years ago, we can see that the themes that emerged then are still very relevant today. One was funding and the concerns that we have about that. The Minister's announcement at the Committee meeting last week about special educational needs funding is a concern, even though he says that £10 million more is going into the Education Authority. However, that £10 million cannot fix everything. The reduction in the number of classroom assistants by 1,000 will have a major impact on effective special educational needs provision in schools.

I am also worried about the capacity of the school workforce. The widely held view is that it does not have the capacity at this particular time and that the increased workload will be put on learning support coordinators and principals in nursery schools and, in particular, small schools. Again, boards of governors will ask how they are to deliver all of that. The increased responsibility and accountability for schools that is being experienced by boards of governors is already a problem. Some mainstream teachers, particularly in early years, do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to make adequate provision for children with special educational needs.

It talks about a programme with training and development. Where will we get the trainers to do that, with the depleted Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) that we have at the minute? Where will the teachers get the time to be trained? You have to get into the shoes of the classroom teacher in, maybe, a typical, small, rural primary school that has a composite class of 30 children, a number of whom have special educational needs, and, maybe, one or two classroom assistants. You have to consider the day-to-day management in that situation. Previously, I taught in the post-primary sector as a mathematics teacher. You have to prepare your work if you are going out for the odd day for a course or whatever, but think about preparing the work for a primary composite class of 30 children with different levels of ability and giving line-by-line instruction to the classroom assistant for the child with special educational needs. Following your one- or two-day course, you then come back to pick up the pieces and so on to ensure that learning has progressed. Let us get into the shoes of our teachers who will become the learning support coordinators — the key people at delivering this.

I am also concerned about the level of collaboration between the health and education sectors. We all know that a multidisciplinary approach works, but the learning support coordinator is going to have to coordinate as well as teach a full timetable to their 30 P3s, P4s or whoever. I would like to see more statutory duty placed on the health sector. I know that the Department of Education cannot put a statutory duty on the health sector, but I think that is what we need.

I think we all agree that early identification and intervention is key. As the SENCO moves to the new role of a learning support coordinator, they will carry out various tests and so on, but we need to devise a comprehensive training programme in the field of testing and data analysis, thus

empowering them. They need to be up to speed, but they need to come back to their school and bring the rest of their staff up to speed as well. That is not an easy job.

There are concerns about diagnosis and assessment in schools. Schools see that as the remit of health professionals, such as educational psychologists. Schools are concerned that that might attract legal challenges when the learning support coordinator takes on the role.

On the same theme, the new plan is opposed to a statement. Parents and carers have expressed concern about that. The coordinated support plan means a reduction in the legally enforceable rights for the provision. I think that is a key point.

I want to move on to a few other things. Everyone's priority should be the welfare of the pupil and ensuring that pupils' special educational needs are given the highest standards of tailored support possible. The best way to do that is to work with the people who will be responsible for the realisation of the proposals, through meaningful engagement, robust training and real support. Yes, the legislation is very important and, as Members who have spoken previously have said, we need to get this right, but the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. I look forward to the outworkings of this very, very important Bill and seeing where it will have a real impact on what is happening in our classrooms, where we will have effective early intervention and where it can be managed by the learning support coordinator, the principal and the board of governors.

Mr Swann: Mr Speaker and, I suppose, Minister, I come at this not as a member of the Education Committee but as Chair of the Employment and Learning Committee. I am sure that the Minister is aware that we are currently undertaking an inquiry into post-SEN provision and the effects that that will have on what is there. I am looking for clarity on how this legislation will have an effect on our inquiry, because, at a number of the stakeholder events that we have had, some parents have stated that they would, ideally, like the opportunity to extend their children's statements beyond the age of 19. I suppose that really relates to clause 13 and the definition of a child. I wonder whether the Minister will have any opportunity to engage with the Minister for Employment and Learning to look at that definition to see whether there is the possibility of extending the statement for a small number of pupils who are attending special schools where their parents, and possibly their teachers, would see the benefit in increasing that age to 23 or, in some cases, to 25.

Part of my concern comes from the evidence sessions that we already had. Work is already being done in our primary schools to prepare children with special educational needs. However, once they hit 19 years of age and the transition process, the lack of current provision is a real problem. We see schools building up young people only for them to have nowhere to go and nowhere to keep that will for learning or the advantage that they gained in the school. I want to ensure that there is a cross-departmental approach from Education, Health, and Employment and Learning to make sure that there is a complete package for the large number of children we now see diagnosed with special educational needs. I want to ensure that provision. However, my real thrust, coming at this from the Employment and Learning view, concerns clause 13 and whether there is any option or opportunity to extend the definition of a child.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for presenting the Bill to the House. Like others, I thank the Department for its very useful briefing last Friday. It was useful indeed.

For anyone who believes that the child, whatever their circumstances, should be at the heart of the education provision, this is a good day. We all have to look forward with some trepidation to what the regulations and the code of practice will say, but it is a step forward along the way, and it is to be welcomed. I do not intend to go through the Bill line by line at this stage, as I think that that is for Committee Stage, but I want to touch on one or two things.

The first is clause 5 and the reduction in the statementing time frame from 26 weeks to 20 weeks. That is very welcome. Everybody who presented to us wanted that process to be quicker. It is important that, following the change, we monitor the actual time taken to ensure that 20 weeks becomes the limit and not the standard. The proposal to establish an appeal mechanism for children under the age of two on statementing is also welcome. I think that that is in clause 7. There are a number of proposals to ensure that the child's particular needs are taken into account. Clause 1 requires the authority to listen to the child's views. I imagine that that was in previous legislation in some form or other, but it if needs to be said, there it is.

Clause 3 requires the board of governors to have a requirement for a personal learning plan for each pupil with special educational needs and to keep it under review. That is another very welcome change. I declare an interest as a governor of Barbour Nursery School. That clause also looks at the learning support coordinator and the teaching staff. Mr Rogers dwelt on that at some length. I always listen to Mr Rogers with interest on these matters, because he has the edge over us in experience, having taught in a school. I think that it is only him and perhaps the Chairperson who have that experience, and I fancy that Mr Rogers has the edge through length of experience. He can announce the teaching profession's concerns on this, so I listened with interest. I will listen with even more interest when we come to the Committee Stage. There is no doubt that the demands on our teachers seem to grow every year, and they are certainly not going to lessen as a result of this. It is important that it is properly managed and that we try to, as Mr Rogers put it, walk in the shoes of our teachers, which he did in his previous existence.

I share the concern, which virtually everybody voiced, about what is coming down the line in secondary legislation, the regulations and the code of practice. This is just the beginning. Hopefully, we will have some more detail on those matters before the end of our Committee Stage. I am not quite sure how we could possibly form a real view on all this unless we have that information.

11.15 am

I welcome clause 8, on mediation. Clause 9 grants a child over compulsory school age rights that were previously exercised by the parent. If the child is over the compulsory school age, that seems like a very reasonable thing to do; as is the case with clause 10, which makes the same change in relation to disability discrimination claims. Those two clauses go hand in hand. They are to be welcomed, but, again, we will see the devil in the detail.

I do not have much more to say about this Bill at this stage, but I make a point that I have often made in the

past, on the odd occasion that we actually have some education legislation: there is only one schedule, but it incorporates about 80 amendments, and, within those 80, there are subsections which probably double that figure. I think that the Minister said that the Bill starts off with the 1986 Order, amends the 1996 Order and also gives some attention to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005. I just wonder whether, at some point, given that we do not now write our legislation with quill pens — it is a lot more digital than that — we might rewrite the Order, rather than continually overlap and overlay new amendments. It would be so much easier for people to understand and follow. I do not imagine that it will happen on this occasion, but I will keep plugging at it because I think that, some day, we will have to come to that conclusion. For now, I leave it at that.

Mr Craig: No one here questions the need for this new Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill. I look at the figures and see a 67% rise in autism alone in the past few years, so I think that no one here argues against the idea that the provision for special educational needs in our education system needs to be looked at or overhauled.

I welcome the Member who spoke previously into the digital age. It is good to see that he has got there, and I understand his wish to see all this legislation completely rewritten and embedded. However, that is something for the Department to look at.

There are quite a few things in the proposed Bill that have some merit. Clause 1 places a new duty on the Education Authority to have regard to the views of the child in relation to decisions being taken for them. That is something which, we almost think, states the obvious but, time and again, has been overlooked in existing legislation, where the views of parents and educational specialists were paramount and the child, to a large extent, was left out of the discussion that was taking place about them. I welcome the fact that the child's views will now be taken on board.

Clause 3 extends the existing duties of boards of governors in relation to SEN. That is something that I warmly welcome. I welcome the fact that there will be a pupil profile built in there and that we will have the learning support coordinators built in, not only to our education system but for the board of governors. It is long overdue that we recognise that governors have a good insight into how those with special educational needs are dealt with in the schools. How do they get someone to aid them? What is that provision supposed to be? How does that work out from day to day in the classroom? More importantly, is it seeing an improvement in learning on the part of the individual in question? Because, at the end of the day, that is what the school is supposed to be about: educating our children, even those with special educational needs. That is a welcome step forward.

Clause 5 changes from 29 to 22 the number of days that we have to get supporting information. Like the Chair of the Committee, I understand why that is there: it is to reduce the time it takes to get a statement. I have come up against this in dealing with and supporting individuals with their cases. However, my only word of caution is that other outside information sometimes takes longer to get coordinated. Will that exclude some outside information from the likes of health or whatever that does not come in on time or will allowances be made for that in the system? I

hope that the Minister will think about that to see how it will work out.

I welcome clause 8, which makes provision for the establishment of an independent mediation service. That is long overdue. A lot of mediation was probably done by many Members and by many outside bodies. It is good to see that formalised in the Bill.

Clause 9 gives to those over compulsory school age the right to appeal and to make statutory assessments. That is a fascinating one because there are two aspects to it. Children with special educational needs who go into mainstream education are clearly deemed to be competent to do so. If they are over the normal school age, that is quite right. It is absolutely right that they have a huge say in their own special educational needs treatment. Sadly, when you move into other aspects of educational needs, that does not necessarily follow through. I will watch that with great interest.

The thrust of the Bill is to speed up how we deal with special educational needs and get statements put on children. That is to be welcomed. The word of caution in all this in my own mind was mentioned by the Chair of the Committee: that this Bill needs a lot of transitional arrangements. It needs subordinate legislation underneath it all.

The role and duty of the Committee is to scrutinise the impact that a Bill is physically going to have on the ground. There is a need for us to have sight of the subordinate legislation so that we can understand what its impact will be. Otherwise, the job of the Committee will be made incredibly difficult. I appeal to the Minister to give the Committee insight into that area if he can because that is where the in-depth scrutiny takes place, not in the Chamber.

All this legislation may well help us in how we treat those with special educational needs in the education system. It may well put all the structures into place, and we may well pat ourselves on the back and think that we have done something great. One thing that I have discovered in all legislation is that implementation is critical; how it is carried out in a school or classroom is where it counts. We may well get all the building blocks in the right place, but the wall itself might collapse because of how the legislation is implemented.

Whatever the impact of these changes, there is a job of education to be done with regard to those who will have to carry this out, whether boards of governors, teachers or special needs assistants. All need to understand how this is meant to help the child. Like many Members, I have seen some appalling examples of how statements are carried out. One child in my locality fought for years to get a statement. They got one, and it was inevitable that they would because they have limited sight and are registered blind. Despite having a classroom assistant to aid their education and despite all the statement being put in place, where was the first place that child was put in the classroom? The very back seat, so they could not see what was on the interactive board. Common sense has a large role to play. While we may pass the legislation and try to improve the system, the training of those who have to fulfil this will be critical. With that, I will sit down.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill, which presents a platform for change. We have talked at

great length in the last number of months and years in this House about modernising our education system, be it through area planning or the establishment of the Education Authority, and it follows suit that we need to modernise our special educational needs facilities.

Every Member will have horror stories about processes of statementing and inconsistencies across the North. In my locality of the Mournes, where two boards meet, a young child with autism at one end of a road can be granted every service required to meet their needs, whereas the parents of a child with autism at the other end of the road may have to pay thousands of pounds to meet that very same need. The situation has not been fair, which is another reason why this legislation is very welcome.

The last Member spoke of the 67% rise in autism cases. Indeed, the rising need in special educational needs across the board is alarming. A multi-causal approach is needed to decipher what exactly is causing that rise. Again, that highlights the need to modernise our system when it comes to special educational needs.

A point that we have all touched upon today is the interface with health authorities, and I welcome the reference in the Bill to strengthening that. The interface is often sluggish, to the great frustration of parents, schools and those in the education sector who are trying to deal with the issue. We need to build an agreed inclusive pathway. I was speaking to a colleague before I came in here who described it as a "battle". Too often, parents have had to engage in a battle to get the services that their children deserve and are entitled to. Parents and children should never have to engage in a battle to receive the services that they need. I hope that that is what can be achieved with this legislation.

The Minister talked this morning of a whole-school acceptance, which I welcome. We need to build special educational needs into the fabric of schools; it should not be just an add-on. The inclusivity of the process is very important. In light of that, I welcome the fact that there has been over the past number of years a very intensive and engaging process with parents, children, stakeholders and schools. It is that empowerment of children and of families that is very important. Even a cursory glance at clauses 6, 7, 8 and 9 suggests that there will be that empowerment of parents and families. The Chair talked about mediation and the right of appeal, which will be very important. I look forward to digging down into that at Committee Stage.

A big driver will be the Education Authority, not just in standardising services across the North to provide support for children but also in the training, support, advice and guidance from boards of governors and schools and around what we term the SENCO, namely the coordinating teacher. It will be very important, as the last Member to speak said, in addition to getting the building blocks in place, to make sure that the nuts and bolts are all in place and that the system will work.

It is important that we do not get bogged down today in each clause. I welcome the Bill, and I look forward at Committee Stage to digging down into it and, as other Members have said, to the further scrutiny of the secondary legislation to come.

11.30 am

Mr Newton: Like others, I welcome the general principle of the Bill and thank the Minister for bringing it forward. It

becomes a bit of a cliché and can be said too often, but society is often judged by the way in which it treats the most vulnerable in society. In this case, we are talking about children and young adults, many of whom have very complex needs and some of whom have less complex needs. Nevertheless, the purpose of drafting legislation is to provide betterment and to improve the position of the people whom the Bill is targeted towards. In this case, it is those who have a vulnerability: children with special needs. They are among the most vulnerable in our society and, in many cases, comprise a section that needs as much support as society can offer. We are dealing with legislation today, but we need to remember that, at the very heart of that legislation, are children and families. Indeed, in the professional way in which support is offered, we need to address the legislation towards teachers and support staff and to improve the holistic package that is offered to all of them.

In the Chair's initial remarks, she very adequately indicated the position. The Department's most recent figures show that the percentage of children with special needs has risen from what we thought at one stage was around 16% of the school population. That figure was taken 10 years ago and, in the intervening period, has risen, so that 22% of the school population are children with special needs. Included in those figures are 73,000 children with special educational needs, 16,000 of whom have been identified as having no formal statement of their needs.

An increasing number of parents are coming to my constituency office with autistic spectrum disorder issues, and a number of children with autism have come to me for work experience. I can well understand the concerns of those parents. In five years, autistic spectrum disorder has increased by about 67%. Those are phenomenal figures, and I do not think that society in general appreciates them. It is our children whom we are dealing with, and the legislation needs to be addressed towards their needs. The Chair said that it is self-evident that the statementing process is complex, confusing and overly bureaucratic, and I know that from parents who come to the office. Even with support staff, it is difficult for me to find my way through it. Parents get confused, and that often leads to frustration, which is not good for the family atmosphere, for the child or for other children.

Last week, the Minister spoke to the Committee about where he was going to orientate his budget, about services that are being offered and where he would have to reduce services and budgets. Indeed, many will be disappointed that the very services that offer support will be targeted in the 2015-16 budget and will receive cutbacks. We are looking to bring in legislation to improve the situation for children while, on the other hand, we are looking at cutbacks to the budget that provides the support services for them.

I have a few remarks to make about the Bill in its totality and a little bit about what it does or should do for our children, their parents, and the teaching profession which deals with them. I was invited to Glenveagh Special School a number of weeks ago. I walked around the school with the principal and one of her staff, and I do not think that I could have been more impressed by a school that is probably at the more extreme end of the spectrum for children with very complex needs. I could not have been more impressed by the way those children were

being taught, and being trained in many cases. I had the opportunity to see them in the classroom and coming in from work experience, and you only had to look at the staff to see their dedication.

The point has been made already about the need for this Bill to ensure that the education system and health provision are joined up. In the case of the pupils at that school, and, I imagine, across the board, we need to see Education and Health joining up in the provision of support for the professional staff in that school in particular.

As I was leaving the school and saying, "Thank you" to the two professional teaching staff, I remarked to them that I had never seen a school with more smiles in it. The principal said that that comment is often made by people who come to visit Glenveagh Special School. They notice the smiles of the pupils as they are going around the school. It is the professional staff who support those pupils whom we need to support through this legislation.

I will talk a bit about the children. This legislation has to target the children, in the sense that it helps to build their confidence in their future and their abilities to survive beyond the normal school environment. That needs an approach that is child-centred — if that is not too much of a cliché — an approach that supports the child in their school environment and prepares the child for life beyond their school years. Mr Swann made some comments about the reaction by DEL in that area, as the child goes on to further education. This is about building the confidence of the child as a pupil in the school and maximising the full potential of the child to enjoy a quality of life beyond the school years that any of us would want for any of our children as they travel through school and into manhood or womanhood.

I will say a few words about the parents. I have already said that parents who come into my office looking at the early stages of statemented needs find the situation confusing and frustrating. Too often — this point has already been made — the parents find themselves battling against bureaucracy. If this Bill does not help in that battle against bureaucracy, we will have failed those parents in many ways, certainly in the very early years. What we need to think about is a simple, joined-up approach, so that all the support mechanisms that can be brought to bear for the parents are brought to bear for them. The system should be designed to benefit the parents, and therefore benefit the children in their journey through life — in many cases, a very difficult journey through life.

I do not want to say any more than that. The Chair has already made some comments regarding where we, in the DUP group, will be expressing concern. We are looking forward to working on the Bill and hopefully making the situation — in legislative terms — better for the children, the parents and the professionals who work in this field.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate today. As has been stated, the current arrangements date back to 1986, albeit that there have been some changes in the intervening period. It is well past the time for us to introduce a legislative framework that is fit for purpose for the 21st century. This Bill gives us the opportunity to build that framework and to deal with the increasing number of children with special needs. Today we have heard chapter and verse about the vast increase in the number of

children being diagnosed with special educational needs, and that is something that the legislation has to take account of.

The rising number of children with special needs has been accompanied by delays in carrying out assessments, and I, for one, welcome the commitment of the Minister and the parts of the legislation that will lead to a reduction of the period for assessment from 26 weeks to 20 weeks. I hope that 20 weeks is going to be the upper limit, rather than a minimum period, in which assessments can be carried out on those children who have special needs.

It is vital that schools — I include the boards of governors in that — and the Education Authority are clear about their responsibilities. Hopefully, this Bill will also bring about clarity in that regard.

While over 5,000 children with very complex special educational needs are in special schools, the overwhelming majority are in mainstream schools. The challenge facing us, as legislators, is first to ensure that children with SEN are provided with the best possible learning environment. It may be that some children with particularly complex needs need a bespoke environment, but, for the vast majority, mainstream schools will be the environment in which they go through the education system. In that light, schools must be welcoming, diverse and provide for the challenges presented by having an inclusive system, so that children are not discriminated against and, just as importantly, that there is no perception that children with special needs are discriminated against within our education system.

I welcome the duty that the Bill places on boards of governors, including the requirement for a personal learning plan for each child on the school's SEN register.

11.45 am

One of the good things about speaking towards the end of a debate is that most of what you planned to say has been said. I will conclude by welcoming the legislation. Hopefully, it will bring modernisation and greater consistency to the system.

Mr Ramsey: I am not a member of the Education Committee, but I declare an interest as chair of the all-party group on learning disability and the all-party group on disability. I welcome the Minister's announcement on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill. I believe that the Bill, if properly implemented, will make legislative changes to support the revised general educational needs and inclusion framework. I support the policy intention of the Bill, which is to ensure, as many Members have said, the early intervention, identification, assessment and provision for children who have special needs.

In order for children to achieve their full potential, they must be placed firmly at the centre, as Robin Swann said. Parents clearly have to be involved in the process, and I will come back to the parents. All the figures have been mentioned and, when you reflect on them, they are alarming. The 67% increase in autism is most alarming. We had the Autism Bill here, but I do not believe that we are getting to a conclusion that is giving more comfort or peace of mind to many parents, because we do not have the most effective cross-departmental approach that is seen in Scotland and possibly in Wales as well.

I note the themes coming from the Department in the review of SEN, one of which is an inclusive framework that raises the standards for all. This is important. Pat Sheehan mentioned discrimination, but it is not even as much as discrimination. A child is vulnerable at an early age when it is noticed that there is something particular about that child that needs assessment, and it is important that we move away from the postcode lottery to ensure that, whether it is a speech and language issue or the need for a classroom assistant, we identify those needs and get them on the table as soon as possible.

Seán Rogers identified some issues with clause 5, which is about reducing the time provided to the authority from 29 days to 22 days. That would put additional pressure on learning support coordinators. We have to examine that, and I am sure that the Minister will do so. We do not want it to be a bureaucratic paper chase for a lot of people who are working on it, particularly learning support workers.

I previously asked the Minister about how much collaboration has taken place with the Health Minister on the review, and I was very content with his response that he will have the fullest support. In any review of special needs, it is important that the Health Department and health trusts are involved from the early stages. We have all met the parents, and we are parents ourselves. Bringing up a child is a trial and tribulation, but there is nothing worse for a mother, in particular, to find out that her son or daughter has challenging or special needs — challenging to the extent that access to the system has to be made easier.

In recent times, Minister, a number of parents in my constituency got a formal statement and wanted to challenge it; but it is most difficult to make efforts to do that individually. In fact, they ask Assembly Members to make the intervention in order to try to secure a meeting because there is a sense, or belief, in the community, whether it is true or not, and particularly with the education and library boards under increasing pressure, that even determinations on whether a child needs a classroom assistant are being reduced because they cannot afford to do it. I am not asking the Minister to comment on that, but that is the perception amongst parents. I have attended meetings representing parents of children with special needs and we have won the case by articulating an argument. However, we have to find a method that ensures the right outcome without such representation. People said that children need to be at the centre: they have to be. The only people who can articulate the needs of a child of five or six are the parents or carers, especially the mother; and we have to find a way of making that possible. A child's development should never be stymied because of financial considerations; they cannot be left behind.

Robin Swann, as Chair of the Employment and Learning Committee, noted earlier and correctly that we are presently hearing from the post-19 lobby. We have gone through nearly every constituency exhaustively looking at best practice. Robin Newton referenced the smiles in special needs classes: it does anybody's heart good to visit the special needs schools across Northern Ireland, where the children are so full of joy and happiness; joy and happiness that are then brought back to the families and communities in which they live through the bond and love they have.

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Ramsey: Yes.

Mr Swann: Does the Member agree with my earlier point that this has to reach into DEL provision? The Member knows the facilities we have visited and the concerns of the parents we talked to that, once their children reach 19, the smiles quickly disappear along with the support provided by schools.

Mr Ramsey: I concur with the Chair of the Committee.

Health is crucial, but it is clear from the inquiry that parents have identified failures at primary and post-primary level affecting the development of their children. A number of parents — and it would be good to hear the Minister's comments on this — have articulated a very strong argument for retaining the formal special educational needs statement until a young person is 25. That happens in Britain; in fact, the Committee will be visiting Manchester tomorrow to inform itself of models of good practice.

As we come to the end of the Committee inquiry, we will look to bring forward some proposals that are relevant to educational need. I quote the following statistic regularly, and it is something that we have to be clear on: someone with a learning disability in Northern Ireland is four times less likely to secure employment. That is a damning indictment of our system. A lot of effective work goes on in colleges in Northern Ireland for those with learning disabilities, and yet, as I have just noted, non-accredited courses for such children leaving special needs or mainstream schools will no longer be funded. That is a matter for the Committee to take up with the Minister.

The language now used by parents is of individually tailored plans and career pathways, which will put children in the best place as they leave the education system. We have to ensure — and many Members are using the term — a platform for change to take advantage of this. As someone who has a personal, but also political, interest in the needs of young people with disabilities and special needs, I think we have to do better, we have to be more purposeful and we cannot leave people behind. Many of those who fall into the not in education, employment or training (NEET) category have disabilities or special needs. We have to ensure that those areas of education are protected and that there is greater investment in special needs at the early years.

Health, again, is so important. In our Committee inquiry, and at my constituency office, I have witnessed the frustration, anger and tears of parents. At an event here last year, older parents of children with special needs told us, very emotionally, that they hoped their children would die before them, as they would be abandoned by the state. I know that this does not directly refer to the Minister of Education, but their biggest point was this: their son or daughter should have had a greater opportunity, at school age, to develop their independence and become more fit to seek employment and live on their own. That is where we need to get it better. We need to ensure that the individually tailored plans for children from age 5 are purposeful and that they concur with what the parents believe.

I believe that the parents' wishes and desires are ignored at times because specialists believe that they know better than the mother. They do not. It is very simple: they do not know better than the mother. We have to find a way of ensuring that the mother's, parent's or carer's voice is on the level when special educational needs are being

assessed, progressed and developed. That is the only way we can make a difference with the Bill.

Mr Kinahan: I welcome the Bill. I have been on the Committee for two and a half years, and it is good to see legislation on special needs coming in front of us.

I also welcome the Bill's intention to include increased transparency and reduced bureaucracy and to focus on early intervention. I welcome the latter especially, as all the studies that we see seem to indicate that, the sooner a child's special needs are identified, the sooner we can deal with matters and help them with their education. As members of the Education Committee, we must remember that the key is to ensure that they get the excellent education that all of us deserve. We must also remember that, in what we are trying to do, various things, especially their welfare, must be looked after.

I have concerns about the Bill. It seems to be over-bureaucratic in places. It sets up costly and time-consuming procedures. At times, it seems to place an unsuitable burden on governors and possibly an even more burdensome role on some of the teachers when they are already appallingly overburdened. I do not want to be negative all the way through, but those are some of my major concerns. I am also concerned that we are relying that much more on the Department and the Education Authority when all the cuts are coming into place. We may well be losing many of those with experience.

The Bill is part of the solution. I think that we have a great deal of work to do to make sure that it works and puts in place the basis for a really good, thorough solution in the future. Others already touched on this, but we need a good cross-departmental approach. It intrigues me that the Bill places a duty on the Education Authority to request help from the Department of Health and Social Services if it believes that the health and social care bodies could help in the exercise of the Education Authority's functions. That is useless if such a duty is not reciprocated by the Health Department. I was intrigued to hear that there has obviously been some discussion between others and the Minister. It seems that the Department will do that, but I would like to hear that from it.

I realise that this is just the Second Reading and that we should be dealing with the Bill's general principles, but I would like to explore some matters in more detail. We, as a party, are happy for the Bill to proceed, but we look forward to hearing about that detail. I feel that there should be more consultation with the public, the parents and the children as the Bill proceeds. There is a general feeling amongst those who practise the teaching of special needs that the Bill is a cover for reducing the spend on special needs. I know that the Minister has said that it is not, but that is something that we are going to have to deal with, as it is very much out there. If you extrapolate the graph that we were given in our excellent brief, you will find that it was intriguing to see that we could be looking at 25% of our pupils having special needs by 2020. So, yes, it is right that we streamline and look at better systems, and I think that it is probably right that we look at how we spend our money better.

12.00 noon

I am sure that every MLA in the Chamber has had to raise special needs issues with their library boards or the

Department because parents were not happy with the initial provision, with the school or with the board and what it offered, with the speed of statementing or even with the final provision that is decided on. We must remember that each child has only that one shot at education, and they deserve the most accurate, efficient and correct process possible to ensure that they receive the excellent education that I hinted at. We have to find something that has no delays and is quick, well informed and, most importantly, well resourced. I hope that the Bill will help to get us there.

The consultation was in 2009, some five years ago. At that time, the Education Committee referred to:

"a groundswell of concern and anxiety about the proposed changes".

The main concerns were about a dilution of the protections and resources. We are now seeing the detail of the changes that will come about. I hope that it will not just be the Committee that sounds out everyone on where the changes will be. We should look at consulting in some way.

When it comes to the bureaucratic procedures, I welcome the wish to have a more transparent system but ask whether the introduction of appeals and mediations without time limits or timescales is the best and most cost-effective way to do things. It seems right that parents, children and, where suitable, independent advisers should be able to challenge decisions within these mechanisms, but has anyone really thought through the practicalities of legislating or assessed the financial cost or the cost in time and hours put in by teachers, parents and governors? We need to question those matters as we go through the Bill.

If a child is to have more say, does that have to be given a legal basis? I am told by those who practise at the moment that children's wishes are already part of the process and that it works extremely well. By giving it a legal basis, I am concerned that we are, as ever, giving more work to lawyers and putting in place an expensive delaying system that will mean that children will not get the fast service that we should give them.

I am also concerned about the burden being placed on governors. I remember going to a governors' meeting in Hillsborough two years ago, when we were discussing the ESA Bill, and they were incensed by the extra work that we were expecting of them. Many governors give many hours and evenings of their life as they battle with budgets, teacher appointments and redundancies and with inspections and their aftermath, yet here we are loading even more on them. I have been a governor and was appalled to find myself legally bound to decide a principal's future without ever being shown the evidence. I hope that no governor is ever put in that position again. In the Bill, we must be careful about placing a legal duty on people who do not have control of every aspect of information or the skills needed to make their decisions.

Under the Bill, we expect the governors of a school to inform all those involved about a pupil's special needs. We expect them to maintain a learning plan for every pupil with special needs, to ensure that a teacher is designated as a learning support coordinator and to ensure that everyone is aware of the arrangements for dispute avoidance and resolution. We are putting a great deal on governors'

shoulders. I am sure that most of them are able for it, but we need to think about it.

When you think about it, the trained learning support coordinators will need to keep the governors right, but will they? Just as today, principals keep governors right on teachers and pupils, and the person on the board of governors who is skilled in finance also advises, but where will we go when we do not have the support, the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) or the resources? We are relying on the governors making the decisions without necessarily having been given all of the right support.

Another area is the concern about training and the continual capacity of the teachers themselves. I met some principals last week who told me that morale was at an all-time low. The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) has asked whether teachers have adequate time and resources to take on the new roles on special needs. Last year, the vice principals showed in a survey of their own staff that they were overworked. The principals whom we spoke to during the inquiry — in fact, during most of the things that we have dealt with on the Committee — have shown more and more being loaded on the teachers. When we went to one school, it showed us that there were 36 consultations, surveys and other forms that it had to return. We were told recently that there are now over 70. We need to think about how much we load on to our teachers. John McGrath said that they will always cope: we have fantastic teachers, and, yes, they will always cope, but at some point we are pushing everyone towards breaking point.

There is much more in the Bill that we should discuss. That will all be clarified as we go through it in Committee, but I am concerned, like others, about the other regulations and guidelines that will come in on the back of the Bill. I look forward to seeing where they are and understanding them in detail before we, as a party, give the support that we need.

I would also like to raise the same concerns as my colleague Robin Swann brought in about making sure that we can extend it past 19, and I take on board those who have suggested that we should look further, up to 25. Although it is not necessarily this Minister's role, it is always concerning when you meet so many parents who are now the sole carer for their child once they have left school.

We need to find a new way forward. The Bill has so much going for it. I have highlighted the areas that I am concerned about, and I look forward to seeing it in Committee.

Mr McCausland: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill. It is important that we identify children with special needs at an early stage and that the needs of those children are addressed. That is good for the child, for the parents, for the family from which they come and for society as a whole.

The figures that have been presented to us this morning by the Chair of the Committee and have been referenced by others in regard to the scale of the situation are indeed stark. From a situation 10 years ago where 16% of the school population had special educational needs — one in six — we are now, 10 years later, at a figure of 22%, which is one in five and not far short of one in four. When you

look at those figures and the scale represented by them — 73,000 children with special educational needs — it leads on to this question: is that simply a reflection or result of better identification of children with special educational needs, or are there other issues here underlying it? The careful analysis and examination of the background is important. How does it compare with other areas of the United Kingdom and with other countries? What are the comparisons across the Province?

The issue of budget has already been mentioned. Of course, that has to be very much in our minds. It is therefore important that, in the thinking of the Department, there is recognition of the importance of money being allocated in regard to SEN. There are many things that we might want to do and that might seem desirable, but there are certain things that should be seen as priorities, and this is certainly one of them. Yet the growth in the demand for SEN support services has undoubtedly placed a considerable burden on budgets for the education and library boards, and it will do so in the future for the Education Authority.

The need to improve the special educational needs situation is, I think, in the mind of most Members. We all have constituents come into our office with concerns about problems that they have encountered in obtaining a statement of special educational needs for a child or, thereafter, in ensuring that the child receives the appropriate provision. It is clear to us all from those experiences that the current situation is complex and that parents can often find it confusing, difficult and bureaucratic. There is a recognition across the Assembly that there is a need for change. Of course, the question then is what the nature of that change might be. Our desire is that there should be a reduction in statementing timescales and that the process should be simpler and quicker than it is currently. I hope therefore that what is eventually brought into law is not overly and unnecessarily bureaucratic.

In that regard, the changes to the appeal mechanism are welcome. The proposal of an independent mediation service is a good development that will help to resolve disagreements more effectively. An informal mediation system of the sort that we currently have is helpful, but it is clearly desirable that that be put on a more formal, independent footing.

We also have to keep in mind the balance between the primary legislation that we are looking at today and the anticipated secondary legislation. Beyond that, there will be a consequent impact on the statutory SEN code of practice. I know that the Committee will get briefings on the secondary legislation and so on after Easter and will have a better understanding then of where that is going. There is a concern that we are seeing only part of the picture at this stage: we really need to see the bigger picture. I hope that what is presented to the Committee after Easter will help provide that better understanding and better picture. It is that absence of detail that makes the current situation somewhat difficult for us in the Assembly today and somewhat unsatisfactory for the Committee. Although I totally support the general principle of the Bill, principle has to be followed by detail.

There is another point that I want to acknowledge. Postcode lotteries and inconsistencies across the five boards have been mentioned. The creation of a single

authority should address and improve that situation in part, but the pre-existing inconsistencies have certainly caused a degree of confusion among parents.

As I said, I support the general principle of the Bill. It is good, and it is moving in the right direction, but the detail that needs to follow is hugely important. We need to know exactly what is proposed and what the implications are. Committee Stage will be hugely important.

Mr Agnew: The Minister and I have engaged on my private Member's Bill, which calls for a statutory duty to cooperate. I am conscious that, if I paraphrase the Minister and get him wrong, he will call me out on it, so I will try to be accurate in my description. I think that he is, at best, ambivalent about my Bill and the need for legislation. Perhaps I have not provided him with sufficient examples of why I believe that my Bill is needed. If he needs a further example, it is his Bill.

As other Members said, this is a key issue and it is important that we get it right. There are too many examples, not so much of what is in the Bill — I do not think that I have any major objections to that — but of what is not.

12.15 pm

I am delighted that the Chair of the Committee for Employment and Learning spoke because he highlighted one of the problems. Where is the post-18 and post-19 SEN provision in the Bill? Indeed, where in the Bill are the duties on the Department of Health? The problem with the Bill is not its content but that it is a Department of Education Bill when what we need is a cross-departmental Bill to properly deal with the issues that affect children with special educational needs and their families. If we are to get it right, we need those three Departments' input. Whilst I have no doubt that there has been consultation, it is apparent that there has not been cooperation and collaboration, because we are left with a single departmental Bill when SEN provisions stretch across at least three Departments and perhaps more.

A number of Members highlighted the issue with clause 4 and the duty on the Education Authority to request health and social care bodies' help in cases where possible special educational needs have been identified. However, there is no reciprocal duty. We are effectively being told that the Department cannot legislate for that, as one Minister cannot legislate for the other. I understand that. We need a cross-departmental Bill, and, if that is not possible, we need to look at our systems of governance. What appears to be the case and what many Members alluded to is that the Minister cannot do that, so the House will have to. In my view, that is not good governance. If it is clear that there is an omission from the Bill, it should have been resolved between Departments in cooperation at Executive level before the legislation was brought to the House.

I have seen examples of very good multidisciplinary work in the diagnosis of SEN. Again, it appears that that work happens within the Department of Health and that there is potentially less scope for it within the Department of Education or, at least, within schools. I am sure that there are counter-examples, but, in my experience, that joined-up working between the Department of Education and the Department of Health still seems to have some way to go.

In the research for my Bill, I came across a great quote in which one parent defined integrated services as not

having to repeat yourself 30 times in 30 different contexts. If we are to really improve timelines, we need the services to wrap around the child and the family, rather than them having to go to each assessment and each practitioner to get the various assessments while explaining the child's experiences each time, repeating themselves and duplicating effort.

This goes back to the need for joined-up working between the Departments and some of the issues that Robin Swann raised, but another great omission from the Bill is transitions. We have had the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People report on transitions for many years. It highlights the parallel approach for transitions planning of the Health Department and the Education Department. We all find transitions difficult, but children with autism will find them particularly difficult. We are sometimes multiplying those transitions because the Health Department will have one plan for the transition from child to adult services, and the Education Department will have another plan. That increases the challenges for a child, when surely our government structures should be mitigating the challenges that those children face.

An issue that has recently come to my attention, which ties into this, is the experience of blind and partially sighted children. I absolutely have to give credit to the Education Department because the evidence is that blind and partially sighted children do well in education. Their educational performance is on a par with their peers, yet, post-secondary education, there is a significant dip in further and higher education and employment. Again, that is why a SEN Bill that comes solely from the Education Department cannot and will not — arguably, it is not the policy intention — solve these problems. It is regrettable that we have a SEN Bill that does not address those issues. It is a missed and wasted opportunity if we do not propose to address the issues of transitions and of SEN post-19.

Clause 5 deals with the time that it takes for diagnosis, and anyone would welcome any reduction in the time frame. Constituents have come to me with their experiences, as has happened to many Members. Certainly, one case appeared in the press, on which I asked a number of questions. It appears that things are improving, but there was a particular problem in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area, where I think that it is fair to say that the timelines were unacceptable. However, as I said, I welcome the improvements that have been made.

Maybe it is not a place for legislation, but it is worth putting on record that, when problems are identified, it is important that we do not wait for the assessment process to make interventions. I have seen good practice in schools, where, on the identification of a problem, support is put in place rather than waiting for the assessment process to complete its course. When a problem is recognised, the interventions are in place and the five-stage approach, as it stands, gives schools and teachers the powers to act quickly. The evidence is that those interventions, rather than the statement or a decision not to impose a statement, make the difference for a child. However, as a lot of the legislation stands, the statement becomes important for access to some services and resources for schools. I am not negating the importance of statements in the context of our system, but they should not be the be-all

and end-all. When needs are identified, a child should receive the interventions as soon as is practicable.

A lot of this comes down to investment in the early years. We have the evidence that shows that this is where we can have the biggest impact with the most efficient use of resources. That will be particularly true, or certainly no less true, for children with special educational needs. Again, that is why we need a cross-departmental Bill. Some of the interventions that are required potentially will be before a child will come into contact with the formal education system, whether at nursery or primary school. Again, that early identification and support is very necessary to ensure the best outcomes for these children.

I have to say that my experience is that, currently, provision is mixed across schools and across boards. I have said on occasions that it is about making good practice common practice. I have to give credit to my son's school, Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, where I have seen some very good practice. I am not saying that it is perfect, but some of the interventions that have been shown to work with children with special educational needs are actually being rolled out across the school. A child with special educational needs is not being taken aside and given special provision — if that is necessary, that is fine — but some of that which would have been deemed to be special provision is actually being generalised; for example, the use of visual cues rather than solely verbal cues. It has actually been found to be of benefit to all children. That is a model of good practice. I do not have sufficient experience to say how widespread that practice is, but I certainly think that we need to take those positive examples of good practice and learning between schools and indeed, as I say, across board areas until we move to the single Education Authority, because it is clear that provision is mixed and that children's experiences differ from school to school and board to board. As I say, the school that I have most experience with has been very positive. I want to put that on record. There is good practice, and it can be built upon.

As I say, I believe that the issue with this Bill is not what is in it but very much what is not in it and indeed the fact that it comes from one Minister. Ultimately, this is a Bill that had to be agreed at Executive level and should be cross-departmental in its scope and provisions because, if we are going to properly address the problems with special educational need provision in the system — and there is good practice, but more needs to be done — the only way in which we can do that is through cooperation across Departments and cross-departmental legislation.

Mr A Maginness: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I just want to apologise because I crossed by Mr Agnew when he was speaking. I really do apologise.

Mr Speaker: Thank you for that. I think that this would be an appropriate time to suspend the debate. 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 sitting is, by leave, suspended.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.29 pm.

On resuming (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Newton] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Social Development

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Questions 10 and 14 have been withdrawn. We start with listed questions.

Owner-occupier Dwellings: Grants

1. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the criteria used to decide on the award of grants provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for owner-occupier dwellings. (AQO 7762/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development):

A range of private-sector housing repair, improvement and adaptations grants is available to owner-occupiers. There are seven grants, including two mandatory grants, namely the disabled facilities grant and the repairs grant, and five discretionary grants, which are for renovation, replacement, houses in multiple occupancy, home repairs assistance and common parts.

One main aim of the current grants system is that resources should be targeted at those who can least afford to pay for works to their properties, with a particular focus on mandatory grants. The disabled facilities and repairs grants must be paid on referral by an occupational therapist or on receipt of certain statutory notices. Disabled facilities grants are designed to support people with disabilities to live independently in their own home. The repairs grant is available to landlords, agents and tenants towards the cost of repairing houses following the issue of statutory notices by the local council.

The Housing Executive has the discretion to make available the other grants, subject to the availability of sufficient budget. Applications are means-tested. That means that the total amount that the Housing Executive awards for a grant is the total approved cost of the work less the amount that the applicant can afford to pay.

My Department provides other grants to improve the energy efficiency of owner-occupied dwellings. They are the warm homes scheme, which is available to households in receipt of certain qualifying benefits; the affordable warmth scheme, which actively targets low-income households considered to be most at risk of fuel poverty; and the boiler replacement scheme, which assists households with the installation of a new, more energy-efficient, boiler.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that information. Does the Minister find that, on occasions, if statutory notices are put forward, there may not be the funding, particularly in the repairs grant, which is mandatory, to carry out repairs? Are they all approved?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member. There is always the issue of a correlation between the money that you have available and the requirement and duty placed on you. Obviously, there is always a challenge for me and, I think, the Housing

Executive to meet our statutory requirements and all our obligations. The reduction in discretionary grants has been necessitated by a significant budget reduction since the economic downturn, for example. However, I would like to think that we will still give priority to schemes where there is a requirement to be applicable and to be found to bring in line the requirement for a statutory order.

Magherafelt Town Centre

2. Mr Milne asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department plans to take to regenerate Magherafelt town centre. (AQO 7763/11-15)

Mr Storey: The regeneration of Magherafelt town centre has been an ongoing commitment of my Department. Since June 2012, DSD has committed funding of £529,493 for regeneration projects, including the Queen Street revitalisation scheme, at £150,000; funding of £100,000 for the marketing and branding of Magherafelt and the associated town centre Wi-Fi project, which continues to evolve; a funding contribution of £37,000 for the gateway art features to be installed at the end of March 2015; £90,000 to fund the consultancy team to develop the Magherafelt public realm scheme up to detailed design stage; and funding of £152,493 for the regeneration of Rainey Street, with works scheduled to complete by 31 March 2015. My Department continues to work with Magherafelt District Council and the new Mid Ulster council to deliver as much of the Magherafelt town centre public realm scheme as possible before the DSD funding and powers transfer to the new Mid Ulster council from 1 April 2016.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra go dtí seo. Thank you for your answer thus far. Will the commencement of the new Magherafelt bypass have any impact on your plans for the regeneration of the town?

Mr Storey: I hope that that will not be the case. There have been discussions between those who have been carrying out the work on the master plan and DRD. We often talk about how government works together, and it would be a huge challenge if we did not have a joined-up approach to what may be the implications of the proposed bypass. I am certainly aware of conversations that have been had by DRD and those who are looking at the master plan to ensure that Magherafelt gets the best possible outcome. We have outlined the schemes and the various elements of the schemes. I visited Magherafelt some time ago, and it is certainly a very strategic town in mid-Ulster. I am confident that the funding that has been allocated will continue to enhance and improve Magherafelt in the weeks and months ahead.

Mrs Overend: As part of the master plan that was commissioned in 2011, a strategic target was that vacant units would be occupied and the town centre would have further established itself as a lively leisure hub with a thriving evening economy. Will the Minister advise how the DSD regeneration function will work in partnership with the new local council that will shortly have responsibility for planning?

Mr Storey: Another important element in all of this is making sure that that happens. The Member will be aware that the issue of area plans and community planning becomes an integral part of the new regime as of 1

April. I am keen and have asked for a meeting with the Environment Minister to further discuss the issues. It is not enough for us as Ministers to believe that what may be on a piece of paper in a master plan or scheme will ultimately always come to fruition. The partnership panel, which is the coming together of the local authorities and central government and which I, along with my ministerial colleagues sit on, will discuss those very issues. I would like to think that, when it comes to how we roll out the plans, we do it in conjunction with the councils. The Member may be aware that I have already commenced the process of meeting the new councils so that it is a partnership, rather than an imposition of how we move forward in the future. With regard to the responsibilities that we have, I am very determined to ensure that my Department works with councils and not against them. At a strategic level, that will include how we ensure the delivery of master plans and all the relevant schemes that are currently in the system.

Mr I McCrea: I welcome the Minister's commitment to Magherafelt by providing the funding of — I think he said — £152,493 for the Rainey Street project. The work is ongoing, and already we see the benefits. Alongside that funding, can the Minister advise the House what money will be provided to the new Mid Ulster council when the funding package is provided to councils?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. It might be useful to outline for him the benefit that it has been to the town centre of Magherafelt. You referred to Rainey Street. The new Mid Ulster District Council indicated that it is committed to delivering three new public realm schemes — Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon phase 2 — at an estimated cost of over £8 million. The Mid Ulster council has assessed that it can deliver £4.5 million of these works in the 2015-16 financial year, subject to DSD providing this level of funding. All Departments, including DSD, have had to take difficult decisions, as you know, on how to allocate their reduced resources, but I have today signed off letters to all 11 councils that outline their funding allocations. I will also send copies to the Minister of the Environment and ensure that copies are placed in the Library so that Members will be able to see them. That will probably not happen until the end of this week so that councils have the opportunity to see their allocation first.

This has been a difficult budgetary process. Members have heard me say before that it is a huge challenge to ensure that we meet all our demands as a Department, and we then have the issue of how we should continue to fund local government. It was very important that we did not send out to local authorities any indication that we somehow felt that they were unworthy of being given the support that they deserve. As someone who came from local government to the House, I am very supportive of our councils. I wish the new councils well in the commencement of their work on 1 April. It was vital that, the budget —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Minister to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Storey: Yes. Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. While it will not be as the councils expected, it will not be as adverse as they initially thought it would be.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra chuimsitheach sin. I thank the Minister for his wide-ranging answer. Given the diminishing funding streams for urban development, what facility or resource does your Department have to help potential developers or councils to identify other EU or private access funding streams?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for that question. I also discussed this issue with his colleague the Minister of the Environment. You will be aware that his budget was under pressure due to environmental elements. In my Department, we previously had the urban regeneration grant. That funding stream came to an end before I came into post, and we are now just at the end process.

I have given serious consideration to what we could do to bring back something that is similar to the urban regeneration grant. I will give the Member the rationale for that. A number of towns across Northern Ireland, especially those that benefited from urban regeneration grants, became the catalysts for other investment, so they were not the sole funder of a particular project. I can think of one such case in my own town, Ballymoney, in Main Street. Had it not been for the urban regeneration grant and money that came from the DOE, the property owner would not have been incentivised to proceed. One of his challenges in proceeding was that his building lay in a conservation area, which brought additional costs. If anyone visits the premier town of Ballymoney — *[Laughter.]* — I say that without prejudice and with a straight face — you will see how a building has been transformed, which in turn has transformed the town centre and Main Street. I am looking at what can be done about that, but, given the budgetary constraints, it will be a challenge for us.

2.15 pm

Ulster University: Belfast Move

3. **Mr Dallat** asked the Minister for Social Development how his Department is helping to facilitate the move by Ulster University from Jordanstown to the Belfast city centre campus. (AQO 7764/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department is helping to facilitate the move by Ulster University from Jordanstown to Belfast primarily through its role in the strategic advisory forum. My Department leads and coordinates the forum, which is a cross-departmental, high-level body that considers strategic issues including planning and public realm, transportation and car parking, student housing, skills, employment and business outreach as well as community engagement.

The forum has been instrumental in supporting the progress of the new campus, which is in construction phase and is on schedule to open in 2018. Examples of that support are the successful outcome of the decision to award planning permission for the Frederick Street car park, which was pivotal to the university's move to Belfast, supporting the introduction of social clauses in construction contracts and collaboration and advice on engaging with businesses, communities and neighbourhoods in the immediate vicinity of the new campus.

Significantly, my Department also adjusted its Belfast Streets Ahead programme, bringing forward phase 3 so that this major public realm investment of around £35 million can complement and support the development of the university's new campus.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for a comprehensive answer. Could he give us his assessment of the impact that this move may have on social housing? I am thinking about not just the students but the increasing number of young people who depend on the Simon Community and on other organisations for a roof over their heads.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for the supplementary question. I have had a concern and I will outline it in this way. The Member will also be aware of the proposal in relation to Northside and the concerns expressed by communities there about the impact it would have and that, by this move, we would create another challenge to a local community from student accommodation and create another Holylands. I am aware of those concerns, but I believe it is better to have an agreed plan rather than the current situation, which is that permission has already been given for a number of developments that are sporadic and where there is no central control of how that will be managed.

I take the point that he makes about the Simon Community. I am conscious of those concerns and that we do not do anything that exacerbates that situation. The other concern that I have, and I think it only right to say this to the House, is that there needs to be greater coordination between all the Departments in relation to this. We have the strategic advisory forum, but I do not believe that it has buy-in from everybody at a high enough level. We have DOE issues, DARD issues, Department of Justice issues, DEL issues and DSD issues. Let us remember that this campus is coming and that progress is being made. To try to take all that into account, I have asked my ministerial colleagues to come together and have further discussion as to how, strategically, we ensure that one of the largest investments in Belfast in many years, at over £1 billion, is coordinated. It has to be planned so that we deliver the best possible outcome for everybody involved.

Ms P Bradley: As a representative of North Belfast, I thank the Minister for his answers. What exactly has the strategic advisory forum achieved?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for her question. As I said, the forum has representation at high level across government. It is, therefore, able to at least supply solutions as problems arise over the period of this scheme.

An example of that was when the strategic advisory forum was instrumental in securing the successful outcome to the planning application for the Frederick Street car park. If that had not been secured, we would be in a completely different situation. As a condition of the university's planning permission, it had to acquire a car park with 350 spaces within 400 metres of the university's main building. Following analysis of the local car parks, the Frederick Street site was identified as the only viable option in terms of regeneration of the area and meeting the university's car parking requirements. My Department and DRD were able to assist the university in acquiring the car park. That is one example of what could be done, but I go back to the concern that I have about the momentum of this forum. I have had discussions with the university and the council, and let us remember that Belfast City Council plays a

hugely important role in the issue. I want to make sure that everybody — government, council and university — is engaged in a way that delivers the best possible project.

Mr Dickson: Minister, thank you for the information that you have given the House so far on the University of Ulster's project at York Street. Can the Minister tell us what action he has taken with the university to ensure that this important development includes a genuine opportunity for shared space in that part of north Belfast? On cross-cutting issues, what action has he taken with the Regional Development Minister to encourage the Yorkgate interchange?

Mr Storey: I will deal with the last question first. The Member made a very important reference to the interchange. If we are to transform that part of the city, one of the elements that will be pivotal to that will be the transport infrastructure. For example, we need to be sure that the railway connection to York Street is tied in to the project. I have a concern about that strategic thinking. We have seen phenomenal growth in the railways, and, if we are to encourage its use by students, who are good at using the railway system, by providing access to the university, surely a key component will be the location of York Street station. That is why I have asked for a meeting with the other ministers. I worry that there is almost a sense of "Well, we know this is coming in 2018", but it is not as organised and strategic as I think it should be.

On the first point about shared provision, the very nature of the university is one of shared provision. The campus is not for any particular section of the community, so the university in itself is the essence of shared provision, and it will bring the experience that it has from delivering in Jordanstown to this part of Belfast.

Public Realm Works: Lisburn

4. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the investment in public realm works in Lisburn since 2011. (AQO 7765/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department has invested approximately £3.2 million in public realm works in Lisburn since April 2011. That investment, which includes new granite paving, new street furniture, enhanced lighting, tree planting, a spectacular event place and resurfacing works, will result in significant improvements to the main thoroughfares of Market Square, Market Street, Bow Street, Market Lane, Graham Gardens and Haslems Lane.

The aim of the scheme is to substantially raise the quality of the environment to enable Lisburn city centre to diversify and create modern office accommodation to attract business and leisure activities that will help to sustain activity in the city centre outside traditional business hours. The investment in Lisburn city centre is considered to be fundamental to delivering the economic regeneration of the city to ensure it remains vital and viable for years to come.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for his answer. Lisburn welcomes the investment that has gone into it. What impact does the Minister expect that investment to have on the city centre when it is eventually completed and what are the expected outcomes for the scheme?

Mr Storey: As I have said about other schemes, such as the one in Magherafelt and those in other places, the scheme plays an important role. If we had not been making

that investment in our towns, we would have seen a far worse situation. Let us remember that many town centres right across the United Kingdom are in a dire condition. The investment that we have put in has made a substantial improvement to some of our towns. It is an improvement in this way: it is designed to rejuvenate. Lisburn is a historic city, and the investment will ensure that high-quality public realm schemes provide a better platform for investment in the city. It is always challenging, and I know that there are public realm schemes that issues are raised about. There are always problems and difficulties, but I think that, where we have worked our way through them, we have seen a benefit.

The measurable objectives of the scheme are to enhance the retail expenditure by 10%, to reduce vacancy rates by 15%, to increase footfall by 10% and to increase city-centre living in the project area. An evaluation of the completed scheme will be carried out a year after the completion of the outcomes of the measurable objectives.

Neighbourhood Renewal Funding

5. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the future of neighbourhood renewal funding in Belfast. (AQO 7766/11-15)

Mr Storey: The transfer of urban regeneration powers and responsibilities to councils has been deferred for one year, until April 2016, as Members know. That means that my Department will continue to be responsible for administering urban regeneration and community development in 2015-16. Neighbourhood renewal provides services to people living in our most deprived communities. In this difficult financial climate, I am seeking to protect projects that demonstrate most effectively that they are meeting the objectives of the programme. The process of assessing applications on the basis of evidence of need and impact of each project is currently ongoing.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his answer, and I thank him for coming to the lower Newtownards Road these past few months. Can he give us an update on the refurbishment of the Ballymac Centre?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for the invitation to visit the lower Newtownards Road, and I was delighted to be able to make that visit to see it at first hand. That is always the part of the job that I enjoy most. There are other parts that, I can assure you, are not just as enjoyable and are more challenging and demanding than going out to see at first hand the impact and the benefit that even an announcement of funding can have. We are going through the process to appoint the contractor. A shortlist of contractors will be compiled, and those contractors will be invited to submit bids for the project. I was able on that occasion to give an assurance to the local community and local representatives, including the Member and Gavin Robinson, that the money had been secured. Given the raft of organisations that use the Ballymac Centre and the huge impact that those organisations can have in their local community, I was delighted to be part of that announcement. I look forward to going back to the lower Newtownards Road when the facility is officially opened.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister outline if and how his Department will continue to engage with local government

following the transfer of neighbourhood renewal policy and funding?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for that question. It is important that is not just a case of us saying, “I can’t wait until April 2016, when we transfer the powers, the functions and the money” and then it is “Well, we’ll see you some time in the future”. I want to ensure that there will be continued working between the councils and central government, through my Department, so that we are there collectively to address the issues. This will be a learning curve for local authorities. The Member may have heard me say that that is why I have now set about a process of meeting each of the local authorities to discuss their budget and priorities and how we will continue to work in the future. Another part of that is the partnership panel that has been set up. That is also important so that local government has the confidence that central government is there to help, to support and to be there so that, whatever the issues, we can collectively get a solution to those problems.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

2.30 pm

Welfare Reform: Sinn Féin Concerns

T1. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister for Social Development whether Sinn Féin expressed any concerns about welfare reform during the meetings that it was suggested that he had with its representatives over the course of last week, particularly given the extraordinary political gymnastics performed by Sinn Féin over the past number of days. (AQT 2241/11-15)

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for the question. To say that we were shocked would be to put it mildly. What happened in the House and in the Building yesterday was monumental for the future of these institutions. I think that it was clear from what happened yesterday that other agendas are at work. I do not think that they are all down to concerns about welfare.

Let me place it on record that I met Sinn Féin last Thursday after the Executive meeting, when concerns had been expressed. Those concerns about how we implement the Stormont Castle agreement have been going on over a period of time. Let us remember that we had an agreement, or we thought we had an agreement. It was a five-party agreement that set out the terms and conditions and the funding for how we would move forward on welfare reform. When I brought all those issues to the House through Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage, we underlined the importance of the regulations and of the schemes that would introduce the supplementary payment fund and the other four schemes. The scheme on universal credit was approved at the Executive on Thursday. I have given my commitment, which is on public record, a number of times —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member of the two-minute rule.

Mr Storey: — that I will work with those who have issues of concern and that they will be brought to the House. The meeting took place, and concerns were expressed.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his very detailed response. During that meeting on Thursday, was there a point when the Sinn Féin representatives expressed the view that there was a red line on supplementary payments that they could not go over and that they would, in fact, reject the Welfare Reform Bill?

Mr Storey: I got no indication that there was going to be a bombshell dropped on Monday. It was then left that we would give further consideration to the clarification that would be needed. I am extremely disappointed by the comments that have been made about officials in my Department. An aspersion has been cast on them that they somehow misled people and gave dud information.

I stand by my officials. I stand by their integrity and their impartiality. They were asked, prior to Christmas, to do a huge amount of work in very challenging circumstances. I have to say that it is extremely disappointing. I have big enough shoulders. I am a politician, and I can take criticism and all that it brings, but there are those who have gone on to the public airwaves in recent days with the aim of criticising my officials, and I will not tolerate that.

On Thursday, we were asked to get further information on how much it would cost to have existing and future claimants in the supplementary payment fund. That was the information that we have subsequently gained. The only comment that was made was that one —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Can I remind the Minister —

Mr Storey: I think this is important, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. One comment was made, which I will not attribute to any individual because I think that would be unfair, that we were against the wire. I still do not know what wire that was. I know the wire that republicans have been against in the past, and it normally was in a prison context. I have to say that I was not made aware of any wire. Maybe it was an issue raised at their conference at the weekend, but that is an issue for others to answer, not an issue for me.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member listed to ask topical question 2 has withdrawn his name.

Welfare Reform: Disputed Figures

T3. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Social Development to give an assurance about the figures provided by officials to the five party leaders during the Stormont Castle discussions before Christmas, the credibility of which Sinn Féin questioned in yesterday’s shock announcement. (AQT 2243/11-15)

Mr Storey: Yes, and I thank the Member for giving me the opportunity to do this. I made reference to that in my answer to the question posed by Mr Maginness. This will be recorded, and I not only want people to hear it, but I want them to really listen to what I am going to say. For clarification: any figures provided were not provided by the DUP but by senior DSD officials; officials who are totally impartial and independent and have no political axe to grind. The figures that were worked up by senior officials were given to Sinn Féin and the DUP at the same time. The same figures were then given to the leaders of the five parties, and this was followed by a discussion with the five party leaders, senior DSD officials and the head of the Civil Service, in which the figures were explained.

I cannot allow this to pass without making comment about the integrity and the service provided by my senior officials during the Stormont Castle discussions. These officials went beyond the call of duty in the time that they gave to the issue. I will not stand by and watch Sinn Féin say what they have said to save their own blushes or watch the incompetence that they have displayed in relation to this issue when trying to pass the blame to others.

Mr Dunne: As a DUP Minister for Social Development, does the Minister continue to stand determined to work to find a solution to resolve the matters and to move Northern Ireland forward?

Mr Storey: When I came into office, it was abundantly clear that there was a problem and that there were issues in relation to welfare. I challenge the Members opposite, the Chair of the Committee for Social Development and his party, to prove that I have, at any stage, been dishonourable, dishonest or have tried to mislead anyone about the issue of welfare. This is not about my integrity but about the future of people in Northern Ireland. What we saw yesterday was shameful and disgraceful, and I will continue to work on whatever needs to be done to ensure that we, to the letter of the law, implement every line, every dot and every figure in the Stormont Castle agreement. That is what the five parties signed up to, and it is time that Sinn Féin recognised that. I also call upon Sinn Féin today to apologise to my officials for the disgraceful comments that have been made and the slur that has been cast upon them in relation to the process.

Repossessions Strategy

T4. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister for Social Development how the repossessions strategy will unfold and whether it will offer assistance for people to stay in their homes. (AQT 2244/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Member will be aware of the repossessions task force. This is a very difficult and challenging issue, and no one should underestimate it. People have gone through trauma and difficulties, and there is a need for us to do everything that we possibly can to assist those in that position. The repossessions task force has set out a number of recommendations for us. We will want to move forward quickly on some, and others will, I think, take some time to work through the system.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer so far. The Minister alluded to the hugely traumatic impact that losing their home could have on a person or a family, and there is a huge cost, not just in financial terms but in human suffering. Has the Minister considered a mortgage-to-rent scheme to allow people to stay in their homes?

Mr Storey: We should not rule out what is possible. I have raised concerns about where this all sits in relation to the banks. Every possible avenue and every scheme that I think would bring benefit to addressing this problem needs to be considered as we move forward.

Welfare Reform: Sinn Féin Position

T5. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister for Social Development whether he accepts that, on numerous occasions, members of Sinn Féin, publicly and to his party, said that the intention and the agreement at Stormont House was

to make sure that those on benefits who are under the jurisdiction of the Assembly and the Executive would not be worse off after the signing of the agreement, albeit that I have listened to the Minister's recent comments and should point out that, in fact, Sinn Féin was not blaming the officials but, in fairness, was blaming the DUP and is glad that the Minister, as head of the Department, is taking responsibility for the position. (AQT 2245/11-15)

Mr Storey: There has been a fixated excitement by Sinn Féin over the last couple of days to trawl through everything that has been said, and it has not been able to find anything of substance that this Minister has said about the implementation of the deal. We can tell the House what the Chair of the Committee for Social Development said in the House on Tuesday 24 February about the Welfare Reform Bill. He said:

"For the record, no one in Sinn Féin ever said that no one would ever lose out as the result of the Welfare Reform Bill." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 102, p223, col 1].

Are Members opposite going to do as they have always done and be partial and pick out elements of what has been said to try to misinterpret it? I think that it is time to be truthful, if it is within the capabilities of the organisation known as Sinn Féin to do that. We will see tonight on 'Spotlight' how truthful it really can be. Let us deal with the issue at hand, which is this: does Sinn Féin really know what it signed up to in the Stormont Castle agreement?

2.45 pm

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer. Since he is talking about truth and is quoting from other people, does he agree with this quote from himself? He said on 12 January:

"I think that we need to build on the achievements of the Stormont House Agreement. There is a huge amount of work. I have given an undertaking to the Assembly in relation to the information that we will bring to the Assembly, in terms of the guidance notes and how the Bill will make its passage through the House. That will be subject to a paper that, I trust, I will be able to bring to the Executive shortly, so that we can progress the issue". — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 100, p206, col 1].

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to come to his question.

Mr G Kelly: I have asked a question, with respect. I am quoting this, and I want to ask whether the Minister stands over it. If I could finish — *[Interruption.]* I am not challenging the Chair; I am merely pointing out that I am asking a question.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to take his seat.

Mr G Kelly: — "I trust, I will be able to bring to the Executive shortly" —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to take his seat.

Mr Storey: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, if I knew what the question was — *[Interruption.]* Despite all that Sinn Féin has tried to do in the last 24 hours, it is abundantly

plain to all who want to see that this is not about welfare reform: this is about some other political agenda. I will let Sinn Féin know that it will not use me or my party to unpick or undo what we agreed at Stormont House. We stand by every letter and every figure that the five parties agreed to. That is what I will faithfully implement as the Minister responsible for welfare in Northern Ireland.

Justice

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I inform Members that questions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 have been withdrawn.

Magilligan Prison: CJINI Report

3. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the recent Criminal Justice Inspection report 'An Unannounced Inspection of Magilligan Prison 27 May - 5 June 2014'. (AQO 7779/11-15)

7. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Justice what action will be taken to implement the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Inspection report 'An Unannounced Inspection of Magilligan Prison 27 May to 5 June 2014'. (AQO 7783/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, with your permission I will take questions 3 and 7 together.

Criminal Justice Inspection (CJI) reports are based on four healthy prison tests: safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement. I am pleased that Magilligan prison was assessed positively in three out of the four tests. In the area of resettlement, Magilligan was assessed as providing good outcomes for prisoners. This is the first time that has ever been achieved by the Prison Service, and it must be commended for that.

However, the prison was also criticised in a number of areas, specifically the nature of its accommodation and the level of purposeful activity for prisoners. I can confirm that a number of recommendations have already been actioned and implemented and that the management team is developing an action plan to address the remaining recommendations, which I will publish in due course.

The Prison Service has produced the outline business case for the development of a new prison on the existing site, and this has been accepted, subject to finances being made available. It is important to recognise that the planned rebuild of Magilligan will address a number of criticisms in the report, especially the provision of in-cell sanitation for all prisoners.

There are plans in place from April 2015 to outsource the learning and skills function by forming a partnership with North West Regional College. It is expected that this will improve learning opportunities for prisoners in Magilligan.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. Does the Minister agree that a substantial section of the report exposes a backward and retrograde movement at Magilligan? What steps will he put in place to ensure that there is no further slippage?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Ó hOisín for his question, but I do not agree that a substantial section of the report relates to matters going backwards. Certainly, there is one section that is definitely acknowledged to be going back, which is why I referred to the action plan being put in place to deal with those matters, the ongoing work on the potential capital rebuild and, in particular, the short-term work to improve the opportunities for learning and skills training in conjunction with the North West Regional College. Those elements of work, and a lot of work that has already been done, show that the report is being noted and that action is being taken to ensure that the prison improves.

Mr Ross: The CJI report on Magilligan highlighted the level of drug use as being high, and there were no disciplinary consequences for positive drug tests. Does the Minister wish to comment on that, and what action can he take in conjunction with the Prison Service to tackle the high levels of use of illegal and prescription drugs in our prisons?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Ross for the question, which highlights a key problem. The specific issue of prescription drugs is largely for the Prison Service's partners in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to deal with. A lot of work is being done on issues like supervised swallow for the most vulnerable prisoners and the most potent drugs to ensure that those are not misused. Other work is being done, including initiatives with the PSNI to address the potential for smuggling in. There have been a number of successful prosecutions of individuals caught seeking to smuggle contraband into prisons. Work is being done on an intelligence-led basis, as well as the routine work of searching people. Drug dogs are also used when people arrive at the prison. Those are all examples of work that is being taken forward. Clearly, there is a problem with drugs in this society, and prisons are not immune.

Ms Sugden: I recently visited Magilligan. The report's recommendations are not unfounded, and they need to happen as soon as possible. Does the Minister have a timeline for when the refurbishment of Magilligan will take place?

Mr Ford: The key problem in addressing Ms Sugden's question relates to capital availability. The outline business case has been submitted and approved, but there are clearly major issues for such a significant capital investment. That will need to be addressed as we look at the budget in the coming period in conjunction with the Finance Department.

The rebuild will be done on a phased basis, which will allow work to be carried through on the kind of scheme that does not require an enormous amount of capital at any one time, but we all know about financial difficulties and the problems that arise. It is clear that there is an urgent need to address the living accommodation in particular in Magilligan.

Mr Dallat: The Minister may be aware that, in the distant past, the dreaded Public Accounts Committee singled out Magilligan for its excellent education programmes. What on earth has happened since he took control of it? When will he put badly needed investment into that prison?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Dallat for his question. I am not sure whether it was entirely referring to education matters when he talked about investment. I have just highlighted the problems with capital investment. An issue has been

highlighted about the way in which the Prison Service, prior to my time, adopted a policy of partnership with the South Eastern Trust in health and social care matters. There is an advantage in partnership with local FE providers to ensure that there is a better way for prisoners to undertake courses in prison and then be transferred to external courses when they are discharged in a way that better meets their needs than simply trying to employ teachers in the prison system. That will make very significant differences not just in Magilligan but, most particularly, in Hydebank Wood, where work is being done on transformation.

Barristers: Fees

6. **Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Justice how he intends to address the situation that, in publicly funded cases, barristers are expected to represent vulnerable members of society for a fee that would not equate to the national minimum wage. (AQO 7782/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Bar operates on a competitive basis, and it is the case that some barristers are not able to attract a caseload that would equate to a full-time job. However, that does not mean that, if they are performing efficiently and effectively, they are working for below the minimum wage for the cases that they are involved in.

Criminal fees in Northern Ireland have been benchmarked against fees paid in England and Wales. Even following the latest round of reforms, they will remain competitive in comparison. I have consulted on reform to the fees paid in civil and family courts. My officials are finalising fee proposals for family and children proceedings that will reduce baseline costs by approximately 20% overall. I plan to introduce a new structure that will provide for standard fees in the majority of cases, reduce the level and complexity of the administration of civil legal aid and contribute to reductions in costs.

The new arrangements are intended to provide standard fees based on specific case types. They are based on an accepted swings-and-roundabouts approach. They reflect the fact that cases will be put into bandings, and fees will reflect the work required. The proposals are still the subject of discussion with the Bar Council. It is incumbent on me to ensure that the legal aid budget is used effectively and delivers value for money. I have already delivered reform of fees in criminal cases, and I am taking forward reform of civil fees. There is no evidence that the reforms will result in fees that equate to the minimum wage.

Mr Spratt: Does the Minister accept that many young junior barristers are working for the minimum wage in cases? Some of those bright young barristers will be driven out of the profession as a result of some of the cuts that the Minister has already made to legal aid. The additional level of 15% on fees will drive young people out, which will create a problem for the future of barristers at the Bar. The Minister must accept that.

Mr Ford: No, the Minister does not have to accept that. It is not the case that people are working for below the minimum wage. It is clearly the case that there are many more barristers per head of population in Northern Ireland than in neighbouring jurisdictions and it is clear that not all of them can obtain full-time work. That is not my fault; that is the reality of a profession that is operating on a competitive basis as, indeed, happens in other professions and businesses.

My job is to ensure that there is access to justice for those who need justice; it is not the role of the DOJ to provide an employment service for solicitors or barristers.

In the context of the cuts that are being imposed on my budget, it is simply not possible to say that it will be easy to manage without making further cuts to the legal aid budget as we also cut the budgets of every other spending area across the justice system.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. I note that, in his answer, he made no reference to the 15% levy. Does he now accept that it is fundamentally unfair and, therefore, fundamentally flawed to go forward with that type of levy?

Mr Ford: The levy was very much on a par with the existing arrangements, which allowed for reductions in payments on those cases that were assessed by the Taxing Master. Since the proposal was put forward initially, there has been a specific decision of the Supreme Court relating to a case involving the Welsh Assembly Government, which has raised questions about the viability of such a proposal. I am closely examining the implications of that with my officials.

Mr Cree: Does the Minister have any idea of the number of barristers who are working for less than the national minimum wage and, if that number is significant, will he consider, perhaps, a redistribution or restructuring of the fee system?

Mr Ford: I have an absolutely precise figure for those who are working below the national minimum wage. For the benefit of Mr Cree and anybody else who did not hear it, there are no barristers working for below the national minimum wage. There may be barristers who do not have enough cases to obtain enough fees to equate to an annual salary that would be the equivalent of the national minimum wage, but for the employment that they are engaged in and paid for from the legal aid fund, none of them are receiving less than the hourly rate of the national minimum wage.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his answers. Last week, I received a bundle of letters from young barristers, male and female, who were struggling at the Bar and who were certainly earning less than the minimum wage. Will the Minister now like to apologise to those young men and women for his dismissive and ill-informed remarks about their income?

Mr Ford: The rates that are set for the employment of solicitors and barristers do not fall less, on an hourly basis, than the national minimum wage. What is clear is that there are so many barristers in Northern Ireland relative to other jurisdictions that they cannot all receive a living from the legal aid fund alone, given the fact that there are those in more senior practice who earn very substantial sums from the legal aid budget. It is not my job to distribute the fees; it is a matter for the Bar as to how it regulates its profession and it is about how cases are allocated. That is not my responsibility. Those who do the work are paid the fee for the work that they do.

Mr Allister: Has the Minister given any thought to the consequences of his crusade on legal aid in respect of family courts and civil legal aid and the removal thereof

in many instances? Has he given any thought to the explosion in the number of personal litigants that that is going to create in our courts, in consequence of which we are going to see our courts clogged up with personal litigants? Has he given any thought to the consequences of that?

Mr Ford: As ever, Mr Allister starts arguing from a false premise. I am no more on a crusade against lawyers paid from legal aid than I am on a crusade against prison officers, police officers, probation officers, those who work in the courts and youth justice and those in every other spending area of the justice system that has had to be cut because of the Budget cuts imposed on my Department. When Mr Allister uses words like "crusade", he is simply not recognising the reality of the budget that I am faced with.

3.00 pm

He asks what the implications are. There are no suggestions from the evidence that I have seen that, by reducing some elements of scope where money is in play, or by avoiding some people using legal aid as a battering ram against an ex-partner who is ineligible for legal aid over family cases, we will vastly increase the number of litigants in person. The question is to ensure that there is basic funding for key hearings, but, where family cases are at play, people should not be allowed to abuse the legal aid system to punish an ex-partner over minor trifles like variations in the time of access.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Colum Eastwood is not in his place.

Maíria Cahill: PSNI/PPS Conduct

9. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Justice what investigations are under way into the conduct of the PSNI and Public Prosecution Service with regard to the Maíria Cahill case. (AQO 7785/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am advised that a complaint has been received by the Police Ombudsman's office and the matter is currently under investigation. The Public Prosecution Service is entirely independent of my Department; however, the Director of Public Prosecutions has commissioned Sir Keir Starmer to conduct a review of the prosecution of three interlinked cases involving sexual abuse and terrorist-related charges. I have asked for early warnings of Sir Keir's review of any issues that would impact on the support provided to victims across the justice system.

Mr B McCrea: Does the Minister accept that there is a danger, in having a number of independent reviews, that one organisation may blame the other and we will not get to the bottom of it? Does he accept that the time has now come for him and his Department to have an overarching investigation into that sorry state of affairs, or would he prefer to see trial by media, as, apparently, we are going to see tonight on 'Spotlight'?

Mr Ford: Mr McCrea may make a point about trial by media, but I do not control the BBC or many another thing. There are a number of issues in the cases highlighted by Maíria Cahill and others that require individual agencies of the justice system in Northern Ireland and individual agencies of the justice system in the Republic to conduct their inquiries, do their work and carry out their

investigations to see whether there are opportunities for prosecution.

I have discussed the issue on a number of occasions, most recently in the last week of February, with my colleague Frances Fitzgerald, the Minister for Justice and Equality. We have looked at the options for wider reviews, but setting up a cross-border review, as has been suggested by some people, would be a very complex issue. At this stage, the important thing is to allow the relevant agencies to conduct their work and then, after ensuring that there is no interference with the justice system, see that an appropriate way of examining matters further is looked at, whether that is a specific inquiry in Northern Ireland, a related cross-border inquiry or whatever. We are open to see what is appropriate at that stage, but, at this stage, we have to allow the work of the ombudsman, the Garda Síochána, the PSNI and the DPP to be carried through.

Mrs D Kelly: Whilst there may be questions for the justice system to answer, the biggest questions should be directed at the provisional republican movement and its institutionalised, systematic cover-up of sexual abuse.

Minister, what assurance can you give to families, particularly those living along the border, where sex abusers were moved routinely over the last number of years, that you, the gardaí and the Justice Minister in the South are sharing and cooperating fully in relation to the movement of and sharing of intelligence about those abusers?

Mr Ford: I appreciate Mrs Kelly's point. I am not sure that I am in the business of sharing information. It is my job to ensure that the justice system is properly funded and properly run. I have certainly encouraged and understand that there has been sharing of information both ways between the PSNI and the Garda Síochána. There is work being done on a general cross-border basis, some of which falls under the general heading of the intergovernmental agreement on criminal justice cooperation. There is work being shared on support for victims and work being done on specific criminal investigations. All of that is being done to see that we do our best to, first of all, find out the facts, then see whether prosecutions are appropriate and, in parallel, support the victims of whatever abuse may have occurred. I believe that that is being done properly in both jurisdictions at present, and Frances Fitzgerald and I are committed to ensuring that that remains the case.

Mr Campbell: Sexual abuse is a horrible crime. Can the Minister join me in expressing the hope that people who have any information about sexual harassment or sexual criminal activity, particularly if it was at the hands of illegal terrorist organisations and given the fear around coming forward, will receive whatever reassurances, succour and support they need from his Department to get to the truth of any allegations that they may have?

Mr Ford: I am happy to agree with Mr Campbell's point. Anybody who has any information about any crime should report it. Sexual abuse can, at times, be a hugely complex issue, whether it involves family relationships or allegations about a particular organisation. There are ways in which people can come forward, receive help and assist in prosecutions, whether they contact the police or social services or go through other agencies. The important point to make is that information should be passed on so that

victims can be supported and action taken against the perpetrators.

Young Offenders: Early Interventions

10. Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice how effective the current early intervention measures are for young offenders. (AQO 7786/11-15)

Mr Ford: Primary intervention and prevention is best achieved through ready access to a comprehensive range of universal entitlements, such as education, health and social services. In the justice system, the term "early intervention" refers to targeted services for children and young people who are assessed as being at high risk of first-time offending or who already display early signs of criminal or antisocial behaviour.

The principal aim is to keep those children and young people out of the formal justice system where appropriate, with many of them needing little assistance to grow out of that behaviour. Research shows that overall life outcomes for such children are improved if their involvement with the justice system is limited at that early stage. To achieve that, my Department provides a range of support and funding aimed at diversion through, for example, the funding of policing and community safety partnerships including the Priority Youth intervention programme and the asset recovery community scheme.

My Department has also established a system of youth engagement clinics to assist in the identification of and early intervention in cases that are deemed suitable for diversion from the court system. Efficient application of the youth engagement process speeds up case processing and gives the fullest consideration to diversionary processes. The early intervention scheme brings together the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), the police and the Youth Justice Agency with the young person and their family so that joint and informed decisions can be made. The scheme has processed approximately 700 referrals to date.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer, in which he referred to youth engagement clinics. How effective does he believe those to have been in diverting young people away from the courts?

Mr Ford: I appreciate the question. As I said, the key issue is early intervention and engagement to ensure that people are presented with the options, including, in some cases, a restorative option or additional support, to ensure that, at the engagement clinic, young people get the chance to hear about the disposals likely to be directed by the PPS and the options that are then open to them so that they can seek a better way forward. In the 700 cases so far, something like 98% of the young people involved have accepted a diversionary disposal that removes them from the formal system and, if they are a first offender, gives them, in effect, a second chance and an opportunity to make amends, understand the consequences of their action and be supported away from the potential for engagement in criminal activity on a more intense basis.

Mr McCarthy: Does the Minister believe that raising the age of criminal responsibility would help the efforts to avoid criminalising young people?

Mr Ford: I thank my colleague for that question. There is clearly a polarised view in the Assembly on the issue of the

minimum age of criminal responsibility. The youth justice review recommended that it should be increased from 10 to 12 and potentially to 14. I certainly believe that there is justification for increasing the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12, given that the tiny number — generally a couple of dozen in any year — of 10- and 11-year-olds who become involved with the justice system are, almost overwhelmingly, dealt with by a care process rather than a criminal sanction. There are real dangers if we get young people involved in that part of the criminal justice system at such an early age. Clearly, the important issue has to be to divert young people from a path of crime, on whatever basis it operates.

PSNI: Injury on Duty Scheme

11. Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Justice for an update on his Department's review of the PSNI's injury on duty (IOD) scheme. (AQO 7787/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following the Scofield report, my Department agreed to review the policy and regulations underpinning the police injury on duty scheme. That work is well advanced, and it is hoped that draft regulations will be published for consultation this spring. The Department also agreed to provide guidance on reassessments that was issued to the Policing Board on 19 December last.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answer. He mentioned the Scofield report, and obviously changes to legislation and regulations are required for the scheme. When specifically does the Minister anticipate bringing forward his proposals to implement the recommendations?

Mr Ford: I appreciate Mrs Cameron's point, but it is, in fact, an issue on which work is to be done between my Department and the Policing Board. The specific responsibilities for administering the scheme lie with the board. My Department merely has the role of looking at guidance, and that has been issued. I am happy to continue to work with the Policing Board on how that guidance is implemented and to ensure that we get the regulations right. I certainly hope that that will happen within the next few weeks.

The key issues are to ensure that the Department and the board each play their part appropriately and that we get a better system than was the case in recent times. That will allow us to deal with the very significant numbers of PSNI officers who have made IOD claims.

Mr Allister: The Minister referred to providing guidance to the Policing Board three months ago, I think he said. In light of that, is he satisfied that the Policing Board is addressing the issue with the expedition that it deserves, given the many long years that this has straddled without resolution?

Mr Ford: I am not sure whether Mr Allister has any specific points that he wishes to make to suggest that the Policing Board is not carrying out its statutory duties. I am concerned to see the Department and the board working together as effectively as possible, recognising the distinct responsibilities that the two agencies have. After the court cases in England, the important point is to get the situation back on track to ensure that injured officers' needs are met.

Access Northern Ireland: Efficiency

12. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the efficiency of the current Access Northern Ireland system. (AQO 7788/11-15)

Mr Ford: Access NI issues all applications for standard and basic checks within three to five days, and over 70% of enhanced applications are issued in six to eight days. Given that 125,000 applications are made to Access NI each year, I believe that that is a good indicator of efficiency. That said, some cases take longer. Those are cases that are referred to the police for consideration. The vast bulk of those are also turned around efficiently, but I acknowledge, as does the PSNI, that delays are occurring and that they can be significant at times.

Mindful of the impact on applicants who are unable to secure positions of employment without an Access NI check, my officials are working closely with the PSNI to reduce the delays being experienced by a small minority of applicants. The PSNI has approved additional resources for that work, but it will take time to effect the necessary improvements and reduce the current backlog.

Ms Sugden: I thank the Minister for his answer, but I was actually referring to the inefficiency of having to get a new Access NI form for every organisation that you are involved with. That is ridiculous, and it places a heavy burden on the community and voluntary sector in particular. In light of that, how has the Minister consulted the community and voluntary sector?

Mr Ford: I entirely agree with Ms Sugden. Before the change of the last Westminster Government and during the first year of the devolution of justice, work was being done to look at a portable check. However, that was changed because of changes in the Home Office that meant that we could not proceed on the timescale that we had hoped.

We have included provisions for the introduction of a portable check in the Justice Bill, which is at Committee Stage. Perhaps Ms Sugden would like to ask the Chair of the Committee how speedily he will progress that. It is clear that we need to move to a portable check as soon as possible, although it may not be available until some time during the next calendar year because of the issues that need to be addressed to tie the system to the available resources.

We will also look at the charges. In England and Wales, it costs £13 to be annually registered, which is somewhat less than the current one-off fee in Northern Ireland. However, it will continue to be free for those who use the check purely for volunteering purposes.

I would hope that we would see progress arising from the work that is being done by my officials in parallel with the progress of the Bill, but, clearly and unfortunately, it will be 2016 before we see it in place.

3.15 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Trevor Lunn is not in his place.

Mr McCarthy: I am delighted that the Minister continues to answer questions briefly and succinctly because it brings us up to question 14.

Community Planning

14. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Justice how Policing and Community Safety Partnerships will contribute to the new community planning model being introduced through local government reform. (AQO 7790/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am not sure what Hansard will make of that, Principal Deputy Speaker.

On 25 February, I met chief executives, members of the Policing Board and heads of statutory bodies who are designated members of policing and community safety partnerships. We considered a range of issues relating to the partnerships, including measures to maximise their impact on local policing and community safety priorities and to ensure that they play a key role in the new community planning structures. This meeting followed ongoing discussions between officials from the DOJ and the Policing Board, chief executives and other key stakeholders in preparation for the new community planning structures.

The recent CJINI report and the recommendations that it made provided the opportunity to address a broader range of strategic and operational issues and to reshape the partnerships accordingly. CJINI's recommendation that PCSP action plans should feed into community plans and that alignment with the aims of the statutory partners and other central government strategies should be explicit will, when implemented, further strengthen the links between PCSPs and community plans. The joint committee will provide guidance to the reconstituted PCSPs on a range of PCSP-related business, including how to prepare their action plans, and will include advice that the plans should feed into community plans.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up. That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move to topical questions. Mr Pat Sheehan is not in his place.

Historical Investigations Unit: Legislation

T2. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice why he lobbied for and secured agreement that the legislation to introduce the historical investigations unit (HIU) would not pass through this House but would pass through Westminster, consequently denying this House the opportunity to scrutinise that legislation. (AQT 2252/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are significant issues on the timing of the legislation, and the fact is that there will be elements of the HIU that might relate on a UK-wide basis and would therefore have to be considered by the Westminster Parliament anyway and to ensure that we got the HIU into place as soon as possible, subject to other discussions over the last 24 hours.

Mr Allister: Is the truth not that the Minister was running scared of scrutiny in this House on issues such as how you would recruit the HIU, whether gardaí members would be eligible or whether investigative officers from the PSNI maybe or, dare one say it, the RUC, would not be admissible as those who could be recruited? Is it the scrutiny of matters such as that that the Minister was running scared of?

Mr Ford: If Members of this House who have not sat at the party leaders' meetings on Monday afternoons saw what

happened inside that room to proposals that were being put forward by anybody, including by me as Minister and officials from DOJ, they would not suggest that there was no scrutiny in that gathering.

Legal Aid: Access to Justice

T3. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of how the reform of legal aid will affect access to justice for the most vulnerable, when it is likely that the cuts will mean that solicitors will not be able to provide existing services. (AQT 2253/11-15)

Ms Sugden: I scored a hat-trick here, Principal Deputy Speaker.

Mr Ford: I am afraid that I have to disagree with the premise on which that question is based, because what we are looking at are reforms that will, to some extent, alter scope around things like money damages, continual applications on family matters for access and so on, but will fundamentally preserve a fee that is similar to that which applies in England and Wales and is generally in excess of that fee for work that is done in ongoing cases.

The reality is that we have to live within the budget, and the budget for legal aid has been exceeded every year since some time before devolution. That is no longer possible. Therefore, cuts have to be made, but a lot of work has been done so far to ensure that there is no reduction in access to justice. That will continue to be my aim, but the reality is that fees in Northern Ireland have traditionally been paid at a more generous level, which slightly contradicts the kind of view that is put forward by bodies like the Law Society when it suggests that external bodies could come in and provide back office legal services because the costs of running a business in Northern Ireland are lower than elsewhere in the Western World.

Ms Sugden: I thank the Minister for his response. I do not accept that we are comparable with England and Wales. We have specific social circumstances, so I reject that rationale. How has the Minister consulted the public on how this might affect them if the reforms are put in place?

Mr Ford: The rationale that I gave was not mine; it was the rationale put forward by the Law Society when it talked about costs being less. So if Ms Sugden thinks that I am wrong, I suggest that she take it up with the Law Society, which I was quoting.

She asked about consultation. Frankly, everything that the Department of Justice has done since I became Minister has been the subject of public consultation, although, clearly, in many cases, it has been only those with specific interests who have commented on them. There has been a public consultation process that has included everything that has been proposed or everything that will be proposed in the future.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member listed at topical question 4 has withdrawn his name.

Armagh Courthouse

T5. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Justice how much has been spent on the refurbishment of Armagh courthouse in the last number of years, how much will be saved if the courthouse closes, and whether he has any plans for the future use of the building. (AQT 2255/11-15)

Mr Ford: The simple answer to a question as specific as that is no, I cannot tell the Member how much money was spent on refurbishment before my time as Minister, and I cannot say how much the current running costs are. All those figures, excluding, possibly, the refurbishment costs, but the ongoing costs and the anticipated savings are available in the consultation document that was circulated by my Department and which is readily available to anybody, not just to MLAs.

The future use of the courthouse is not an issue for my Department. If any building is redundant from the use of my Department, it is offered to other public bodies and then put on the open market for sale.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. What assessment has the Minister's Department taken on the impact that the closure will have on the most vulnerable in the area? How will they access justice in future? Can he confirm that the facilities that are to remain open after the consultation will be able to deliver the same services that Armagh courthouse has been delivering?

Mr Ford: Again, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I refer Mr Boylan to the consultation document, which makes clear information on the transfer of business to the significantly better buildings that we have in the more modern parts of our estate, which are better able to meet the needs of 21st-century justice, and how that will be carried through to ensure continuing access to justice, including access to court sittings. In the review of the closure of Bangor courthouse and the transfer of business to Newtownards, I notice that business was seen to proceed more efficiently on the amalgamation of the two courts. So there is no reason to suggest that there will be any restriction on access to justice.

John Pat Cunningham: Murder Investigation

T6. **Mr F McCann** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is concerned that the family of John Pat Cunningham has stated that it has no confidence in the PSNI to carry forward the investigation into his murder by the British Army in 1974. (AQT 2256/11-15)

Mr Ford: Clearly, I would be concerned if I thought that there was any issue about public confidence in the PSNI in general. However, when we look at issues that happened 40 years ago, so many matters come into play that it is a long way from my responsibility to ensure confidence in the work of the PSNI, as they police 2015 and not 1974.

Mr F McCann: I think that the Minister has opinions on all other agencies carrying out investigations. Does this point up the need for the creation of the HIU to address legacy issues, particularly murders carried out by state forces?

Mr Ford: We need to be very careful before we talk about "murders carried out by state forces" in the plural; if the Member can say "allegations of murders carried out by state forces", it might be slightly accurate. Yes, I fully support the concept of the HIU. That is why the DOJ has been doing a lot of work since 23 December to establish the HIU to ensure that it can operate in a way that provides confidence, deals with the past and separates the PSNI today from the toxic issues of the past.

National Crime Agency: Implementation

T7. **Mr Craig** asked the Minister of Justice to give a date for the full implementation of the National Crime Agency and to state whether he has any idea about the numbers involved in the civil case backlog. (AQT 2257/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am afraid that I cannot give Mr Craig an exact date. The best answer that I can give is two months from the point when the necessary order is passed at Westminster. I have not seen that specifically timetabled, though my understanding is that it is due in the next week or 10 days. The intention is that the necessary measure will be passed through both Houses at Westminster in advance of the dissolution of Parliament for the general election. The timescale is two months from that date. As to the specific issue of civil backlog, I do not have the details in front of me at the moment, but, when we were debating the issue, I pointed out that we had had something like a 70% reduction in the number of civil cases that could be considered. Clearly, that can now be stepped back up again.

Mr Craig: Is the Minister at all surprised to learn that that backlog now stands at the astonishing figure of almost £14 million and growing? Can the Minister confirm that there is also growing evidence that serious crime groups are basing themselves in Northern Ireland because of the lack of the National Crime Agency? The sooner we get it implemented the better with regard to that aspect of crime.

Mr Ford: I am quite prepared to accept Mr Craig's figure. If he says that it is £14 million, it is very similar to the understanding that I had a few months ago. I am not sure how much evidence there is, but there is certainly a concern on the part of the police and other agencies that, if we had not proceeded to pass the order to allow the legislation to pass at Westminster to make the NCA fully operational here, there would have been a very significant risk of international crime groups establishing here. If Mr Craig is suggesting that that had already begun to happen, that is all the more reason to see that we get the NCA operational and fully supported by public representatives in the House in the important work that it will do in fighting that kind of crime.

Roe House: Separated Regime

Mr McElduff: Tá ceist agam don Aire.

T8. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the current situation with the separated regime at Roe House in Maghaberry prison. (AQT 2258/11-15)

Mr Ford: The separated regime in Roe House operates as it has done for a significant time; it long predates the devolution of justice. As ever, there have been continuing difficulties at times with some of those within the separated regime. Following on from the stocktake report by the assessment team, work has been done to seek to create a better atmosphere. Prison Service staff have done a lot of work, including some measures to improve the supervision ratios that have been seen from the prisoners' point of view, while still ensuring the safety and security of prisoners, but there is no doubt that some prisoners and some of their supporters outside the jail continue to threaten and intimidate both personally and by the use of social media.

Mr McElduff: Following on from the Minister's reference to the stocktake report, does he agree that, essentially, the stocktake report was a missed opportunity to resolve the issues central to the dispute in Roe House?

Mr Ford: No. I believe that the stocktake report was a genuine assessment of the situation that we were in. I am extremely grateful to the team of independent assessors for the work that it has done. The Prison Service continues to seek to build on that through things like the prisoner forum and other measures to make the situation as normal as possible, given the fact that separated prisoners are in an abnormal position.

3.30 pm

Fine Enforcement Service: Modernisation

T9. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the schedule for modernising our fine enforcement service to better match good practice elsewhere in the United Kingdom, given that find-the-fault enforcement is expensive for court time, legal aid costs, police enforcement costs and prison costs. (AQT 2259/11-15)

Mr Ford: Again, I do not have the details of the schedule in front of me, but the answer is that work is being carried forward as urgently as possible, recognising the very significant issues, as the Member said, of court time, prison time and the completely unexpected judicial decision that it was not possible to place in custody fine defaulters without a further court hearing. A lot of court time has been taken up in addressing those issues. A very large number of those cases have gone through satisfactorily.

Clearly, there are issues as we look to civilianise fine enforcement and take it away from being a burden on the Police Service. As we seek to ensure the additional methods by which fines will be paid, whether deductions from earnings or whatever, there is a better chance that, in a year or so, we will have a much better system in operation than has been the case for a number of years.

Mr Beggs: Given that consultation is already under way, the savings that could result and the huge pressure that his Department is under, is the Minister surprised that his officials have indicated that it could be up to two years before new legislation is introduced and delivered on the ground?

Mr Ford: I am not sure where Mr Beggs gets that figure from, but it is certainly my expectation that we will see legislation in this Assembly mandate, which has little more than a year to run. It will then be a matter of ensuring that all the necessary measures within that, with, if necessary, supporting secondary legislation, are in place as soon as possible. Yes, it is unfortunate, but the reality is that the legislative process takes time if it is to ensure that the matter is got right. We are trying to fix a problem, and there is no point in doing something rapidly that will not stand the test of time and produce a viable solution for the future.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Employment and Learning

European Social Fund: Application Process

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Pat Ramsey has given notice of an urgent oral question to the Minister for Employment and Learning. I remind Members that, if they wish to ask a supplementary question, they should rise continually in their place. The Member who tabled the question will be called automatically to ask a supplementary question.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to update the Assembly on the latest delay in the European social fund application process.

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The assessment of applications for funding to the Northern Ireland European social fund programme for 2014-2020 has been continuing. A total of 134 applicants entered the phase 1 assessment process. Of those, 101 will progress to phase 2; 24 applicants will not progress at this stage; and a further nine are providing clarification on the information that they have submitted in respect of the financial capability assessment. Any applicant who has been rejected will be allowed five working days to appeal the decision.

The Department will be issuing letters this afternoon to notify applicants of the outcome of the phase 1 assessment process. Appeals will be considered by an independent panel comprising three individuals who have not been involved in the selection process. It is anticipated that the appeals process for phase 1 will be concluded by 23 March. The aim is to complete the assessment process by the end of March to allow funding to be made available to the successful applicants by 1 April.

Mr Ramsey: I thank the Minister for his response. There was some useful information; at least some contact is being made with the groups. Will the Minister be kind enough to reflect on the whole process, given the pain, suffering, concern, anger and frustration among so many groups across Northern Ireland and the concern over not only the loss of jobs but the capacity that a lot of the groups have been able to deliver — from women's groups and youth groups to disability groups across Northern Ireland — and the fear and trepidation that they have at present?

Dr Farry: Mr Ramsey packed a lot in there, but I do not recognise many of the characteristics that he has described for the process. Let us be very clear: this is a live, ongoing application process. There is no absolute guarantee that any organisation will be funded. Indeed, we are 1·8% oversubscribed in terms of the value of the value of bids compared with the money that is available. Processes are still ongoing, and no decisions have been made on who will be funded and who will not. That will happen at the conclusion of phase 2 of the process. There is no immediate threat to any organisation, nor is there any guarantee of continued funding. Just because

an organisation has delivered in the past, that does not necessarily mean that it will receive funding in the future.

There has been a particular and discrete issue in relation to understandings around the submission of management accounts that has been addressed. I think that the issue of fear and disorder in applicants is way off the mark. We have a process that is live and ongoing according to the process that was set out and explained to all groups. I dare to suggest that, if that is the situation that is emerging in the eyes of some Members, everyone has a duty to act responsibly and not to feed the misunderstandings but to act in a manner to correct those misunderstandings.

Mr Swann: Minister, I recognise Mr Ramsey's description of the organisations that have been through this, because they have been in front of our Committee a number of times. I know that the Minister has not engaged because we were in a selection process, but I can assure you that the description that Mr Ramsey has put in front of us is fair and accurate.

The Minister is well aware of the interest of the Committee for Employment and Learning and the time it has given to the issue. Voluntary and community organisations have staff on notice, programmes on hold and participants at this minute who do not know where they are going. To be very specific, there has been a great change in the number of applications now through phase 1 —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to come to his conclusion.

Mr Swann: Can he provide additional detail on the appeal process for phase 1 and phase 2? Will the appeals be available solely on process, or will organisations be able to supply additional or supplementary information? Is the Minister still as confident that this process is not open to legal challenge?

Dr Farry: Again, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, there is a lot in there. I will do my best to cover the points that have been made.

There was a discrete issue in relation to management accounts that has been addressed. If we find a situation where groups are uncertain of funding or of the ability of participants to continue, that is, regrettably, a product of the fact that we are going through a competitive process in relation to European funding. Groups should have been clearly aware that the current programme was coming to an end on 31 March and that there would be a fresh process for the next round of ESF funding. Sadly, it is part and parcel of the process that groups will have to place staff on protective notice.

Let us be clear: my officials are working tirelessly to ensure that we can deliver a refreshed programme from 1 April this year and that, where groups are continuing, there is no break in coverage or what they do with participants or staff. The situation in Northern Ireland stands in sharp contrast to that in many other regions across the European Union, including England, where they have yet to receive approval from the European Commission for their operational programme, so they will see a break in coverage. That will not be the case in Northern Ireland, subject to us being able to complete all phases of the process by the end of March, which is our intention.

In terms of the appeals process, there will be an appeal panel of departmental and independent representatives.

It will meet over the coming days to assess the appeals that are taken forward. The grounds for appeal will be as follows: the outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would make on the basis of the information provided in the application and/or there was a failure in adherence to procedure or systems. In terms of the timescales, we anticipate that appeal panels for phase 1 will be convened between 20 and 23 March. We will then issue notification in relation to phase 2. The closing date for phase 2 appeals will be in the region of 21 to 25 March. It is likely that appeals in relation to phase 2 will be convened on 25 March and notifications issued as soon after that as we can.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Minister of the two-minute rule.

Mr Buchanan: I do not want the Minister to miss the mark, but the difficulty lies in how the Department handled this whole issue from the start. You may or may not be aware that my colleague Diane Dodds has already raised this with the European commissioner. Have you had any contact with the European commissioner? If so, what was the nature of that contact?

Dr Farry: Members are making comments about the process not being properly handled. I must stress that that is a perception that has been fed by many people rather than being addressed by many people. There has been a particular discrete issue about understanding management accounts, but Members are not giving specifics to me so that I can address their wider concerns with the process, albeit that we have heard comments about breaches in coverage, which I have already sought to address. I made the point that we are doing better than other regions.

I have discussed our outgoing programme and our new programme with the European Commission. This is European Union money that is coming to Northern Ireland, and it is based on EU rules. If anything, the EU stressed the importance of checks and balances and the audit requirements for the programme. We do not have discretion over those things; if we want the money, we have to adhere to those requirements. That is why there has to be such discipline with management issues and financial capability assessments.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for coming to the Chamber. Does he acknowledge the distress that the delays in the funding process are causing employees and service users alike? I have been lobbied, as you know, by the First Steps Women's Centre in Dungannon, which is the only women's group west of the Bann, an area with the highest rates of economic inactivity in the North.

Dr Farry: It would be inappropriate for me to make comments in the Chamber about an individual application. People have made points about delays, and we are behind with different aspects of the assessment process because we have a revised process for the receipt of management accounts. However, there is no delay in our target date for taking decisions on the allocation of funds, which remains the end of March. That was our timetable at the beginning of the process, and it remains our timetable. In that respect, there have not been delays in the awarding of funds that would give people any credible reason to be distressed by the pace of the decision-making process in the Department.

Mrs D Kelly: I am grateful to my colleague Pat Ramsey for tabling the question for urgent oral answer. Given that one of the priorities is social inclusion and bringing people closer to the labour market, will the Minister give the House an assurance that women's groups, which do such tremendous work, will be a priority in the application process criteria?

Dr Farry: All applications will be assessed on their individual merits. As the Member will appreciate, there are a number of subcategories through which funds will be allocated. We will be mindful in ensuring that we have a reasonable and proportionate outcome that reflects all aspects of how people can better access the labour market or overcome barriers. I very much appreciate the work of a number of women's groups across Northern Ireland. While I cannot give commitments to organisations that they will be in receipt of funds, I am seeking to endeavour that we have proper coverage to support the women's sector.

Ms Lo: Obviously, the application process did not go very smoothly at the beginning. What is the ESF's added value in supporting training and employability outcomes?

Dr Farry: I again stress the importance of the European social fund to Northern Ireland. In the absence of the European social fund, we would struggle, with only our local resources for the degree and depth of coverage in employability and skills interventions. The ESF allows us to provide and resource on a much bigger scale, so it is an advantage that comes from our membership of the European Union. We have to appreciate that it is not our money, and we must ensure that we act in accordance with the rules that it sets out.

Ms Sugden: Unsurprisingly, the Minister is unwilling to acknowledge the farcical process of the European social fund. That is part of a bigger picture of mismanagement by the Northern Ireland Executive when it comes to implementing funds like early years, the European social fund and neighbourhood renewal. As the Minister has overarching responsibility for DEL, can he tell me how he is supporting the community and voluntary sector instead of standing by the officials who have made mistakes?

3.45 pm

Dr Farry: I am not standing by any officials. I am here to set out the position of the Department on the approach that we are taking. I am not going to entertain notions that the process has been somehow farcical. We have made comments about the point around management accounts, and, if Members have wider concerns about other aspects of the process, please set those out to me rather than making unfounded claims without any evidence to back up what they are saying.

Again, I stress that there has been a process under way. The process is fair and objective. Where there has been some cause for concern that we may not be able to maintain full objectivity in the process, we have acted in a corrective manner to ensure that we have restored the integrity of the process.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister spoke about perceptions, and there are perceptions out there that this whole process has been skewed to the advantage of statutory bodies, departmental bodies and major groups and against the smaller groups that cannot meet some

of the regulations that not only Europe laid down but his Department laid down. If there is an undue impact on the women's sector, would the Minister not be better calling an equality impact assessment to ensure that we do not lose this sector altogether?

Dr Farry: I dare suggest that, if we were to jump through unnecessary hoops in relation to equality processes, the effect of that would be to delay this process beyond the beginning of April and would create a situation where we could not allocate funds and would end up with the discontinuation of programmes, with staff being made redundant. No doubt, that is an outcome that the Member wishes to avoid.

On his first point, no doubt the Member has acted to try to dampen those misperceptions rather than feeding them. There has not been any skewing of this process to favour any particular organisation, any size of organisation or organisations from any particular sector, never mind any individual organisation. This is an entirely above board, fair and objective process that will have an outcome that is based entirely on merit.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. That concludes this item of business. Members will take their ease while we change the top Table.

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

Executive Committee Business

Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill: Second Stage

Debate resumed on motion:

*That the Second Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill [NIA Bill 46/11-16] be agreed.
— [Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education).]*

Mr McCallister: It is at least refreshing that we are here debating legislation and that there is not yet a petition of concern in sight, although I warn the Minister that it is early stages. It is useful to think that we might have some legislation that might form a useful, strategic, streamlined and coordinated approach in dealing with helping to find the right services to help support children with special educational needs.

I turn to clauses 2 and 3, and my concerns come from experience of dealing with constituency issues. How do we get a joined-up approach between the board of the new Education Authority and boards of governors or schools?

That is something that I am sure many colleagues have had to deal with at times. There is almost an emphasis on protecting a budget line and people say, "We are not going to pay for that". It can almost become a bartering match between the school and the education board as to who pays for what; who buys what support; how many hours a classroom assistant is required for, if that is the appropriate course of action; how much time is bought in and who should pay for it. When we put a duty on the authority to deliver, that is something that I want to see. I want to make sure that those lines become very much about delivering outcomes for the child and not defending budget lines. Too often, this place has been mainly about defending budget lines and not about delivering real support for a child.

Colleagues touched on other parts of the Bill. Of particular concern to the Assembly is how we make sure that health and social care buys into it. The Minister will probably respond by saying that he cannot bring legislation that puts a statutory duty on another Department. If that is the case, surely the Bill, which has been approved by the Executive, should have been worked on with the Minister of Health and the Department of Health and had buy-in from other Departments as to how we develop those services. That applies not just to Health, I suspect.

Mr Swann's earlier contribution around how we extend provision past the age of 19 would also encompass the role of DEL. How do you make that mean something, and how do you get other Departments to buy into it? It goes to the core of all that is wrong with this Executive. We had a very stark reminder of that in the last 24 hours, where we have no sense of collective purpose or vision. That is my concern around the aspects of health in the Bill. Can we link in to other health issues, such as speech and language therapy?

A few years ago, we lost the brilliant I CAN facility in Ballynahinch Primary School because it fell between two stools. Health stood ready to put speech and language therapists into it, Education was putting money into the

board and the board decided to spend it somewhere else. We lost that facility and lost the services and the work that was being done to deliver speech and language programmes for children. Everyone in the Executive and the Assembly should hang their heads in shame that we lost a facility of that quality because we could not coordinate government properly.

It probably comes back to the need for Mr Agnew's Bill to come forward. If we are struggling to get the linkages made between the Departments of Health and Education at this level in the legislation, we come to the point that Mr Agnew has been making, not only in his Bill but earlier in the debate, that it is high time that we had that level of cooperation and coordination between Departments when it comes to children.

Health is particularly important because, as has been pointed out and the Minister will, no doubt, be aware, Health, in a number of cases, may also be the lead Department in government that touches the lives of children before Education even comes on the scene. If we are serious about early intervention, early diagnosis and having places, statements and support in place for children, we will need Health to be at the table. We will need it, in some cases, identifying that and flagging the issue up with the education system before the child has even entered school. That is what a joined-up system would look like. I hope that the Minister is prepared to take that suggestion on board and look at it, and, if amendments come to mind, to go back to the Minister of Health and other Ministers and say that he wants to come here as an Executive Minister promoting an Executive policy to improve outcomes and the lives of children. That is what is at stake here. We need that coordination and those early diagnoses, and we need to get the support in. That needs to be done in, as I said, a coordinated way, and to be done across the board. In welcoming the Bill, I very much hope that it does that. When I look at some of the failings in the systems that we have at the minute, I am not always seeing those linkages.

Autism has been mentioned by colleagues. The Assembly's approach to autism is that the Minister financially supports a centre for autism in Middletown. My understanding, from the previous time that the issue was discussed, is that the Department of Health does not contribute to the centre financially, does not use it and does not buy in any services from it, and neither, I think, does DEL, although I am happy if the Ministers want to correct me.

There is no sense of coordination in the Northern Ireland Government's policy on getting support for autism. Is it the centre at Middletown, or is it whatever the Department of Health, DEL or the Department of Education wants? There is no coordinated approach, and, sadly, what is lacking so much across government is that we do not have a government approach to dealing with special educational needs. We have a Minister who wanted to bring forward a Bill. He brought forward this Bill and is doing his level best to move it forward.

What many of us want to hear is that this Bill, and this Minister, speaks for the Executive of Northern Ireland — the entire Executive, including the Minister of Health — and that the Bill will have a coordinated role to play so that we do not always have to depend on people such as Mr Agnew to bring forward separate legislation to make sure

that Departments talk to one another and work together to deliver the best outcomes for children. I will be interested to hear in the Minister's reply whether he is minded to take a coordinated government approach to helping as many children as we can deal with having special educational needs, to putting in place the support that they need and to making a real difference to the lives of our children and young people.

Mr B McCrea: I hope not to detain the House for too long. I rise for a specific reason, which is to deal with an issue that has arisen in my constituency to do with a young man who came from Kent. I will, by way of example, dwell on the details.

I apologise to the Minister for not catching his opening remarks, but I do have the benefit of the Official Report. I was taken by the fact that he highlighted the point that the reasons for the review were:

"inconsistencies in provision, delays in assessment, significant increases in children recorded with SEN",

among other things.

The particular case that I want to bring to the Minister's attention, and that of those who will consider the Bill in Committee, is that of Joshua Awujoola from Dromore. Joshua's parents moved to Northern Ireland in late 2014. He is on the autistic spectrum, and, of course, he had a detailed statement from his previous place of residence in the Kent County Council area.

Kent County Council had given him a SEN statement and had provided all the details with regular updates. However, when he tried to get a place in the primary school in Dromore, despite it being very keen to take him, those existing comprehensive assessments were not deemed satisfactory. I had two letters, one from the Minister saying, "This is all very well, but this is for —

4.00 pm

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I respect Mr McCrea's right to represent his constituents, but I am not sure that the Second Reading of a Bill is the place to discuss constituency issues.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I ask Mr McCrea to link his contribution specifically to the Bill, rather than to simply relate his experience. It must be linked to the Bill, please.

Mr B McCrea: The specific point that I was going to get to is that I would like there to be consideration in the Bill of a process whereby special educational needs statements granted in full in other parts of the United Kingdom are treated as temporary for the provision of services when that person comes to Northern Ireland. You could extend that to proper, bona fide statements of educational need from other jurisdictions in the European Union.

I did not mean to antagonise the Minister; I was only trying to set it out that there is a case for that. I was merely making the point that I have a letter from the Minister in one hand saying, "This is for the library board", and in the other a letter saying, "This is down to legislation, and we are now considering how we might change legislation to streamline processes". I am making the not unreasonable point of asking whether that could be taken into consideration when we look at the Bill.

Having made my point, I will leave it at that. I look forward to further engagement with the process as the Bill proceeds through the next stage.

Mr O'Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Bhain mé an-sult as an leithead agus an doimhneacht sa díospóireacht inniu, agus fáiltim roimh an spéis atá le feiceáil go sonrach i measc Comhaltaí. I very much appreciate the breadth and depth of the debate today and welcome the interest that is very evident among Members.

It is important that issues relevant to the Bill are raised, and, as would be expected, there are many differing views and thoughts on how to move forward in trying to improve policy in what is clearly a very sensitive area. I recognise that some of the issues raised are about problems in the current framework or with the way in which the framework has been put into operation by schools or the education and library boards, but it is worth putting it on the record once again that, in 2013-14, 71,582 children were assessed as requiring assistance with special educational needs. As a constituency representative, I am aware that the system does not always work properly. Down through my years as an elected representative, I have had to make representations on behalf of families and to act as an advocate for families on many occasions. That is part of our role and function. It is also worth noting that, last year, across all areas of SEN, there were 100 appeals. On 100 occasions, the system reached the stage where it had to go to appeal. We have 71,000 children who use SEN provision. The system is far from perfect, and many families experience difficulties with it, but it is also worth noting that, in many cases, services for young people are being met through the SEN services.

We are now at the Second Reading of the Bill, and Members are quite rightly asking questions about aspects of the journey of the Bill and what they are being signed up to. Indeed, Miss McIlveen, the Chair of the Education Committee, made the very valid point that Members are being asked to endorse a Bill without knowing what regulations or code of practice will come afterwards. However, very important safety measures are built into the legislation. This is the primary legislation, which will go through Committee Stage and Consideration Stage. I have no doubt that many amendments will be proposed, and I am happy to work with Members and the Committee on them. I am on record as saying that I want the Bill to turn into an Act that all Members of the House are comfortable with and that will improve outcomes for our young people with SEN and the delivery of SEN services in schools.

The regulations that will follow the legislation, if and when passed, will be drafted in consultation with the sector and the Committee, and they will have to go out to full public consultation. They will then come before the Committee and, depending on the decision of the House, will be in the form of either negative or affirmative resolution. I am happy in either circumstance. I will have no difficulty with the Assembly taking the view that they should be approved by affirmative resolution, because I can understand why Members might want assurance that the regulations are consistent with the Bill and will deliver positive changes to SEN services. This is the first step in the legislative process. The role of the Committee and of the Assembly will continue, and regulations cannot come into force unless the Assembly has had its say one way or another.

The code of practice will also be drawn up in consultation with the sector and the Education Committee.

Miss M McIlveen: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: I will give way.

Miss M McIlveen: Can the Minister give us a timescale for when we will have sight of both regulations and the code of practice?

Mr O'Dowd: They will be very detailed documents, and, obviously, we have to draw them up in line with the legislation. I cannot give you a definitive time frame for when they will be complete, but I can assure you that, at every stage of drafting, my officials will engage with the Education Committee on the direction of travel. They will, however, be very detailed documents and will take months, at least, to complete. They also have to reflect the Bill and the consultation. There is considerable work left to be done on the regulations, but, as I emphasised, they cannot come into force unless the Committee, through either negative or affirmative resolution, and the Assembly approve them. There are a number of steps to take place in relation to that secondary legislation moving forward.

Members raised other concerns, particularly in relation to resourcing SEN. I accept, as do Members, that the education budget for the next financial year has been very difficult. At the Education Committee, I said that we were among the sacred cows. The education budget has been reduced year on year for five years, and I have to make savings in areas that normally I would never go near to make reductions. The savings in SEN, however, are approximately 1%. I will instruct the new Education Authority that the SEN budget will have to be ring-fenced against further cuts and will be protected. I also accept that programmes in relation to extended schools etc face reductions and pressures, but my budget is what my budget is. I have done everything in my power to protect front-line services, particularly in relation to SEN. The average cut to the Education Department is 5%; those affecting SEN are in and around 1%, with the rest to be ring-fenced.

There has been investment in SEN over the last number of years in preparation for the changes. Members raised concerns about the roles of boards of governors and teachers and the preparation for new responsibilities in those areas. The Department has invested £14.5 million in a capacity-building programme since 2011-12 in our schools for the preparation of SEN. We will continue that investment moving forward in preparation for the changes to SEN, and we are confident that the continued investment will allow our teaching workforce and our boards of governors to take on the responsibilities for the delivery of a new SEN framework that will roll out from the final Bill, if and when accepted.

Members also referred to the burden on the boards of governors. There will be new responsibilities on boards of governors — I accept that — but the shape of our education legislation is clear: our boards of governors are responsible for running our schools; they are the managing authority in the schools.

It is only right and proper that the boards of governors are also responsible for the provision of SEN at the various agreed levels when, hopefully, the legislation passes. It is only right and proper that our boards of governors have

that responsibility built into the management of the entire school as they manage those schools.

The Bill will be scrutinised by the Committee, including the reasons for reducing the 29 days to 22. Members have different opinions as to whether that is a good or a bad idea; perhaps some think that we should have reduced it even further. I am more than happy to engage with the Committee as it drills down into the matter. If it comes back with recommendations that it should be reduced or should stay the same, I am happy to work with the Committee on it. It is open to deliberation and further interrogation and investigation.

There were some comments about the pilots on the rights of appeal by a child. I understand that a single pilot has taken place in Wales and that they then moved on to legislation. While I understand that England has the power to run a pilot or pilots, it has not run any yet, so the experience from there is not available to us. Although I am keen to reduce any unnecessary bureaucracy or expenditure coming out of the legislation, I want to get the appeals mechanism right for children. We will certainly learn from the Welsh example. If there are any further lessons to be learnt from the English example, we will learn those as well. The legislation gives us the authority to set up a pilot, run it and then introduce the appeals. I have no doubt that the Committee will interrogate that matter further, and my officials will work with it.

I think that most Members accept that we need to make change to our SEN provision, and they want to see positive change, as do I. Several Members raised concerns about the role of the Health Department in the future legislation. I cannot impose a statutory duty on another Department. However, throughout this process, the work of the Health Minister and his officials has been first-rate. It is not accurate to say that Departments do not talk to, work with or engage with one another; they do. There is a healthy working relationship between my Department and the Health Department on SEN issues and how we move forward on them. The Committee will examine the matter further. If Members have different views, or if amendments come forward, the Health Department will have to express a view.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. If he had permission from the Health Minister, could he then include it in the legislation?

Mr O'Dowd: Yes. There would have to be an agreement with the Health Department. I am not going to speak on behalf of the Health Minister or his Department. There are different opinions about the effectiveness or necessity of a statutory obligation on the Department of Health. There is legislation that governs the relationship between Health and Education on SEN matters. Let us allow the Committee to examine and investigate the matter further. I am willing to work with the Health Department on that matter. I have no doubt that the Health Department is willing to work with my Department and with me to address any concerns that there may be about SEN working frameworks.

I cannot make provisions on behalf of the Employment and Learning Minister. In 2012-13, there were discussions with him about having a statement in place up to 25 years of age. However, the Minister for Employment and Learning and his Department felt that that was unnecessary. There have been some discussions with officials in the intervening period. I am more than happy to raise the

matter with the Minister for Employment and Learning again to see whether there has been a change of views or whether his Department believes that statementing up to 25 is appropriate and will deliver benefits for the young people involved, which is the most important thing.

4.15 pm

Mr Ramsey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr O'Dowd: Yes.

Mr Ramsey: Will the Minister consider looking at other areas across Britain where special needs statements up to 25 have been introduced? They seem to be the models of best practice.

Mr O'Dowd: I am more than happy to learn best practice from anywhere. You have to remember that the Bill has been in consultation since 2009-2010, and there were over 3,000 responses to the consultation document. We then made changes to the original proposals, and we engaged with the sectors and advocacy groups. We brought a policy paper to the Executive and engaged with the Executive to bring that forward. Even since 2012, we have been engaging with the various sectors and have been involved in capacity building, as I pointed out earlier. The legislation that we have brought forward is, I believe, the best way forward for getting agreement on the specific issues around education under my Department's control and working in a relationship with the Health Department.

I understand that the legislation in England is different and is governed under a different mechanism. This covers Mr McCrea's point as well: I was not annoyed at him raising it, but there is a time and a place for issues to be raised. The Second Stage of any Bill is not the place to respond to or discuss constituency matters. If Mr McCrea has specific concerns, I am more than happy to engage with him again on those points or clarify points that I covered in my letter to him. England, Scotland and Wales have different legislation for SEN provision, and it does not automatically marry across to our legislation. However, I have no doubt that, as the debate goes on in relation to provision of statementing up to 25, Mr Ramsey and others will continue to raise the matter and there will be a healthy debate in and around it. Where we can make changes that are for the betterment of service delivery to our young people, I am more than happy to support them.

I welcome the fact that, I think, we will be able to move the Bill beyond Second Stage. The engagement at Committee level will only prove to be beneficial to improving the outworkings of the Bill. Everyone is focused on the needs of the young people involved, and what we want to have at the end of this is a piece of legislation that improves the lives of our young people and their family members and ensures that the system and bureaucracy, as much as possible, is reduced, that people have advocacy and appeal rights built in, that everyone knows what their entitlements are, and that some of the most vulnerable people in our society are protected.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Second Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill [NIA Bill 46/11-16] be agreed.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That concludes the Second Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill. The Bill stands referred to the Committee for Education.

Mr Eastwood: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I apologise to you and the House for missing a question during Question Time. I was in a meeting with the Secretary of State.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I thank the Member for putting that on the record.

Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I beg to move

That the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

The regulations will implement an EU directive that deals with the compulsory wearing of seat belts and restraints by children in motor vehicles. They are made under article 24 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

I will briefly set out the background to the legislation. In February last year, the European Commission adopted a regulation that aims to provide additional safety benefits for child restraints over and above existing safety standards. Regulation 129 will be introduced in three phases. This legislation deals exclusively with phase 1. It is intended that, once all three phases have been completed, old-style child restraint systems will gradually disappear from the market. Although no date has been set for that, it is unlikely to be before 2018. In the meantime, old-style and new-style child seats can be sold alongside each other.

The purpose of the regulations is to give legal effect in Northern Ireland to the new safety standards. Once they are in place, the regulations will ensure that consumers in Northern Ireland have an extra option to choose from when buying a child car seat. As I have stated, the regulations are needed to implement the requirements of an EU directive. Britain is also moving to amend its legislation, and similar regulations came into operation in the South in September last year.

What is the rationale for the new safety standards? While most parents will have used car seats at some point in time, I am certain that many will admit that they are sometimes unsure whether the child car seat is fitted correctly or is suitable for their child and/or their vehicle. The new standards should make it easier for parents and others with responsibility for children travelling in their cars to choose the correct seat and to fit it with more confidence.

The main aim of regulation 129 is to make provision for a child car seat that is anchored to standard plug-in points in the car's structure. This will safeguard children to the maximum degree possible in the event of a collision by limiting the mobility of the child's body. Regulation 129 introduces a new classification of child car seat called i-Size. Seats are categorised according to standing height and maximum permissible combined weight of the child and the child car seat. This should give parents and carers greater certainty that they are using the correct seat. The i-Size seats will also be more rigorously tested before going into the marketplace. The introduction of a side-impact test will lead to better protection of the child's head, especially for younger children, should they be involved in a side-impact collision.

Another key change will be the requirement to carry very young children in a rearward-facing child restraint system until the child is at least 15 months old, instead of nine months as permitted under current safety standards. Initially, this will be recommended practice, but it will ultimately become a mandatory requirement.

As I have indicated, the new and existing standards will remain legal for some time yet. That is the position across Europe. There is, therefore, no need or obligation for consumers to rush out to replace their current child seat for a new i-Size model at this time.

Of course, child car seats must always be properly used to be effective. My Department has encouraged parents and carers to use the appropriate restraint through a number of educational measures, underpinned by the core message "No seatbelt: No excuse". That has reinforced all seat belt wearing campaigns over the past 13 years. However, we should not take it for granted that that message is getting through. The 'Northern Ireland Survey of Seat Belt Wearing 2014' reported that 5% of children travelling in the back of a car were not restrained. Similar figures were reported in 2013, so, unfortunately, not everyone is listening.

One of the benefits of the new i-Size system is that the new child seats should be much easier to install and fit into any i-Size position in a car, regardless of make. This should reduce the risk of incorrect installation. Not all cars are currently compatible with the new standard. Naturally, it will take some time for older cars to be replaced and the car fleet in the North to be refreshed. It will therefore be important for those using child restraint systems to continue to make sure that any ISOFIX or i-Size seats that they use are approved for use in their car. This will mean checking the specifications of their car and the manufacturer's instructions for the car seat.

Regulation 129, in its first phase, has been in place since 2013. Parents can already buy an i-Size child restraint system. Once affirmed, our regulations will ensure that the new safety standards are formally recognised in legislation here. In moving this motion today, we continue to ensure the safety of our children as passengers in cars. I commend the motion to the Assembly and ask that it affirms the regulations.

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I thank the Minister for his very detailed explanation of the background and purpose of this affirmative statutory rule. The Committee first considered the SL1 proposal at its meeting on 13 November 2014 and was briefed by departmental officials on the rule at its meeting on 26 February 2015. Officials outlined how the rule will implement UNECE regulation 129 to introduce new safety standards with the aim of providing better protection for children travelling in cars. Members questioned officials about the timetable for implementing the legislation and were reassured that parents would not need to replace existing seats until at least 2018, when it is expected that most cars will have the necessary ISOFIX points to meet the new standard. The Committee also discussed how the changes would be promoted and would like the Department to make sure that the changes to the safety standards are widely publicised to assist parents with the choice of appropriate car seats. Accordingly, the Environment Committee has agreed to recommend that the motion is affirmed by the Assembly.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for outlining the purpose of this statutory rule, and also the departmental officials who briefed the Committee recently. This rule is bringing the safety standards to a new level that will eventually see all cars fitted with the necessary ISOFIX points for the fitting of the appropriate child safety seats.

Of course, none of us is going to argue that the safety of children in our cars is not of paramount importance. I welcome the fact that the current child seats will not need to be replaced until at least 2018 and trust that the retailers will continue to promote the use of ISOFIX points and the actual seats and booster cushions where appropriate. I urge the Department to ensure that all relevant information is made available to retailers and parents. On behalf of the DUP group, I am content to agree that the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee for their contributions. I actually watched the Committee session on these regulations, which is not something that I make a habit of doing by any means, and saw and heard many questions being asked — many of which I have asked myself. Mrs Cameron hit the nail on the head when she said that this is about increasing the safety of our children as passengers in cars and that that safety is paramount. In conclusion, I ask the Assembly to affirm the regulations.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): As the motion refers to a statutory rule that impacts on the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 applies and cross-community support is required.

4.30 pm

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I beg to move

That the Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

As Members will be aware, the order is brought forward annually and stems from the Executive Budget agreed in January.

The regional rate helps to supplement Northern Ireland's share of national taxation allocated through the Barnett formula for public expenditure. It provides a supplement of between 5% and 6%, helping to fund departmental expenditure on hospitals, roads, schools and other essential public services and investment. To underline the significance of the rating system, well over £1 billion is now collected in rates — regional and district, domestic and non-domestic. Taken together, the domestic and commercial regional rate is forecast, as part of the Budget, to raise in the region of £650 million in the forthcoming financial year.

In the specific breakdown of rates bills, the regional rate represents just over half the typical bill, with the other half made up of the district rates that were set independently by the new councils. Since 2010, the Executive have frozen the regional rate in real terms to provide certainty and stability for businesses and households to plan and manage their finances.

I am proud of the fact that household bills in Northern Ireland are the lowest in the United Kingdom. In 2014-15, the average household bill in Northern Ireland was £825. That is almost half that in Wales and £622 less than in England. Since 2011-12, the non-domestic regional rate in Northern Ireland has increased by 9.3% in comparison with the uniform business rate in England, which has increased by 13.9% over the same period. The economic outlook is improving, but there are still many challenges ahead. My Executive colleagues and I want to do whatever we can to make sure that the conditions for economic recovery and growth are in place in Northern Ireland.

The real-terms freeze is adjusted for the effect of inflation. We continue to use the Treasury gross domestic product (GDP) deflator, as it is known, as determined in the 2015-16 Budget. The legislation before us for approval is the simple outworking of that important Budget decision. It will fix two regional rates in the pound for 2015-16: one for households and one for business ratepayers. The new rates in the pound represent a small increase of 1.4% in the regional rate for the 2015-16 rating year for households and businesses. That real-terms freeze is critical at a time when the system is changing as a result of local government reform and non-domestic rates revaluation, both of which come into effect on 1 April this year.

The Executive wish to continue the commitment of ensuring that household and commercial budgets are protected, given

the continuing economic difficulties being faced across the board. Alongside the extension of small business rate relief, industrial derating, the empty shops rates concession, a district rate convergence scheme that is worth up to £30 million and the retention of relief for rural ATMs — all of which were brought forward this year by my Department — the order represents the best that we can do to balance the interests of ratepayers and the demands of public expenditure. Some argue that the regional rate should be higher: I disagree. The economic pressures of recent years have been unprecedented, but I firmly believe that the Executive have taken a sensible and measured approach.

Allow me to move on to the more technical matters covered in the order. Its main purpose is to give effect to the decisions that were made in the 2015-16 Budget. Article 1 sets out the title of the order and gives the operational date as the day after it is affirmed by the Assembly. Article 2 provides that the order will apply for the 2015-16 rating year through to 31 March 2016. Article 3 specifies 31.86p in the pound as the commercial regional poundage and 0.4042p in the pound as the domestic regional rate poundage.

Members may note that the non-domestic poundage has decreased from last year. That is an effect of the recent revaluation of non-domestic properties, which takes into consideration the growth in the overall value of the new valuation list. When the Executive agreed to undertake the revaluation in 2012, it was on the basis that the exercise would be revenue-neutral. Indeed, there is a downward adjustment in the regional rate every time there is a general revaluation to correspond with the higher values. The calculation of the new non-domestic rate has reduced in light of the 7.94% growth in value from the current regional rate figure and then increased by 1.4% for the inflationary rise. This represents a clear and technical outworking of the difficult decisions made by the Executive as part of the Budget. I look forward to hearing Members' comments. I commend the order to the Assembly.

Mr McKay (The Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle.

I thank the Minister for his opening remarks. As outlined, the purpose of the proposed statutory rule is to set the domestic and non-domestic regional rates for the year ending 31 March 2016. The order will stipulate the regional rate for domestic and non-domestic property, expressed in terms of "pence per pound", that will apply for the 2015-16 rating year. The poundages laid out in the proposed rule will reflect the Executive's budget for domestic and non-domestic properties.

No consultation took place on the text of the order, as it is technical and routine in nature. The regional rate increases were consulted on as part of the public consultation exercise associated with the draft Budget. That consultation closed on 29 December, and the order will reflect the final uplift agreed by the Executive.

The policy proposals contained in the statutory rule were considered by the Committee. It had no issues to raise in respect of the policy proposals at that time. The Examiner of Statutory Rules had no points to raise in the technical scrutiny of the rule. The Committee agreed to recommend that the order be affirmed by the Assembly. On behalf of the Committee, I support the motion.

Mr Girvan: I, too, speak in favour of the motion as a member of the Committee for Finance and Personnel.

There have been winners and losers in the process that we have gone through on the revaluation of non-domestic property. I can say only that, as far as I am concerned, it was vital that we did not increase the rate overall. As the Minister mentioned, Northern Ireland's rates are the lowest in the United Kingdom. The average rate in Northern Ireland is £825, as the Minister says, while, in England, it is £1,447. We are definitely not a party to increase taxation. I appreciate that it has been Executive policy to freeze the regional rate and ensure that £650 million is raised from the regional rate component. I think that, in total, we raise somewhere in the region of £1.1 billion through rates collection. As a consequence, it is vital that we marry that up with the spend that we put through in the Budget. I appreciate that there are some who feel that the Executive have been working, in some way, to ensure that we save money in certain areas but waste it in others. Some people feel that there has been a Trojan Horse at work on that in recent days. That could create some difficulties in trying to balance the Budget throughout the process.

Understanding that we have the lowest rates, we continue to have the small business rate relief scheme in place for the next year. It is vital that those businesses take advantage of it. I appreciate that a small number of businesses in town centres fall outside the scheme. During the revaluation of the non-domestic rate, it was identified that some premises would benefit from the process and others would probably be made to pay more. I appreciate that petrol stations in some areas seem to have been hit with an increase. Most petrol stations have now become mini-supermarkets, and effectively that has added to it. It is vital that, as banks have been withdrawing from rural communities, there was an intention to ensure that ATM providers in those rural communities could avail themselves of the rate relief. Therefore, those who want to put an ATM in a petrol station, in place of having a bank on a village high street, will take advantage of having a small area in their shop zero-rated, which can ultimately be used to attract people into the shop. I support the motion as presented for the Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, I also support the motion. The good news for the Minister is that, when we get the rates revaluations wrong, it is usually the small businesses that come to the Committee first to voice their concern and anger about non-domestic rates. Already, we have had some small businesses, especially petrol stations, come to our Committee because they are concerned that they maybe carry too great a burden at this time. That said, we have made a decision as a Committee to try to collate the evidence, bring it forward, try to have quicker revaluations and try to respond to the complaints and concerns of, in particular, non-domestic ratepayers in businesses and small businesses.

A series of reliefs for businesses and manufacturing businesses already exists. We need to avoid the situation that was created, especially in places like Belfast city centre, where the rates bill became so onerous that businesses no longer wanted to locate there and moved. The recent revaluation has brought business back into some of those areas in the core of the city. People are now

able to estimate what their rent and rates will be, decide whether they can afford it and bring businesses back to the city centre. As the burden is spread, I hope that the scale of the rates increase in other areas of Belfast city does not make business there untenable. I think in particular of the Cathedral Quarter, where there has been an increase. I hope that the businesses continue to flourish in the time ahead.

As we adopt the motion today, the main thing is that we need to return more swiftly to look at the effect of the rates and rates increases on business in the time ahead. If I caught the Minister right, inflation is 1.4%.

Mr Hamilton: Yes.

Mr Ó Muilleoir: I would love to claim credit for that. That is probably the biggest help and assistance that we can give to businesses. Inflation, at present, is low and staying low. We have done a good job of maintaining the rate increase at inflation-only. I know that many of our councils have frozen their rates again. I look forward to working closely with the Minister in the time ahead through the two Committees that I am on — the economy Committee and the Finance Committee — and to hearing the response to rates, especially from business.

Mr McCallister: Like colleagues, I welcome the Minister bringing this to the House. Some bits of it, certainly, are good and welcome news. He will know of my support for the small business rate relief scheme and industrial derating. I hope that the Minister will continue with that long into the future. It is a vital link in supporting manufacturing. I would hate to see anything put manufacturing under even more pressure than it is under already.

The Minister will, no doubt, be aware that the Committee had a powerful presentation from small businesses and the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA) last Wednesday about the revaluation of non-domestic rates. It was very powerful because of the figures that were involved, the size and variety of the businesses and their location in the towns and small towns. The Minister represents a constituency that has many towns and small towns that, I have no doubt, will have been struggling over the past seven to eight years. They will have had difficulty, and they need and will continue to need the support of the Assembly and Executive. That is where the small business rate relief comes in. I welcome the fact that, for his part, with the revaluation, the Minister has taken that into account, but, as Mr Girvan said, revaluations give winners and losers. Certainly, some of the people who gave evidence to the Committee last week felt that they fell into the excessively losing side of that equation.

The Minister has probably done as much as he can to lessen that burden. It certainly swings to councils to see what they can do to make sure that no one suffers excessively or no business has to close because of the burden of rates that falls on it.

Smaller towns, rural communities and larger town centres have been struggling to attract people to open shops, and that has been a real difficulty and a real challenge over the last few years.

4.45 pm

We have been debating the rating package very much as if it were business as usual, even though the events of yesterday mean that the entirety of the Minister's Budget could be completely blown out of the water, rates included. If we are raising £1.1 billion in rates, I am not sure whether we will soon need to raise more to pay for welfare reform, or where that all stops. That should worry and concern us all. That uncertainty will certainly concern the people who presented to our Committee last week. Can the Administration hold the line on setting regional rates policy or will pressures as a result of welfare reform, failure to move anywhere on the voluntary exit scheme, failure to draw anything down on shared education and all the other parts of the Stormont House Agreement make the Assembly limp on for the few months until June when the Minister has to come back? That is the real challenge that the Administration face. I am not sure that I can offer the Minister many answers, but let us hope that he can provide some for me.

Mr Hamilton: I thank all the Members who contributed to the debate. Mr McCallister raised a range of issues that are troubling my mind and that will continue to trouble my mind for a number of days. The financial consequences of where we are now in not proceeding with welfare reform will have an impact on our Budget. I continue to hope to clarify over the remainder of today and further days the extent of the financial impact that it will have, but it will have a bearing on our Budget. I am absolutely clear that it does not matter what it is to pay for, because our citizens are paying enough through taxation and the rating system. I do not wish, for any purpose, to put a further burden on the citizens and businesses of Northern Ireland.

Sometimes it does not feel like it, but I think that we have much to celebrate, particularly when it comes to our rates system. I say that in the full knowledge that no one likes to pay their rates bill. However, as an Assembly, we should be proud that, in spite of all the various challenges that we have faced fiscally over the past number of years, and continue to face, we have managed to keep household bills in Northern Ireland at the lowest level in the whole of the United Kingdom. This represents the fifth year in a row in which we will be freezing, in real terms, rates increases for domestic and non-domestic ratepayers.

Sometimes, the concentration is on domestic ratepayers. Rightly, most of the debate today has been around the impact of rates on our businesses. Again, that is an area in which there is much to celebrate in how the Executive have supported business. Industrial derating remains in place, offering around £60 million worth of support each year to many of our businesses, and not just manufacturing businesses, although a lot of them are. That has kept over £300 million in those businesses since the decision was taken in the early days of devolution back in 2007-08 to keep that policy in place. We introduced a small business rate relief scheme, which is offering around £20 million worth of support for businesses each and every year. To date, 33,449 businesses have benefited from the small business rate relief scheme and the reduction of 20% in their rates bill that comes with that.

We have had the extension of the rates relief policy for rural ATMs, which the Assembly passed last week. In the lifetime of that policy, we have seen the number of ATMs in rural wards increase from 37 to 76. We have been

innovative, and the rest of the UK has followed our lead on the empty shops rate concession, which has so far seen 375 new businesses open across Northern Ireland and avail themselves of what is, in effect, a 50% rates holiday in the difficult first year of business.

I am sensitive to the comments that were made about rates revaluation. Several Members made the very valid point, which I have made consistently, that the first principle in rates revaluation is rates neutrality. We are not trying to raise more rates in total through a revaluation; we are trying to get a fairer distribution of the rate burden. Members identified that there will be some winners and some losers and that there are many who will more or less be in the same position.

I think that some of the shock that some businesses will have felt is probably down to the fact that it has been 13 years since we did our last revaluation. I think that that is far too long. There were very valid reasons why the revaluation was delayed. I do not think that we should allow ourselves to get into that position again, and I want to see regular, five-yearly revaluations, irrespective of the prevailing circumstances. Many of those businesses that are experiencing large increases in their revaluation do not necessarily experience large increases in their rates, because that depends upon what we and, indeed, councils are doing. Mr McCallister is right to identify that we are only one half of that equation. Certainly in the past, many councils have not kept the same degree of rigour and discipline as the Assembly in keeping rates low.

As I say, there will be some winners and some losers. That 13-year gap will perhaps have amplified the increases that would have happened over say, two or three revaluations, and people in businesses will have seen much more clearly the increases that would have been taking place in their valuation over that period.

Mr Ó Muilleoir talked about getting it wrong. There is, of course, a methodology that is employed in a revaluation. If valuations are wrong, for whatever reason, there is an appeal mechanism, and I encourage any business that thinks that its valuation is wrong to appeal and to go through that process. If it is wrong, that will be reflected in an adjustment to its valuation.

The particular issue of petrol stations was raised. I am not saying that this is the case in every instance, as there will be quirks and nuances in every business, but describing them as "petrol stations" perhaps ignores the evolution of the petrol station over the last 13 years. Many of them are now quite substantial small or medium-sized supermarkets. That will, obviously, be reflected in an increase in their valuation. The significant investment that many of those types of business have put in will also be reflected in their revaluation.

I take some solace from the idea that we have got it right overall, even though there will be some losers. On the day that the valuations list was first published, the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association went on the public record to say:

"We welcome the outcome of the rates revaluation and are particularly pleased that Finance Minister Simon Hamilton has addressed the unfair imbalance of large out of town multiple retailers paying less rates

per square foot than many of our members in town centres.”

Mr Roberts, the chief executive, went on to say:

“This is a win-win for our independent retailers and town centres.”

I appreciate that, in a revaluation, there are always those who feel that they are losing out. I encourage those who feel that they are unfairly losing out to appeal. However, comments like that suggest to me that, by and large, we have got it right.

In conclusion, I trust that Members will be able to support and back this order and help to keep the rates burden for our citizens and businesses at a minimum. Thank you.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): 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 Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): As there are Ayes from all sides of the House and no dissenting voices, I am satisfied that cross-community support has been demonstrated.

Civil Legal Services (Appeal) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Appeal) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

This draft statutory rule is one of four regulations we will be debating today to commence civil legal services under the 2003 order and transfer the functions and staff of the Legal Services Commission to an executive agency of my Department. This provides a timely opportunity to move the legislation governing civil legal aid on to a modern statutory platform.

Under the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, as amended by the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, my Department is responsible for making regulations to establish a procedure for appeals against decisions on applications for funding by way of civil legal services. It is also responsible for the appointment of independent appeal panels.

It may be helpful if I explain how the current arrangements will change. The Legal Services Commission is responsible for granting legal aid under the civil legal aid schemes, and there is a right of appeal against decisions taken by the commission. When the legal services agency is created on 1 April, the function of granting or refusing funding in civil cases will transfer from the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission to the director of legal aid casework. Decisions on the award of funding or further funding will be based on the relevant statutory provisions and the requirements of the scheme.

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

Members will recall from our debate on the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill a few months ago that decisions in individual cases will be taken on the merits of the case. Safeguards have been put in place to ensure that those decisions are not influenced by external interference or political considerations. The appeals mechanism is one of those safeguards to protect the independence of individual decisions on the grant of civil legal aid. Individuals will have access to a robust and independent appeals mechanism to consider appeals against individual decisions.

The principles of the appeals process are as follows: appeals will be considered on the basis of the relevant statutory test, depending on the subject matter of the appeal. The appeals panel will comprise three people drawn from a wide pool of suitably qualified people from a range of professional backgrounds, with a legally qualified presiding member, all recruited through the public appointment process. The new approach will be more open and transparent than the current arrangements, with written reasons provided by appeal panels on their decisions.

I thank the Justice Committee for its careful consideration of the draft regulations and its swift scrutiny of the revised regulations in recognition of the time pressures involved in bringing forward this suite of legislation necessary to commence civil legal services. It is with the Committee's support that I bring this draft statutory rule before the House today. I commend it to the House.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice):

I am pleased to speak on this motion on behalf of the Committee for Justice. Before I turn to the Committee's consideration of the statutory rule, I wish to draw attention to the Committee's dissatisfaction with the Department's management of the four statutory rules before the Assembly. The Committee considered and agreed that it was content to approve the four statutory rules at its meeting on 18 February. However, the Department relaid them in the Business Office five days later, with an explanation that it had made minor changes to the rules following suggestions by the Assembly's Examiner of Statutory Rules. This required the Committee to consider and agree to approve the four statutory rules for a second time, on 4 March 2015. As much as we enjoy statutory rules, we do not enjoy them so much that we wish to do them twice. Although the Minister will be relieved that we are not calling for his resignation at this time, the Committee agreed that it would write to the Department to say that this was managed in an unsatisfactory way. To avoid duplication of work, we ask that the Department communicates better with the Committee when changes are made.

Now back to the rule in question. In September last year, the Department advised the Committee of the suite of legislation that was required to implement civil legal services. That included the requirement for a statutory rule to establish a procedure for appeals against decisions on applications for funding by way of civil legal services and provide for the establishment and composition of independent appeals panels. At that time, the Committee was content for the Department to undertake a targeted consultation on the draft statutory rule.

At the meeting on 14 January of this year, the Committee considered the responses to the Department's consultation and the detail of the new appeal process proposed by the Department, which had been revised as a result of the consultation responses. The Committee noted that the appeal panel will comprise three people drawn from a wide pool of suitably qualified people from a range of professional backgrounds and appointed through a public appointments process and that there would be a requirement for the presiding member of the panel to be a lawyer.

At that meeting, the Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's proposed statutory rule. As I outlined, the Committee agreed to recommend that the statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly at its meetings on 18 February and 4 March and therefore supports the motion.

5.00 pm

Mr A Maginness: I welcome the statutory rule and the Minister's statement on it. It is good to see progress being made on the administrative reform of legal aid. We welcome that, because it is important that we make progress. The Committee, as the Chair indicated, has been supportive, and the work that was done with the Committee, the Minister and the Department to get this new arrangement for appeals has been productive and very helpful. That is an indication of the good relationship that there usually is between the Committee and the Department.

I would like to see the new system in action in order to make a judgement on it. It is probably going in the right direction, as it is important that there be a legally qualified

person presiding over the appeals. It is very important that appeals be as transparent and independent as possible in the circumstances. I hope that those who are attracted to the panels will obtain the confidence of the community at large, not just the applicants but those involved in the legal services at large: barristers, solicitors and so forth. It is a good step forward, and I welcome it, as, I think, do most in the legal profession. However, we have to wait and see how the new system will work. I wish it well.

I want to make one further point that is relevant to the legislation. The Department has embarked on legal aid reform, which is important. I support that, my party supports it and, I think, most parties in the Assembly support it. However, the Department and the Minister may be going a step too far with some of the reforms. I encourage the Minister to listen very carefully to all stakeholders in the justice system so that we do not damage access to justice. I make those points in a non-adversarial manner and offer them as advice to the House and the Minister. I hope that we can avoid damaging the system with reforms that are ill thought-out or are imitative of reforms in Britain that have proven to be a complete disaster. If you do not believe me, you should read the Public Accounts Committee report on the matters that are before the House. I will leave it there, but the Department must take that on board.

Mr Dickson: Mr Deputy Speaker, if you will permit me, I will reference the four regulations that are in front of us rather than make four separate speeches.

I welcome the developments that the new regulations bring to our legal system in addition to the safeguards built into the system. For example, decisions on funding will be based on individual cases, and additional safeguards will be put in place to ensure that those decisions are not influenced by external interference. For appeals, people will have access to a robust and independent appeal mechanism to consider appeals on an individual basis. Finally, the Criminal Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Rules will include a safeguard that ensures that the director and the Department cannot disclose information if it relates to the defence of an individual or may be used for the purposes of a prosecution.

I believe that the regulations will produce a more efficient, user-friendly and sensible legal system for the people of Northern Ireland. Safeguards have been included to ensure that the system functions effectively and in response to the comments made through consultation. I welcome the changes, which do have and will have an effect on how our legal aid system is developed in the future. I am sure that the Minister will agree that Mr Maginness may be reading Public Accounts Committee reports from the rest of the United Kingdom but, in Northern Ireland, you, Minister, have been working hard to ensure that the reforms that you will make to legal aid are nuanced and are not slavishly following what is happening in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr Ford: In my customary way in these short debates, I thank all the Members who have contributed to it.

I noticed that Alban Maginness, with his usual good humour, referred to the generally good relationship between the Committee and the Department, and he even managed to go completely off-message in criticising the process of legal aid reforms and was allowed to by you,

Mr Deputy Speaker. I trust that I may respond briefly to that point. I am well aware of some of the problems that have arisen over legal aid reform in England and Wales. There is no issue of slavishly following, but there is the issue that budgets have to be dealt with. Mr Deputy Speaker, I visited your constituency last Friday night and voluntarily subjected myself to attend the annual dinner of the local solicitors' association and be lobbied by some on the issue. I can certainly assure the House, as I assured members of the Coleraine and Ballymoney Solicitors' Association last Friday night, that I am not slavishly following the disaster of England and Wales.

These regulations are, of course, absolutely nothing to do with the amount of legal aid but are to do with ensuring that we get matters right. I note in particular the Chair's opening comments. As he acknowledged, defects in the rules that were originally laid were pointed out by the Examiner of Statutory Rules, and I think that we can all agree that it is important that we get it right. It is a question of getting it right at the right time in the right way, and I apologise to the Committee that we did not do that on this occasion. I appreciate the good humour with which the Chair referred to it and the fact that the Committee was prepared to reconsider the rules a second time. I trust that, as future things come up, we will not need to.

In closing, I commend my colleague Stewart Dickson for his ability to make four speeches in one, thereby saving the time of the House somewhat later on. It is clear from the quality of the debate that those who have taken an interest in this are fully supportive of the process. I believe that this will significantly improve the operation of the legal aid system by the provision of a new procedure for appeals. I commend the draft regulations to the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I am sure that Members will be extremely pleased that you made four speeches in one and that you were not held hostage in Ballymoney or Coleraine.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Appeal) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Criminal Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move

That the draft Criminal Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Under the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, my Department is responsible for the administration of criminal legal aid. These rules ensure that the provisions regarding disclosure of information in respect of civil legal services should apply equally in respect of criminal legal aid.

The Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, as amended in 2014, makes it an offence to disclose information, except as may be allowed under rules. The draft rules provide the circumstances in which the Department, any court, tribunal or other person or body, in connection with the case of a person receiving criminal legal aid, can disclose information. Those circumstances are: where it is in accordance with the law of Northern Ireland; where it is for the purpose of court proceedings; where it enables or assists the Department, a court, tribunal or other person to discharge their functions under the legislation governing legal aid; for the purpose of investigating or prosecution of any offence; and for the purpose of facilitating disciplinary functions by a tribunal. There is a safeguard that ensures that the director and the Department cannot disclose information if it relates to the defence of an individual and may be used for the purposes of the prosecution of that person in that case.

At this stage, I wish to thank the Justice Committee for its careful consideration, as ever, of the draft rules and for its swift scrutiny of the revised regulations, in recognition of the time pressures involved in bringing forward the complete suite of legislation to commence civil legal services. I thank the Committee for its support and commend the statutory rule to the House.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice):

I will be very brief once again. As already outlined by the Minister, the Criminal Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Rules make provision for the disclosure of information that is furnished to the Department of Justice or any court in connection with the case of an individual seeking or receiving representation under a criminal aid certificate.

The Committee considered the proposal for the statutory rule in September last year and agreed that it was content for the Department to undertake a targeted consultation on its proposals. At a meeting in January this year, the Committee reviewed the consultation responses and agreed that it was content for the Department to progress its proposed statutory rule. The Committee then considered the draft statutory rule laid by the Department at its meetings on 18 February and 4 March. On both occasions, the Committee agreed to recommend that the statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly and, therefore, supports the motion.

Mr Ford: You see the advantages of making four speeches at once, Mr Deputy Speaker. As the Chair has acknowledged, the Committee approved the regulations both times they were laid before it. That also followed consultation with the offices of the Lord Chief Justice and the Attorney General. I should point out to the House

that the rules require the approval of the Department of Finance and Personnel before they can be made, but, on the basis of support from the Committee and no dissent from the House, I happily commend the draft regulations.

Notice taken that 10 Members were not present.

House counted, and, there being fewer than 10 Members present, the Deputy Speaker ordered the Division Bells to be rung.

Upon 10 Members being present —

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Criminal Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Civil Legal Services (Disclosure of Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Disclosure of Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Under the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, my Department is responsible for the administration of what is currently termed civil legal aid. On commencement of parts of the 2003 order, civil legal aid will become civil legal services.

The Access to Justice Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 makes it an offence to disclose information, except as may be allowed under regulations. The draft rules provide the circumstances in which the Department, any court, tribunal or other person or body, in connection with the case of a person receiving criminal legal aid, can disclose information. Those circumstances are: where it is in accordance with the law of Northern Ireland; where it is for the purpose of some civil court proceedings; where it enables or assists the Department, a court, tribunal or other person to discharge their functions under the 2003 order for civil legal services and the 1981 order for criminal legal aid; for the purpose of investigating or the prosecution of any offence; and for the purpose of facilitating disciplinary functions by a tribunal. There is a safeguard that ensures that the director and the Department cannot disclose information if it relates to the defence of an individual and may be used for the purposes of the prosecution of that person in that case.

5.15 pm

At this stage, I again wish to thank the Justice Committee for its careful consideration of the draft regulations and its swift scrutiny of the revised regulations, allowing us to bring the matter forward as speedily as possible. It is, again, with the Committee's support that I bring the draft statutory rule before the House today and commend it to the House.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I notice that the numbers have increased in the Chamber. I do not know whether the bells have led to an element of excitement but I am quite sure, now that people have arrived in the Chamber, that they may be sorely disappointed.

As already outlined by the Minister, the Civil Legal Services (Disclosure of Information) Regulations make provision for the disclosure of information that is furnished to the Department of Justice, or any court, in connection with an individual seeking or receiving civil legal services. The regulations also require the provision of information from suppliers to the director of legal aid casework and waive the rules of privilege and confidentiality. The Committee considered the proposal for these regulations in September of last year and agreed that it was content for the Department to undertake a targeted consultation on its proposals.

At a meeting in January of this year, the Committee reviewed the consultation responses and agreed that it was content for the Department to progress with its

proposed statutory rule to bring the regulations into effect. At its meetings on 18 February and 4 March, the Committee considered the draft statutory rule laid by the Department. On both occasions, the Committee agreed to recommend that the statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly and therefore, again, it supports the motion today.

Mr Ford: I thank the Chair for his support, along with all the Members who have spoken in the debate and those who have come in to ensure that we have a quorum for the vote shortly. The details have been given by me in the opening speech, and also by the Chair. It is clear that, as we seek to move legal services into an executive agency of the Department, it is appropriate that we should modernise the legislation under which civil legal aid is administered. These regulations are part of that, and I commend the draft regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Disclosure of Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Civil Legal Services (Cost Protection) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The next item on the Order Paper is a fourth motion from the Minister of Justice to approve a statutory rule.

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I note a sense of relief in your voice at this stage. I beg to move

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Cost Protection) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

These rules are, specifically, a further part of the suite of subordinate legislation to set out the limit on costs ordered against an assisted party and to prescribe the periods during which cost protection applies and does not apply. Cost protection applies in respect of costs incurred by the unassisted party in relation to funded proceedings, costs incurred after the issue of a certificate and costs incurred up to the date that funding is withdrawn. Cost protection does not apply if a funding application is subsequently revoked.

I thank the Committee for its careful consideration of this, as with the other rules. It is with its support that I bring this draft statutory rule to the House and commend it.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I am pleased to speak very briefly on the final motion today. Given that we have had swift agreement on the previous three, I hope this is an example of speeding up justice and anticipate that this will be a similarly quick motion.

As already outlined by the Minister, the Civil Legal Services (Cost Protection) Regulations make provision for the circumstances in which cost protection will apply — and when it will not apply — in civil cases in which legal aid has been a feature. The cost protection regulations set out the periods in which the limit on liability, under an order for costs against a person receiving funded services as part of civil legal services, apply.

The Committee considered the proposal for this statutory rule in October of last year and agreed that it was content for the Department to undertake a targeted consultation on its proposals. At its meeting on 14 January of this year, the Committee considered the post-consultation report and noted that minor drafting amendments had been made to the draft regulations as a result of the consultation responses received. The Committee agreed that it was content for the Department to progress with its proposed statutory rule.

At its meetings on 18 February and 4 March, the Committee considered the draft statutory rule laid by the Department. On both occasions, the Committee agreed to recommend that the statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly, and therefore it supports the motion today.

Mr Ford: Again, I thank the Chair and the Committee. It becomes something of a joke in the House when regulations go through so speedily, but I wish to acknowledge that, even if regulations are presented formally to the Committee only once, it involves a fair deal of work on the part of the Committee. I am grateful for the ongoing positive relationship that was highlighted by Alban Maginness and the Committee Chair in the way in which this business has been handled. I am genuinely pleased about the good work being done between my officials,

the Committee and the Committee staff. We should acknowledge that much work is done in this place, not in the Chamber but in the Committee rooms, which means that we have a better justice system for the people of Northern Ireland. I commend the draft rules to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Cost Protection) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat).]*

Adjournment

Lisa Dorrian: Tenth Anniversary of Her Disappearance

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes, and all other Members who wish to speak will have approximately four minutes.

Mr Weir: I suspect that the topic of today's Adjournment debate will find a fair degree of consensus around the Chamber, but all of us approach it with some mixed emotions. I express gratitude that the Business Committee has allowed the debate to be selected today on the closest opportunity that we have had to the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of Lisa Dorrian. I also commend the Justice Minister. I suppose that he can take advantage of a commendation when he gets it. It is rare enough in the House.

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Especially from you.

Mr Weir: Especially from me. He has been very generous in helping to facilitate the debate, given that it is largely an operational matter. I also understand and appreciate that, because of the nature of that, while it will not in any way dampen the fervour with which the Minister will speak on the subject, it will by definition limit the scope of any remarks that he can make on the subject. That is understood by all those involved.

I have mixed feelings. On at least two grounds, it is, in many ways, a shame that we have to have the debate. It is a shame on the grounds that, 10 years on from the disappearance of Lisa Dorrian, the case remains unresolved, but, above all, it is a shame that the matter needs to be debated at all, because the disappearance and assumed murder of Lisa Dorrian is a terrible tragedy that should never have been inflicted on the Dorrian family. It is just over 10 years since Lisa disappeared. Lisa should be with us today. If Lisa Dorrian was alive today, she would be 35 years old. At the time of her disappearance, she was 25. She was a bubbly girl who grew up in a very loving family in Conlig, and our thoughts today are mostly with her family: her father, John, her mother, Patricia, and her sisters, Joanne, Michelle and Ciara. Indeed, it is poignant that, shortly after her disappearance — it should be a salutary reminder to us — her father said that one of the most difficult things he ever had to do in his life was to tell Lisa's then eight-year-old sister Ciara that her sister was not coming back and that her sister was dead. No father should have to face that.

As all of us do, Lisa made mistakes in life. All of us have been in that position. In her last few years, she fell prey to evil people who were involved in criminal actions, particularly drugs. She had also taken active steps to sort out her life. One of the great tragedies of the Lisa Dorrian case is that, at the time of her death, she had recently received a significant amount of compensation for injuries. That would have enabled her to fulfil her plans to start a new life in Spain or the Canaries and open a business there. Unfortunately, her life was cut short before she had that opportunity.

Lisa Dorrian disappeared in the early hours of 28 February 2005. She had been attending a party in a caravan in Ballyhalbert. What is known directly about the disappearance of Lisa Dorrian is that, in the early hours of the morning, she got a call on a mobile and left the caravan, clearly to meet someone. The assumption is that the people she met led directly to her death. There has been speculation that she was attacked, beaten up, killed and then dumped and buried somewhere, but, unfortunately, one of the major problems is that speculation is what we are left with.

Since her disappearance there have been many false trails and false hopes. Suspects have been highlighted, particularly those from a loyalist paramilitary background. For the family, in particular, it is less significant who carried this out; the central question is where Lisa is today. That is what people need to focus on.

I praise the work of the police. Over the last 10 years, there have been, at various stages, eight arrests, none of which led ultimately to charges. There have been 275 searches, and, at various stages, intelligence suggested that Lisa's body had been dumped at locations in County Down or at sea. Sad to say, 10 years on, the body has not been found. The police, to be fair, have interviewed around 4,000 people in connection with the case. They have taken a very proactive approach, and they deserve our praise. Ten years on, however, the Dorrian family still do not have closure.

I am sure that most of us in the House have lost a close relative. A lot of us have lost a mother or father and know the heartache that that brings. Losing a child is much more poignant and sad, because it goes against the order of things. It is difficult for any of us to imagine a situation where not simply has a child been lost but the family does not even have the opportunity to give the child a Christian burial or a moment at which they can grieve and a location either by way of a grave or an urn that they can look at and say, "Those are the remains of Lisa Dorrian". That has been denied to the Dorrian family for far too long.

The Dorrian family have been active in trying to ensure that the name of Lisa Dorrian is kept alive through a number of initiatives, be it the blue ribbon campaign, a range of debates, balloon releases and services in their local church — all to highlight the case. Yet, despite the good work of the police, one thing has been missing: those who know what happened to Lisa have not come forward. The most recent campaign to mark the tenth anniversary has been boosted by a reward from the family of £10,000 and a reward from Crimestoppers of £5,000 for information on the whereabouts of Lisa. There is an opportunity, at the very least, for someone who may well be fearful to give that information confidentially. What the family seeks above all is knowledge of the whereabouts of Lisa's body. I quote her father John:

"The justice thing can take care of itself afterwards, but we would like to find Lisa to give her a Christian burial... All they have to do is listen to their conscience."

Whether it is their conscience or the reward money, I do not think we care particularly about what people are motivated by. Let us bring some peace and closure to the Dorrian family, and send out a signal that the Assembly has not forgotten Lisa. Justice has still to be done for the Dorrian family.

5.30 pm

Mr Cree: I rise in support of the sentiments of my North Down colleagues and to bring public attention to the fact that this cruel crime — committed, it is hard to believe, 10 years ago — remains unsolved. I applaud the local police, who have joined Lisa's parents, Patricia and John, and her sisters, Joanne, Michelle and Ciara, in renewed investigation to find out what happened to their loved one when she disappeared without trace on 28 February 2005. As a political representative, I use this opportunity to appeal to the general public to let the police know anything they feel may help to complete the missing links of what happened on that fateful day.

I cannot begin to imagine what the family must go through every day of their life, knowing that Lisa is out there somewhere. They cannot grieve or find rest until they find her remains. As with all victims of our Troubles, the family is left to suffer in the not-knowing place of such crimes. Her memory cannot be laid to rest until she is found or someone comes forward with substantial evidence that will satisfy police investigations. Until that happens, the Dorrian family cannot find closure.

I am pleased to note that extensive press coverage has been produced that gives detailed accounts to date of police evidence obtained by the serious crime branch. Detective Chief Inspector Justin Galloway said:

"The initial response to the tenth anniversary appeal for information about Lisa's disappearance and murder has been encouraging, both in terms of the volume of calls we have received and the quality of the information being provided. It shows that people care and there is information in the community which could make a crucial impact."

He advised that:

"on PSNI social media platforms alone, 50,000 people read the renewed appeals."

It is important that that message is delivered by as many people as possible to try to bring to book the perpetrators of this heinous crime. Someone out there knows what happened. I appeal to the conscience of those who do to come forward and help to put closure to the Dorrian family's pain.

In closing, I take the opportunity, as a resident of north Down and a public representative, to reinforce my previous call for those with information to contact the police at the incident room in Newtownards or anonymously through Crimestoppers.

Dr Farry: I thank my colleague Mr Weir for arranging this Adjournment debate to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the very sad disappearance of Lisa Dorrian. I echo the comments that were made by both of the Members who spoke previously. I also share in the comments that, no doubt, will be made by others during the debate.

Obviously, our thoughts are very much with the family of Lisa Dorrian, who have gone through a tremendously difficult decade with a huge degree of dignity. They have also been very tenacious in ensuring that they have kept the case of Lisa Dorrian very much in the public eye. They have always sought and continue to seek the truth and, following that, in due course, hopefully, justice in relation to her disappearance and, sadly and inevitably, her death.

There are two points that I want to make to build on the comments that have been made to date. The first is to reinforce the point that there are people out there who know fully what happened to Lisa Dorrian and where her remains lie today. Hopefully, with the passage of time over that 10-year period, the perspective and attitudes that maybe pertained in the head of someone 10 years ago have moved on significantly and one or more people out there today have this case very much preying on their conscience. They have many avenues through which they can make that information known. In doing that, not only would they give huge comfort to Lisa Dorrian's family; I suggest that they would benefit from getting what is, no doubt, a very important thing weighing on their conscience into the proper light to ease their own burden, even if that person is a perpetrator in the case.

Hopefully, over time, the circumstances will change in the head of those with information that will lead to that information coming to light.

Others have made known the different avenues that exist for bringing information to light. I want to make a further point, which is that Lisa Dorrian is perhaps as much one of the disappeared as the victims of republican violence who are more traditionally associated with the concept of the disappeared. We have had many debates in the House over the past number of years about the disappeared and talked about the importance of information leading to the recovery of remains. There have been some successes that have brought a degree — I stress the word "degree" — of closure for many families who have been suffering for many years.

Sadly, the remit of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains is prescribed by law and by treaty, only covering the period up to 1998, but one possible route might be to encourage the British and Irish Governments to consider extending the commission's remit to include Lisa Dorrian's case. That would provide one more mechanism by which information leading to the recovery of her remains could be pursued. Doing that would never take justice itself off the table, but, as Mr Weir pointed out, there are two different aspects here: one is the closure that would be given through the location of the remains; while the other, in due course, is that of justice.

Mr Easton: Lisa Dorrian was 25 and from Bangor, and she went missing in the early hours of 28 February 2005 after attending a party at a caravan site in the seaside town of Ballyhalbert. She had recently separated from her boyfriend of four years and was hanging about with a new crowd. It is widely believed that she was abducted and murdered by criminal elements with possible paramilitary links. Her body has yet to be found, but police believe that she was murdered.

The investigation into Lisa's disappearance and murder has been substantial. As my colleague has already said, the identification of more than 4,000 witnesses has taken place and statements have been taken from 571 people. There have been 275 searches, 194 of them in caravans and outbuildings, and there have been eight arrests on suspicion of murder and a number of unrelated drug offences. Despite extensive land and sea searches, Lisa's body has never been found. Police have made several arrests, but no one has ever been charged with her murder.

The Dorrian family have tried a number of initiatives since she went missing, including linking up with Snow Patrol singer Gary Lightbody and releasing a short film at local cinemas. A £10,000 reward, as has already been mentioned, was also offered by the family for information leading to the recovery of Lisa's body. Police and the Dorrian family have launched a renewed appeal for information about the missing Bangor woman in the week of the tenth anniversary of her disappearance. The anniversary appeal coincides with a new reward of up to £5,000 from the independent charity Crimestoppers and an outdoor advertising campaign in Bangor and parts of greater Belfast to promote the campaign.

A video appeal made by Lisa's family and the police will be shown in a number of cinemas in the coming weeks, as well as being available to view online on the PSNI website, YouTube and Lisa's website. A social media campaign, @letsfindlisa, has been started to enlist community support for the tenth anniversary appeal. Several cinemas have also kindly agreed to show Lisa's appeal video in their premises over the coming weeks. The police and the Dorrian family gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and generosity of those organisations in showing the video appeal free of charge.

There are individuals who have knowledge of how Lisa died and where her body has been hidden. By holding on to those secrets, they prolong a grieving family's agony. The family have received a number of confidential messages, however, and the quest for the conclusive piece of information continues. Investigations into Lisa's disappearance are ongoing and will not be concluded until her body is found. Those individuals who harbour the secrets that could free the Dorrian family from their living nightmare should take no comfort from the passage of time. I ask them to do the right thing and talk to the police.

If anyone has information, please contact Crimestoppers immediately. The smallest of details could be a vital link to catching those responsible and lead to the whereabouts of Lisa's body, giving the Dorrian family the closure that they deserve.

Mr Dunne: I, too, welcome the opportunity to further the debate, and I commend my colleague Peter Weir for bringing the topic forward tonight.

There is no doubt that Saturday 28 February 2005 was one of the darkest days in the lives of the Dorrian family and one that will never be forgotten. It was the night that Lisa never returned from a night out in Ballyhalbert. Sadly, Lisa has not been seen since that fateful night, and we all share in the family's pain today. However, our pain pales into insignificance compared with that of the Dorrian family, who have had to live with that empty chair for over 10 years since Lisa's disappearance.

It is important that we continue to raise awareness of the campaign. As the family recently stated, someone out there knows something about Lisa's disappearance. I pay tribute to the bravery and courage that the Dorrian family have shown since the day of Lisa's disappearance. Lisa's parents, John, who I have known for a number of years, and Patricia, along with sisters, Joanne, Michelle and Ciara, have shown incredible bravery and determination. That is a real testament to Lisa. As has been said, the family want closure and the right to a family, Christian funeral. Justice, as they have said, can wait.

There has been considerable police input to the investigation over the years. For example, there have been statements from 571 people, 275 searches and so on, with eight arrests. However, given that no one has been brought to justice, I believe that that needs to continue. The police need to continue their efforts, redouble their investigations and do all that they can to help that grief-stricken family in their time of need. It is important that the police review all actions taken, all the processes that they have gone through and all their files and carry out a stringent review of the evidence and statements to date.

I have no doubt that the family will continue with their campaign. We must salute them in their hour of need. I reassure them that they have our full support and that we will continue to remember them in our thoughts and prayers.

Mr Agnew: As I rise to speak, I have a picture of Lisa Dorrian in front of me, along with images of her family during the recent appeal. Lisa was my age, and it is hard not to put yourself back 10 years. Where was I? I, like Lisa, was partying. I was without responsibility — I did not have children at that time — and no doubt I was irresponsible at times. I suppose, in my own context, I was largely safe and had the advantage of being male. That is unfortunately still an advantage in this society. Violence against women is still all too prevalent. It is very much still a scourge and an issue that we have to deal with, whether it is domestic violence within the privacy of a family home or this violent act that we understand has been committed and that we have yet to fully discover the truth of.

It is 10 years on, and I am fortunate to have children of my own. That is a future that was denied to Lisa. I can only imagine, as a parent, how Lisa's family must feel — her parents, John and Patricia, and, indeed, her sisters, Joanne, Michelle and Ciara. I can only speculate how that tragedy has impacted on their lives. I extend my sympathy to them, as my North Down colleagues have done today.

All I can do is echo the appeals that have been made. There are people out there who know what happened. Whether for right or for reward, they should bring forward that information. If needs be to protect them from any fear of persecution, they can do that confidentially through Crimestoppers.

As has been stated on a number of occasions in this debate, the family want to find Lisa's body. They want to give her the burial that she deserves. I call on those with information to let their consciences rest, let the family have peace and bring forward this information to help this family to move on.

5.45 pm

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to speak in this Adjournment debate; if, indeed, "welcome" is the right term. I was just starting university when this occurred, and I remember the blue ribbon appeal. I did not know Lisa, and I do not know Lisa's family, but, when you read the local papers and stay in touch through the news, the heartbreak that this family has endured is evident. Indeed, there is heartbreak with all the disappeared. Reference has been made to other families who still suffer with the terrible heartbreak associated with such incidents.

Like many in our society, Lisa was a young person with her life ahead of her when such a crime was inflicted upon her. Coming out of the conflict, this is something that far too many families have had to deal with. It is heartbreaking for the family, not simply because they have lost their daughter, a daughter whom they no doubt loved, but because they do not have the body and a grave and have not had the Christian burial that they very much want.

I apologise that I did not hear all of what Peter Weir had to say, but I caught the end and the talk of the extent that the PSNI has gone to. It is quite clear that the PSNI has gone to some considerable extent, with over 4,000 interviews and massive searches on land and at sea. The real crux of the problem is that the wall of silence remains. Despite the fact that somebody somewhere knows something, nobody is coming forward to give the evidence that is very much needed. Stephen Farry touched on a salient point that perhaps it would be worthwhile if the purview of the Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains could be extended past 1998. Steven Agnew also touched a very important point: the often hidden problem of violence against women in conflict. That is something that we must bear in mind.

I really just want to echo the calls that other Members have made. Somebody somewhere knows something. There is nothing that is too insignificant if it can help in this case. If anybody knows anything, they should come forward and help. There is a family whose hearts have been breaking for 10 years, and, unless somebody comes forward, that could be the case for another 10 or 20 years.

Mr A Maginness: I thank Mr Weir for bringing forward this debate. It is very appropriate and timely given the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of this young lady who is now presumed to be dead as the result of murder; there seems to be very little doubt that that was her end.

To the Dorrian family, in particular to John and Patricia Dorrian, I give my party's support and solidarity in their difficult time. I say this to them: do not give up. I repeat that: do not give up. The families of the disappeared, who were kidnapped and murdered by republican terrorists and buried in unknown graves, did not give up. They mounted a very successful campaign to try to find out where their remains were and have those remains returned. It has not been completely successful, but there have certainly been successes, so I say this: do not give up.

The suggestion by Mr Farry about the commission for the disappeared being extended to this incident is a good one. The reason why I say that is because, under the terms of that commission, information can be given in full confidence without any penalty. Further to that, any evidence derived from the discovery of the remains of an individual victim is not permitted to be used in any criminal proceedings. That is important because it gives a degree of immunity to those who may have been associated with the dreadful disappearance of Lisa Dorrian.

From what Mr Weir and his colleagues have said, the family do not seek prosecutions; their first desire is the return of the remains, and, for them, justice is secondary. It is important that an encouragement of that sort be given to those who have an intimate knowledge of what happened and who may have been involved in the despicable actions that led to Lisa's death. It is important that we emphasise that in the hope that we can encourage people to come

forward and give information to the PSNI or, as I have said, the commission. I would hope that that would be successful. It is so important for a family to find closure on the disappearance and death of a loved one.

All of us in the House lend our support to the encouragement that Mr Weir has given to those outside the House who have information —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is up.

Mr A Maginness: — to bring it to the PSNI. I will end there, but I simply say: do not give up.

Mr Ford: I am grateful to Peter Weir for bringing the debate to the House, and I am personally grateful and appreciate his acknowledgement of the limitations of my role as Minister in this context. Just as it is entirely appropriate that the matter should be debated shortly after the tenth anniversary of Lisa's disappearance in a debate in which all six Members from North Down, and two representatives of parties that are not represented in North Down, have taken part, it is also appropriate that I, as Minister, should respond, even though my role in the area is very limited. It is important that the Dorrian family should have the sympathy of the House and the Executive on record.

Our thoughts have to be with her parents, John and Patricia, and her three sisters, who so movingly and courageously helped to relaunch the appeal. It must have brought back, in an even more difficult way, what they have lived with for 10 years as they have dealt with it.

As Minister, I commend the good work being done by the police. That has been highlighted by other Members, and I do not need to repeat the statistics of the number of interviews, potential witnesses traced and all that has been done with searches. That showed a significant effort on the part of the police. It is also clear that we have seen a significant and imaginative renewal of the campaign with the work that is being done on social media, the video that will be shown in local cinemas, the advertising on billboards and so on. That all shows a family facing that difficulty with great courage because of their desire for their daughter to be given a Christian burial. Very good work is being done by the police in support of that, and I understand that there has been a significant response to that work over the last couple of weeks, with a number of people coming forward. It is not just the number of people who have brought information to the police; detectives believe that there is a significant quality to some of the information that has been brought forward. That must give hope that it is possible that Lisa's body can be recovered and that her family can have the comfort of giving her the Christian burial that they so clearly crave.

I noticed the references, which Stephen Farry made first and others have made, about the potential to treat Lisa as one of the disappeared and to bring her within the remit of the commission. That may or may not be possible, but what is absolutely clear is that the campaign that is under way, involving the family, the police and others, must be given the utmost support. The opportunities must be given in order to bring forward the information that will finally bring closure to that family.

Regardless of whether it is possible to make that legislative change, much needs to be done in the interim. Certainly, I would hope that those who know something — because there are people who know a lot, which they

have never brought forward, and there may be others who know a little, which they have never brought forward — will listen to the appeal from the family, recognise the trauma that they are still subjected to and come forward. If they are unwilling to contact the police directly, there are other agencies, principally obviously the Crimestoppers charity, and other ways in which information could be brought forward to allow the recovery of Lisa's body. Certainly, as Justice Minister, I would wish to see justice, but it is clear what the family wants most of all.

On that basis, I can say little more about the operational matters that affect the police, but I urge whoever may have any information whatsoever to come forward. I commend Lisa's family for the courage with which they have put forward their case in recent days, as indeed they have done over 10 years. I wish them every sympathy as they deal with their continuing loss.

Adjourned at 5.56 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 16 March 2015

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Off-street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill: Royal Assent

Mr Speaker: I wish to inform the House that the Off-street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 became law on 12 March 2015.

Budget Bill: Royal Assent

Mr Speaker: The Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 became law on 12 March 2015.

Teachers' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I beg to move

That the draft Teachers' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Iarraim cead an rún seo a bhogadh. The regulations we are debating today make consequential modifications to the Pension Schemes (NI) Act 1993 and the Finance Act 2004 to ensure that our teachers' pension scheme, which was created under the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014, operates as intended.

The proposed regulations make small and technical modifications to the law governing the new teachers' pension scheme. I remind Members that the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014 provides framework enabling legislation for the reform of public-service pensions in the North of Ireland. The design of the new teachers' scheme has now been settled within the confines of the Act, and the scheme will come into operation on 1 April of this year. The regulations before us today are simply the means to ensure that the scheme design for the teachers' pension scheme, which was widely consulted upon with members and unions, works properly within the wider framework of pensions and tax law. They will make sure that members of the teachers' pension scheme get the pensions they expect, and that they do not lose out as a result of any tension between the scheme design and the wider law.

I move now to modifications to the Pension Schemes (NI) Act 1993 and provisions to stop transitional members being treated as deferred members of their pre-2015 scheme.

A set of modifications is being made to the Pension Schemes (NI) Act 1993, the first of which is needed to ensure that members moving from their existing scheme to the new scheme also remain non-accruing members of the old scheme. Therefore, their old scheme service will only terminate when they leave the new scheme. That will ensure the following three things: the benefits that they have accrued in their existing scheme are not revalued as if they were deferred members; secondly, their right to a cash equivalent transfer value, a refund of contributions or a cash transfer sum applies only when they leave the new scheme; and, finally, anti-franking provisions do not apply as if they were deferred members from 1 April 2015.

The proposed modifications mean that, for those purposes, such individuals do not cease to be active

members of the existing scheme until they also leave their new scheme. In addition, modifications to the regulations that govern contracting out, specifically those that dictate the process a scheme must follow to be contracted out, are also contained in the regulations. For the new teachers' pension scheme, the process has been simplified, ensuring that the new scheme and, therefore, its members continue to be contracted out of the additional state pension until the end of contracting out in April 2016.

I move now to modifications to the Finance Act 2004 and provisions to stop transitional members taking ill-health retirement being assessed twice against annual allowance and lifetime allowance limits. The regulations also seek to modify provisions within the Finance Act to ensure that members with service in both a new and existing pension scheme who retire with an ill-health pension do not face unintended tax consequences. Specifically, they ensure that parts of the ill-health pension available to members who fall ill are not measured twice for annual allowance and lifetime allowance limits simply because of the transitional mechanics for payment of ill-health benefits. Put simply, the modifications ensure that the tax regime will apply in the way intended to those members who move into the new scheme and then retire because of illness.

In conclusion, these are very technical modifications to wider pension legislation that seek to ensure that NI Teachers' Pension Scheme members can get the pensions that they expect without any unexpected effects as a result of tensions with the wider law. Therefore, I commend the modifications to the House. Subject to affirmative resolution, the regulations will become effective from 1 April 2015.

Miss M McIlveen (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): The Department briefed the Committee on the regulations in question on a number of occasions and as part of the wider raft of secondary legislation that supports the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Minister has outlined the nature of the regulations before the House today. The Committee considered the relevant consultation on 5 November 2014 and the draft rule on 4 February 2015. The Committee also engaged with the teaching unions, seeking their views on the changes to the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme. Members accepted that the legislation in question was largely technical in nature and that its passage was certainly required in order to ensure the continued payment of teachers' pensions. The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had found no impediments in the drafting of the rule. The Committee, therefore, agreed on 3 March 2015 that it was content for the Assembly to affirm the rule.

This secondary legislation is part of the wider reform of teachers' pensions. As pensioners' longevity has improved, so costs have increased. In order to manage this increasing liability, teachers' contributions have risen to an average of 9.6% of pensionable salary. Teachers' retirement age is also set to change. It is expected that the average retirement age for teachers will increase from around 60 at present to around 65 in about 10 years' time. That will increase again to 66 in about 20 years from now. As well as teachers' contributions, employers' contributions have also increased to 17.7%, generating

an additional cost of around £37 million per annum for the next four years.

The costs are substantial and the changes are significant. The outlook, according to the actuaries, appears to be better, with employers' contributions to the new pension scheme falling back to 13.2% in 2019-2020 as contributions catch up with liabilities. It is also hoped that there will be no further increases in teachers' contributions to their pensions. This is a difficult transition with consequences for all teachers and, indeed, further education lecturers that need to be fully understood.

As I indicated earlier, the Committee was content with the legislation. However, members did have a number of reservations and concerns. Firstly, members want to be sure that the Department will make significant efforts to communicate these complex pension changes that will take effect in about two weeks' time. Members also wanted to be sure that the Department will properly explain and be flexible in respect of the timescales relating to options for avoiding actuarial reductions.

As I indicated a moment ago, that may very well affect almost all teachers retiring 20 years from now.

Finally, changes of the kind proposed in this and related legislation may have equality implications. The Committee was surprised by the absence of workforce information and equality data for teachers. The Committee felt that the Department should do more, and soon, to develop and maintain such data. Members felt that, for a modern teaching profession, it was only sensible to know more detailed demographic profile information for its employees.

The Department has provided some assurance in respect of the above. I hope that the Minister, in his response, will touch on these matters again and give reassurance to members of the Committee.

Mr Lunn: As the Chair has said, we do not really have much option but to agree to this, and the Committee has done so. She also said that the Committee had some reservations, and, certainly in my case, that is an understatement.

Take the situation of a new teacher who is going to join the new scheme after 1 April. He may well graduate, and, if he is one of the 18% or so lucky enough to get a job, he will now take on an average contribution rate of 9.6%, and the employer will eventually pay 13.2% or something like that. The 9.6% contribution rate is well above the rate for a Civil Service or public service contribution, and the 13%-odd is well below it. As well as that, the eventual benefits for teachers are no better, and in some cases are worse, than those provided by other public service schemes. The eventual increase up to age 68 will hit the teacher who is now coming into the profession for the first time. At present, most teachers retire before the age of 60 because — I would not like to say that they are "burnt out" — you come to the end of your useful teaching life at some stage in your late 50s or early 60s. If that 23-year-old teacher, who is now coming into the profession, wants to retire early, he may well have made 40 years' contributions, but his pension will be reduced if he retires early, by 5% per annum for each year of early retirement.

Only a few years ago, we were encouraging teachers to leave the profession in their late 50s and making up their pension to what they would have got aged 60. Now, we are

doing completely the reverse: we are effectively forcing teachers to work on until the age of 68. At the same time, we are going to have hundreds into thousands of young graduate teachers who cannot get a job. As I have said, I accept these regulations but with considerable reservation.

Mr O'Dowd: I welcome the support from Members that has been expressed during the debate. I also acknowledge the reservations of Members that were also expressed during the debate. Our hands are largely forced in this matter, in terms of legislation. Pension changes take place in Westminster and then the financial consequences of those bear down on our Executive and Assembly. As I have already said, the enabling legislation was passed by the Assembly in 2014, and today we pass the regulations.

In response to some of the issues raised by the Chair of the Committee, I take the opportunity to reiterate the assurances given to the Education Committee by my officials, both in oral sessions and writing. My Department is conscious of the wide range and number of changes involved in introducing the reformed pension scheme. A communications strategy and engagement action plan have been put in place to ensure that members are fully informed — or informed as much as possible — of the changes to the scheme.

12.15 pm

My Department continues to work with employers and teachers' unions to ensure that teachers are made aware of the changes to the pension scheme and how they will affect them. To that end, six information roadshows have taken place in various venues across the North.

I am aware of the time limits in the scheme rules for exercising the option to buy out an actuarial reduction to pension. I asked my officials to exercise, where appropriate, the flexibility in the regulations in the application of the timelines. I acknowledge that there are gaps in the data that are collected for equality monitoring. I am committed to ensuring that better-quality data are collected in future to inform monitoring and the analysis of the effect of policy changes across our workforce.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Teachers' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the draft Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

The regulations make consequential modifications to the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993 and the Finance Act 2004 to ensure that the firefighters' pension scheme, which was created under the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, operates as intended.

The proposed regulations make small and technical modifications to the law governing the new firefighters' pension scheme. I remind Members that the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provides framework-enabling legislation for the reform of public service pensions in Northern Ireland. The Act gives effect to the recommendations from the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission, led by Lord Hutton. That review considered what needed to be done to have sustainable public service pensions, given the increases in longevity and associated costs.

These reforms were much needed to balance taxpayers' legitimate concerns about the cost of public service pensions with the need to ensure adequate levels of retirement income for the millions of people who have devoted their lives to the service of the public. I am pleased to say that these reforms received the Northern Ireland Assembly's support during their legislative passage.

The reforms will apply to all public service pension schemes in Northern Ireland, including the firefighters' pension scheme. The design of the new firefighters' pension scheme has now been settled and will come into effect from 1 April this year.

The regulations are simply the means to ensure that the design of the firefighters' pension scheme, which was widely consulted upon with members and unions, works properly within the wider framework of pensions and tax law. They will make sure that members of the firefighters' pension scheme get the pension that they expect and do not lose out as a result of any tension between scheme design and wider law.

There are also provisions to stop transitional members being treated as deferred members of the pre-2015 scheme. A set of modifications are being made to the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993, the first of which is to ensure that members moving from their existing scheme to the new scheme also remain non-accruing members of the old scheme. Therefore, their old pension service will terminate only when they leave the new scheme.

That will ensure three things. First, the benefits they accrued in their existing scheme are not revalued as though they were deferred members. Secondly, their right to a cash equivalent transfer value, a refund of contributions or a cash transfer sum applies only when they leave the new scheme. Thirdly, anti-franking provisions do not apply as though they were deferred

members on 1 April 2015. Mr O'Dowd made exactly the same point about his scheme.

The proposed modifications mean that, for those purposes, such individuals do not cease to be active members of their existing scheme until they leave their new scheme. In addition, modifications to the regulations that govern contracting out, specifically those that dictate the process that a scheme must follow to be contracted out, are in the regulations.

For the new firefighters' pension scheme, the process has been simplified, ensuring the new scheme, and therefore its members, continues to be contracted out of the additional state pension until the end of the contracting out period in April 2016. There are also provisions to stop transitional members who are taking ill-health retirement from being assessed twice against annual allowance and lifetime allowance limits.

The regulations also seek to modify provisions within the Finance Act 2004 to ensure that members with service in a new and existing pension scheme who retire with an ill-health pension do not face unintended tax consequences. Specifically, they ensure that parts of the ill-health pensions available to members who fall ill are not measured twice for annual allowance and lifetime allowance limits simply because of the transitional mechanics for payment of ill-health benefits. Put simply, the modifications ensure that the tax regime will apply in the way intended by the Government to those members who move into the new scheme and then retire because of illness.

In conclusion, I am sure that Members will agree that these are very technical modifications to wider pensions legislation, which seek to ensure that firefighter pension scheme members can get the pensions they expect without any unexpected effects as a result of tensions within wider law. I therefore commend the modifications to the House. Subject to affirmative resolution, the regulations will come into effect from 1 April 2015.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I support the motion.

The statutory rule, as the Minister said, intends to make consequential modifications to primary legislation, which are required to ensure that new public-service pension schemes — in this case, the firefighters' pension scheme — will operate as intended in their interaction with the wider framework of pensions and tax legislation.

The Committee considered the proposal for the statutory rule at its meeting on 14 January 2015, and we approved the subsequent rule on 18 February 2015. There were no issues raised by the Committee.

Mr Wells: I seem to be on a good run, because this is the second time there has been very little opposition to what is, of course, technical legislation.

I am glad that Members appreciate that this deals with some of the difficulties of matching the new scheme with taxation law. It is not a rehearsal of the debate on Hutton or the nature of the changes to pensions; it is something that simply has to be done if we are going to be able to start running the scheme from 1 April 2015. Members of the Fire Service and the unions, whilst not happy with

the overall direction of pensions legislation in the United Kingdom, feel that, given where we are, these regulations are absolutely necessary. Therefore, I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I beg to move

That the draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

The regulations we are debating today make consequential modifications to the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993 and the Finance Act 2004 to ensure the health and social care (HSC) pension scheme, which was created under the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, operates as intended.

The proposed regulations make small and technical modifications to the law governing the new HSC pension scheme. I remind members that the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provides a framework enabling legislation for the reform of public-service pensions in Northern Ireland.

The Act gives effect to the recommendations from the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission, led by Lord Hutton. That review considered what was needed to be done to have sustainable public-service pensions, given the increases in longevity and the associated costs.

Those reforms were much needed to balance the legitimate concerns of taxpayers about the cost of public-service pensions with the need to ensure acceptable levels of retirement income for millions of people who have devoted their lives to the service of the public. I am pleased to say that these reforms received the support of the Northern Ireland Assembly during legislative passage and will apply to all public-service schemes in Northern Ireland, including the HSC pension scheme. The design of the new HSC pension scheme has now been settled, and it will come into operation on 1 April this year.

The regulations are simply the means to ensure that the design of the HSC pension scheme, which was widely consulted upon with members and unions, works properly within the wider framework of pensions and tax law. The regulations will make sure that members of the HSC pension scheme get the pension that they expect and that they do not lose out as a result of any tension between the scheme design and wider law. There are also provisions to stop transitional members being treated as deferred members of their pre-2015 scheme.

Modifications are being made to the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993, the first of which is needed to ensure that members moving from their existing scheme to the new scheme also remain non-accruing members of the old scheme. Therefore, their old scheme service will terminate only when they leave the new scheme. That will ensure three things: first, that the benefits that they have accrued in their existing scheme are not revalued as if they were deferred members; secondly, that their right to a cash equivalent transfer value, a refund of contributions or to a cash transfer sum only applies when they leave the new scheme; and, finally, that anti-franking provisions do not apply as if they were deferred members on 1 April 2015.

The proposed modifications mean that, for those purposes, such individuals do not cease to be active

members of their existing scheme until they leave their new scheme. I hope that everyone is following this because I will be asking questions later. In addition, modifications to the regulations that govern contracting out, specifically those that dictate the process that a scheme must follow to be contracted out, are also contained in the regulations. For the new HSC pension scheme, the process has been simplified, ensuring that the new scheme, and, therefore, its members, continue to be contracted out of the additional state pension until the end of contracting-out in April 2016.

There are also provisions to stop transitional members taking ill-health retirement being assessed twice against annual allowance and lifetime allowance limits. The regulations seek to modify provisions in the Finance Act 2004 to ensure that members with service in both a new and existing pension scheme who retire with an ill-health pension do not face unintended tax consequences. Specifically, they ensure that parts of the ill-health pensions available to members who fall ill are not measured twice for annual allowance and lifetime allowance limits simply because of the transitional mechanics for payment of ill-health benefits. Put simply, the modifications ensure that the tax regime will apply in the way intended by Government to those members who move into the new schemes and then retire because of illness.

In conclusion, these are very technical modifications to the wider pensions legislation, which seek to ensure that HSC pension scheme members can get the pension that they expect, without any unexpected effects as a result of tensions with the wider law. I therefore commend these modifications to the House. Subject to affirmative resolution, the regulations will come into effect on 1 April 2015.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I support the motion. The statutory rule contains amendments to the Pension Schemes Act 1993 and the Occupational Pension Schemes Regulations 1996 to ensure that the new HSC pension scheme operates as intended. The Committee considered the proposal for this statutory rule on 4 February 2015, and we approved the subsequent rule on 18 February 2015. There were no issues raised by the Committee.

Mr Wells: I thank the Chair of the Health Committee for her contribution. I am extremely grateful for her support and that of the Committee in respect of the amendments in the Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, and I commend the motion to the House. Once again, I am glad that Members have not taken the opportunity to rehearse the debate on Hutton. These are simply technical changes to ensure that health service workers get the pension that they believe they are entitled to without any consequential tax difficulties. Therefore, I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

12.30 pm

Statutory Rule Laid by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to 30 minutes for this debate. The proposer will have five minutes to propose the motion and five minutes to wind up. All other speakers will have five minutes.

Mr Dickson (The Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee to consider an AGNI Statutory Rule): I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Ad Hoc Committee to consider an Attorney General for Northern Ireland Statutory Rule [NIA 236/11-16] on the Statutory Rule laid by the AGNI entitled: The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

On behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee I am pleased to bring to the House today the Committee's report on its consideration of the statutory rule entitled the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. The statutory rule has been laid by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, whom I shall refer to as AGNI, and is subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure. As Members are aware, statutory rules that are subject to draft affirmative resolution are normally brought to the Chamber in the form of a motion, usually moved by the relevant Minister. This statutory rule, however, has been laid by the AGNI and, as he cannot table a motion to allow the rule to be considered by the Assembly, the Ad Hoc Committee was established to facilitate the bringing forward of the rule.

Perhaps I should outline the purpose of the statutory rule. One of the responsibilities of the AGNI is to provide guidance on human rights standards to a list of criminal justice organisations. The statutory rule in question seeks to add the PSNI to the list of organisations to whom guidance is issued. The Committee for Justice has given detailed consideration to the proposed statutory rule, including taking oral evidence from the Attorney General. Having completed its scrutiny of the rule, the Committee for Justice has recommended that it be approved by the Assembly. The Examiner of Statutory Rules has also carried out his technical scrutiny of the rule, and his report confirms that it contains no technical defects. In view, therefore, of the detailed scrutiny that the rule has already been subjected to, the Ad Hoc Committee agreed that no further evidence was required to inform its decision-making. In conclusion, having considered all of the evidence in relation to the proposed statutory rule, the Ad Hoc Committee has recommended that it be approved by the Assembly, and therefore I commend the report to the House.

Mr Ross (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Committee for Justice this morning. As the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee has already outlined, the statutory rule brings the PSNI into the list of organisations that the Attorney General can issue guidance to on the exercise of their functions in a manner consistent with international human rights standards.

The Committee has considered this issue from as far back as February 2013, when the Attorney General wrote to the Committee advising that he proposed to amend the list of

section 8 organisations to include the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Committee considered this issue a number of times and consulted with the Attorney General, the PSNI, the Policing Board and the Department of Justice.

The PSNI indicated in its response to the Committee that it is subject to the close statutory scrutiny of the Northern Ireland Policing Board on how it carries out its duties and functions in relation to human rights standards and that, under section 52 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000, the PSNI is bound by a code of ethics, which is intended to lay down standards of conduct and practice for police officers and to make police officers aware of their rights and obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights. It is the PSNI's view that it was not necessary to add the PSNI to the list. The Policing Board performance committee also indicated that, in its view, the inclusion of the PSNI on the list would be both unnecessary and potentially unhelpful as it may be in contention with the Policing Board's oversight role in monitoring the PSNI's performance in complying with the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Committee sought the views of the Attorney General on the issues raised by the PSNI and the Policing Board. In response, the Attorney General highlighted the fact that guidance under section 8 provides direction on how to achieve compliance with international human rights standards rather than with a base minimum, and that the guidance could provide the PSNI with more detailed and practical advice to assist officers carrying out their day-to-day duties.

The addition of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to the list of organisations would also enable him to provide guidance that links across all the criminal justice organisations. The Attorney General also indicated that the role of the Policing Board to monitor the Police Service of Northern Ireland's performance in complying with the Human Rights Act 1998 is entirely distinct from the role that section 8 guidance would play in assisting the PSNI with human rights compliance. The Committee also sought further clarification on the role of the Department of Justice and the mechanism to amend section 8.

Having considered the views expressed at its meeting of 30 April 2014, the Committee agreed that it was content to support the Attorney General's proposal to add the PSNI to the section 8 list of organisations. The Committee subsequently agreed, at the meeting on 14 January 2015, that it was content with the Attorney General's proposed statutory rule to give effect to his proposal and, at its meeting on 4 February 2015, recommended that the statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly. While the Committee is content, one member, Mr Elliott, indicated his opposition to the inclusion of the PSNI on the list of organisations to which section 8 guidance applies when considering both the proposal and the statutory rule. However, all other members of the Committee were content, and we therefore recommend it to the House.

Mr Elliott: I apologise for not being in for Mr Dickson's introduction of the proposals. This has been through Committee on several occasions, and we had quite a number of debates around it. The Committee seemed to move from maybe supporting it or being minded to support it, to opposition to it and eventually to a position of support for it. I was consistent during the entire process in that I

was taking some lead, as was the Committee at one point, from what the PSNI had said and, indeed, the Policing Board decision.

In essence, the PSNI indicated that it is subject to section 52 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. The PSNI is bound by a code of ethics that is intended to lay down standards of conduct and practice for police officers and to make police officers aware of their rights and obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights. The guidance to section 52 of the Act states that the purpose of the code is to ensure that the police are guided by one document that is consistent with the human rights guidance and avoids the need for the police to refer to a variety of documents. In addition, the PSNI is subject to oversight by a range of other statutory agencies, including the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, and the surveillance commissioner. The Policing Board performance committee has concluded that the inclusion of the PSNI on the list of section 8 organisations would be unnecessary and potentially unhelpful.

I met the Attorney General, as well as him presenting to the Committee on the issue, and I was not persuaded by his arguments around the aspects. I still believe that the PSNI direction and view on it, as well as that of the Policing Board performance committee, is the proper view, and I have consistently supported that. I opposed it the entire way through Committee, and so the Ulster Unionist Party will oppose it today.

Ms P Bradley (The Deputy Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee to consider an AGNI Statutory Rule):

I welcome the opportunity to conclude this short debate on the Ad Hoc Committee report. I would like to thank the Committee Chairperson for opening the debate and to thank Mr Ross, Chair of the Justice Committee, and Mr Elliott for their contributions. In any of our debates in the Committee, nothing was raised of any of the issues that have been brought up today. As this is a straightforward statutory rule, there is very little that I can add to what has already been said, except perhaps to summarise. As the Chairperson mentioned, the purpose of the rule is simply to add the PSNI to the list of criminal justice organisations to which the AGNI issues guidance on human rights standards. As the Committee for Justice and the Examiner of Statutory Rules have scrutinised the rule and are content with it, there was no need for the Ad Hoc Committee to take further evidence. Mr Speaker, the Committee asks that the Assembly approve this report, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Ad Hoc Committee to consider an Attorney General for Northern Ireland Statutory Rule [NIA 236/11-16] on the Statutory Rule laid by the AGNI entitled: The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Assembly Business

Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015

Mr Speaker: The next item of business is a motion to approve a statutory rule tabled by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland. As this is a business motion, there will be no debate.

Resolved:

That the draft Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved. — [Mr Dickson.]

Committee Business

Attorney General's Participation in Proceedings of the Northern Ireland Assembly: Committee on Procedures Report

Mr Speaker: The next item of business is a motion from the Committee on Procedures on its report on the extent to which standing orders should permit the Attorney General for Northern Ireland to participate in proceedings of the Assembly. The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to 45 minutes for this debate. The proposer will have 10 minutes to propose the motion and five minutes to wind up the debate. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr G Kelly (The Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to move

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee on Procedures [NIA 232/11-16] on its inquiry into the extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General for Northern Ireland (AGNI) to participate in proceedings of the Assembly: Part 1 — impartiality of the Office of AGNI, registration of interests and participation of the AGNI in Assembly proceedings in respect of areas other than Statutory Rules.

This report is slightly unusual, because it covers only part of a Committee inquiry. This is necessary because of the complexity of the issues being considered and the care and diligence with which the Committee has approached the inquiry.

The inquiry is on section 25 of the Justice Act 2002. This permits the Attorney General to participate in proceedings of the Assembly, but only to the extent permitted by Standing Orders and it expressly forbids him from voting. The provision has been in existence for some time. However, there has been no interpretation of the legislation in practice, despite predecessor Committees having wrestled with the matter. During the 2007 to 2011 mandate, both the Procedures Committee and the Committee on Standards and Privileges examined the matter. However, no resolution was reached by the end of that mandate, and the matter passed into the legacy report and then to the present Committee on Procedures.

At first glance, this seemed a fairly straightforward matter. Closer examination of models used for law officers in other jurisdictions showed that it was not. Some parts of the models were defined in legislation; others arose from constitutional convention, custom and practice; but they had all been adapted to suit specific devolution settlements and/or unique legal arrangements in the different areas. Although the Committee looked at modifying existing models, it soon became clear that this would not work, the reason being the statutory requirement that the role of AGNI be non-political. This is not true of any other legislatures examined.

Having recognised this, the Committee began to examine the role and devise a model from scratch. Its first step was to identify aspects of the role where participation in Assembly proceedings might be of benefit, either by providing enhanced scrutiny or added value to proceedings, both Committee and plenary. If any such areas were identified, the Committee went on to examine

whether such participation needed to be codified in Standing Orders.

Five main areas of work were identified as worthy of further consideration; however, a number of options for participation in each area were found, and this resulted in an extensive matrix that needed to be evaluated. The Committee agreed that a strategic approach to assessing them was required. To achieve this, the Committee discussed a set of key principles, which, it agreed, would be used to underpin its evaluation of options.

As these principles are detailed in the report, I will mention only one as an example. This is the first and suggests that, as the AGNI is not a duly elected Member of the Assembly, he should not automatically be afforded the privileges of that office. Applying that principle meant that a number of options that afforded the AGNI an automatic right to appear in plenary or Committee could be discounted. Applying the agreed principles as a baseline reduced the matrix to a more manageable size, and the Committee moved on to more detailed evaluation.

12.45 pm

The five work areas considered are detailed in the report, but, briefly, they cover the impartiality of the office and the registration of interests; answering Assembly questions; the referral of Bills after Final Stage; the scrutiny of the AGNI's annual report; and scrutiny of statutory rules brought by the AGNI. The first four are the basis of the report before the House today. The last is still being considered and will be brought to the Assembly as part 2 of the report in due course. For today, though, I will restrict further remarks to a brief outline of the areas covered in the report and the reasons for its recommendations.

The first area is titled "impartiality of the office and registration of interests". No discussion of that would be complete without mentioning the work of the Committee on Standards and Privileges on it. The Standards and Privileges Committee considered the matter in detail during the last mandate. It revisited its findings in this mandate and confirmed to the Committee on Procedures that they were still valid. After consideration of its conclusions, the Committee on Procedures was content to endorse the findings and, therefore, has recommended that a distinct Standing Order be drafted to cover the matter.

No doubt the Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges will wish to speak to that aspect of the report in more detail, so I will restrict my remarks to a brief outline of the proposed requirements of the Standing Order. The AGNI would be required to register and declare interests in the same way as a Member. He would be prohibited from advocating on any matter on behalf of anyone else for payment or benefit. If an alleged breach were to occur, the Assembly's Commissioner for Standards would investigate it. The report from such an investigation would be passed to the Committee on Standards and Privileges, which would decide whether to uphold the complaint and impose appropriate sanction if required.

The second work area concerns answering Assembly questions. The Committee identified several options but discarded a number that did not comply with underpinning principles or that posed significant reputational risk. For

example, if the AGNI attended plenary, he could be asked questions on matters that were sub judice. The AGNI then either could not or would not answer. That could be perceived as an Assembly being powerless to hold the AGNI to account or that the AGNI was being unhelpful or lacking transparency.

The Committee finally agreed that the risk outweighed any perceived benefit and decided to recommend against setting up an oral Question Time for the AGNI. It considered the option of questions for written answer, but it recognised that, as no memorandum of understanding was in place, setting response times and rules would be difficult. The Committee also recognised that, as nothing prevented the AGNI answering questions that were sent directly to him at present, there was nothing to be gained by making provision in Standing Orders in that regard.

The Committee then considered the power given to the AGNI in legislation to consider and refer Bills after Final Stage for a decision on legislative competence. In that category, too, the Committee identified a reputational risk in calling the AGNI to plenary. For example, if the AGNI was asked inappropriate questions, it could be perceived as the Assembly questioning the AGNI's statutory right to refer Bills. Mitigating that risk from the Chair would be very difficult in practice, therefore the option was discounted.

The Committee also looked at what benefit was derived from codifying the AGNI's attendance at Committee in that regard. However, it agreed that such a Standing Order would merely formalise a process that was already permissible. Therefore, it recommends that no change to Standing Orders be made on that. The Committee gave brief consideration to whether any benefit was to be gained by codifying a role for the AGNI in giving views on Bills prior to Final Stage. However, it was agreed that the AGNI's role in advising the Executive created a conflict of interests, and the matter was set aside.

The last area covered in that section of the report is the AGNI's annual report. The AGNI is required by law to produce an annual report. It must be submitted to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, who are required to lay it in the Assembly. That means that a copy of the report is placed in the Assembly Business Office, where it is available to all Members. It is lodged in the public domain only when the AGNI publishes it on his website. The Committee recognised similar reputational risks attached to plenary appearances as before. However, it believed that some benefit existed in creating a Standing Order to facilitate the AGNI attending a nominated Committee when the report is laid. This should be only at the Committee's request but would allow an opportunity for the AGNI to make a statement and/or answer questions on the content of the report. The Committee recommends that the nominated Committee should be the Committee for Justice.

Obviously, I could go into a lot more detail, and I am sure that Members are delighted that I am not going to. However, I will bring my remarks to a close by stressing again the detailed consideration that has been given to all the options identified. In making recommendations of preferred outcomes, the Committee is content that those outcomes are in keeping with the key principles that it agreed at the start. It is also confident that the mechanisms that have been recommended protect the integrity of the institutions and individuals involved. I am therefore content to commend the report to the Assembly.

Mr Spratt (The Chairperson of the Committee on Standards and Privileges): Standing Order 69 addresses the issue of Members' interests, sets out duties in relation to the registration and declaration of interests by Members and provides for a prohibition on paid advocacy. At its meeting on 13 March 2013, following a request from the Committee on Procedures, the Committee on Standards and Privileges considered the issue of the Attorney General and Members' interests. The Committee agreed that the duties for Members set out in Standing Order 69 should be extended to the Attorney General and that the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards should be able to investigate an alleged breach of any duty by the Attorney General in respect of Members' interests. The Committee agreed that it should be able to decide whether to uphold a complaint in respect of the Attorney General and, where it upheld a complaint, it would recommend to the Assembly the imposition of a sanction.

On sanctions, the Committee said that Standing Orders should include provisions for excluding the Attorney General from proceedings of the Assembly if he failed to comply with any of these duties or for withdrawing his rights and privileges for the period of his exclusion. The Committee noted that, however, compared with Members, there were fewer rights and privileges that could be withdrawn during such an exclusion, for example, the right to salary and allowances. The Committee on Procedures has addressed these points in its report.

The Committee on Standards and Privileges is concluding its review of the Assembly's code of conduct. The code of conduct will not apply to the Attorney General. The majority of rules in it will not relate to Members' interests. However, the code and guide will set out categories of registrable interests. Except where these requirements can only apply to Members, the Attorney General would also be bound by them. The new code and guide would also inform the Attorney General's duties in relation to declarations of interests and paid advocacy. I expect that the existing Standing Order 69 on Members' interests will need to be amended to take account of the conclusions of the review of the code of conduct. Given this, the Committee on Procedures may wish to await the Assembly's consideration of the review of the code before bringing forward a new Standing Order in relation to the Attorney General and Members' interests.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Chair for his contribution to this debate and his work in leading the Committee on this issue. I also want to thank the Committee staff, who carried out very diligent work on this matter.

To fully understand this report, one has to understand that the Attorney General in Northern Ireland has a unique position.

As the report notes, the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 states that:

"The Attorney General for Northern Ireland may participate in the proceedings of the Assembly to the extent permitted by its standing orders but he may not vote in the Assembly."

Therefore, the statute gives a permissive power to the Attorney General. That, of course, is to be enacted by the Assembly at its discretion.

The important aspect of the report is the emphasis that it puts on the Attorney General's being independent of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the Northern Ireland Executive and Northern Ireland Departments. Of course, he or she is also expressly barred from being a member of the legislature itself. The important point to make about that is that, when we looked at other models of how Attorneys General related to the respective legislatures, it was clear that there was no uniform position and that, in any event, the position of other Attorneys General was, in fact, quite different from the unique statutory position of our own Attorney General.

Therefore it was important, in coming to conclusions, to preserve that independence and to look at the way in which the Attorney General could relate to the Assembly. Whilst it is a fairly conservative report, insofar as it does not give the Attorney General active rights in the Assembly itself, it realises that the Attorney General's independence should not be prejudiced in any way. It is no reflection on the personality of the current Attorney General, who has served the Executive and his public office with great credit, nor is it to do with any other aspect of the functioning of that office, but there is a necessity for the Assembly to explore it. It has explored it and has come to the conclusion that, on the issue of questions, questions can in fact be asked of the Attorney General at any stage. There is no need for that to be embodied in Standing Orders. There is also the referral of a Bill after Final Stage to the Supreme Court. There are existing arrangements. The Attorney General can be called to a relevant Committee to make a statement and to answer questions as to why that reference took place. That is important to note.

The Attorney General should also not be required to give views on the content or competence of a Bill prior to Final Stage. Again, that is important to note.

Then, with regard to the annual report laid by the Attorney General, he can attend a nominated Committee at that Committee's request to make statements and to answer questions. That Committee should invariably be the Justice Committee. That, I believe, is a sensible approach, which preserves the independence of the Attorney General and which allows the Attorney General the freedom to interact with the Assembly through, effectively, the Assembly's Committees. I think that that is a sensible way forward, and I hope that it will find favour with the rest of the House.

Mr McCarthy: First, as a member of the Committee, I thank everyone involved in the drawing up of the report and, of course, our officials and staff. Our Chairman has already outlined in detail the many recommendations and our deliberations, so I will be brief but give support to the report.

Alliance believes that the report strikes a fair balance between accountability and independence. Where greater accountability can be sought from the Attorney General, the report seeks to implement it. For example, as has already been said, it recommends that the Attorney General be required to make a declaration of interests similar to that of MLAs. This is a sensible move as the role of Attorney General is a public one and it is reasonable, therefore, that people should know what other interests, if any, a senior law officer should have. Given that his or her advice is often used in political debates in favour of or against change, it seems reasonable that the source of that advice should be subject to transparency.

1.00 pm

The report also recommends that there be a specific procedure to allow Committee scrutiny of the Attorney General following two specific events: first, the tabling of the Attorney General's annual report; and, secondly, any referral of a Bill to the Supreme Court after the passage of Final Stage. Both of these are areas where some form of improved accountability to the Assembly will be welcome. Due to the technical detail of most of these discussions, a Committee would be best placed to hear those discussions.

However, as I outlined at the start, this report also strikes a fair balance with independence. It is important that the Attorney General retains independence from the Assembly, as it is part of the job to speak impartially and fairly. The position is also one that advises the Executive, rather than the Assembly. Making a clear distinction will underline this independence of office. That is why, at this stage, I am not at all convinced that there is a need to allocate the Attorney General any additional role in the Assembly. It is appropriate, therefore, that the report recommends no change in this area.

In conclusion, the Attorney General has an important role in the political process. However, it is a nuanced one. That is why it is important that, at any given time, the balance is appropriately struck between accountability and independence. This report manages to do that. I support the motion.

Mr Clarke (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Procedures): I welcome the opportunity to conclude today's debate on part 1 of the Committee's report on this matter. As we have already heard from the Chair, this has been a complex piece of work. It has taken some time to conclude, but this has been necessary in order to deal with the complexities of seeking to add value while ensuring that the integrity of the institutions and individuals involved is protected.

The final area of the Committee's consideration is yet to be finalised, but today's report stands alone and provides recommendations on four of the five discrete areas that the Committee agreed to consider in its inquiry. The Chair has outlined these, but I will summarise them.

The Committee has recommended that a discrete Standing Order is created to describe how the AGNI will participate in proceedings in respect of ensuring impartiality of the office and a registration of interests. It also recommends that Standing Orders provide for the AGNI to attend the Committee for Justice when his annual report is laid. This should be only at the Committee's request and will allow the AGNI to make a statement or answer questions on the content of his report. However, the Committee could find no benefit in codifying the AGNI's participation in respect of answering Assembly questions or referral of Bills after Final Stage. It therefore recommends that no changes to Standing Orders be made in this regard.

We have heard the Chair of the Committee on Standards and Privileges go into detail in relation to some of the work. We should take cognisance of that as the Committee goes forward to the next stage of this. We also heard from Committee member Alban Maginness, who said — and I have to agree — that the position of the Attorney General in Northern Ireland is unique but that he should still have

the freedom to carry out his work. What we have agreed here today will not restrict him in those duties.

We then heard from another member of the Committee, Mr McCarthy, who emphasised the Alliance Party's position that we need a fair balance and to allow for accountability. That was one of the things in the Chairman's remarks: we have looked for a fair balance and are looking for an opportunity to increase the Attorney General's accountability. Having that opportunity for him to attend at the request of a Committee should allow that, while he can make his report, the Committee will have the opportunity to hold him to account in respect of his views.

In closing, I would like to thank all the Members who have contributed to this debate, as well as the Chair and my Committee colleagues. I commend this report to the Assembly.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee on Procedures [NIA 232/11-16] on its inquiry into the extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General for Northern Ireland (AGNI) to participate in proceedings of the Assembly: Part 1 — impartiality of the Office of AGNI, registration of interests and participation of the AGNI in Assembly proceedings in respect of areas other than Statutory Rules.

Private Members' Business

Equality Legislation: Revised Wording

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 is 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 Lyttle: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes, given the passage of the Equality Act in 2010, that Northern Ireland is now out of step with the rest of the UK in equality protections; expresses concern that no progress has been made on introducing a single equality Act in this mandate; rejects the proposed freedom of conscience amendment Bill; regrets the failure of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to introduce age discrimination legislation that covers under-16s; and calls on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to issue a fresh consultation paper to facilitate the speedy consideration of a single equality Bill by the Assembly.

I welcome the opportunity, on behalf of the Alliance Party, to propose the motion, which calls for a single equality Act in Northern Ireland. The fact that we are created equally and equality before the law are fundamental principles in any democratic society and, indeed, are reflective of the Alliance Party's long-standing commitment to building a shared society for everyone that is based on religious and civil liberty and equality for all citizens regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. It is also in line with our stand against discrimination or stigmatisation of any kind. It is our belief that the principles of freedom of religion, freedom from religion and equality for all citizens affords us with the best framework within which to build a safe, shared and prosperous society under government by the people.

Our equality legislation in Northern Ireland, in line with the Good Friday Agreement, made some significant progress, but it is true that we have fallen behind pace with equality law in the rest of the UK and Europe. A single equality Bill would be a demonstration of the commitment of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and, indeed, the Executive to put in place clear and concise equality law for all citizens in Northern Ireland. It would be an important piece of legislation to harmonise existing Northern Ireland equality law and, indeed, to extend and update existing equality legislation.

The existing body of equality law spans a period of over 40 years. We have had equal pay legislation, anti-sex-discrimination legislation, fair employment law, disability legislation, race relations legislation and anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexual orientation, but it has been some time since we have extended, updated and simplified those provisions in Northern Ireland. In essence, a single equality Bill would bring together, in a structured way, all the provisions that are contained in the existing legislation and update them where appropriate. Hopefully, that would be a much clearer and more accessible statement of law than currently exists.

There was a UK consultation on a single equality Bill for Northern Ireland as long ago as July 2003, and we believe that a fresh consultation on that single equality Bill for Northern Ireland is long overdue. The Equality Act 2010 in Great Britain brought together previous equality law provisions there and harmonised them in a single law. That strengthened the law in a number of areas and shows that changes need to be made in Northern Ireland.

What are the key differences in Northern Ireland? Inconsistencies in equality law were ironed out in the 2010 Act by ensuring that uniform protection across all grounds was established. For example, race equality legislation was amended to provide equal protection on the grounds of colour and nationality as on the grounds of race, ethnic origin and nationality. Age discrimination was tackled. Disability legislation was strengthened considerably; the definition of disability was widened, and it allowed for carers, friends and families of people with a disability to be protected under the law if they were discriminated against.

It also introduced a new duty for schools to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students. These changes have meant that the law in Northern Ireland is unclear and has some anomalies whereby individuals cannot rely on local legislation to protect them under grounds which are now provided for by Westminster and European legislation. People do not know how to exercise their rights fully, so we need a new process for that. Northern Ireland has not kept in step with its duties to protect against discrimination on equality grounds. It is time that we stepped up to the mark.

I would also like to use the motion today to send out a clear message that the so-called conscience clause Bill does not address the need for reasonable accommodation in relation to these provisions. We accept that there should be room for debate and respectful dialogue in relation to those provisions, but the so-called conscience clause Bill does not actually address issues relating to this or indeed the Ashers case. It is wholly disproportionate and a dangerous contribution to an already existing debate around reasonable accommodation for conscience in equality and anti-discrimination law. It has been fairly widely rejected as being in any way an appropriate starting point for respectful and informed debate about if and how reasonable accommodation would be achieved for conscience in equality and anti-discrimination law.

For example, my reading of the proposals — perhaps, if the proposer is contributing today, he could respond to this — is that they could potentially permit a restaurant owner or other service provider to refuse service to a same-sex couple on the grounds that it would be against his or her strongly held religious convictions with regard to sexual orientation, by way of facilitating their partnership. Indeed, organisations, such as the Evangelical Alliance, which is absolutely clearly supportive of the need to address reasonable accommodation, have also, in their investigation of the proposals, said that the way in which the consultation and the proposals are currently framed would seem that many ordinary services could be construed as being facilitation of a belief or behaviour and that that has created concern for LGBT people in the community. I think that we therefore have to send out a clear message today in the Assembly that this is not acceptable in a democratic society.

The effect of the proposals has been to heighten tension and division in our community. It has unnecessarily polarised people and has been used as a platform to describe my party as “anti-Christian”.

Mr Givan: I appreciate the Member's giving way. Without prejudice to his views about what I have done, would he accept that the Equality Commission's actions have created tension with our community, which has precipitated a response?

Mr Lyttle: Yes: I believe that it is possible to have regrets about the manner in which the Ashers case has been approached, and indeed to consider it as not being a clear-cut case, but to still oppose the conscience clause proposal because it actually fails to address the issues in the Ashers case and, most importantly, I believe, is a dangerous and disproportionate response to that particular case.

I would also use this opportunity to refute what I think is a false, dangerous and inflammatory narrative that the Alliance Party is anti-Christian or that the current balance between freedom of religion and freedom from religion means that the public sphere must be neutral. There are numerous Christians in the Alliance Party and numerous religious freedoms in society. I frequently speak publicly and openly about my Christian faith and the right of others to do so, including in this very public legislature. I have sponsored Christian events and prayer at the Northern Ireland Assembly and recently hosted the launch of Christians on the Left in Northern Ireland here in Parliament Buildings. Many of my colleagues in the Alliance Party are in politics because of their Christian faith and belief in a gospel of reconciliation, social justice and new beginnings for Northern Ireland.

I believe that there is room for respectful debate on what is reasonable accommodation between the human right to manifest one's religion and the human right to freedom from discrimination, but the proposals that are supported and campaigned on by the DUP are not the starting point to go about achieving this.

In closing, it is important that the Assembly supports the Alliance Party motion here today and sends out a clear message of our commitment to delivering equality for everyone in the community. Indeed, the consultation on a single equality Bill should act as an open and inclusive process by which OFMDFM can deliver a respectful and wide-ranging public process to engage views on these very important matters.

1.15 pm

Mr Givan: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out from “rejects” to the first “Bill;” and insert

“notes the public debate generated by the consultation on a proposed freedom of conscience amendment Bill and, recognising the differing views expressed, encourages the Assembly to consider a process to facilitate respectful consideration of these issues;”.

I noted Mr Lyttle's contribution. He spent six minutes on the freedom of conscience amendment Bill, which probably indicates that the motion was more about that than about all the other aspects surrounding those few words in the motion, hence the amendment.

I launched this consultation back in December, and there was a 12-week public consultation to engage with people. In fact, I said right at the start that:

"This is very much a draft piece of legislation and I do not claim that it is the finished article. I am interested in the views of interested parties with regard to the legislation and will carefully consider responses to see if my proposals can be improved."

I have been open and honest from the very outset that I am seeking to provide a remedy to the very clear tensions that exist. That is why I am disappointed that the Alliance Party would bring forward a motion wanting to reject this outright. I hope that it will be able to support the amendment so that we can have a reasonable discussion about an issue that is of very real concern.

There was a knee-jerk reaction to the proposals. However, over time, people have been able to engage in the debate. I recognise that even the 'Belfast Telegraph', in its editorial position, has changed somewhat from when it first contributed to this in December to its most recent editorial. That is a sign that people are engaging and debating on it.

The proposals have been grossly misrepresented. That is as soft as I can put it. Some may want to put it stronger. They have been grossly misrepresented. The petition that was mentioned in the media, which people were asked to sign and which got some 218,000 signatures on a worldwide scale, said:

"Northern Ireland's proposed anti-gay amendment would make it legal to deny service to lesbian, gay, and bi people. Restaurants, hotels, and many other businesses could refuse to serve people just because of who they love."

That is a lie, Mr Speaker. It is an absolute lie. Indeed, I could quite easily have signed that petition myself, because if that is what was being proposed, I would be opposed to it. So, let us nail it for what it is. It is a gross misrepresentation of what is in the Bill. Why not have this discussion in a debate in the Chamber or in a Committee where we can tease through all the legislation? The fact that the SDLP, Sinn Féin and the Alliance very quickly wanted to stop the debate, I think does a disservice to the need for a broad discussion within our society and within a democratic establishment for that discussion.

This debate was not started by me. In a speech to the Dublin Law Society, Baroness Hale spoke of the need for reasonable accommodation in the context of religious belief. That was after a case where she found Christian owners of a bed and breakfast guilty. She then said that we needed to look at this, saying that, "The story has just begun."

It then became very clear in a Northern Ireland context, when the Equality Commission took the case against Ashers bakery. I will not speak too much about that, given that the courts will be looking at it next week. It came very much into the public domain when the Christian owners of that company were being taken to court or, indeed, persecuted through prosecution by the Equality Commission because of their sincerely held beliefs. Indeed, Beulah Print, in Drogheda in the Republic of Ireland, is similarly in the public domain due to issues that it is having to deal with. So, this debate was not initiated by me, but I think there is a duty on politicians to respond to it.

Of course, we were told that there would never be a need for this type of debate because the regulations would never do this. In 2006, in fact, we debated the issue in the Assembly. I was not a Member, but others were. Ms Ruane said on the sexual orientation regulations that:

"There is much hysteria and misinformation about this legislation."

She went on to say:

"They also claim that a printing shop run by a Christian will be forced to print flyers promoting gay sex. They claim that it will force a family-run bed-and-breakfast establishment to let a double room to a transsexual couple, even if the family think it in the best interests of their children to refuse to allow that couple into their home."

Let us debunk some of those myths. Printers will not be forced to print flyers promoting gay sex — or any other form of sex." [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 21, p92, col 2].

Yet Ashers bakery is to be forced to promote something that it does not believe in. We were told that that would not be an issue, and it is.

Naomi Long made a very important contribution in the same debate, and I agree with a lot of what she said:

"We must be very careful about saying that people should have the right to refuse business simply on the basis of people's beliefs, lifestyles, or who they are."

I agree with Ms Long on that; we should be very careful.

She also said:

"Some Members have suggested that the legislation would impose a duty to promote homosexuality".

This is what Ms Long went on to say:

"nowhere in the legislation is there a demand to promote a homosexual lifestyle ... The legislation contains no duty to promote or defend a homosexual lifestyle: the duty is to treat people with respect." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 21, p104, col 2].

I put it to the House that my proposals are exactly that — to treat people with respect — and that we should not have a duty to force people in business to do things against their religious beliefs. I share what Ms Long indicated.

A report was published only last week that was carried out by the English Equality and Human Rights Commission. It was a report on religion or belief in the workplace and service delivery. It was carried out by the National Centre for Social Research. Two and a half thousand people took part, and the findings of that report demonstrate beyond any doubt that this is a very real issue that we need to grapple with in our society. The findings of the report indicated that people reported being mocked for their beliefs, including Christians, who said that their colleagues assumed that they were bigoted. That is the type of discrimination that Christians are feeling in their workplace. Others alleged that they were excluded from meetings, passed over for promotion or recruitment due to their beliefs, and felt that they were unable to raise those issues for fear of repercussions. So, those who deny that

people of faith in our community feel as though they are being subject to abuse need to realise that it is a very real sense of alienation within the broader faith communities and, therefore, we need to grapple with it.

Just to quote —

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member. I am not sure that I would disagree with that perception that needs to be responded to and addressed. Will he outline how the proposed conscience clause Bill would respond to that issue?

Mr Givan: The Bill, at its very heart, is about managing the tensions that exist between two protected characteristics in our society: one around sexual orientation and one around religious belief. We need to find that balance, and that is why Baroness Hale spoke about a reasonable accommodation. Those who responded to the consultation process that I carried out, of which there were many hundreds, indeed, thousands — I am working through them and intend to give a report on them — all indicate that we need to strike the right balance, and that is what I am seeking to do and take forward.

In the report that was carried out, the commission acknowledges that work needs to be done. I contend that the commission in England has created a lot of those tensions. Indeed, the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland — I acknowledge what Mr Lyttle indicated — has some regrets about how it handled this particular case. It has not contributed to this in a positive way. It has pitted two different characteristics against each other. It has taken taxpayers' money and funded this case against the private citizens. That is not the way in which it should have gone about its business and left things for the court to adjudicate. It should be trying to facilitate this broad discussion.

Of course, there is recognition for what I am seeking to take forward — I have acknowledged it needs to be worked on — but it came from the Catholic Church, and I will not quote what it said. However, it supported the principle behind what I am doing. The Presbyterian Church, as a denomination and as an official body that is representative a quarter of a million people in Northern Ireland, indicated that it supports what I am trying to do —

Mr Dickson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Givan: I am sorry, but I am going to finish; I have only one minute left.

It has indicated support as a denomination. I accept that there may be differing views within the denomination, but the official view of the church is that it supports what I am trying to do. The chairman of the Church of Ireland committee that is dealing with this indicated that he supports this. In the 'Church of Ireland Gazette', the Rev Adrian Dorrian urged colleagues to continue to facilitate a broad-ranging discussion around the accommodation of rights. My amendment does not prejudice anybody in the Assembly from having a definitive view of how we should seek to strike the balance.

I am putting an olive branch out to people and saying, "Let us discuss this in a respectful manner without having a pre-determined outcome, and I will engage in that process in that manner." I appeal to Members to recognise that this is an issue that needs to be grappled with. Let us do it in a respectful manner so that we can strike the right balance

in our society and people can live peaceably with one another.

I support the amendment.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion and oppose the amendment. I should say at the outset that I will not be taking any interventions.

Sinn Féin takes its responsibility seriously and strives to create an inclusive society based on mutual respect, equality and parity of esteem, the underlying principles of the Good Friday Agreement. That involves reaching out to our fellow citizens in the unionist community and convincing them that we are serious about tackling the differences that exist between us. I am not talking about tolerance, but about the acceptance of cultural, political and religious differences and of people who espouse those differences. I am talking about acceptance, which, within the bounds of equality of treatment, means almost unconditional acceptance of the other.

The motion for discussion gives us an opportunity to focus on the need to give effect to the Good Friday Agreement provisions with respect to the establishment of, for example, a bill of rights for the North of Ireland and the creation of an all-Ireland charter of rights, based on agreed measures for the protection of the fundamental rights of everyone living on the island of Ireland.

The call for a bill of rights and the single equality Act is supported by a wide range of progressive opinion, including leading and influential voices from academia and civic society. The Good Friday Agreement provided for a bill of rights for the North. The agreement was democratically endorsed by the majority of those who cast their votes in historic referendums, North and South, in 1998. The agreement envisaged a bill of rights particular to the circumstances of the North. The clear import was a maximum approach to rights protection. The purpose of a bill of rights is to build on the European Convention on Human Rights and reflect the particular circumstances of the North, a society emerging from decades of discrimination and conflict. Provision for a bill of rights was included in the Good Friday Agreement in recognition that, as a society, we would benefit from setting down a shared set of rights. As we continue to transform our society, developing a bill of rights is as relevant today as it was when the agreement was drafted. It is an essential piece of work that needs to be carried forward.

The British Government were to define, in Westminster legislation, rights supplementary to those in the European Convention on Human Rights to reflect the particular circumstances of the North, drawing, as appropriate, on international instruments and experience. Those additional rights were to reflect the principles of mutual respect for the identity and ethos of both communities in parity of esteem and, taken together with the European Convention on Human Rights, were to constitute a bill of rights. The British Government have failed to deliver on their commitment and have consistently taken the position that a bill of rights must be agreed between unionists and nationalists. A bill of rights would outline basic human rights that all the people in northern society would be entitled to, and it would improve the lives of the most disadvantaged in our society. It would also provide a means by which people can hold the Government to account if those rights are not being adequately protected.

Human rights are there for everyone. It is widely agreed that a bill of rights for the North needs to address the specific realities of our society, a society of great inequalities and divisions. As many as one person in five has a disability, and those with a disability are twice as likely to be unemployed; one in three children here lives in poverty; one in three of those who are economically inactive has no qualifications. Sectarian and racist attacks still happen all too frequently and quietly, and quite often against a backdrop of intolerance. It must be remembered that a survey carried out by the Equality Commission found that 91% of people in the North supported equality laws. In another survey, carried out by the Human Rights Consortium, there was also support across the board for the right to adequate housing and an adequate standard of living, while rights in relation to mental and physical health scored highly and the right to education highest of all.

A bill of rights and a single equality Act would protect all people equally, regardless of political opinion, colour or creed, and it would protect the social and economic rights of everyone in the North of Ireland. A single equality Act and a bill of rights are about guaranteeing a basic standard of living for everyone that is consistent and fair, providing protection for the most marginalised in society and giving them dignity and respect.

1.30 pm

Mr Attwood: Whether Mr Lyttle did or did not spend 60% of his time on the conscience clause, and Mr Givan spent 100% of his time on the conscience clause, I intend to spend my time trying to deal with the totality of the amendment.

In doing so, between now and 4.00 pm when the House divides, can we have some clarity, from the DUP in particular, in relation to the issue in the motion about the failure to introduce age discrimination legislation? At Question Time I think last week, or certainly within the last two weeks, the junior Minister Jennifer McCann confirmed that it was Sinn Féin's wish that the age discrimination legislation should extend to those under 16 and that they hoped, in time, for that to be realised.

The DUP does not seek to amend the part of the Alliance motion that regrets that age discrimination legislation that covers under-16s is not to be introduced. If it is the case that they do not oppose that part of the motion, I invite the DUP to confirm on the Floor before the vote at 4.00 pm not only that it accepts the principle that legislation should be extended to the under-16s but that it will accept the practice, and that OFMDFM should bring back to the Assembly legislation in that regard. You cannot on the one hand call on the Assembly to accept that part of the motion that the Alliance Party has written, because that is what you are doing by not amending it, and not on the other hand go back and change the legislation that you are proposing in the future.

Secondly, we want to see a single equality Bill because in a society like ours, where too many people still cling to a past that is already dying, you require good law and tough enforcement to bring about the seismic shifts in how our society conducts its affairs. We know that from our history, which demonstrates that often only when there is good law and tough enforcement do you bring about societal changes. Whether it comes to equality, discrimination, policing or other matters, strong legislation

and enforcement bring about better society in a society that resists change. We urge the House to accept the motion because it speaks so strongly in respect of a single equality Bill.

Thirdly, we say to the Equality Commission that it is not living up to all its responsibilities. The Good Friday Agreement created dedicated mechanisms to deal with equality, human rights, policing and justice. Why? As I have oft-times said on the Floor of this Chamber, because as the late Frank Wright, an academic at Queen's, said, national conflicts, when they are fully evolved, revolve around issues of law, order and justice. That is why the Good Friday Agreement put at its heart mechanisms to deal with issues of law, order, justice and equality, including the creation of the Equality Commission. It has been long our view, and the Equality Commission knows this, that we do not believe that it has been punching to its weight when it comes to its general duties in respect of Northern Ireland.

I will give you one example. Long-term male Catholic unemployment is virtually unchanged after decades, and long-term Protestant adult unemployment is increasing. We suggest to the Equality Commission that, whatever about the Ashers case, where questions do arise about its judgement, it should apply its judgement and its mind to dealing with the much wider equality agenda, including long-term male Catholic and Protestant unemployment.

We are supporting the motion and rejecting the amendment because the words that are used in any possible draft Bill, and the attitudes that in the past have informed some in this House when it comes to the treatment of those who are LGBT, leads us to conclude that, whilst the amendment talks about respectful consideration of these issues, at the heart of the proposed conscience clause is something that is not respectful and does not have respectful consideration of those in our society who are LGBT.

Mr Kinahan: I am pleased to speak in the debate on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party.

The issues of equality and rights are key in any modern liberal democracy, but we would add a third concept, because with rights come responsibilities, and we all must remember that. We should all wish to live in a society that is open, tolerant, respects the rights of others and promotes equality for all. You only have to look at TV bulletins to see that, in far too many countries, too many people are forced to live under regimes that have no respect for the rule of law and have scant regard for human rights and equality. We are fortunate to live in the United Kingdom, where respect for rights and equality before the law are part of our democratic culture.

The motion is correct in that, since the passing of the Equality Act 2010 at Westminster, we have been out of step with the rest of the United Kingdom in equality protections. I had expected other Members to go through those who need to be protected and those whom we are protecting them from. I find it rather strange that we have not gone down that route at all and have hardly touched on what is in the equality Bill. I too want to move on to other matters, but I point out that an email I got today from the Equality Commission highlights that we in Northern Ireland are behind, especially on disability and women's rights. Those are the two areas where I thought that we would

probably least be concentrating today. It is sad to see that all being pulled together with a Bill of rights. It is also sad that, in life, common sense and good manners cannot be allowed to resolve these matters and that we feel that we have to go to legislation.

The motion also expresses concern that no progress has been made on introducing the single equality Act in this mandate. The idea of a single equality Act has been around for more than a decade, but, like so much with the process of administration in Northern Ireland, it has ground to a halt. That is typical of so much of what passes for government in Northern Ireland. Departments and bureaucrats are excellent at coming forward with strategies and consultations. They then assist Ministers in drawing up action plans, which lead to task forces and working groups, but, at the end of the day, there is not too much tangible progress in the shape of delivering meaningful change. The failure to bring forward a single equality Act is yet another manifestation of the dysfunctional nature of OFMDFM. The people of Northern Ireland deserve better. Did we not all enter politics to make Northern Ireland a better place?

I come to the freedom of conscience amendment Bill. The Ulster Unionist Party has a long tradition of permitting Members to vote according to their conscience on matters of conscience. The case involving Ashers bakery is due to be heard in court within the next two weeks. Whatever one thinks of the rights and wrongs in that specific case, I hope that we can all agree that it should never have come to this. There should be space in our society for people who wish to live their life according to their religious beliefs. However, we need to find a way of accommodating the whole range of views. Freedom of conscience needs to be allowed and respected, as do the rights of citizens and of all other groups. All too often in this Chamber, there is an arrogance among some who try to force their views on others. That must cease, and, if we are to set the right example to society, we must all do that. We live in a democracy and under the rule of law. When it comes to the Ashers case, let due process take its course.

When it comes to the amendment, I sincerely believe that we have to find an accommodating range of views. Freedom of conscience and religion have to be protected. We must also accept that the rights of citizens and groups to equality of treatment is key in any liberal democracy worthy of that name. The amendment recognises "the differing views expressed" and calls on the Assembly to:

"consider a process to facilitate respectful consideration of these issues".

That is why we support the amendment. That is the way that we should be going to discuss and find a way forward. What disappoints me in the amendment is that there is no timescale —

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Moutray: The issue of rights and the balance to be found between them is not black and white. In our society, rights compete against each other frequently. At times, these rights are not compatible. The key to a successful society is the ability to balance these rights and to ensure fairness and equity to all parties. However, there seems to exist a form of human rights fundamentalism that allows for

no other interpretation or approach or shows no tolerance for other views on the issues of rights. That is exactly what we have seen from the Alliance Party in this motion. I am strong believer in human rights and the protection of these rights. That is wholly different from saying that only one interpretation is the correct one. The proposal put forward by my colleague was not an attempt to attack or demean anyone on the basis of their sexuality. Rather, the primary aim of the proposal was to address the lack of protections for faith in our community.

This is not a challenge that we alone face. This clash of rights has occurred elsewhere, including across the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland. Many people hold strong religious beliefs. This is not a choice but often a matter of genuine faith. This must also be respected in our society. This proposal is not about dominance but about protecting yet another of our minority groups in society. I wish to highlight the fact that the proposal by my colleague is about consultation. It is about taking on the views on how to better protect people with genuinely held religious views. Discussion and debate —

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Moutray: I will, yes.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for his contribution. With respect, the proposal is not just about consultation. It is a specific proposal on which the Ulster Unionist Party has just completely fudged expressing any view whatsoever. We need to consider the specific proposal as well.

Mr Speaker: The Member will have an extra minute.

Mr Moutray: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I take on board what my colleague across the way says. However, I will continue. Discussion and debate on these issues should be welcomed, not closed down and rejected outright, as the Alliance Party is suggesting. I am calling on all parties around this Chamber to engage in a positive discussion on how we protect our citizens and how we balance these rights. It is not sustainable or acceptable that Christians and others of faith continue to be discriminated against and maligned.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an díospóireacht seo agus gabhaim buíochas le Páirtí an Chomhaontaithe as an díospóireacht seo a chur sa Tionól. I welcome the debate, and I thank the Alliance for bringing it forward. As my colleague Bronwyn McGahan has said, we will be supporting the motion and voting against the DUP amendment.

Sinn Féin supports equality legislation, and we note with disappointment the DUP attempts to row back on equality. It is disappointing to see this because equality is for everyone, and nobody should be afraid of it.

As I stated publicly, Sinn Féin will put a petition of concern against the so-called freedom of conscience Bill at the earliest opportunity because this is not about debate. No matter what the previous Member to speak said, this is not about debate or consultation. This is about the continued DUP threats to discriminate against the LGBT community. Its past record was that it was first going to save Ulster from sodomy, and, thankfully, people stood up and were counted. It then tried to block civil partnership Bills. It has voted consistently against equal marriage. This is just a continuation of its discrimination against the LGBT community, and I am very pleased that Basil McCrea

and Steven Agnew are joining with us on the petition of concern. I welcome the fact that the SDLP and Alliance have said that they will be voting against. I am still waiting for them to come back to me to confirm whether they will be supporting our petition of concern.

I publicly call on them to do that, because we need to send a very clear message from the Assembly that we will not tolerate any diminution of rights for the LGBT community.

1.45 pm

Leaving aside the Ashers case, we should not return to a situation where people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual are worried that, every time they go to a restaurant, look for insurance or look to buy a mortgage, someone is going to use the so-called freedom of conscience Bill. Thankfully, there will be no freedom of conscience Bill, and Sinn Féin will use the petition of concern in the way it was meant to be used, which is to protect equality.

I put on record my admiration for the LGBT community's courage in standing up against discrimination. I would like the Assembly to send out a message not of hate but of love and support for that community. It has suffered enough in the past. You can see the level of attacks and homophobic behaviour and the impact that it has on that community. The people who try to bring about Bills on freedom of conscience really need to examine their own conscience about what is behind some of this legislation.

Where Christian beliefs are concerned, of course Churches of all denominations need religious belief. We are the first to support that, but many people in Christian communities do not want to see religion used as an attempt to justify discrimination against an entire community. I note that a Catholic priest has come out recently on that, as have many people within the Protestant and, indeed, other Churches. I very much welcome that.

We have been trying for some time to get age discrimination included in legislation. It is not a good foundation to bring forward anti-discrimination legislation when it discriminates against people who are under 16. We tried to get agreement on this, covering all ages, but unfortunately it was not forthcoming. At present, there is no protection for anyone who is under 16. We see the legislation that has been brought forward as a first step, and we will now ensure that we consult with all interested parties and stakeholders with the aim of bringing forward legislation that covers everybody.

I support those Members who spoke about the Single Equality Bill. Our position on it is very clear. We support it, and we would like to see a bill of rights progressed. Again, however, the party opposite is attempting to block anti-discrimination legislation.

Mr Poots: I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. I know it is a debate that the Alliance Party wanted to close down a few months ago, making it very clear that that was the case. Interestingly enough, it comes to the Floor today with its proposal, and I think that that is on the basis that it has been publicly losing the argument and knows that it has been losing it. People are now publicly saying that this matter needs to be discussed, that we need to find a middle way and that there is, in fact, too much discrimination against people of Christian faith who

have real concerns about engaging in particular things and being forced to do things that they are totally opposed to.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Poots: I have not started yet, so give me a moment or two to develop the debate.

Lord Mackay of Clashfern, who was, amongst other things, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, Lord of the Session, Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, Lord Chancellor and Lord High Commissioner, has made this following point of view known:

"Those who have strong religious views are likely to have views about what is right and wrong and in their lives their consciences are constrained by these views. It is particularly painful for them to be forced to transgress the direction of their consciences. If it is possible by reasonable adjustment of the arrangements to which such a person is subject so that he or she is not forced to transgress the dictates of conscience, this seems highly desirable thus avoiding the infliction of unnecessary pain on the person affected".

Mr Givan proposed a conscience clause Bill, which people immediately sought to close down. Ms Ruane, who has disappeared almost as quickly as she appeared and made her speech, is very quick to run around the Assembly seeking to get people to sign a petition of concern, and, quite foolishly, Basil McCrea and Steven Agnew supported her in that without allowing a debate to take place and without allowing those issues to come forward.

Mr Attwood asked why we made the amendment in the way that we did. We did that to facilitate and enable the SDLP to lend its support. Sadly, it has chosen not to. I am very surprised that it has chosen not to. Bishop Treanor was up at the Assembly in the past month, and he said that we need to have a discussion:

"in a calm and respectful manner, how to find a more just and reasonable accommodation for religious belief when conflicts between goods and services legislation and freedom of conscience arise."

It would be good if the SDLP listened to this point. He continued:

"It is important that our politicians accept there is a real problem here that needs to be addressed. Our laws as they stand are having an unjust and disproportionate impact on those of religious faith. It is important that they don't just ignore the situation but seek ways of addressing it and of giving greater recognition to freedom of conscience and religion as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of a diverse and pluralist society."

The SDLP is not yet too late to support us in the amendment, which is a very reasoned amendment that allows us to engage in a continued discussion on this vexed issue.

We cannot force individuals to think particular things. It is sad that the Ashers case came to the fore through a cake that was to be used by the Alliance Party's Mayor of North Down, I believe, to promote gay marriage. I am happy to be challenged on that. If someone is not in support of gay marriage, why go to their business and seek to force

them to provide that support? It is wrong that someone's conscience should be exercised on an issue like that.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Poots: Yes.

Mr Givan: In respecting rights, the Member will be aware that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted earlier this year on a report calling for a reasonable accommodation for religious beliefs across all the member states in Europe. The SDLP, in its pro-European stance, could be part of the curve on this issue and could join with others in seeking the reasonable accommodation that I would like to take forward.

Mr Poots: I thank the Member. It is wrong that people who are engaged in a bed-and-breakfast business are forced to adopt a policy, if they want to maintain their business, that goes totally against their beliefs in a small family home. And —

Mr Attwood: Will the Member give way?

Mr Poots: Very briefly.

Mr Attwood: So, you want to have respectful conversations about this matter. Would the respectful thing not be to withdraw your Bill in order to have a conversation, perhaps in the terms that you want to talk about? By the way, whilst my Catholic faith informs my values, my party constitution informs my judgements when it comes to political matters.

Mr Poots: The Bill has not been lodged yet.

Mr Speaker: Time is almost up.

Mr Poots: We are proposing a Committee to discuss it. The Member seems to be opposing that, but he could change his mind.

Mr Speaker: Members, as you know, Question Time is at 2.00 pm. I therefore propose, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 1.54 pm.

On resuming (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Newton] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We will start with listed questions. Before I call Mr Basil McCrea, I inform the Assembly that question 4 has been withdrawn.

Genito-urinary Clinics

1. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the effectiveness of local genito-urinary medicine clinics. (AQO 7792/11-15)

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Local genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinics are an effective means of providing for the diagnosis and care of patients with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and related problems, including contraceptive care, genital conditions and HIV. Confidentiality is a fundamental component of working in the clinic. Staff are trained to deal with all sexual health problems and to provide advice, education and information to patients, their friends and family and outside agencies.

The main conditions treated in the specialty are bacterial STIs, such as syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia, and viral STIs, such as the human papilloma virus, herpes and molluscum. GUM clinics may also provide additional services, such as erectile dysfunction management. Importantly, they act as centres for training and governance for sexual health networks.

Mr B McCrea: Minister, in England, the public health outcomes framework provides useful indicators that local areas can be benchmarked against. One indicator is especially relevant to adult sexual health, and that is the proportion of people presenting with HIV at a late stage of infection. What is the Minister's view of the framework? Is it relevant to Northern Ireland? If so, does he accept that the number of consultants in our GUM clinics ought to rise from four to 20 to meet the demand?

Mr Wells: As the Member will be aware, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) undertook a review of the provision of specialist sexual health services. That report was published in October 2013. I think that one of the reasons that he is raising this is that there is a staff vacancy in the present provision for a grade 6 nurse. That post has been advertised and trawled, and I think that we will be in a position fairly soon to indicate that there has been an appointment. We believe that that will bring us up to the full complement of staff required.

He raised the issue of HIV. In total, 522 people were receiving HIV care in Northern Ireland in 2011. That is the latest figure. Also in that year, 82 new diagnoses were made of HIV. That is very unfortunate. HIV has been with us now for almost 30 years, and there has been

a very intensive public education programme to alert people to the dangers of certain practices that run the risk of contracting HIV. Sadly, even though that extensive campaign has been well managed by the Public Health Agency and has targeted the entire population, we are still seeing an inexorable rise in the number of HIV diagnoses. That is very unfortunate, because there are very simple and effective ways of avoiding contracting that condition.

Ms P Bradley: As the chair of the all-party group on sexual health, I welcome the Minister's response, albeit that I impress on him the pressures that our GUM clinic up in the Royal is facing. As the Minister will be aware, we have a reduction in cervical cancer due to a good vaccination programme in our girls, albeit that we still have not provided that for our boys. We also have a reduction in teenage pregnancies. What is the Minister doing to further reduce this number?

Mr Wells: This is quite a good-news story. In 2012, there were 1,100 recorded births to teenage mothers in Northern Ireland. That is 6% lower than 2011, when there were 1,170. Even more fundamentally, it is 27% lower than a decade ago, when it stood at 1,502 births. However, I emphasise that the birth rate for teenage mothers aged 13 to 16 remains two to three times higher in the most deprived parts of Northern Ireland. That is still an issue, but at least it is an issue that we are tackling with considerable success. We know that the outcomes for children born from teenage mothers are often much poorer than those of mothers who wait until a more mature age before giving birth.

The HPV vaccine has been a success. Of course, it is much more of an issue for young girls than it is for young boys, but we are keeping that issue under review. We are having considerable success in on both counts — HPV and teenage pregnancies. We will be guided by the evidence when it comes to HPV vaccinations but, once again, extending that to a wider population will require more funding. One of the fundamental issues that I face is the fact that I have no finances at all for new service development in 2015-16. That is an area of profound concern to me because there are so many worthy initiatives that could be rolled out to protect public health. At the moment, we do not see where we are going to get the money to pay for them.

Mr Eastwood: The Minister mentioned some of the figures around HIV cases. The fact is that, since 2000, between the North and GB, we have had the largest increase in new HIV cases. Why is that, and what are we not doing to try to turn that around?

Mr Wells: I presume he means Northern Ireland when he refers to the North rather than Malin Head.

In 2013, the review team found that Northern Ireland does not as yet have a specific set of agreed standards for sexual health services. There is a need for standardisation of practice across all those services. The review also indicated that we needed to do more in commissioning, leadership training, workforce planning and capacity of services.

It is very worrying that Northern Ireland in particular has a greater increase, but we started from a much lower base and, as Northern Ireland has become a much more cosmopolitan society, we have found that that has led to an increase in sexually transmitted infections. I find it quite

worrying because not only is HIV increasing but the number of sexually transmitted infections diagnosed at GUM clinics increased by 28% between 2000 and 2011. In 2011, 7,661 new diagnoses were made in those clinics, which is a very worrying statistic. We need to get the message home to our population and to those who have come into our community that there are important steps that can be taken to avoid contracting sexually transmitted infections. It very much depends on the community listening to that message and taking advice that will prevent what is, to me, quite a worrying change in the situation.

Huntington's Disease: Regional Strategy

2. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to implement a regional strategy for Huntington's disease. (AQO 7793/11-15)

Mr Wells: While I have no plans to develop a regional strategy specifically for Huntington's disease, following publication of the United Kingdom strategy for rare diseases in November 2014, my Department is currently developing the Northern Ireland rare diseases implementation plan. This will set out how the commitments identified in the strategy will be taken forward in Northern Ireland. It is anticipated that the final plan will be published in summer 2015.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. What services are available at present?

Mr Wells: People diagnosed with Huntington's disease have access to the full range of core community health and social services across Northern Ireland, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, community nursing, speech and language therapy, dietetics, social work, social care, domiciliary care and day care. The Huntington's disease regional service is provided by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and I fully support the need to develop research, particularly in the rare diseases sector, so that patients can receive the appropriate treatment at the earliest opportunity.

Currently, 120 patients in Northern Ireland are being treated for Huntington's disease, which means that it constitutes a rare disease. It is a very serious genetic condition, which is life-limiting. That does not mean that we do not take it seriously, but it makes it difficult to develop large-scale projects for that relatively small number of patients. Based on clinical need, there is always the option of travelling across to the mainland of the United Kingdom for specialist care, but that case would have to be made by the clinician and funded accordingly.

Mr G Robinson: Will the Minister give us an update on the rare diseases strategy?

Mr Wells: The consultation on the draft Northern Ireland implementation plan ended on 19 January 2015. Following the analysis of the responses and the amendments to the plan, it is envisaged that we will definitely have it by the summer of this year. I have a particular interest in the rare disease partnership, and I have attended all the various events associated with the implementation plan.

I do have a personal interest, because I have a rare disease and so does my daughter, so I am always very interested to see what happens with those conditions and

what treatments and care pathways are available. I am taking particular interest in the subject, and I look forward to the publication of the full plan, hopefully by the end of August 2015.

Mr Kinahan: Will the Minister meet the Huntington's Disease Association and the Health and Social Care Board to see how it can be dealt with better?

Mr Wells: I would be delighted to. There are 169 registered health charities in Northern Ireland, and I think that each of them has been through my door at least five times, but I must say I have not had direct contact with the Huntington's Disease Association. If the Member wishes to coordinate a meeting, I would be absolutely delighted. It is a condition that, until the question was asked, I, frankly, did not know an awful lot about. I was obviously aware of it, but I was not aware of the scale. I am always very interested in the charitable sector, which provides so much useful information to me and to the Department in general. I find it extremely beneficial to meet those charities, and the door is certainly open to the Huntington's disease folk.

Mr McCarthy: Can the Minister advise the Assembly if he has had any correspondence with the Huntington's disease people across the water or indeed down South?

Mr Wells: No, I have not. When I was looking at the material in connection with the condition, it surprised me that, as far as we can trace — apart from Mr Boylan, who takes a personal interest in the subject — I have not come across much material on Huntington's disease. It is one of those conditions that, because there are a relatively small number of sufferers in Northern Ireland, has not crossed my constituency casework either. No doubt this will open up the doors to an avalanche of material from the charity, and I would welcome that. It is still life-limiting. The average onset is at 30 to 45 years of age and life expectancy following that is 15 to 20 years, so it is certainly life-limiting and a very painful and difficult condition. I would like to know more about it, and I am sure that I have prompted both the Member and Mr Kinahan to ensure that my ignorance is swept away very quickly.

Craigavon Area Hospital: Additional Finance

3. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the increased demand for services at Craigavon Area Hospital, what additional financial resource the health and social care trust will receive from his Department. (AQO 7794/11-15)

Mr Wells: The final budget for 2015-16 is exceptionally challenging for my Department. Work is ongoing with all of the trusts, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), the Public Health Authority (PHA) and other arm's-length bodies to clarify the implications of the Executive's final budget and develop detailed savings proposals for 2015. As part of the process, the board is currently finalising the budget allocations for each of the trusts. However, at this stage, I can give an indication that we plan to allocate an extra £28 million to the Southern Trust for 2015-16. That represents about 22% of the total planned increase to all of the trusts. The Southern Trust spends about 16% of the total budget at the moment, so an increase 22% is a real and significant increase.

Whilst there is an increase in planned allocations, all of the trusts must deliver substantial savings in order to live

within their budget and meet rising demand. Indeed, I have those proposals from the Southern Trust. As she knows, the Southern Trust has a very strong management team and it has been very quick to come back with proposals. I think most of them are sensible and deliverable.

Savings from non-front-line areas will be maximised. However, given the scale of the challenge that health and social care faces in 2015-16, savings will also need to be delivered from front-line services, and that will inevitably impact on those who are trying to meet their needs. In any case, I can assure her that we will maintain the safety of services for patients and clients across the trusts. That will remain my priority.

Mrs D Kelly: I welcome the increase in funding. Can the Minister provide any more detail in relation to how that might be split between acute service provision and community service provision?

Mr Wells: No, we are not that far on. We leave it to the trust's board and the new chief executive, Paula Clarke, and her team, to work that out. Whilst we have a rough indication of where we are going budget-wise next year, we have not yet nailed down what money is going where. I can say, from my experience of the Southern Trust, that the extra £22 million will be very well spent. I was at a function on Thursday where we said goodbye to the outgoing chief executive of the Southern Trust, Mairead McAlinden, and quite a few Members from the House were present. Even with the loss of Mairead, I think that we have a very strong team in the Southern Trust. I think that that £22 million will be very well spent. I have noticed in my seven years in Health that, in almost every indicator, the Southern Trust has been at the top of the league in Northern Ireland. We need to support and confirm that success by investing further in what is a first-rate service.

2.15 pm

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for his responses thus far. What changes have there been in the numbers of key staff in the Southern Trust area over the last four years?

Mr Wells: We have obviously maintained our priority to invest in front-line services. It is worth saying, for instance, that, since Mr Poots was appointed Minister, we have decreased administration staff by 11% and sports support services by 23%, but we have increased medical and dental staff by 19%, qualified nurses by 9%, and professional and technical staff by 14%. I hope to refer to the huge increase in front-line staff that my predecessor delivered. I will continue to bring in extra staff. Almost 900 new nurses have been taken on since my party took on this portfolio four years ago. That gives a clear indication that we are putting more feet on the wards and moving more resources into front-line care, particularly in hospitals such as Craigavon and Daisy Hill, where we know that it will be well used. Indeed, both those hospitals maintain their positions in the top 40 hospitals in the United Kingdom year after year. If you saw what the competition is like, you would know that that is a remarkable achievement by the Southern Trust area team.

Mrs Dobson: I also thank the Minister for his answers. I met management of the Southern Trust at the hospital recently, and I appreciate the very real pressures that staff are under. Can the Minister give his assessment of the potential repercussions of heaping more pressure on

to an already stretched workforce? I share the very real concern, which was reiterated to me, about the nursing staff shortage. How does he plan to resolve —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Can I just bring you to the question?

Mrs Dobson: — that at Craigavon Hospital?

Mr Wells: I think the fact that we have managed to recruit 892 nurses in four years indicates that we accept the argument that she is making —

Mrs Dobson: There is still a shortage.

Mr Wells: Yes, I accept what she is saying. In Northern Ireland, we are still short of nurses, GPs and middle-grade doctors and consultants. We have a fundamental problem, in that 20% of nurses who qualify in Northern Ireland go elsewhere. They go to Australia, London, other parts of England or wherever they are recruited. That is a real issue. We have also lost 250 middle-grade doctors who qualified in Northern Ireland and went straight to Australia. We are doing everything that we can to recruit, but there is another point that I need to make.

On Saturday night, I attended a dinner of a very successful private residential home in Castledearg. The problem is that, if we extend our recruitment of nurses into the trusts, we find that they inevitably come from that sector. That is making life extremely difficult for those who are trying to manage private nursing homes and private residential homes. We are robbing Peter to pay Paul. Under the workforce review, we need to find a way whereby we can train more nurses to meet the need that she identified. The Southern Trust has been much more successful than other trusts in attracting and retaining staff, and, therefore, its bank agency budget, for instance, is much smaller than the other four trusts'.

Mr McNarry: In the light of what the Minister just said, would he really and earnestly consider putting in a cap so that nurses who have been trained in Northern Ireland have to stay here for a period so that we are not losing them to the places that he says we are?

Mr Wells: That is a very interesting point. It costs us £860,000 to train a doctor in Northern Ireland. There is nothing to stop that person, as soon as they are registered, getting on the plane and going to Bondi Beach. Should we be spending Northern Ireland taxpayers' money to train doctors for the rest of the world? It does not cost as much as that to train a nurse, but should we be training nurses to go to Barking, Somerset, Tottenham or wherever else in England?

Mr McNarry: You can do something about it.

Mr Wells: Unfortunately, while we remain within the European Union, we cannot stop them going elsewhere within the European Union. That is because there is free movement of staff. However, we will have to look seriously at some way not of preventing staff from going but of saying, "If you go, you will pay back a significant proportion of the money that it cost to train you." That has already been implemented in other professions.

It is only at the initial stage, but we need to look at that. I do not see why I am training nurses and doctors to go to Sydney, but there is another argument: for years, we have benefited enormously from doctors and nurses coming from places like India, Pakistan and the Philippines. Even

in the ward that I recently had experience of, a good proportion of the nurses — first-rate nurses — were from the Philippines. We gain the other way, so it is a double-edged sword.

The Member has a point: it is worrying that we lose so many of our top staff. The good news, of course, is that that means that the rest of the world regards our staff as extremely competent and well trained. Therefore, they are the envy of the rest of the world, but we would like to keep them.

Causeway Hospital: Service Delivery

5. **Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the delivery of services at the Causeway Hospital will change following the recent senior clinical staff appointments. (AQO 7796/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Trust's model for services in the Causeway Coast and glens area is based around an acute hospital in Coleraine with an emergency department and supporting clinical services, a well-developed intermediate care service and community teams evenly distributed across the area. In January, the trust made a number of new clinical appointments for the Causeway Hospital. The permanent appointments include consultants in surgery, gastroenterology, respiratory — these are hard — obstetrics, gynaecology and a consultant physician in internal medicine. All that I am drinking is water. A joint consultant cardiologist post with Altnagelvin Area Hospital is in the process of being recruited.

The Causeway Hospital, like several of the other smaller acute hospitals across Northern Ireland, has experienced challenges in attracting permanent staff to some of its specialities in the past. I am therefore pleased to see that the new permanent clinical staff have arrived on site. The trust is also recruiting a further three posts: a consultant in emergency medicine; a consultant physician in general medicine and care of the elderly; and a consultant physician with an interest in respiratory medicine. Those processes remain open. The appointments are good news for the people who use the Causeway Hospital, and it is expected that these permanent postings will enhance the continuity and quality of care for patients.

Mr Campbell: I, too, welcome the intention to recruit the three new staff. Will the Minister indicate, for example, the change that there has been at the A&E, compared with four years ago, in the number of people waiting 12 hours or longer?

Mr Wells: I am glad to say that there has been a dramatic fall in the number of people waiting more than 12 hours at the Causeway Hospital. In 2011-12, there were 1,020; in 2012-13, there were 719; and, in 2013-14, there were 156. That is dramatic and almost an 80% fall. Well done to the staff — the clinicians, the consultants and the nurses — at the Causeway Hospital who have delivered such a fundamental change in outcomes. That, of course, is in the context of quite a significant increase in demand. Indeed, almost 80% of patients in that hospital are seen within four hours.

Throughout Northern Ireland, demand on A&E and ED is increasing dramatically. We had over 2,200 more referrals in December this year than the previous year, and that puts significant pressure on our staff. I am glad to say that we were able to meet that demand, unlike 13 health trusts in England, where emergency situations were declared,

or in the Republic of Ireland, where over 600 patients were on trolley waits at one stage during December and January. Therefore, a lot has been achieved. Indeed, there have been no 12-hour breaches in the Causeway Hospital since September 2013. Well done to all concerned. It has been a huge effort by the Northern Trust team. I believe that there is a brighter future for the Northern Trust and that things are beginning to turn around there. I offer my congratulations to the chief executive and all those responsible.

Mr Dallat: I welcome the Minister's response, and I would, of course, say absolutely nothing negative about the Causeway Hospital. Would he agree that developing partnerships not just with Antrim Area Hospital, which is in the same trust area, but with Altnagelvin Area Hospital, which, in turn, has partnerships with Letterkenny General Hospital, is the key? Does he also agree that, in the future, the Causeway Hospital will have a major role to play in the north and north-west? I include Malin Head in that, because some patients come from there.

Mr Wells: I am glad the Member has defined what he believes to be the north: that includes Malin Head. All joking aside, we have an excellent relationship with our colleagues in Letterkenny General Hospital. For instance, when we had the fire in Altnagelvin a few years ago, they were in there immediately to try to help us out. I welcome that, and that cooperation will continue.

The Causeway Hospital is in a unique situation because it is equidistant from Altnagelvin in Londonderry and Antrim; therefore, there is a crossover. I have already indicated that the consultant cardiologist will be shared by the hospitals because, for folk who live in the Member's constituency, such as in Limavady, it is six of one, half a dozen of the other in terms of moving. John Compton, in 'Transforming Your Care', outlined that hospitals should not be identified as silos or islands but should work in partnership with one another. I welcome that. Not only does that help with patient care, but it helps to maintain the viability of individual hospitals. It is important that the numbers are sufficient to maintain viability.

I think that the tide has turned for the Causeway Hospital. Things are now moving very much in the right direction. I believe that the new team in charge of the Northern Trust has given new priority to that. From letters that I have received from the Member, I know that he certainly believes that the Causeway Hospital is providing first-rate care. We hope that that is maintained in the future.

Mr Allister: I welcome the recent permanent appointments, not least because it was not so long ago that the Minister's predecessor was telling us how difficult it was to recruit people permanently to the Causeway Hospital. I am glad that that has been turned around.

The Minister says that he is committed to the retention of a small acute hospital at the Causeway. What does "a small acute hospital" mean with regard to the level and range of clinical services, including, for example, maternity services? Can he spell out exactly the services that he will maintain? In particular, does it mean that the present range of services will all be retained?

Mr Wells: The honourable Member for North Antrim would need to realise the current services being maintained in the Causeway: the A&E department; day surgery; dermatology; children's ward; coronary care; cardiology;

maternity; intensive care unit; X-ray department; mortuary; gynaecology; minor injury unit; various theatres; and older people's services, including a rehabilitation ward. The Causeway has a remarkable range of services already for a relatively small hospital. Compared with Altnagelvin, the Royal or Antrim, the numbers that go through Coleraine are much smaller. Accepting that, I think that that list indicates our commitment to the Causeway.

The new management structure in the Northern Trust and — I will be honest — the new chief executive have instilled confidence in the Northern Trust. The tide has turned in the sense that people now have confidence in the long-term future of the Causeway and are prepared to apply. The Member rightly said that there was a difficulty in obtaining consultants for posts in the Causeway: that was true. Adverts were not being answered, and the number of applicants was very small. That has changed. We have made a series of major appointments, and we continue to do so. That is good for the future. I also said that the new chief executive of the Northern Trust had made a strong personal commitment to the emergency department in the Causeway. That has to be good for the future of that relatively modern hospital.

Mr Swann: The Minister referred to hospitals working in partnership. He will know that the Dalriada Hospital is used as a step-down facility for the Causeway Hospital. Can he give the House an update on where the Dalriada Hospital stands at the minute?

Mr Wells: The honourable Member will know that a judicial review was taken by one of the patients who used the Dalriada Hospital and that interim relief was granted by the courts in response. Therefore, I am abiding by the terms of that legal opinion. There is no change at the moment to services at the Dalriada.

I will also say that there has been the most incredible public response in the Moyle area to any change to the status of the Dalriada. Indeed, I think that we have all been taken aback by the sheer scale of it and the input from the entire community. Therefore, we will keep the situation under review, but the trust has confirmed that it will fully comply with the court's interim relief ruling and has restored the status quo at Dalriada by increasing the staffing complement and admitting additional patients. That is an indication that, when the courts rule, this Department simply has to follow that. We have no option.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Cancer Patients: Inequalities

T1. **Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on what he is doing to reduce the health inequalities experienced by cancer patients here when compared to patients in England. (AQT 2261/11-15)

2.30 pm

Mr Wells: I thought he was going to ask a question about Downe Hospital, but he has not. As he knows, we have had the review of the individual funding request (IFR). That is out for consultation, and it is indicating that we are going to do away with the 95% exceptionality criteria.

Indicative in what I said when I launched that review and its findings was that we will be trebling the amount of money that is being set aside for non-National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)-approved cancer drugs in Northern Ireland. If he reads the figures he will see that the quantum of what we are trying to do is clear. Two committees will be set up to look at individual requests for funding of non-NICE drugs. We expect that those new committees will be much more flexible in their approach and that the people of Northern Ireland will not have to jump through hoops, as they were doing under the old criteria. Most of those drugs are life-extending and life-enhancing rather than life-preserving, but, still, my view is that we should try to make certain that someone in Downpatrick is in the same position as someone in Durham or Dundee when it comes to these products. There will still be people who will be turned down under a much lower exceptionality threshold.

As far as the more general issue is concerned, Northern Ireland, through the Belfast cancer centre, which is based at the Belfast City Hospital, has been able to produce outstanding, significant progress in survival rates. Indeed, for some cancers, like testicular cancer, prostate cancer and breast cancer, we are now into the 80% range, which is remarkable. Therefore we can hold our head up and say that we are making progress. However, there are still other cancers, such as ovarian, pancreatic and lung, where the survival rates are extremely poor. We need to continue to work on those. Less than 10% of lung cancer patients, for instance, are alive after 10 years, and, for pancreatic, it is less than 5%. Those are the really worrying conditions that we need to bear down on. I think Northern Ireland is doing well in this field, and that is thanks to people like Paddy Johnston and his team of oncologists at Belfast City Hospital —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Minister about the two-minute rule.

Mr Wells: — who do outstanding work.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for his answer. I welcome the answer and, on a personal level, commend the work of the cancer centre at Belfast City Hospital. Considering the revelation that £36 million has been received by the Department from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) rebate, what is your assessment of the benefits of creating a cancer drug fund immediately, without prescription charges?

Mr Wells: I am glad that he asked that question, because I think we need to look in depth at what he means by the PPRS. This year, 2014-15, we are going to get about £13 million in PPRS refunds. We think that it will be £30 million for next year, 2015-16. I see that the honourable Member for South Belfast does not agree with me, but whether it is £13 million or £14 million is neither here nor there, because we are spending an extra £12 million this year on NICE-approved drugs. Therefore, whatever we get back from PPRS is completely gobbled up. We could carry that £12 million into next year, and we will be spending another, maybe, £13 or million or £14 million on NICE-approved drugs, so that will eat up entirely the PPRS rebate. Of course, the PPRS is a five-year programme; it may not be here in five years' time.

I am trying to develop a sustainable model that will ensure that we have the money for not just cancer drugs but all

specialist drugs and treatments for the foreseeable future. That is why I suggested a very small prescription charge of maybe 30 pence, 50 pence or a pound, with an exemption certificate of £20 or £25. The latest model I have seen has suggested that that will raise an initial £16 million. Is anyone telling me that it is not fair that someone who may be getting thousands of pounds of free prescription drugs cannot pay a pound or 50 pence per item? That is what is out for debate. I will be very interested to see what people's views are on it. To me, that is the sustainable model for the future, long after PPRS is gone.

Prescriptions: Generic and Cheaper Drugs

T2. Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what he has to say about the fact that a Public Accounts Committee report has shown that, in 2012-13, £14 million could have been saved if GPs had prescribed cheaper, generic drugs, and, in the next three years, £54 million could be saved. (AQT 2262/11-15)

Mr Wells: First, our generic rate at the moment is 72% and, because of our concern about the alleged wastage, we have imposed a £20 million saving on pharmacy for next year to try to ensure that clinicians, pharmacists and hospitals grind down on any perceived wastage. Over the last 10 years, the use of generic drugs has gone from 41% to 71% and is now at 72%. In the four-year period from 2013-14, the Department, through the HSC, has delivered £132 million through efficiencies in prescribing. This gives an indication of just how important we consider the issue to be.

We are up there with many other nations in our generic cost base, and I think that we are doing very well in that sense. However, there is clearly wastage in the system, and we need to drive that down. The problem, of course, is what while we do so, demand continues to rise. There has been a very significant rise since we went to totally free prescriptions. I think that we need to give prescriptions a value. It is a bit like a free newspaper. When a free newspaper comes through my door, it is hardly read because it is of no value, but if I buy a copy of the 'Mourne Observer' or the 'Down Recorder', I read it because I have invested some of my hard-earned cash in buying it. The same principle applies: a very small charge will encourage people to think, first, whether they need a prescription and, secondly, now that they have paid £1 or whatever for it, they should use it properly.

This matter is out to consultation. I want to see the views of the industry, individual pharmacists and the public on this very important issue. If we get it right, we can have a long-term funding stream, which will mean that many of the arguments about various drugs, vaccinations, etc, will no longer apply, because we will have the money to pay for them.

Mr Dallat: There is an awful lot in the Minister's answer, but none of it is about the GPs who are not prescribing the cheaper generic medicines that could be equally as good. Does the Minister agree, having talked to Seán Rogers earlier, that it would be wonderful to invest these savings in a cancer fund?

Mr Wells: We continue to look at that issue. Remember, it is a decision for the individual GP as to what he or she prescribes. GPs tell me that there is a certain resistance among their patients when a different box appears, even though, clinically, it is exactly the same product. If it is not

the yellow and orange, or whatever, that they have always had, and you move them on to the generic drug, which can be 90% cheaper, they say that it does not have the same impact. Therefore, there is pressure on the doctor to prescribe the branded product. We need to continue to do that.

I can assure you that the overall trend is very much in the direction of further generics: there is no question about that; we are getting there. We need to take the BMA and the doctors with us on the issue. I hope that the £20 million efficiency saving that I am imposing next year will force everyone to have another look at the issue.

With regard to the report, we have to be careful, because it is still going through the process of the Public Accounts Committee. We have a view on some of the assertions made in it, and it is not all as black and white as it seems. The experts in the Department tell me that it is just not entirely correct in its assumptions. However, with regard to the basic question of whether we need to drive down more efficiencies in our prescribing budget; yes, we do. However, all of that will simply be gobbled up by other demands within the health service. It is not going to produce the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow that can be used forever and a day to introduce new non-NICE-approved drugs in Northern Ireland. We need something that is much more sustainable.

Health: Budget Deficit

T3. **Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his opinion on the fact that, at the Health Committee last week, officials said that there remains a gap of some £30 million in next year's budget, which will mean that the Executive will be unable to avoid unpalatable decisions, and, in light of that and the fact that there will be absolutely no money available to keep up with developments across the water, to state how that will be felt by patients and members of the public. (AQT 2263/11-15)

Mr Wells: I alluded to that earlier. We are in an extremely difficult position. Even looking at all the difficult efficiency savings that we have to make, we are somewhere between £29 million and £30 million short for 2015-16. On top of that, we have identified about £100 million of new service developments that, ideally, we would like to deliver in things like elective care, nursing levels, public health initiatives, including vaccinations, NICE drugs and special service, mental health and learning disability and Transforming Your Care (TYC) transitional funding.

As things stand, we have no money at all for those things. I will give you just one example: the previous Minister quite rightly pledged that, once Bexsero was introduced in GB and approved, and agreement reached between the drugs company and the Department over there, we would introduce it here as a vaccination to prevent anyone in Northern Ireland from contracting meningitis B. That is a very worthy initiative, but, at the minute, figures quoted suggest that it might cost £1.5 million to £2 million to do that for all children under one. I want to do it, but, when I have literally no money in the budget even to balance the books for what we are already committed to, it is very difficult to see from where we can get the cash to introduce the vaccine. That is why the new medicines fund is a very good idea: something such as Bexsero could be brought

in and implemented using that money. We have got rid of meningitis A and meningitis C. I hope that soon we can get rid of meningitis B, and we are going to tackle meningitis W. The question is this: is it a worthy objective to make certain that, when their child gets flu-like symptoms, parents no longer experience the anguish that it could be meningitis? However, I have to find the money, and I need the support of the House before I can do that.

Mr Spratt: I thank the Minister for his answer. In the light of it, and given the situation in which you find yourself in the Health Department, how do you view recent calls that a further £300 million should be directed towards enhanced welfare payments? Obviously, some of that money would be taken away from your Department.

Mr Wells: When I heard that, I automatically did the sums, and, at 40%, it means that £120 million would be taken out of my budget for 2015-16 to fund welfare claimants. I cannot even find the £29 million to bridge the funding gap for next year or the £100 million to introduce new services. Therefore, it would be absolutely disastrous.

Members need to know the consequences of that. We are into such serious cutbacks in health that we could not guarantee public safety. That £120 million cut would come on top of £170 million of savings that have been obtained this year and £163 million next year, as well as another £50 million that has to come out of arm's-length bodies such as the Fire Service, the PHA and the Business Services Organisation (BSO). That is how difficult the situation is, so I watch with trepidation to see whether that will happen. It would certainly lead to a deterioration in services and waiting times. The quality of services provided to patients would be compromised, we would have an inability to respond to the growing needs of the population of Northern Ireland, and we would compromise the delivery of key ministerial priorities and commitments. It is as black as that. Certainly, as one who has seen the figures, I urge the Assembly to step back from anything that would lead to a reduction in my budget in 2015-16.

Abortion: DHSSPS Guidelines

T4. **Ms McCorley** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when his Department will publish guidelines on the termination of pregnancy. (AQT 2264/11-15)

Ms McCorley: An dtig liom a hfiagraí den Aire cén uair a mbeidh treoirínte foilsithe ag a Roinn maidir le cúrsaí ginmhillte?

Mr Wells: As the Member knows, this is a very emotive and difficult issue. There have been various attempts to introduce guidelines in Northern Ireland. The last set of guidelines was successfully challenged by one of the pro-life charities. There have been various attempts to produce a document that the Executive can agree. We are still in that process, and I have to admit to the Member that this is perhaps one of the most difficult issues facing me and the Department at the moment. I have no doubt that, whatever document is produced, it will be judicially reviewed. If it is seen as too liberal, it will be judicially reviewed by the pro-life groups; if it is judged to be too strong on the pro-life stance, it will be judicially reviewed by one of what are euphemistically called the pro-choice charities.

It is one of those areas in which the problem is almost insoluble. It is extremely difficult. I am working on it at the minute, and I hope to have something before the Executive within the next few weeks.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

2.45 pm

Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call Mr Alban Maginness, I inform Members that question 14 has been withdrawn.

Export Trade Missions

1. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the missions led by her Department to promote Northern Irish exports beyond the EU. (AQO 7807/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I and my officials have been part of numerous missions to non-EU countries aimed at gaining access to markets and promoting our high-quality agricultural commodities.

China is a key market for a range of commodities from the North. I have twice visited there to build the important high-level relationships needed to agree terms of trade. In addition, my veterinary officials have visited China on eight occasions since 2012. Officials have supported inward inspections by the Chinese authorities, when we were able to showcase our excellent pig health standards and secure approval for us to export pig semen. Through those visits, we also agreed terms to export horses to China. I am hoping for similar success for pork exports following the Chinese mission we will host in the coming months.

Other key markets for pork include Australia. I was pleased when my officials, having met their Australian counterparts in June 2014, were able to secure agreement for an inward mission. That is scheduled for mid-2015 and will offer us the opportunity to show at first hand our excellent production standards and high-quality produce. My officials supported an inspection by the US authorities in 2014 that allowed us to maintain our approval to export pork there.

For the beef sector, my officials secured access to the Singapore market after hosting a successful mission in 2013. A visit by my officials to Japan resulted in them agreeing to initiate negotiations on beef exports. One of my officials recently visited the Philippines to promote our high-quality beef production standards and hopefully to secure an inward inspection of our processors. We are also preparing to host a beef and lamb mission by the US in 2015.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for her detailed reply and welcome the progress that is being made, particularly in relation to China. I attended a meeting recently that the Chinese consul general attended, and certainly there is great potential there. How much progress is being made on export licences issued by DEFRA?

Mrs O'Neill: I also met the consul general and look forward to establishing good links with her in terms of the assistance that she has offered us in reaching into new markets across China.

We have a strong working relationship with DEFRA on export certificates. DEFRA is in the lead on international relations, but we have a strong working group that helps us to identify priority areas for industry here. We can then have those discussions with DEFRA on potential visits and securing inspections, which lead to us securing new markets. There is a strong and ongoing relationship. We are continually looking for and identifying new markets, so it is important that we keep our eye on the ball in terms of possibilities for the local industry.

Mrs Overend: I may need to declare an interest, being the wife of a pig farmer. Can the Minister provide an update on the inspection visit of the Chinese veterinary officials with regard to the possible exportation of pork from Northern Ireland? I understand that that visit has been delayed twice. Does the Minister accept that time is of the essence with regard to the value of such export markets? Does she accept that the Republic has been better than Northern Ireland in tapping into that market?

Mrs O'Neill: We are disappointed that the Chinese officials had to cancel the inspections on a number of occasions. We are continually engaging with them to make sure that they happen. We have been told to expect our inspection next month and are looking forward to that. As I said, China is a key market for us that we are fully exploring.

I do not think that there is a need to play what happens in the Six Counties against the Twenty-six. We get into quite a lot of the same markets. We work collaboratively in a number of areas and markets that we are trying to explore. It is of key importance to me that we open every opportunity and my Department is not found wanting in our processes. As I said in my original answer, all markets are being explored, whether in China, the US, South Africa or the Philippines. We are working with those markets because local industry have identified them as the markets that they want to target. We will be working with them to make sure that we access those markets as soon as we can.

Getting pork into China is right up there in my priorities. I have said previously in the House that once we have the inspection, if I think it is important politically for me to visit China, I will certainly do that to try to open up that market.

Mr Allister: Following up on that point and the very disappointing delays in the Chinese inspection, might the answer not lie in better coordinating inspections in Northern Ireland with those governed by DEFRA in the rest of the United Kingdom? The Chinese officials were in GB months ago and did their inspections, so why could you not have an arrangement whereby they would come to Northern Ireland under DEFRA and inspect here? Is DARD standing on its own dignity when there is a far more important issue, namely getting the inspections over and done with?

Mrs O'Neill: The Member probably works very hard to try to find a difference between my working relationship with DEFRA and that with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in the 26 counties. As I said in my substantive answer, we work very closely with DEFRA

on trying to open up new markets. DEFRA is the lead Department on opening new markets, so it is vital that we work with the local industry and identify the markets.

The Chinese market for pork is, in terms of our priorities, right up there. The fact that the Chinese officials have cancelled has been disappointing for all of us. However, we do not have control over their diaries and how they conduct their business. For varying reasons, they have had to cancel their visit. By extension, when they visited England, they were to come here also. However, that did not happen. We are hopeful that that will happen over the next number of weeks. We are hopeful that we will be able to further exploit the Chinese market for the local industry, and we will continue to work with DEFRA on whatever is needed to make sure that we open up the Chinese market for pork.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Raymond McCartney is not in his place.

Local Action Groups: Section 75 Representation

3. **Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of how representative the social partner members of the local action groups are of the Section 75 categories. (AQO 7809/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Network and the rural support networks facilitated the wider local action group (LAG) animation and formation process, which commenced in October 2014. Three or four meetings were held in each new council or LAG area towards the end of last year. I have always wanted to get as many and as wide a spread of rural people involved in the wider LAG as possible. I have also said up front that I want to see a greater emphasis on engaging with young people and women to get them onto the LAGs. To that end, two sector-specific events aimed at encouraging membership from these sectors were also undertaken. As a result, over 2,000 people registered as wider LAG members across the rural North. Some 70% of those members are new to LAGs, 41% are female and the average age of members lies within 40-49 age group.

Each LAG was then required to form a board. All registered LAG members were invited to a facilitated meeting of their LAG for discussion and agreement on the arrangements for the selection of social partner composition on the LAG board. Guidance was provided on the necessary balance and representation of the LAG because of the each area's geography, gender, age and other section 75 considerations.

Members agreed their own composition requirements and were invited to nominate, including self-nominate, and vote for board membership. Nominations had to be supported by two other LAG members, and voting was undertaken in line with the LAG agreed criteria for that area. The social partner election has taken place in every area, and those elected are confirming their appointment.

The establishment and election processes adopted by the new LAGs have been robust and transparent. The composition and balance of each group will be scrutinised by officials before the drafting of the strategies begins.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Minister for her answer. She has also appointed the rural development programme monitoring committee. I notice that there are a lot of different groups represented on that committee, one of which is the GAA. Will she consider appointing other groups to that committee, such as the Orange Order?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, we are very open to any group that represents a rural constituency coming forward. The stakeholder group is very important in monitoring the outcomes and the work of the rural development programme. The board has been established, and we opened up for calls. I do not believe the Orange Order came forward. However, I am open to any group that has an interest in rural communities and is genuinely interested in protecting them coming onto that stakeholder group.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. When does the Minister anticipate the new programme opening?

Mrs O'Neill: Our programme has been sent off to Europe, and we expect it to take six months from when it was sent. We had expected initial correspondence during the last couple of months, but that has not happened. By June, we expect to have sign-off from the Commission, and we are hoping to open in April or May for animation works. I encourage all groups that are interested in applying for the funding to watch out for that, because it will be widely advertised in the press and on the DARD website. For me, it is so important that we hit the ground running and that we get funding on the ground as quickly as possible. We certainly can learn from our experience on the current programme and hopefully get off to a better and quicker start. Now that we have the LAGs in place, I think that we are well equipped to be able to do that.

Mr Eastwood: Can the Minister assure us that her Department is continuously monitoring any issues pertinent to section 75 to ensure that we have a proper and full account of people coming from all different parts of our society on these boards?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes. As I said, the LEADER approach is very much a grass-roots and a bottom-up approach. The LAG areas decide how the groups will be constituted. However, I am very mindful of the need to adhere to section 75 considerations, and that was very much part of the discussion informing these groups. I am in no doubt that that happened. My desire in this programme was to make sure that we attracted more young people and more women to the groups because they were underrepresented. We have improved the situation somewhat; however, there is still a way to go.

Sheep: Identification Methods

4. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what her Department can do to implement an alternative method of sheep identification, to both prevent the removal of electronic sheep tags by thieves as well as act as a deterrent to sheep theft. (AQO 7810/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Accurate traceability of sheep is extremely important for animal disease control and for public health and is necessary to support trade in our sheep and sheep products. Theft and re-identification of sheep must be condemned not only because of the effect on the keeper whose livelihood is affected but because it undermines

the future success of our sheep industry. Under European legislation, sheep must be identified with two identifiers bearing the same name that DARD has approved. One of the identifiers must carry an electronic identification device (EID). DARD has approved a range of types of EID identifiers for sheep. That includes an EID ear tag, which is attached to the sheep's ear, and a ruminal EID bolus, which is inserted orally and remains in its stomach.

While I do not propose to make the use of boluses compulsory, if a keeper is concerned about sheep theft, he or she may wish to consider applying a bolus. That may be an effective way to deter the theft of sheep, as boluses cannot be removed from a live animal. Whenever a bolus is applied along with a second identifier in the form of an ear tag, that ear tag must be light blue to signify that the sheep is also carrying a bolus. That may help to deter theft.

I recognise the limitations of the use of boluses, because if a sheep has two ear tags in place, markets and abattoirs are not required to check whether a bolus is also present. However, if the police trace stolen sheep, the presence of any bolus may be of evidential value. Keepers who are particularly concerned about theft can also apply additional identification marks outside the official identification system. That could include tattoos and paint marking.

Mr Frew: What discussions has the Minister had with DEFRA and, of course, our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland about livestock theft? Can she tell the House whether the problem is increasing or decreasing?

Mrs O'Neill: I have had conversations with Simon Coveney through the North/South Ministerial Council on livestock theft and rural crime in general. Quite recently at the North/South Ministerial Council a number of weeks ago, we discussed this item at some length. I think that the Member will be very aware that there are some areas where cattle theft is a lot more pronounced than others. For example, in the glens of Antrim, where a retinal scan pilot was run, we saw the figures for cattle theft coming down, which, obviously, was a positive development. However, it is fair to say that there is not a big demand for that type of technology. I think that there is a different picture depending on different geographical areas. Rural crime and rural theft is the responsibility of DOJ, and I discuss with it on a fairly ongoing basis how we can tackle that. Our Department's veterinary enforcement team is working very clearly with DOJ officials and the Garda Síochána on how we can tackle these issues head on.

Mrs McKevitt: I am sure that the Minister will join me in congratulating Newry man Colum McNally on becoming young engineer of the year by designing something to help to prevent farm accidents. I thought that I would take that opportunity. Also, with the increase in farm theft in rural areas, what long-term plans does her Department have to tackle the theft of livestock and farm machinery?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, I concur with your congratulations for the design that the young guy came up with. Fair play to him.

3.00 pm

Farm theft is obviously a crime; it is an issue for the Department of Justice. However, my Department works very closely with the PSNI and Garda Síochána around tackling livestock theft and farm machinery theft, and we are certainly up for getting involved with whatever elements we are able to.

In the longer term, from DARD's point of view, we can be a bit creative with grant aid and items for which we award grant aid. For example, could identification tags be made a must in terms of equipment that is possibly purchased? We are looking at a number of initiatives, but cross-departmental working and cross-agency working is key to that, and we are up for that.

Wind Farm Development Programme: Revenue

5. **Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the revenue generated through the wind farm development programme. (AQO 7811/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Forest Service is actively investigating the opportunities to exploit the forest estate for wind energy development. A wind energy development manager, seconded from the Strategic Investment Board, is progressing work on defining the wind farm programme and developing the necessary business case.

So far, we have confirmed that there is an opportunity to develop this area at a strategic level, and a strategic outline case to support this work was approved in November 2014. The next stages of investigation will inform the basis on which my Department can anticipate revenues to be generated as the programme progresses. Clearly, revenues will be dependent on the first sites becoming operational, and we hope to see significant progress on that over the next number of years.

Alongside our programme for development of wind energy in forests, Forest Service already has access agreements in place for five wind farm projects taking place on land adjacent to forests. Over the past 10 years, this has realised about half a million pounds.

Mr Cree: The Minister will know that at least one of the wind farms is due to be in operation this year. The contingent action, in case it was delayed, was to sell timber from the Forest Service. Could the Minister tell us how much has been sold during the current year, and if it will meet the budget?

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have the figures for the overall sales by the Forest Service, but I am happy to provide them to the Member in writing. Suffice it to say that the Forest Service is an efficient operation that works within its budgets and is able to be self-sustaining in its timber production.

Mr Irwin: Has the Minister had any discussions with NIE about difficulties in getting connections to wind farms? I know that DETI has already made representations about that.

Mrs O'Neill: Grid connections remain a significant constraining issue for connecting renewable energy projects, regardless of the scale — whether they are the big projects or the smaller ones — and that is causing issues, particularly for small-scale generators, including turbines, but also for anaerobic digestion facilities. Larger-scale developments, like those proposed on Forest Service land, tend to connect as part of a group or cluster, to which NIE will provide a transmission-level voltage grid connection, rather than a lower voltage connection.

I know that there are ongoing concerns, as the Member has highlighted, in relation to grid connections. My officials are continuing to engage with NIE about how those things can be improved.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her answers so far. How will she ensure that real community benefits are an integral part of this project?

Mrs O'Neill: Forest Service has commissioned work to review and report on community participation on the benefits model that exists in Ireland and other relevant jurisdictions, and to test these models for use on Forest Service lands. Forest Service will present this information to community stakeholders in advance of wind farm plans coming forward. Responsibility for developing an action plan, following on from the cross-departmental study on communities and renewable energy, is a matter for DETI, but Forest Service is part of the group that is working on that.

Suffice it to say that we have to exploit the maximum community benefits. We need to be talking not about small-scale development, but about real, long-term, sustainable investment in rural areas that really leads to a benefit. Community participation and involvement in working up those plans, well in advance of planning applications going forward and all the other works being progressed, is key. That is the only basis on which I will proceed with wind farm development.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhúiochas leis an Aire as ucht a freagraí. I thank the Minister for her answers. The Minister indicated her support for five wind farm projects. Could she give us an indication as to where those are, please?

Mrs O'Neill: The five wind farm projects that I talked about are on land adjacent to Forest Service land. I am happy to give you in writing the names of the five forests adjacent to the wind farms.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Fearghal McKinney is not in his place.

MARA Project: Update

7. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the evaluation of the maximising access in rural areas (MARA) project. (AQO 7813/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The maximising access in rural areas evaluation has been ongoing since this phase of the project commenced in 2012. The evaluation, which is both process- and outcome-focused, has been integrated into the implementation of the project from the outset. The process elements of the MARA project were evaluated and reported on early in 2013. The project implementation group implemented the report's recommendations, which enhanced various delivery aspects of the MARA project. Regarding the evaluation of outcomes from the project, household visits have been followed up with a questionnaire to a sample of individuals in each delivery zone to assess outcomes generated.

Data collection is now complete, and data is being analysed to examine the reach of MARA for key demographic groups, the level of referrals for grants,

benefits and services and the resultant outcomes. In addition, an independent piece of work has been commissioned to review the evaluation undertaken by our delivery partners in the Public Health Agency. That will include an economic assessment, including a social return on investment on the project. The evaluation work is on schedule to be completed by the end of June 2015, and I look forward to sharing the evaluation to help to inform how to tackle rural poverty and social isolation issues for the most vulnerable in society.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for her answer. I know that trained enablers are planning to visit up to 2,000 households this coming year, but is the Minister aware at the minute, before the data is available, whether there are areas where MARA is not being accessed fully or where take-up is very low?

Mrs O'Neill: We want to draw that out from the analysis that has happened. As far as I am concerned, it is right across the board; I do not think that there are any areas that we are not reaching. However, I am happy to write to the Member when we have our full analysis, because that is obviously not the intention. If there are any areas where we are not being as effective, we need to address that.

The fact that we have rural enablers who are local people who know the areas that they are going into is of benefit to the programme. It is not my understanding that areas have been left out, but if the Member can identify an area, I am very happy to take that on. As we roll out the new programme, we want to make sure that we plug any gaps that are identified, because the early indication is that the benefits of this programme are fantastic, as are the numbers that have been reached. We want to be able to build on that. It is a very positive piece of work.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Could the Minister outline how people have benefited from the roll-out of the project?

Mrs O'Neill: Since it started in 2002, almost 14,000 households have been visited. That speaks volumes about the work that is being done by people going door to door and working through applications with people. Some of the initial outcomes suggest that over 1,800 households have benefited from the installation of energy-efficiency measures through warm homes and levy schemes, and that has led to an investment of over £2 million in rural households. Almost 6,000 households have been issued with various pieces of equipment and advice from a home safety check, and 451 have received additional welfare benefits from 505 successful claims. Almost 1,000 have registered with their rural community transport provider, 440 households have received a SmartPass, and 477 boiler replacement applications have been claimed.

More people have availed themselves of services from occupational therapists and social services. Those are all tremendous benefits for rural areas, and it really highlights the need for MARA in rural communities and the need for us to do more of it. I am certainly for designing our approach to the 2015-16 budget year, and the work on tackling poverty and isolation is, and will continue to be, a priority for me. A project such as MARA, through which my Department works alongside the Public Health Agency, is of tremendous value, and we all should prioritise it to make sure that there is sufficient funding to take it forward.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for her answer. I commend the work of MARA in the South Down constituency. Taking your last answer, and considering that the project is delivered by the Public Health Agency, can you outline your discussions and ongoing engagement with the Minister of Health to ensure the continuing success of the MARA project?

Mrs O'Neill: I am very pleased to confirm to the House that, after discussions at ministerial level, my Department and the Department of Health through the Public Health Agency have agreed to fund this project for 2015-16, so there is no doubt of the project going forward. For all the reasons that I have outlined, the programme has tremendous benefits, so I am delighted that we have been able to secure its future. The basis for its effective delivery is the 13 lead community-based organisations delivering the project on the ground. I want to see more of that.

Brucellosis-free Status

8. **Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her recent application to secure brucellosis-free status will assist local farmers. (AQO 7814/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My chief veterinary officer began the formal process of applying to the European Commission for officially brucellosis-free (OBF) status on 2 March 2015. I hope that OBF status will be granted later this year, meaning that the whole island of Ireland will be recognised as free from the disease. This represents fantastic news for our dairy and beef farmers. Achieving OBF status would allow us to proportionately and progressively reduce our existing control measures, such as annual testing and pre-movement testing. The brucellosis eradication programme is estimated to cost approximately £8 million per year to taxpayers and £7 million per year in compliance costs to farmers. Relaxing the testing regime for brucellosis would therefore result in substantial savings for both livestock farmers and taxpayers in reduced administration and sampling costs.

This is the opportune time to review existing control measures. On 6 March 2015, I launched a public consultation seeking views on our future testing regime and how to begin to implement a reduction in our control measures. I urge all cattle farmers and industry representatives to fully engage with us and to submit their replies before the closing date of 17 April. However, we must not be complacent. I remind farmers of the importance of complying with the current testing requirements. It is also vital to continue to report any suspicion of disease, so that Veterinary Service staff can follow up with the necessary investigations.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as na freagraí sin. I thank the Minister for her answers. Will she outline the savings she expects from reduced testing?

Mrs O'Neill: Achieving brucellosis-free status will allow us to introduce proportionate and progressive reductions in the testing regime. The current cost to the taxpayer is about £8 million per year, but the industry pays about £7 million per year in compliance costs, so that is a big saving to the farming industry.

There is the added benefit of achieving this status across the island. Looking towards export markets, there will be added benefits for industry in terms of being able to achieve new markets and the knock-on benefit that that will have in terms of income for farmers. It is an all-round win for the farming industry, which now needs to work with the Department to turn this around into a very positive development indeed.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions. Members listed at topical questions 1 and 8 have withdrawn their names.

Dairy Technology

T2. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, following the recent disclosure that some €25 million has been invested in a new dairy technology centre at the University of Limerick, which is a collaboration between industry and researchers, to advise what has happened in Northern Ireland under her leadership. (AQT 2272/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Well, there is quite a lot of work; that is a very broad question. There is quite a lot of work that goes on in supporting the dairy sector. We have our own work at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) and with the dairy industry through College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) advisers. There are ongoing discussions with farmers about managing efficiencies and assisting with technology transfer. The Member has asked a very broad question; maybe he would like to be more specific. A lot of work goes on to assist the dairy sector to expand, grow and reach into new markets.

3.15 pm

Mr Beggs: In the Republic of Ireland, there is a very clear ambition to significantly increase the dairy sector and invest in practical research that will enable that to happen. Rewards will come to the producer and the manufacturing process industry. Will the Minister give us a figure of what has been invested in Northern Ireland? How has it been coordinated?

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have that figure with me, but I am very happy to provide the Member with a figure if we have it. We very clearly also have an ambition for the dairy sector; it is very clearly set out in the Going for Growth strategy, which is the economic strategy for growth in the agrifood sector. That is across the board, so it includes everything from finding new markets to trying to assist farm businesses around efficiency. We have an avenue to do that through the farm business improvement scheme, which will work with the industry around its needs. The Department will then be able to assist it with grant aid, whether that be for parlours or whatever the industry identifies as its need. There is quite a lot of work, but I will try to get a figure for investment. Quite significant investment happens; I just do not have the figures to hand.

AFBI: Research Potential

T3. **Mr Poots** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to estimate AFBI's ability to engage in research in the coming years. (AQT 2273/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: AFBI does a significant body of work for the Department and will continue to do so. I do not have the figure with me, but I think that somewhere in the region of £46 million is its current portfolio with the Department around research and development. That is across all the different sectors, and will continue to be the case in the time ahead. We are, obviously, faced with a very difficult budget situation, given the cuts to the block grant by the Tory Government. That is putting us all in a difficult position. I am working with AFBI around our current and future needs. We will continue to work our way through that process as part of the budget process.

Mr Poots: Why has the Minister disproportionately slashed the AFBI budget by more than twice everybody else's cuts? It is close to 30%, which is going to lead to 400 job losses, including the closure of Crossnacreevy, the Omagh facility, and a significant reduction in the services conducted at Hillsborough.

Mrs O'Neill: I have not disproportionately affected AFBI's budget. As I said, I am working my way through the AFBI budget with its board, and we will continue to do so.

We are in a difficult economic climate because of the cuts to the block grant by the Tories. I will work my way through AFBI, but let us not move away from the fact that AFBI receives significant funding from the Department to do key research and development work. It will continue to hold that portfolio of work over the next number of years.

There are financial challenges for AFBI because of a combination of reasons, not least the private-sector work and the EU money it is drawing down. I have set it challenges that I am quite sure it will be able to rise to, particularly around attracting additional EU investment. There are challenges for AFBI as there are challenges for every other Department here. I will continue to work my way through them. As I said, AFBI holds a significant body of work; it does key work in terms of research and development. I want to continue to work with it to be able to support the local industry.

Bord Bia Accreditation

T4. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she is aware of any producers who are having difficulty in obtaining Bord Bia accreditation, given her welcome assistance in a recent case. (AQT 2274/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I thank the Member for bringing the issue to my attention. After we learnt that that individual was having difficulties in securing Bord Bia inspections and accreditation, the Department got involved, as the Member is aware. We met Bord Bia at official level to discuss its quality assurance schemes. I understand that the application is being processed; so, I am delighted that there has been some progress in that issue.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for her answer. What action is she taking to ensure that there are no barriers to all-island trade?

Mrs O'Neill: Removing barriers to all-island trade is a regular discussion item between Simon Coveney and me. We are working very closely on all-island animal health and welfare so that we are able to achieve the same disease status across the island. We very much deploy a fortress Ireland approach when it comes to disease

control. That is obviously of tremendous benefit to the industry. I will continue to work with Simon Coveney in removing all barriers that exist to trade. There are opportunities that we can exploit as an island in reaching new markets. There are benefits to be had for all from continuing to work together. I assure the Member that I will continue to do all I can to remove any barriers to all-island trade.

Pesticides and Spraying: Farmer Training

T5. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether, given the new regulations for the use of pesticides and spraying, she will consider arranging some training for farmers in the west of the Province, particularly in and around Fermanagh, due to the fact that the only facilities available at the minute are at CAFRE's Greenmount campus. (AQT 2275/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: That is an issue that a farmer raised with me at a public meeting in Fermanagh recently. I gave an undertaking to him, as I will to you, that we are trying to see whether it is possible to have courses in the west to make sure that there is proper access for everybody.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that assurance. Hopefully, courses will be in the west of the Province and not somewhere central. Will she also consider providing financial support to independent trainers who can provide training outside the Department, thus giving the process much wider flexibility? The Department seems to have a monopoly on that training facility.

Mrs O'Neill: If the Department can provide training in-house, why would it pay for anybody outside of the Department to deliver it? That is not something that I would give any consideration to, although I will enquire into whether there is any need for that type of approach. It is not something that has been flagged with me, but, as part of my looking at the availability of courses, I will take a look at all of that in the round.

DARD HQ: Ballykelly Move

T6. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the proposed decentralisation of her Department to Ballykelly and to state when that move is likely to be fulfilled. (AQT 2276/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The update is that we were up there over the past number of weeks and saw the demolition of some of the existing buildings on the site. We are full steam ahead in making the move and that transition with all our staff. We are on target, as we said we would be, to be there in early 2017. I am delighted with progress being made. I meet regularly with the chair of the board that has been tasked with taking the project forward. We are very content with the approach that is being taken. Work is ongoing to engage with staff and to make sure that everybody is content in moving forward. As I said, it is full steam ahead.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for her answer. Subsequent to that, will civil servants from the north-west be able to avail themselves of any potential vacancies that will arise from people not wanting to go to Ballykelly so that far fewer people will have to travel the Belfast road in the mornings?

Mrs O'Neill: The Member will know that, in the past number of months, we have published the numbers of people who would be keen to move, whether to the headquarters at Ballykelly, to the fisheries division in Down or to Rivers Agency or Forest Service in Fermanagh and Tyrone. That clearly showed the numbers of people who work in the public service who want to find a better work-life balance. I was very enthused by the fact that so many staff wanted that. We have a bit of a lead-in period because we are allowing staff to make the transition. As part of those changes, under the wider Civil Service rules, there will be opportunities for staff to move out of DARD or into DARD, and that will facilitate the staff in the north-west that you are talking about.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I apologise for not being in my place for an earlier question.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Please leave that until the end of the session, Mr McCartney.

Mr McCartney: I am sorry. My apologies.

Horse Racing Fund

T7. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether, given the recent focus on the retirement of A P McCoy, this is an appropriate time for an update on the horse racing fund. (AQT 2277/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department administers the horse racing fund, which is maintained through charges on bookmakers. It goes towards funding Downpatrick and Down Royal racecourses. My officials have been engaged with stakeholders as part of a review of the charges on bookmakers, which commenced earlier in the year. In early March, my officials met the Horse Racing Group, which represents the two racecourses, to discuss proposals for future funding. Officials also met the Turf Guardians Association, which represents bookmakers. It agreed to meet directly with the Horse Racing Group to try to find a way forward.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for her answer. I am just wondering what work will be done, particularly with the online bookmakers, to make sure that they are also part of whatever revenue is raised.

Mrs O'Neill: That is a contentious issue between the online bookmakers and the racecourse — why one group has to pay a levy whilst the other one does not. I have written to the Social Development Minister giving my support to the proposition that online bookmakers should also make a contribution towards horse racing here and that consideration should be given to that in the ongoing review of the gambling legislation, so there is an opportunity to make things better and to raise funds that would allow development and investment in both Downpatrick and Down Royal racecourses.

Young Farmers' Scheme: Update

T9. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the roll-out of the young farmers' scheme. (AQT 2279/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Yes. We have obviously had significant numbers of young people — maybe more than anticipated — coming forward to enrol in the level 2 agriculture course, which we are offering in CAFRE. Some 2,500 young farmers have come forward, and on top of that there are obviously quite a number of young farmers who already have the qualification. I think that clearly shows that the profile of farming is changing. That number of young farmers was never identified before. The scheme is financed by reserving 2% of CAP pillar 1 to provide the top-up payment for those eligible. It is very clear to me as I engage in a series of public meetings that young farmers are the hot topic of the day in terms of CAP reform. No matter what public meeting we go into, young farmers' questions continue to take over the questions on the night.

It is also my intention to provide an additional 10% grant aid provision for young farmers as part of the farm business improvement scheme. All those things are going to help keep young people in farming and help them to invest in their farming and look at new practices and new ways of doing things, so it is quite a positive time for young farmers.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for her answer so far. How effective does she feel that the CAFRE course has been in preparing young farmers for that level 2 qualification?

Mrs O'Neill: It has certainly been very effective, because quite a number of young people are now involved in a DARD/CAFRE-run course who may have never engaged in the education opportunities that have been there in the past. So, for me, running the courses has actually opened up a number of young farmers to what we provide. The course, which was run on one evening a week over 20 weeks, has been really successful, with a very low drop-off rate. Having been out and visited one of the classes on an evening, I found it great to see that young farmers were enthused and energised by what they were learning. I was also delighted to see that 10% of the young farmers who have enrolled in the courses were female, which, again, is a number of young female farmers that has never been seen before.

Potato Growers: CAP Reform

T10. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has been able to deal with and resolve the apparent CAP reform and land regulations disparity and discrimination faced by potato growers, who need to be able to use crop rotation when growing potatoes. (AQT 2280/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, I am aware of the issue. There is certainly no intent from the Department to discriminate against potato growers. The issue arises when landowners are perhaps going to speculate to try to get an income and do not let their land to potato growers. In an attempt to address the issue, because it is something that comes up quite frequently in public meetings, we set out a q and a for potato growers, which is on the website. It may be useful to refer to that if farmers contact you individually.

Basically, because the Commission is being steadfast in what it has set out, the best advice and the easiest option for potato growers is that they establish entitlements in the first year and then they may be rented or sold back to the landowner the following year. For any potato farmer

who finds themselves in difficulties, I encourage them to seek advice. We are trying to provide as much clarity as possible to allow them to take the best decisions. I also discourage anybody who is not a farmer and is trying to keep land from doing so, because the Department is going to be very robust in how we decide who is a genuine farmer. We will certainly push for strong evidence that you are actually engaged in farming.

3.30 pm

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

IT: Constituency Offices

1. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Assembly Commission what impact the reduction to its budget will have on the IT provision for constituency offices. (AQO 7821/11-15)

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an gceist. I would like to thank the Member for his question.

Ón bhliain 2012, mar chuid dá phleananna chun trealamh agus seirbhísí Teicneolaíochta Faisnéise a athnuachan agus a uasghrádú, sholáthair Coimisiún an Tionóil áiseanna nua mar chlóirí agus idirlíon leathan-bhanda, agus tá sé ag athsholáthar gach ríomhaire glúine a thugtar do Chomhaltaí agus do fhoireann na nOifigí Toghlaigh. Tá rún ag Coimisiún an Tionóil gach Ríomhaire Deisce a athsholáthar sa bhliain 2016. Since 2012, as part of its plans to refresh and upgrade all information technology equipment and services provided to constituency offices, the Assembly Commission has delivered new facilities, such as printers and broadband internet, and is replacing all laptop computers supplied to Members and constituency office staff. The Assembly Commission also plans to replace all desktop personal computer equipment in 2016.

The reduction of £2 million in the Commission's budget for 2015-16 will obviously impact on services provided to Members. A significant reconfiguration of the way that the Commission delivers its services is needed. We are still having discussions on our budget reductions. A final paper has to come to the Commission meeting on Wednesday 18 March. I can assure Members that, for my part, I will be doing everything that I can to protect jobs. I am sure that all Commission members will join me in that.

Mr I McCrea: I appreciate that there are many budgetary concerns, whether it is the health budget, the education budget or the Assembly budget, and we all have our concerns about all of that. The public will no doubt be more concerned about things other than constituency office IT equipment, but one big aspect of delivering constituency services is the IT provision. Can the Assembly Commission ensure that the budget that is in place to change the desktop provision will be protected?

Ms Ruane: I agree with the Member that it is very important that we have the most up-to-date technology to represent our constituents in the way that we should. We are in discussions around the budget. At this point, I cannot give an absolute assurance that the desktop computers will be replaced. Two million pounds is a lot

of money out of a budget, and we want to ensure that we protect jobs as much as possible; that is a priority. While I am speaking here for the Assembly Commission, I am stating my own position on jobs, but I know that other Members want to do the same because it is very important. I will certainly relay your comments to the Commission at our meeting on Wednesday.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. How does the Assembly Commission intend to dispose of the old laptops?

Ms Ruane: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an gceist sin. I thank the Member for that question. The successful supplier of the laptops will be responsible for carrying out the disposal of existing laptops in a way that causes minimum disruption to the routine work of the Assembly and is in line with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2006 (WEEE).

Commission Budget: 2015-16

2. **Mr Brady** asked the Assembly Commission how it plans to meet its budget for 2015-16. (AQO 7822/11-15)

3. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Assembly Commission what steps it is taking to meet the budget reduction agreed by the Executive. (AQO 7823/11-15)

6. **Mr Beggs** asked the Assembly Commission how it will meet the reductions in its 2015-16 budget. (AQO 7826/11-15)

8. **Mr Anderson** asked the Assembly Commission for its assessment of the likely impact of budget cuts on the delivery of services provided by the Assembly. (AQO 7828/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I propose to answer questions 2, 3, 6 and 8 together. Perhaps you will indulge me if I go over my two minutes.

The Assembly Commission's budget covers a range of different expenditure categories, including Members' salaries and allowances, Assembly secretariat staffing costs and general administration costs. As a result of the overall Budget agreement, the Commission's total budget for 2015-16 was reduced by 5%, equating to a cut of just over £2 million. Approximately 40% of the Commission's total budget of £40.7 million relates to costs that are set by the Independent Financial Review Panel and, therefore, lies outside the control of the Commission. That means that the overall reduction of £2 million becomes a bigger challenge, as the Commission has discretion over only approximately £24 million of its budget. A cut of that scale will undoubtedly have an impact on the services and activities that the Commission delivers.

To deliver those savings in 2015-16 and to continue to absorb any upward inflationary pressures, the Commission recognises that a significant reconfiguration of the way that services are provided is required. To that end, a strategic planning initiative was commissioned for 2015-16 and beyond. The initiative has already carried out a detailed review of all the activities that the Assembly secretariat delivers and has prioritised those activities into the three broad categories of statutory, essential and important.

At its meeting on 10 March 2015, the Commission agreed a package of measures to deliver the £2 million savings that are required in the next financial year. Those

measures include the approximate £220,000 saving from the further reduction of office costs expenditure for Members as stipulated by the Independent Financial Review Panel (IFRP); reductions in payments to political parties under the financial assistance for political parties (FAPP) scheme; savings in staffing costs through reductions in temporary staffing numbers and, hopefully, through participation in the public-sector voluntary exit scheme; and savings through a wholesale reduction in administrative costs. The Commission remains committed to supporting the Assembly and its Members, but the range and quality of services and activities that it delivers will have to change.

Mr Brady: I thank the Member for her answer. Our party's position is that we hope that cuts will not necessarily target agency staff, who may not have the protection of permanent staff. What has the Commission done to protect jobs, including agency staff? Go raibh maith agat.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. In recognition of the fact that the vast majority of services are provided to Members through the secretariat staff, the Commission has sought to deliver inefficiencies from its non-staffing budgets first. However, the extent of the savings that are required for 2015-16 means that a reduction in staffing of the order of 32 full-time equivalent posts will be required. That reduction will be facilitated partly through participation in the wider public-sector voluntary exit scheme, which would be applicable only to those staff who have permanent contracts with us. We will also have to consider a reduction in the use of some of our temporary staff, and we have tried to get a balance between the two. Staffing resources will be deployed to ensure that the Commission's statutory and essential functions are maintained.

I point out that secretariat and agency staff have displayed commendable flexibility over the recent years of the spending review since 2010 and that any changes to staffing will be made in consultation with staff and their representatives.

Mr B McCrea: We have talked quite a lot about cuts, but there is sometimes a view that we are isolated from those cuts. Does the Commission feel that Members will take their fair share of the pain in that regard?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. In short, yes, we are taking our fair share of the pain.

Member's office cost expenditure has already reduced by 9% between 2012-13 and 2014-15 and will be reduced by an additional 3% in 2015-16, which will provide some £220,000 of the £2 million savings that are required. In addition, the Commission has agreed a 25% reduction in the budget for Members' office consumables and a reduction of £25,000 in the funding that is provided to political parties through the FAPP scheme. The Commission has also written to the Independent Financial Review Panel to request that childcare scheme options for Members are the same as those on offer to secretariat staff. That could yield approximately another £60,000 of savings. If all those savings are realised, over £330,000 of the savings will immediately impact directly on Members, and that will be before any impact on other services to Members is considered.

Mr Beggs: In the earlier question, the Member tried to give the impression that he wants to protect jobs. Does the

commissioner find that strange, given that the Member has approved a Budget with such a significant reduction and that a reduction in employment is a likely outcome? What lessons have been learned from the previous business efficiency programme that can be implemented to try to bring about savings so that such jobs losses will not have to be faced to balance our books?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. I will not get drawn into a political opinion about how the Budget was agreed by certain parties etc.

The business efficiency programme had been running for a number of years to ensure that the Commission could continue to provide the full range of services to Members, despite the 9% cash cut to its budget over the past number of years.

The programme identified a number of recommendations that have enabled the Commission to reduce admin costs whilst maintaining staffing at levels that can support Members to the best possible extent. Unfortunately, the scale of cuts that are now going forward means that staffing reductions will be required in the near future. Staff who are employed by the Assembly Commission are public-sector employees. They have been entitled to incremental pay rises and inflationary pay rises over the years, so even though we have actually reduced the number of staff, we have not necessarily seen a reduction in the pay bill. That is something that will have to change going forward.

Mr Anderson: In which areas are the budget cuts likely to happen?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. The Commission has a statutory requirement under section 40 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to:

"provide the Assembly, or ensure that the Assembly is provided, with the property, staff and services required for the Assembly's purposes."

The strategic planning initiative, which I mentioned in my original answer, has involved extensive work across the secretariat to prioritise activities into three broad categories: statutory, ie, those activities to deliver the statutory functions and obligations of the Commission and associated bodies; essential, ie, those activities that are non-statutory but are essential to deliver the statutory functions; and important, which are those activities that are important to the wider work of the Assembly, but which are more discretionary in nature. Staffing allocations have been made on the basis of this secretariat-wide prioritisation exercise. However, all areas of the secretariat will see some reduction in the number of posts. Staffing allocation decisions in future years will be informed by a series of fundamental business reviews to ensure that the core business of the Assembly continues to be supported effectively.

Mr A Maginness: It would seem that the cuts have been imposed by the Executive on this Assembly, which is a very odd thing constitutionally when the Executive are accountable to this Assembly. Were the cuts imposed by the Executive or were they unilaterally made by the Assembly, as should have been the case? Will those cuts, as presently planned, not damage the capacity of this Assembly collectively and Assembly Members individually to carry out their work?

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for his question. Yes, indeed, the cuts have been imposed on us directly by the Executive. I do not necessarily want to defend Ministers, but the Commission wrote to the Finance Minister and explained that 40% of our budget fell outside our control. I think that, as a result of that engagement, the 5% cut that we received, which equates to £2 million, was perhaps less than we may have received had we not made that representation.

Parliament Buildings: Visits by Constituency

4. **Mr Campbell** asked the Assembly Commission what is the estimated number of visits to Parliament Buildings by individuals or groups from each constituency since 2012. (AQO 7824/11-15)

Ms Ruane: I thank the Member for his question. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an gceist. Mar gheall ar éagsúlacht na gcuairteanna agus an líon ollmhór cuairteoirí a bhíonn ar imeachtaí, ócáidí, nó ar thurasanna, ní féidir le Coimisiún an Tionóil an t-eolas seo a bhailiú de réir toghlaigh. Is féidir linn, áfach, líon na gcuairteoirí sna trí bliana deireanacha a chur ar fáil don Chomhalta. Sa bhliain 2012: 79,081 chcuairteoir. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Gregory Campbell for a supplementary.

Mr Campbell: I did not understand the first part of —

Ms Ruane: Sorry, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ruane: I am answering the question, and I really believe that that was totally inappropriate behaviour. I was waiting for —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to continue with her answer.

Ms Ruane: Sa bhliain 2012: 79,081 chcuairteoir. Sa bhliain dhá mhíle — *[Interruption.]* Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, is it appropriate that somebody yawns so ignorantly as I am trying to answer the question? *[Interruption.]* It is not possible. I am not prepared to answer questions in these circumstances.

3.45 pm

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to resume her seat. All remarks are to be made through the Chair. I ask the Member to continue.

Ms Ruane: I have made the point that I think that it is absolutely inappropriate for the Member to yawn in the way that he has.

Sa bhliain 2013: 70,328 gcuairteoir. Sa bhliain 2014, 67,921 chcuairteoir.

Due to the diverse nature of the visits and the vast number of visitors attending an event, function or tour, the Assembly Commission is not able to gather that information, broken down per constituency. However, we can provide the Member with the total number of visitors for the past three years. In 2012, there were 79,081 visitors, in 2013, 70,328 and, in 2014, 67,921.

Beidh Coimisiún an Tionóil in ann miondealú ar líon iomlán bliantúil na gcuairteoirí ar ócáidí, ócáidí le turas, turasanna

le fáilte, agus cláir oideachais a chur ar fáil don Chomhalta i scríbhinn.

The Assembly Commission will be able to provide for the Member, in writing, the yearly total number of visitors broken down for functions, functions with tour, tours with hospitality and education programmes.

Is iad na cláir oideachais an t-aon chatagóir d'imeachtaí ina bhféadann an Tionól an toghlach as ar tháinig cuairteoirí a thairfead go beacht.

Education programmes are the only —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member that she has only two minutes.

Mr Campbell: I look forward to being told how one can yawn in Irish; I do not know how that will work out. The Commission member outlined the numbers that came to Parliament Buildings in the course of each of the three years. What intention is there in the course of the next 12 months to ensure that numbers continue at that high level in future, particularly for young people to see and get a feeling for what goes on in Parliament Buildings?

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I will answer the question, but I will not be ignorant and inappropriate as the Member was to me.

The Assembly Commission recently approved a new engagement strategy, which aims to ensure that the Assembly and its work are accessible to all and communicated widely. The four main objectives of the strategy are to provide accurate and timely information in order to build awareness, understanding and participation with the Assembly, its Members and work and the democratic process; to develop an increased digital initiative in order to support all stakeholders to participate, interact and engage with the Assembly; to build partnerships with stakeholders, create and improve engagement opportunities with underrepresented and/or hard-to-reach groups, build synergies and improve effectiveness; and to increase visitor numbers to Parliament Buildings and deliver an excellent visitor experience.

Mrs Overend: Can the commissioner detail how the Assembly proactively reaches out to schools and groups that are furthest away from Parliament Buildings in the far west?

Ms Ruane: I thank the Member for her question. Since 2012, the three most represented constituencies on our education programmes have been East Belfast, with 2,787 pupils; Upper Bann, with 2,779; and East Antrim, with 2,663 pupils. The three constituencies that are least represented are West Tyrone, with 626 pupils; North Down, with 1,072; and Strangford, with 1,128 pupils. The Member can see that there is a bit of a mixed bag in terms of distance from the Assembly. I absolutely take the point. I have a full list, which I will provide to the Member, of the numbers coming from schools from every constituency. It is essential that the Assembly Commission target, in particular, the constituencies that have the least number of children and young people coming up.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the commissioner for her answers thus far. Given what we have talked about already, the Budget cuts, and given the importance of outreach, by way of the educational work of the Assembly, especially

the 'Let's Talk' programmes, for example, can the commissioner assure us that those things will not be cut and that there will still be a fully fledged educational process for our young people to engage with the Assembly?

Ms Ruane: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an cheist sin. I thank the Member for his question. As I said, the Assembly Commission has not agreed the final cuts or budget reductions to date. We still have to have further discussion at our meeting on 18 March. We are trying to do everything that we can to protect front-line services and jobs. At this point, I cannot give any assurances on any programmes. However, the Member can be assured that I will certainly do everything that I can to ensure that the resources are there to protect front-line services and jobs as far as possible.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. What plans does the Commission have to increase visits from women's groups, ethnic minorities and the LGBT community?

Ms Ruane: I thank the Member for that question; it is very close to my concerns. As Members in the Chamber know, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee recently produced a report, and the Assembly Commission will examine the report very carefully in relation to women in politics and how we ensure broader gender representation. At our next meeting, we will look at the issue of the gender action plan. The Member will be aware that the Speaker recently hosted a very successful event for International Women's Day. Indeed, the Building was lit up purple to celebrate women. We will do everything that we can to broaden the number of visitors and the number of women in the Chamber.

In terms of the LGBT community, as part of the outreach strategy, which I chaired, we ensured that sexual orientation was one of the key areas of outreach for us, and that is now out for an equality impact assessment. That is one of the areas that we will look at. We value greatly the contribution that our ethnic minorities make to our society here in this part of Ireland, and we will do everything to ensure that our institution reflects the diverse nature of our society.

Parliament Buildings: External Lighting

5. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Assembly Commission what plans it has to consider additional dates for the external lighting of Parliament Buildings. (AQO 7825/11-15)

7. **Mr Lunn** asked the Assembly Commission for an update on the policy for the external lighting of Parliament Buildings. (AQO 7827/11-15)

Mr Weir: With permission, I will answer questions 5 and 7 together. Perhaps we have a question here that can generate more light than heat, for once.

The external lighting system is due to be installed in May 2015, and it will have the ability to colour-wash the facade of Parliament Buildings in a single colour. In the meantime, the colour wash of the facade is provided by hand-fitted colour gels, which is done on a one-off basis.

At its meeting on 11 November 2014, the Assembly Commission agreed the policy for the external lighting of Parliament Buildings in order to manage the use of

that system while preserving the dignity of Parliament Buildings. In line with the policy, the Commission scheduled up to four days during a calendar year for events of its choice. In 2015, the four days chosen by the Assembly Commission are Monday 9 March, International Women's Day, purple; Tuesday 17 March, St Patrick's Day, green; Sunday 12 July, orange; and Wednesday 11 November, Remembrance Day, red.

Again, in line with the policy, the Commission will permit its charity of the year, which, this year, is the Simon Community, up to five days during a 12-months period, as well as granting up to a maximum of another eight days for other events during the calendar year.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Member for his answer. As he knows, Pride is also an internationally celebrated day, especially in Belfast. Is any consideration being given to externally lighting the Building on Pride day?

Mr Weir: The Commission agreed unanimously to four specific days during the year. That is in line with the policy, and we have agreed that. From that point of view, there is a system which allows consideration of other days, again, by way of a consensus. So, at the moment, the answer is basically that four days have been unanimously agreed. That is what has been agreed so far.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Member for his answer so far. Who can apply to have the facade lit up, and what will the process be for such an application in the future?

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for his question. In line with the policy, only events organised at Parliament Buildings or in the estate, and which are DFP approved, will have access to the lighting system. It is restricted to charitable, community or non-profit-making organisations, which make a significant contribution to Northern Ireland and are celebrating a significant anniversary or occasion. Only such organisations are permitted to have Parliament Buildings illuminated in a particular colour.

Organisations wishing to use the facilities will apply for the use of it directly to the Events Office, in line with this policy and the events policy. The organisers will be asked to seek a triple signature sponsorship, as we would require for any other event, from Members, showing cross-designation support. Requests should then be forwarded to the Events Office which will seek approval from the Assembly Commission, no less than two calendar months before the event taking place. In line with the policy, that would be agreed by way of consensus.

The eight-day provision can also apply to something that is particularly significant to Northern Ireland. To choose an example from a previous occasion, if we had the Giro this year, it would be something that could be considered by the Commission for a specific day within that envelope of eight days.

The aim is to try to facilitate special events by lighting up Parliament Buildings, without it becoming something which simply happens on a casual basis and then loses its significance.

Mr Rogers: I certainly welcome this, and I know that a certain amount of PR is associated with it. How will we encourage other groups to use this facility?

Mr Weir: Again, it is up to individual Members. As I indicated, the process is that, if it fits certain criteria, there would then be an application made through the Events Office. From experience elsewhere, there may be an argument that we will have more groups applying than days available. However, to be honest, it is about striking a balance. From that point of view, there is no point in having a building that is lit up every day of the week in a different colour. In that case, it would lose its special significance. It is up to individual Members to encourage whatever groups they want to apply; then the application has to fit the criteria and clear the various hurdles before it can be agreed.

Mr Allister: What are the initial capital costs to enable this programme to proceed?

Mr Weir: I am glad that the Member asked that. It is part of the overall roof project and was budgeted for within that project. The overall initial costs — in fact, the overall capital costs full stop — are £95,000, which are part of what I think was about a £4 million project for the roof. There is one initial capital cost. Until now, when groups have been facilitated, there has been an individual cost each time it has been brought forward. This, effectively, operates as a one-off cost.

Cycle to Work Scheme

9. **Mr Clarke** asked the Assembly Commission how many people have joined the Cycle to Work scheme. (AQO 7829/11-15)

Mr Gardiner: I thank Mr Clarke for his question. There is currently a review of this aspect of the scheme which is coming to a close. Members will be informed of the outcome of this review shortly.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Member for his answer, however, it does not answer the question I submitted. Given that there is a review, has consideration being given to the fact that each Government Department opens its scheme 12 months a year, but employees of the Assembly are eligible to apply only once a year?

Mr Gardiner: That was looked at before, and applications are accepted during February and March; that is slightly changed. This is the first time that it has been changed. If you bear with us, you will probably see the change coming about.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

4.00 pm

Private Members' Business

Equality Legislation: Revised Wording

Debate resumed on amendment to motion:

That this Assembly notes, given the passage of the Equality Act in 2010, that Northern Ireland is now out of step with the rest of the UK in equality protections; expresses concern that no progress has been made on introducing a single equality Act in this mandate; rejects the proposed freedom of conscience amendment Bill; regrets the failure of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to introduce age discrimination legislation that covers under-16s; and calls on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to issue a fresh consultation paper to facilitate the speedy consideration of a single equality Bill by the Assembly. — [Mr Lyttle.]

Which amendment was:

Leave out from "rejects" to the first "Bill;" and insert

"notes the public debate generated by the consultation on a proposed freedom of conscience amendment Bill and, recognising the differing views expressed, encourages the Assembly to consider a process to facilitate respectful consideration of these issues;". — [Mr Givan.]

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Alliance Party for tabling the motion. It is a very good and broad motion. It needs to be broad, because equality issues should not be narrowed to one Bill.

The motion understands that we are not there yet when it comes to equality legislation and that we are lacking a single equality Act. If people were prepared to engage on that, we could address some of the issues raised today. It is also good that the motion recognises that we have age discrimination legislation that discriminates against people on the basis of their age. By anybody's standards, that is a fairly bizarre way to do law.

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

My colleague Mr Attwood rightly pointed out that it was interesting that the DUP sought to amend only the part of the motion that dealt with the conscience clause issue and left alone the issue around age discrimination legislation. We can only assume that that means that the DUP now supports the idea that age discrimination legislation should not start at 16 and that people under that age should be entitled to avail themselves of the protections in law that people over 16 are entitled to avail themselves of.

There are not too many DUP Members here right now, but perhaps we can look forward to a new announcement from OFMDFM saying that it has changed its mind and finally has agreement on ensuring that everybody is covered by age discrimination legislation. That would be a positive step forward. I hope that I am not reading too much into the lack of amendment of that part of the motion from the DUP. We would all be grateful for confirmation of that.

The issue that has got all the media attention is the proposed conscience clause. We have to be careful

in the House about the messages that we send out to members of our community. For a long time, people in our community who were described as LGBT had to hide who they were from their family, community and people in general. I think that we have moved a long way from that. I think that families in every community, regardless of religion or faith, have moved to understanding people's sexual orientation. As a society, we have moved far forward in that regard.

Unfortunately, the Assembly has not moved quite as fast. Perhaps that is understandable, but we need to begin to send out a different message — to send out a message to the man in Belfast whose house was attacked recently after his husband passed away that that sort of activity is not condoned by us. That sort of activity should be left in the past where it belongs. We should send out the message that we as legislators stand with minorities, regardless of what minority it is, against people who would bully or intimidate them out of their home or drive them towards suicide, which is a very real concern for many in our community.

I was very proud when I was mayor of our city to lead the first Foyle Pride march in Derry. From Duke Street in the Waterside, that particular civil rights march actually made it to Guildhall. That shows the advancement that has been made over the past number of years.

Mr Givan: I appreciate the Member's giving way. All of the attacks that he mentioned are wrong and are to be condemned. In the report that was carried out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in England, and I would appreciate your thoughts on this, one of the respondents — a manager in the health service — said:

"I appreciate minority groups may in the past feel that they were dealt with in an intolerant manner. For that I am truly sorry. However, you cannot allow the pendulum to shift so far in the opposite direction ... A balance of mutual respect must be found."

Is that not what I am trying to do so that we can strike the right balance and at least have the discussion? I cannot understand why the SDLP cannot support an amendment that does not set any preconditions and only asks for a reasonable discussion to take place.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Member for his intervention and for getting me an extra minute. Of course, the SDLP has no problem with any discussions. We do think, however, that it is very difficult to have those discussions in an atmosphere that has been created over the last number of months that, despite the DUP calling for respect and tolerance, has not been respectful or tolerant and has made people in our communities feel less than the rest of us. That is not the way to go forward.

We are open to any discussion or debate: you do not need an amendment to this motion to get that. You need to engage in the idea of a single equality Bill, where we can have all those issues addressed. We are up for that conversation. What we are absolutely not up for is supporting legislation that will, in our view, enshrine in law discrimination. I will answer Ms Caitriona Ruane's question —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is up.

Mr Eastwood: She asked whether we would sign the petition of concern.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Sorry, the Member is well over his time.

Mr Eastwood: Yes, we will sign the petition of concern. We have said in public and we have said in private that we will sign the petition of concern when it comes to this House.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I will speak briefly on this matter. Like my party colleagues, I support the motion and reject the amendment.

In rejecting the amendment, it would prudent and wise for people to enter into dialogue. To that extent, the spirit of the amendment is supportable, but the proof of the pudding has to be in the eating. Therefore, in our party's view, if you create the conditions whereby it is quite obvious that there is an intention, at least on behalf of some by their actions, to discriminate against certain sections of our community, that is not the way to lead to a positive environment within which you might have a constructive discussion and debate. Like the previous Member to speak, Colum Eastwood, my party is very keen to have such a discussion, but we do not believe that that will be facilitated by the amendment.

We support the motion. I want to make it very clear on behalf of Sinn Féin that, whilst OFMDFM recently agreed legislation on goods, facilities and services (GFS), our party's absolute preference has always been to include all ages in that legislation. We worked for considerable time to try to ensure that that was the case. The best way to tackle and end discrimination is not to not go the whole way with the GFS Bill and omit people under the age of 16. I want to make it clear on behalf of Sinn Féin that that was not our preferred option, and we did not endorse it.

We had lengthy and very significant discussions with the DUP at OFMDFM level, but there was only agreement to include people aged between 16 and 18 in the proposed GFS legislation, which is useful and beneficial. That is a step forward, but it does not go anywhere near far enough for Sinn Féin, and we see the introduction of that legislation as being one step towards ending discrimination in terms of citizens' rights and their ability to avail themselves of all the necessary and appropriate goods, facilities and services.

I make a pledge from the House this afternoon that we will endeavour to work with a wide range of people within the children and young persons' sector, as we have done this last while. I look forward to being engaged in that work to make sure that we examine every opportunity we can, by way of various Department and agency strategies and policies, to seek to redress any aspects of discrimination that people under the age of 16 will have to suffer as a result of not being included in that particular piece of proposed legislation.

We are disappointed that that is the way that the DUP is prepared to go in terms of OFMDFM. Nevertheless, as I said, I think that it is worthwhile, at least insofar as it includes people aged 16 and above. It is important to stress the importance not only for older citizens, who have been a very highly effective lobby — fair play to that sector of people out there; they are clearly in need of legislative protection — but it is important to say that there are a lot of very challenging issues for people from the age of 16 even

to age 18. I think that the legislation will go some way to addressing some of their concern.

As I said, my main point is that we need to go much further, and my party will certainly look forward to working with others in the House and with people in the sector to ensure that we do as much as we can in the remainder of this Assembly mandate and going forward into the next to end any form of discrimination against all of our citizens from when they are born.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he have insight into how likely it is that OFMDFM will be able to bring forward an equality Bill for an open and inclusive consultation process on these issues?

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for his intervention. As I said, my party has a clear view: we want to see a single equality Bill; we want to see an end to all forms of discrimination; and, in respect of the proposed GFS legislation, we support proposed legislation from the age of 16 upwards. We argued for some time that that should include all ages, but that was not possible because the First Minister was not prepared to include everyone under the age of 16. That is quite simple, and that is the basic bottom line on the matter. It is not a choice of Sinn Féin. We were happy or at least a little more content with the fact that it was bringing in people under the age of 18 to at least include people of 16 years of age. It is not our preferred option, and I again make this pledge in case anyone has missed the point: we as a party will continue to work with all other Members of the House who want to include — a lot of Members do — people below the age of 16 right through to birth. I invite all of the other parties to state who will in the future support the introduction of legislation on GFS that will include all ages. Sinn Féin certainly stands ready to deliver on that legislation if we get agreement from the First Minister. As I said, our party —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Maskey: — wants to see a single equality Bill. We want to see a bill of rights. We will oppose the freedom of conscience Bill, and others in the House have already stated that they will too.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is up.

Mr Maskey: We want to make sure that we work with people in all sectors out there to end discrimination in our society. The Assembly needs to be more progressive than the public.

Mr Allister: Anyone who picks up this resolution to read it and wants to approach the matter objectively, might, when they come to the phrase:

“rejects the proposed freedom of conscience amendment Bill”

rather naively think that, to understand that, they had better go and see what the freedom of conscience amendment Bill actually says. This is the Bill that the Alliance Party wants to reject. Of course, the startling thing is that you will not find it. It is not published. It does not yet exist. Yet, the Alliance Party, the paragon of all things liberal and open-minded, is quite ready and prepared not only to prejudge the entire issue itself but to invite everyone else to prejudge the issue and to condemn and

to reject that which they have not yet been able to see or to read.

One often thinks that there is none more illiberal than the liberal, and here we have a classic example of that. They are so totalitarian, so illiberal and so bigoted that they are not even prepared to consider what such a Bill might say but rather condemn it out of hand without needing to see it or wanting to see it or caring what it says because, in their little world, it is not the sort of thing that you could even contemplate.

4.15 pm

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. I find his contribution even more misrepresentative and negative than usual. There is a one-page draft piece of legislation available for the general public to view and read. That is what we based our conclusion on. Indeed, organisations like the Evangelical Alliance have said that the current proposals raise legitimate concerns for the LGBT community about discriminatory treatment across a wide range of goods and services. So, do not try to caricature us when other people across the community have legitimate concerns about the draft legislative proposals on these issues.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member has an additional minute.

Mr Allister: The Member knows full well that, in a consultation exercise to bring forward a private Member's Bill, you conduct the consultation and then you produce the Bill. It is what the Bill says that matters.

Unfortunately, the Alliance Party, joined with the SDLP and Sinn Féin, is so narrow-minded in its approach that it is not even prepared to have a considered debate, even though it knows full well that there is a shrinking ground of toleration for people of a religious viewpoint.

People have religious beliefs that inform their view of what is right and what is wrong. It is their religious beliefs that very often make something unconscionable for them, yet even though the Universal Declaration of Human Rights expressly underscores the right to freedom of conscience, what we have here are those prepared to say, before they even see a Bill, “We will suppress freedom of conscience. We are not going to allow freedom of conscience to germinate and grow. We will abort it. We will suppress it”. That is the attitude. Who are the people saying that? They are the very people who advocated and encouraged others to practise discrimination when it came to 50:50 in the RUC. They said, “We must have active discrimination. We must have positive discrimination”.

Mr Dickson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: No, I am fast running out of time.

The very people who today cannot even contemplate freedom of conscience are the very people who were prepared to practise discrimination and who continue to support the practice of discrimination, namely in the retention of the Catholic certificate of education. The very people who are supportive of —

Mr Dickson: That is simply not true. Not true.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Order, please. Can I remind Members who are conducting the debate from

a sedentary position that that is against the rules of the House? Let Mr Allister be heard.

Mr Allister: I was speaking about toleration, and perhaps we had an indication of intolerance from my — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Sorry, order please. The Member has now got his final warning. No more from a sedentary position.

Mr Allister: Thank you.

The point I am making is that it is bizarre — or is it? — that those who present themselves as the paragons of liberalism are the very suppressors of something as fundamental as freedom of conscience.

One other thing that struck me in the debate is that no one has really expounded what it is in the Equality Act 2010 that we are missing in Northern Ireland that would change things. Section 1 of the Equality Act reads almost like section 75 and section 76 of the Northern Ireland Act, setting out the bodies that must have regard to various issues —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Allister: There it is. One listened for and has not heard what essentially is the deficit that has to be addressed, other than —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is up.

Mr Allister: — other than the intention to determine to suppress freedom of conscience.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I call Mr John McCallister. Sorry?

Mr Dickson: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. In his comment, Mr Allister referred to the Alliance Party supporting 50:50 for RUC/PSNI recruitment. That is simply untrue.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): That is not a point of order, and it certainly was not an excuse for speaking from a sedentary position. I call Mr John McCallister.

Mr McCallister: In this debate and even in the wider debate around Mr Givan's proposed Bill and changes that he would make, my biggest regret — Members will have heard me saying this on many occasions about many pieces of legislation — is that a petition of concern is not a good way to do our business in this place. I take Mr Allister's point that there are not firm proposals in a draft Bill that we can necessarily look at during First Reading or Second Reading, but, when that comes, I want the Assembly to have the maturity to have a debate. That is quite right. It is no great surprise to Mr Givan that I would like us to vote down what I think he is likely to bring in his legislation.

Mr Givan: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCallister: Yes, briefly.

Mr Givan: Does the Member agree that it is slightly bizarre that some are queuing up to sign a petition of concern against a Bill that has not even been introduced? They do not even know what type of Bill they want to block by way of a petition of concern (POC). I appreciate that Alliance has said that it will not sign a POC, but others have and yet

there is no Bill to put a petition of concern against, unless a POC has been submitted to the Speaker's office. I do not know.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member has an additional minute.

Mr McCallister: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I am in the unusual position of having to agree with Mr Givan on that point. I fundamentally warn Members about signing petitions of concern when, quite clearly, the majority of the House will be against the Bill. It is not the way that we should do our business. There is a slight touch of irony in the DUP lecturing about petitions of concern, considering that it hands them out very liberally, to use a word. We should not be doing that. Look at our experiences with the last number of petitions of concern that were used. On welfare reform, the DUP put in almost 50 petitions of concern against 50 amendments. None of those were needed. The Assembly debated and found its place. That is why it is not a good way to do that.

I do not disagree with Mr Givan's amendment. My concern is about the DUP calling for and pushing for a respectful and thoughtful debate, because I am not entirely sure that that sits well when members of the DUP have talked about homosexuality as an "abomination". I do not see where the respect is there. I do not see the respect when people compare homosexuality to child abuse. We could and should be having the debate very much in the language and spirit of his amendment, but I warn the DUP that using language like "abomination" is not how you have a respectful debate.

There are issues around equality and the Ashers case, and I think that we will all regret the huge damage that has been done to relationships between faith communities and LGBT communities. That has been hugely detrimental as we are almost pitting two communities against each other. I warn Members, and I say this as a member of the Presbyterian Church and someone who is from a faith background: a recent UK-wide poll of religious attitudes revealed that, to two thirds of British people, religion is a negative concept and is considered to be doing more harm than good. There is a perception that religion produces division, sets people against one another and discriminates against women and gay people. As someone from a faith background, I think that it is of huge damage to faith communities that that is the perception across our United Kingdom.

Very often the forerunners to the DUP talked against home rule as next to Rome rule, yet most support for the DUP for this Bill comes from the Roman Catholic Church. How things have changed over the past 100 years.

Mr Givan: That is your Church.

Mr McCallister: I do not think so. The Member should know that Presbyterians are far too freethinking to be told what each and every one of us should think.

Returning to the wider debate, the drive for the Bill that Mr Givan has talked about could lead —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is almost up.

Mr McCallister: — to a much more secular society.

Mr Weir: I do not support the motion, but at least we had the opportunity to hold this debate. We have concerns

about the motion and put forward, as we indicated, the amendment to focus in on the one issue. We are, moreover, concerned about a single equality Bill, in part because it could be used, as the proposer of the motion suggested, to extend and expand, rather than merely codify, what is there. A single equality Bill might be not just one Trojan Horse but a stable full to expand the law. That is why we have degrees of reservations.

Mr Attwood, on behalf of the SDLP, referring to our amendment, said that he did not really trust our motives. I am reminded of Queen Elizabeth I's declaration that she did not wish to make "windows into men's souls". Mr Attwood, it seems, is possessed of just such an ability when looking at the DUP — such, presumably, is his wisdom. I urge Members to look at the merits of the wording rather than what they believe to be the intention behind them.

I welcome the consultation that Mr Givan has done on his private Member's Bill. I do not think that Mr Givan would suggest that every jot and tittle is perfectly correct. We do not claim infallibility on behalf of Mr Givan; I do not even think that he would claim it on his own account — certainly not on most days of the week.

I understand that there will be Members who take the view that this is not precisely the way forward or, indeed, that the proposals go either too far or not far enough. As Mr Allister indicated, however, what is slightly disturbing about this debate is that we could have a petition of concern about non-existent legislation. It is tilting at windmills in the tradition of Don Quixote. In this attack Sinn Féin is aided, on this occasion, by the Green Party and NI21, although I appreciate that the previous Member has wriggled out of that particular — I was going to say embarrassment, but perhaps that is a little bit too subjective. It seems to me slightly ridiculous not to allow a proper debate through such a veto.

It may be that we are simply saying that there is not a precise solution that people can agree to. One thing has to be acknowledged, and a number of Members mentioned the remarks of Baroness Hale, the position of the Council of Europe and the survey published just this week by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Many Christians in the United Kingdom feel strongly that it is a cold house in which they are being cold-shouldered. When I look at human rights and equality issues, I am reminded of Orwell's 'Animal Farm', where:

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

We are in danger of encompassing human rights and equality, but doing so in a hierarchy that leaves out those of faith and those from a Christian background.

4.30 pm

I welcome the fact that there seems to have been at least some level of acknowledgement from around the Chamber that there are serious issues to be debated. If Mr Givan's Bill is not precisely the way that people would want, let us at least have that much wider debate. If we can accept that there needs to be a reasonable level of adjustment, let us have that mature conversation and see what the best way forward is. I will give way briefly.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Member for giving way. The amendment calls on the Assembly:

"to consider a process to facilitate respectful consideration".

Will he give us some idea of what format that process might take? Would the outcome of it have any effect on the DUP's decision as to whether it would bring forward the conscience clause Bill in its present proposed form?

Mr Weir: From that point of view, we are open-minded on the issue. We are happy to engage with all parties as to the best way forward. We want to see proper protection for people so that their conscience is protected. We are not doctrinaire on the exact format in which that is done. We want to ensure that that proper protection is put in place, and we will be happy to discuss with all the parties the best way forward. *[Interruption.]* No. You will appreciate that I have —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member did get an extra minute.

Mr Weir: I appreciate that, but I have only a minute to conclude.

In terms of the debate that has been started, mention was made by the Member who spoke previously of the fact that, on this issue, we have the support of the Catholic Church. We also have the broad support of the Presbyterian Church and a number of mainstream denominations in that regard. While not every jot has been agreed, mention was made of a caveat that has been put forward by the Evangelical Alliance. The Evangelical Alliance is in favour of the Bill. There has been much misrepresentation of Paul Givan's Bill; let us not add to that today by pretending that the Evangelical Alliance is against the Bill. There is a wide range —

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: I have approximately seven seconds —

Mr Lyttle: I have read from the document.

Mr Weir: I have shared a platform with the Evangelical Alliance, where it has spoken directly. I have seen its submission.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is up.

Mr Weir: I urge people to support the amendment. Let us at least progress a mature discussion on this issue.

Ms Lo: I thank all the Members who have contributed to the debate. The Alliance Party tabled the motion because, since the Westminster passage of the Equality Act 2010, there have been widening gaps in our equality law protection. We are calling for a single equality Bill to harmonise and simplify different pieces of anti-discrimination legislation. So far, we have failed to update our laws. It is time that we rectified that. Many Members voice their support for that.

It is worth adding that the EU is currently considering the simplification and harmonisation of the equality legislation with the horizontal directive. In the Republic of Ireland, there is also the Equal Status Act 2000. The main gaps in Northern Ireland are in disability legislation and age discrimination legislation to cover under-16s, which my colleague Chris Lyttle and many others mentioned.

The DUP has long dragged its feet over publishing the sexual orientation strategy, but it readily consults on a private Member's Bill that would significantly weaken protection for lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals. The conscience clause would effectively legalise discrimination. Although equality policy is largely a devolved matter, that does not mean that we can create special rights regimes.

The Alliance Party believes that there should be the same standard equality provisions throughout the UK. If we decide that exemptions from equality legislation are necessary, they should be limited, specific and justified objectively.

Legislation should properly reflect and respect the diversity of identities. It certainly should not create a hierarchy of equality. If people want to run a business to provide services or facilities to the public, it must be for everyone; they simply cannot pick and choose who they wish to serve. The days when notices said, "No blacks, no Irish, no dogs" are gone. We cannot, therefore, accept the DUP's amendment, which would remove our rejection of the proposed conscience clause contained in the motion. The amendment may be dressed in a plausible manner but, so far, the DUP's tactic on the consultation process has been anything but respectful, accusing the Alliance Party of being anti-Christian.

Much of my career has been spent in the pursuit of racial equality in Northern Ireland. The single equality Bill will include the amendment of race equality legislation to cover colour and nationality alongside race and ethnic origin. If Members cast their minds back to the Assembly debate in 2009, they will recall that all parties supported the reform of race relations legislation. The Alliance Party, Sinn Féin and the SDLP all called for a single equality Bill in their manifestos. The UUP manifesto called for the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to be amended as a matter of urgency. However, we continue to wait.

The draft racial equality strategy has still not been produced, even though the consultation closed in October 2014. Several questions for written answer that I have submitted remain unanswered. I do not need to remind the House of the fear felt among ethnic minority communities over the summer. OFMDFM's snail's pace has certainly not reassured them. The ethnic minority development fund runs out on 31 March and there has been no indication as to when and how it will be administered, even though organisations were told in February that the same level of funding will be available for the next financial year.

Clearly, Northern Ireland has now fallen behind in its equality legislation. It is sobering to reflect that all equality laws applying to Northern Ireland have been delivered either through primary legislation in Westminster or through OFMDFM using the Order in Council, acting under direct rule. Northern Ireland has been named in examinations of the UK by UN committees for non-compliance with treaty standards. Our equality law is, in some areas, less likely to meet, and is potentially in breach of, the standards set out in international human rights conventions.

I will now highlight some of the points that Members made in the debate. Paul Givan said that there was a knee-jerk reaction to his proposal for the conscience clause, which had been grossly misrepresented. He said that the

amendment is an olive branch to appeal to Members for respectful discussion.

Bronwyn McGahan said that the bill of rights and the single equality Bill should protect everyone. Alex Attwood asked whether the DUP would confirm that it would accept the principle and practice of the age discrimination legislation covering under-16s. He said that the Equality Commission had not been punching above its weight in promoting equality law.

Danny Kinahan said that we are out of step with equality legislation, particularly on disability and women's rights, and that the single equality Act process had ground to a halt because of the dysfunctional nature of OFMDFM. He said that the UUP would support the amendment to find a way forward.

Stephen Moutray said that the conscience Bill is not about dominance but is meant to better protect those with genuine religious beliefs and should not be rejected outright by the Alliance Party.

Caitriona Ruane said that the DUP has now rolled back on equality, that the conscience Bill is about the DUP's continued attempt to discriminate against the LGBT community, and that Sinn Féin will use a petition of concern to stop the Bill.

Edwin Poots said that the Alliance Party is losing its argument against the conscience Bill and that there is too much discrimination happening against Christians. Colum Eastwood mentioned that the age discrimination Act now discriminates against people on the basis of their age. He questioned whether the DUP, because it did not seek to put down an amendment to the motion concerning the age discrimination Act, now supports age discrimination legislation not starting at age 16. Alex Maskey said that the age discrimination Act should start at birth and apply to all ages.

Jim Allister accused the Alliance Party of lots of things, including being illiberal and being so bigoted that it is not prepared to consider what the Bill might say. In our little world, we object to a lot of the things that he said. He was actually wrong when he said that we supported 50:50 PSNI recruitment. We did not. He said that we supported the Catholic teachers' certificate. We did not, so he was wrong again.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Ms Lo: No, I am sorry. I am running out of time.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is almost gone.

Ms Lo: I am almost done.

John McCallister wants to see there be maturity to have the debate when the Bill comes along.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is up.

Ms Lo: He criticised the use of the petition of concern. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 47; Noes 44.

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Devenney, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, 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 Ayes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mrs McKevitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson and Ms Lo.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and negatived.

Adjourned at 4.56 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 23 March 2015

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Speaker: Order. I want to return to an issue from last week's Question Time to the Assembly Commission and exchanges between Mr Campbell and Ms Ruane. Having reviewed the Official Report and video footage, it is clear to me that Mr Campbell's behaviour was blatantly disrespectful and contrary to the standards of courtesy, good temper and moderation that are expected in debate in the House. Such schoolboy behaviour falls well short of how business should be conducted in a mature, elected legislature. I have to warn Mr Campbell that I will not let juvenile and disrespectful behaviour like that continue.

The Member is a senior and experienced parliamentarian in this Chamber and in Westminster and knows full well that he has to respect the rules of the House. The rules and conditions of the House are clearly laid out in Standing Orders and Speaker's rulings and conventions. Standing Order 78 provides for Assembly Members to speak in a language of their choice, and Speaker's rulings are clear that, when Members choose to speak in another language, they must also provide an English translation.

If the Member continues in this line of being deliberately disrespectful and discourteous to other Members when they are complying with the procedures of the House, I will have no option but to introduce a sanction against him. The Member is capable of making serious and valuable contributions to the business of the House, and he should concentrate on that.

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

Mr Speaker: Unless you wish to make an apology, I will move on.

Mr Campbell: So you are not taking a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: No. I am giving you the opportunity to make an apology. If not, then please resume your seat.

Mr Campbell: Is it appropriate, Mr Speaker —

Mr Speaker: Please do not challenge the House or I will respond to that.

Mr Campbell: — that a member of a party that seeks to excuse punishment beatings —

Mr Speaker: I have already asked you to resume your seat.

Mr Campbell: — that seeks to ensure that Sinn Féin escapes and does not acknowledge its part in what it has done over the course of many years could spend time

going to the Speaker's office to complain about someone yawning?

Mr Speaker: The Member has continued to be disrespectful and discourteous and his conduct is clearly in breach of Standing Order 1(2). I will, therefore, not be calling him to speak for the rest of today or tomorrow. Let us move on.

Ministerial Statements

North/South Ministerial Council: Trade and Business Development

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 regarding a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council in trade and business development sectoral format. This meeting was held in the offices of the North/South Ministerial Council, Armagh, on Thursday 5 March 2015. The Executive were represented by me in my capacity as Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and by John O'Dowd MLA, Minister of Education. The Irish Government were represented by Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. This statement has been agreed with Minister O'Dowd.

The Council received a presentation from Martin Cronin, the chairperson, and Thomas Hunter McGowan, CEO, on InterTradelreland's performance and business activities, including information on performance against its 2014 business plan target. The Council noted the positive performance of InterTradelreland during 2014, including creating and maintaining 1,881 jobs; delivering a 10:1 return on investment; assisting 64 first-time innovators; assisting 127 first-time exporters; delivering 4% efficiency savings; and delivering a total business value of £67 million.

The Council noted that there was strong demand across all InterTradelreland's programmes during 2014. It was also noted that InterTradelreland had continued to carry out business and economic research activities, including production of a report entitled 'SMEs, Credit constraints and Growth — A Cross Border Study', the production of InterTradelreland's quarterly business monitor survey, and undertaking research into the issue of mapping the potential for cross-border clusters and clustering. The Council approved InterTradelreland's 2015 business plan and recommended that the 2015 budget/grant provision for InterTradelreland should be £8,746,440.

The Council noted that both jurisdictions had agreed a joint target of €175 million for drawdown under Horizon 2020 and welcomed the support structures that have been put in place to deliver on this target, including the continued work of the all-island Horizon 2020 steering group, which is chaired by InterTradelreland; the launch of the Horizon 2020 strategic action plan; and the work of the contact point networks in each jurisdiction. The Council was advised that InterTradelreland had identified, and will be taking forward, additional activities in conjunction with the all-island steering group to deliver on this target.

The Council was encouraged by the early results from Horizon 2020, including 45 cross-border applications submitted to the programme, with seven being successful. Those seven projects will have an economic value of €8.8 million for successful cross-border Horizon 2020 collaboration. The Council noted the high level of demand for Horizon 2020 funding from across Europe, but was encouraged by the fact that the success rate for cross-border proposals of 16% was higher than the average EU rate of 14%.

The Council noted that officials were continuing to investigate opportunities for cooperation on EU business and enterprise funding, including under Horizon 2020,

INTERREG Va, and possibly the Juncker initiative and the competitiveness of enterprises and small and

medium-sized enterprises (COSME) programme. It was noted that €71 million of the INTERREG Va programme is to be allocated to research and innovation and that officials are looking closely at opportunities for cooperation in this area.

Ministers recognised the benefits to be gained through participation in collaborative European projects, welcomed the collaboration between bodies and officials in each jurisdiction, and encouraged officials to continue to seek new opportunities for European funding for projects.

The Council received a presentation on the US Ireland R&D partnership, which reflected the world-class nature of the ongoing work. It was noted that, up to January 2015, a total of 19 projects had been awarded £23.7 million and had brought together over 60 investigators from universities and institutes in Northern Ireland, Ireland and the United States. Ministers noted that the research undertaken through the partnership meets the gold standard of the United States' National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) peer review system. In this regard, the projects supported were recognised internationally as world-leading.

The collaborative research projects involved are subject to the highly competitive National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health peer review systems. The Council was particularly impressed that, for proposals submitted to NSF, the success rate for projects involving institutions in Ireland and Northern Ireland was 38%, compared to the standard success rate of 18% for projects from within the United States.

Equally, although the success rate for proposals submitted to the NIH was 14%, slightly lower than the standard success rate of 16%, that represented a significant achievement. The success rates for the partnership projects are testament to the international standard of research carried out in both jurisdictions.

I and Minister Bruton recognise the benefits that participation in the US-Ireland R&D Partnership brings. InterTradelreland was asked to track how many of those post holders end up supporting or working in industry in order that they can transfer the knowledge and experience gained. I welcome and support the partnership's expansion into research collaboration at a centre-to-centre level.

Ministers welcomed the work being undertaken by the partnership to expand its scope to include agrifood research. I invited InterTradelreland to liaise with the Agri-Food Strategy Board (AFSB) and seek its views on potential areas of research of interest to the industry.

The Council received an update on InterTradelreland's strategic priorities and key activities planned for 2015. Those include increasing joint applications to Horizon 2020; assisting SMEs to access finance for growth; exploring the use of additional funding streams to increase SMEs' capacity; and assisting SMEs to access the public-procurement market.

The Council recognised the importance of public-sector contracts to SMEs in both jurisdictions and was encouraged to hear that 66% of public-sector contracts in the Republic of Ireland and 80% of those in Northern Ireland went to SMEs from both jurisdictions. The Council

heard that the complexity and scale of public-sector contracts was increasing and was supportive of the work being undertaken by InterTradelreland through its consortia facilitation service. The body works closely with SMEs that are considering collaboration as a means of taking advantage of the opportunities and that support the development of successful partnerships. By supporting indigenous SMEs to exploit that market, InterTradelreland will promote public tendering as a route to export markets.

Colleagues will be interested to note that InterTradelreland's business monitor survey for the fourth quarter of 2014, which reflects the views of the SME community in both jurisdictions, found that energy costs had dropped down the order of issues exercising businesses. There had been no significant change in the energy prices at the time of the survey, so that would indicate the impact that fuel costs have on businesses in both jurisdictions.

The Council noted InterTradelreland's annual report and accounts for 2013, which were certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General and laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Council agreed that the next trade and business development meeting should be held in autumn 2015. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

Mr McGlone (The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an ráiteas iontach cuimsitheach sin. I thank the Minister for that comprehensive statement, in which she said that 66% of public-sector contracts in the Republic and 80% in the North went to SMEs from both jurisdictions. An SME has up to 250 employees. Are there figures available for the percentage of public-sector contracts that go on to microbusinesses, which make up the majority of business in the North and have 10 or fewer employees? Does the Minister have detail on the net benefits to microbusinesses from the allocation of such contracts?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Chairman for his point. I was somewhat surprised by the figures when they were given to us at the Council meeting. When we talk about small to medium-sized businesses in that context, it is the European definition that is used, and, as he rightly pointed out, that refers to businesses with fewer than 250 employees.

I do not have the further breakdown. I would be hopeful that microbusinesses were in the supply chain, but I will certainly ask the CEO of InterTradelreland to see whether we can go further down the chain to see whether impacts are being made. I am sure the Chairman will agree that the issue of small companies not being able to break into procurement comes up a lot at constituency and ministerial level. I made the point at the Council meeting that we really do need to get out there and help people.

I think that the Go-2-Tender programme has been very useful. It has worked well from InterTradelreland's perspective, but I think we could do more with the smaller companies. I am hopeful that InterTradelreland will be able to do that.

12.15 pm

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister her statement. Can she elaborate on the impact that the strong pound against the

euro has on our ability to export to the Republic of Ireland and, indeed, countries throughout Europe? I think that we all recognise the need to increase our export targets within this financial year.

Mrs Foster: Absolutely. Exporting has been a struggle during the downturn. We looked at new developing markets for Northern Ireland to try to deal with that, but certainly the strong pound in the eurozone has been a disincentive over the past period of time. You can see that through some of the export market figures that are coming out. I am hopeful that we will continue to work with our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland to try to show them the value of the goods and services coming from Northern Ireland. Indeed, I hope that they will recognise that the short supply chain compensates a little for the increased price that they are having to pay for it, given the exchange rate that we are having to deal with. We have to deal with the realities of the situation. The pound is strong, the euro is a lot weaker now, and we need to look to other markets, as well as to our close neighbours.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for her statement. Can she explain why there has been a relatively small number of successful cross-border projects through Horizon 2020 in comparison with the high number of applications?

Mrs Foster: I think that it is the very nature of the programme. We are ahead with successful projects in Horizon 2020. The European average is, I think, about 14%, and we are at 16%. It may appear that we are not very successful, but that is the nature of Horizon 2020 across Europe. It is hugely competitive and, therefore, we must ensure that we take all measures to make sure that we can benefit from it. There has been €80 billion allocated to the project. I am quite pleased that we have as high a number as 45 in place at this early stage in the programme, and we will certainly work very hard to make sure that we benefit even more.

Mr Kinahan: I also thank the Minister for the statement and congratulate InterTradelreland for its success. I note that the statement is on trade and business development, but when we had Horizon 2020 representatives at the Committee, there did not seem to be any emphasis on education below employment and learning. Will the Minister ensure that, in future, we will be looking for funding that will help schools? STEM funding has been cut, and we need more influence from business. Can we get that on to the agenda so that we prepare children earlier to create more trade and business development?

Mrs Foster: On the Member's point about education and its priority status or otherwise within Horizon 2020, that is really a matter for the Education Minister. I agree with his point about STEM subjects and creating an ethos early on within a child's mind about science, technology, engineering and maths. I am, therefore, supportive of doing that. However, that has to come from the education sector through the projects that come forward.

The three top areas of cross-border collaboration — after all, this is InterTradelreland — are health, the Marie Curie actions and ICT. ICT could be an area where we could hook education, even outside the formal classroom setting, to encourage young people to get involved in the sector. There have been a lot of private sector initiatives on coding

for children that have been very encouraging. That is something that I very much welcome.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for her statement. It notes:

“the positive performance of InterTradelreland during 2014”.

However, it does not say whether it met any targets during that year or give any comparison with previous years. Will the Minister comment on that?

Mrs Foster: Yes, absolutely. We hit all our targets, apart from that for first-time innovators: the target was for 66 first-time innovators, and they reached 64. The target for return on investment was 9:1, and the full-year performance on that was 10:1. The target for first-time exporters was 58, and the full-year performance was 127, so that was met very well. The jobs impact target was 1,270, and again, that was well met, with 1,881 being reached. The target for efficiency savings was set at 4%, and that was met.

Mr Frew: I am very interested to hear more detail around discussions on the continuing pressure on energy costs and on what is being done to bring down the costs of bills for business, especially in my constituency of North Antrim, which has a very high level of manufacturing and is a good manufacturing base. Minister, given that we are in a shared single electricity market across the two countries, what discussions were had regarding the North/South interconnector and the implementation of the integrated single electricity market (ISEM) getting up and running?

Mrs Foster: Those last two matters are, of course, not matters for InterTradelreland but are energy policy matters, so we did not have any discussions about those.

On the issues for businesses, I was interested to see the fact that energy costs had dropped back, particularly in Northern Ireland. At its height back in quarter 2 of 2012, that was the top concern of 47% of the businesses. In quarter 4 of 2014, that had dropped to 7%. That is quite a significant drop back, albeit that that has happened over two and a half years. In the Republic of Ireland, rising energy costs is again an issue of concern. Where it is 7% for our companies, it is 10% for companies in the Republic of Ireland. It still is an issue, and I think that the falling fuel costs will have had an impact on energy costs. I continue to share his concerns about the high energy costs for large manufacturers, and I continue to work with the regulator on those issues. If all goes according to plan, I am having a meeting with the regulator, NIE and SONI at the end of this week on grid connections. We will be able to have discussions around grid connections, which, again, have caused a lot of concerns to consumers and those wishing to connect to the grid. I referred to that in my last Question Time. That meeting is happening, and I am hopeful that we can make some progress.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I welcome the Minister's statement, and I welcome specifically the emphasis by InterTradelreland on assisting SMEs to build partnerships in the context of public procurement. Perhaps the Minister will provide further clarity on how she proposes to ensure that SMEs can fully benefit from island-wide procurement opportunities.

Mrs Foster: This is something that I take a particular interest in, and I always say that the Go-2-Tender programme works very well. There was a bit of a kickback at one stage when some of the Northern Ireland companies were being successful with Republic of Ireland government contracts. I am glad to say that that concern has disappeared, and now some of our companies are competing and competing very well for those government procurements. Go-2-Tender is a very important part of what InterTradelreland does. As I indicated to the Chair of the Committee, I hope that we can make more of an impact with the smaller microbusinesses, as Europe calls them, so that they can benefit as well as some of our larger companies.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for her statement to the House and her answers so far. I welcome the economic benefit that comes from Horizon 2020 and the trend of 16% as opposed to the European average of 14%. How many jobs have been protected and created due to this intervention?

Mrs Foster: I cannot give you figures on jobs from Horizon 2020 because it is the first six months of Horizon 2020. I am quite sure that it will sustain a number of jobs and, indeed, create a number of jobs because of the fact that we have that success rate. As I said, InterTradelreland's target in 2014 was 1,220, and that was well surpassed, with 1,881 jobs being sustained and created. I am very pleased about that.

Mr Allister: Why did the Minister consent to the appointment, as vice-chair of InterTradelreland, of a person who acts as economic adviser to Sinn Féin and boasts, in the latest InterTradelreland report, that she operates out of the office of Pearse Doherty TD? Is the appointment of such a partisan individual to such a position thought to be appropriate?

Mrs Foster: As the Member will know, appointments are made to InterTradelreland on a party basis. There are a number of party appointees who have been appointed to InterTradelreland, Tourism Ireland and other North/South bodies, so it is not surprising that Sinn Féin should seek to put their placepeople on. I think that it is disappointing that they do not seek to put on people who have a wider view of the world. However, it is a matter for them who they put on.

Mr Speaker: That concludes questions on the statement. The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment wishes to make a second statement.

North/South Ministerial Council: Tourism

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement in compliance with section 52 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, regarding a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in tourism sectoral format. This meeting was held in Armagh on 5 March 2015.

Minister Carál Ní Chuilín MLA and I represented the Northern Ireland Executive. The Irish Government were represented by Paschal Donohoe TD, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, who chaired the meeting. This statement has been agreed with Minister Ní Chuilín, and I am making the statement on behalf of us both.

Ministers noted the support that had been provided to tourism projects under the EU funded INTERREG IVa programme. They also noted the current position regarding EU funding programmes and agreed that the relevant tourism stakeholders, in both jurisdictions, would closely monitor developments at EU level to ensure that tourism would benefit from all suitable collaborative funding opportunities.

The chairperson, Mr Brian Ambrose, and the CEO, Mr Niall Gibbons, updated Ministers on the work of the Tourism Ireland board over the previous year. The Council noted progress on implementing the corporate plan 2014-16. It also noted progress on delivering Tourism Ireland's SMART objective performance goals for 2014, which include growing promotable revenue and promotable visitors to Ireland and Northern Ireland; maintaining our high competitive interest ranking in GB, US and France, and improving it in Germany; achieving 500 million social connections by the end of 2014 and delivering 1.8 million commercial referrals to trade and industry from digital activity; and driving the delivery of Tourism Ireland's corporate plan objectives.

Ministers were updated on the nine board meetings that have taken place at various locations since the last NSMC tourism meeting. Presentations at board meetings included assessments of the North American, Australian and developing markets. The board also reviewed and noted the high level of cooperation between Tourism Northern Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland on hosting the Grande Partenza of the 2014 Giro d'Italia.

Ministers received a presentation from the CEO, Mr Niall Gibbons, on Tourism Ireland's performance throughout 2014. Ambitious targets have been set for growth in 2015, from all main markets, and it was agreed that strong collaboration across the industry was crucial to deliver on these targets. It was noted that Northern Ireland's distinctiveness has a very important role to play in attracting overseas visitors, and I stressed that one of my key priorities is to see standout for Northern Ireland. As one of Tourism Ireland's objectives is to help Northern Ireland achieve its tourism potential, I highlighted the importance, where the market or event lends itself, for the potential visitor to see positive, specific messaging for Northern Ireland. I also emphasised the vital role of direct air access in developing tourism into a billion-pound industry by 2020, and I encouraged Tourism Ireland to continue its ongoing work with Invest Northern Ireland to attract new air services to Northern Ireland in 2015, particularly from Germany and Canada.

The Rugby World Cup 2023 was also discussed, as was the bid by the IRFU to host the Women's Rugby World Cup in 2017. The opportunities presented by sporting events, which put Northern Ireland on a world stage, were noted.

I updated Ministers on the Hunter review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and wider tourism structures. I advised that I will be working with the industry to bring forward a new strategic plan for tourism, which will coordinate the work of key partners in the industry and in central and local government.

Ministers approved Tourism Ireland's 2015 business plan and recommended the budget provision for 2015 of €53.885 million.

12.30 pm

The Council agreed to meet again in tourism sectoral format in autumn/winter 2015 on a date to be confirmed. I commend the statement to the Assembly.

Mr McGlone (The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Tá mé buartha nár thug mé an t-ainm sin ort roimhe. I am sorry if I miscalled you earlier; I think that I was somewhat distracted by Mr Campbell's antics to hit the media. There must be an election on or something.

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

The Minister's statement refers to the role of air passenger duty in attracting:

"new air services to Northern Ireland in 2015, particularly from Germany and Canada."

Has the Department done an impact study, independently or in cooperation with the Irish Government, on our ability to attract passengers and, consequently, additional trade from overseas?

Mrs Foster: Absolutely. You will know that the Department commissioned the then Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy to carry out a study of the economic impact on Northern Ireland of short-haul air passenger duty, and it recently published its report. The report's central conclusion is that, when the cost to the public finances in Northern Ireland is taken into consideration, APD on short-haul flights is not a strong economic development tool. We, of course, set the air passenger duty for band B long-haul flights at zero; we have already dealt with that. The Finance Minister and I have continued to stress that there is an urgent need for central government to look at APD as it affects the UK as a whole, and we will push for that on behalf of industry here, because it is set in a way that is unfair to the regions of the UK. We need, therefore, to deal with the issue at Westminster, and I hope that my colleagues who are returned to Westminster will be able to assist me. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I am trying to work out who is in control at the moment; I hope that it is not Mr Campbell.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her statement today. I think that we all enjoyed Ireland's success in winning the Six Nations championship at the weekend. We pass on

our congratulations. What progress has been made on bringing the Rugby World Cup here in 2023?

Mrs Foster: It was a tremendous weekend of sport. I say weekend, because we should not forget that the ladies' team was also successful; it is important to recognise that. The Rugby World Cup bid for 2023 is moving along, and, since the announcement on 5 December 2014, a bid director has been put in place, and work has commenced on compiling the bid, with the support of the Executive and the Government of the Republic. We will put an overview group in place in the near future to help to oversee progress on the bid. I am very confident in the bid, and we hope that our success on the pitch will be of assistance.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. It was, indeed, a big weekend for sport. The Tyrone hurlers beat Roscommon, which I would like to add to the list of feats over the weekend.

The Minister mentioned reaching out to developing tourism markets such as North America and Australia. Is work being done by Tourism Ireland to reach out to the Irish diaspora and to those who have emigrated to assist us in this work? There are a lot of Tyrone people in Philadelphia and New York. A joint mission by the Minister and Minister Donohoe might prove very fruitful.

Mrs Foster: I am sure that the Member is aware that Northern Irish Connections has started that work and is reaching out to our diaspora across the globe. The Republic of Ireland, however, is ahead of us in this game, and it uses its diaspora very well.

We need to be able to reach out to people from Northern Ireland in a similar way, and I am hoping that Northern Irish Connections will be able to do that. It has held a number of events across the world and is now looking for strategic partnerships with people who have left our shores for whatever reason but still want to be positive advocates for Northern Ireland. So, yes, absolutely, we will be working on that.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for the statement, and I congratulate both the ladies' and male teams of Ireland for their terrific success at the weekend. Does the Minister recognise that there is more than a perception that Tourism Ireland is not delivering for Northern Ireland in line with the amount of money that we put into it? Is she satisfied with Tourism Ireland's performance and, if not, will she instigate a review?

Mrs Foster: Of course, any review would have to be instigated jointly because it is a joint body. The Member is correct in saying that Tourism Ireland needs to have regard to the distinctiveness of Northern Ireland. Indeed, its terms of reference in the legislation have specific regard to that. It is important that Tourism Ireland gives a distinctive standout, particularly in the Great Britain market, where there are very natural synergies between the rest of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. That point was made at the North/South Ministerial Council sectoral meeting, and I will continue to make it with the board and with the CEO. However, I point the Member to the fact that our visitor numbers from Great Britain have continued to rise. I welcome that, and I think that it is a positive step forward.

Mr Lunn: Again, I thank the Minister for the statement. My question is really a repeat of the one that I asked on the previous statement. The statement notes the progress in

delivering Tourism Ireland's performance goals for 2014, and it lists them in bullet points, but it does not actually say whether Tourism Ireland has met targets or make any comparison with previous years. Can the Minister comment?

Mrs Foster: Unfortunately, I cannot be as definitive as I was in relation to InterTradeIreland, because it is over a different period of time. I only have the January to September 2014 figures; I do not have the full year as yet. But I have to say that, in most sectors, it is looking very positive. The one area where we need to see an improvement is in relation to Republic of Ireland visitors. Again, that is probably a lot to do with the euro during this year. We need to pay concern to that. Domestic visitors are up, GB holidaymakers are up, and external visitors are up as well, so things are going in the right direction, but we just need to watch the Republic of Ireland visitor numbers. Again, that is to do with the exchange rate.

Mr Frew: Minister, you mentioned that Northern Ireland has a distinctiveness, which has a very important role in attracting visitors and overseas visitors. Given the distinctiveness of the Giant's Causeway and, indeed, the north Antrim coast, and given the fact that the Gobbins path in East Antrim — my neighbouring constituency — will soon be opened, what more can the powers that be and Tourism Ireland do to promote it to get even further traction?

Mrs Foster: I congratulate the Member on moving from North Antrim to East Antrim today; that is a great step forward. He is right to mention the Gobbins path, because that is going to be a new product in our portfolio for this year. It is a very important piece of product that we have, and I look forward to its opening very soon. It adds, of course, to the whole coastal driving route and gives reasons for people to stop and stay. It really is key for tourists that they have not just somewhere to go on a one-off visit but a range of products to take advantage of. Particularly for those who are interested in independent travelling and who drive, I think that the Causeway coastal route has more potential, and I look forward to them fulfilling it.

Mr Givan: I commend the Minister for her ongoing good work in increasing the number of visitors to Northern Ireland through the tourism strategy that she is taking forward. As the Minister moves forward in implementing the corporate plan up to 2016 and as the Southern Ministers, and, indeed, political parties here in Northern Ireland consider how they will commemorate or celebrate — whatever term they wish to use — the Easter rebellion, what message does she have for her counterpart in the South that such events need to be ones that do not cause disrespect and, indeed, put off international visitors because of any attempt to glorify IRA terrorism?

Mrs Foster: I think that, from a tourism perspective, any event that takes place has to be a positive event. It has to be one that encourages people to come and visit. Certainly, that is what is in my mind when I look at 2016, and that is one reason why I have designated 2016 as the Year of Food. I think that we can really build on our agrifood produce and on what we do best, which is provide very good food, along with good service, for our visitors, building on the product that we have invested in. It has to be respectful and something that people enjoy and will want to come back to, and I am hopeful that that will be the case.

Mr Humphrey: I am sure that the Minister will join me in wishing the Northern Ireland football team well for Wednesday night's friendly against Scotland and the qualifier against Finland next week. I agree entirely with the Minister's comments about standout for Northern Ireland, and, following the Hunter review of tourism, what standout does the Minister hope Tourism Northern Ireland will be able to deliver, working with Tourism Ireland in marketing Northern Ireland internationally to tourists?

Mrs Foster: I absolutely wish the Northern Ireland team well, and I look forward to hearing the results.

The idea behind the Hunter review of tourism was to build on relationships within the tourism sector in Northern Ireland to allow Tourism Northern Ireland to develop strong relationships with Invest Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to tourist accommodation and grant making, and that Tourism Northern Ireland would work closely with Tourism Ireland. I hope that that will happen. I think that everybody will benefit from it, if we take that collaborative approach. I should, of course, mention that the new councils will have a role to play in tourism in the future. I hope that they will play their part in building up our strong tourism sector.

I was at a tourism event held by the Hotels Federation on Friday, and there really is a very positive sense of the potential of tourism for Northern Ireland, and I hope that we can build on that.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for her statement and acknowledge the good work she is doing in building tourism potential here, especially in south Down. I add my congratulations to both our rugby teams for their tremendous victories at the weekend.

Minister, the SMEs in tourism and hospitality are the lifeblood of a successful and sustainable tourism industry, but there are two stumbling blocks. One is the VAT rate, and the other is the licensing laws. What recent discussions have you had with the Westminster Government about reducing VAT for tourism? What discussions have you had with your colleague in DSD, Mr Storey, about the licensing laws?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for his questions. Indeed, VAT was one of the main issues discussed on Friday at the Hotels Federation's summit on tourism. It is something that I know our MPs are taking a particular interest in. Indeed, the Finance Minister has written to his counterpart in Treasury to raise the issue again, to make him aware that it has a very disproportionate impact on Northern Ireland, particularly on tourist accommodation businesses along the border. Therefore, it has been raised again.

I am not too sure which issue he is mentioning in relation to licensing. If he wants to give me the specifics, I am sure that I will be able to speak to my party colleague the Minister for Social Development on that issue.

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give an assurance that Tourism Ireland, which her Department so generously funds, will not, next year, promote or sponsor events marking the grubby rebellion of 1916?

Mrs Foster: I know that there are Members in the House who are absolutely myopic in what they want to talk about today, but this is a statement about what happened at the last tourism sectoral meeting. It might surprise the Member to know that there was no discussion in relation to the 2016

commemorations at all because, if the Government of the Republic of Ireland decide to have a commemoration, that is a matter for them, and it is a matter for them to decide what they do for it. As far as I am concerned, Tourism Ireland has a duty to make sure that it promotes all of the island in a way that does not offend anybody.

12.45 pm

Executive Committee Business

Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

That the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

These regulations are made under the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 and increase the compensation payable under that order to those suffering from certain dust-related diseases and to their dependants. I will outline briefly the purpose of the scheme established by the Order, which covers five respiratory diseases, most of which are directly related to asbestos exposure: mesothelioma, diffuse pleural thickening, primary carcinoma of the lung, byssinosis and pneumoconiosis, which includes asbestosis.

People suffering from an industrial disease can sue their employer if the disease was contracted as a result of working for that employer. However, in some cases it has taken years to develop symptoms of the diseases covered by the Order, and diagnosis may not be until decades after exposure to the dust. Given the long time frame involved, it is possible that employers responsible may no longer exist, and consequently sufferers and their dependants can experience great difficulty in obtaining compensation.

The scheme, which was introduced in 1979, provides a lump sum payment for sufferers who are unable to pursue employers through the courts as those employers are no longer in business. To receive payment under the Order, there must be no relevant employer who can be sued and court action must not have been brought, or compensation received, in respect of any of the diseases for which the person is claiming. In order to receive a payment, a person must have been awarded industrial injuries disablement benefit. The lump sum payment under the Order is in addition to the weekly industrial injuries disablement benefit that is paid in relation to the same disease. A claim can also be made by dependants after the death of the sufferer.

The lump sum payment is based on the age of the sufferer and the level of disability, with higher amounts paid to people with higher levels of disability and whose disability arises at an early age. Lower amounts are payable to dependants who make a claim after the sufferer has died. The regulations increase the amounts payable under the order by 1.2% in line with this year's uprating of industrial injuries benefits and they ensure that payments are the same as those in the corresponding scheme operating in Great Britain. The maximum amount that can be paid under the scheme is increased to £86,607 for a person aged 37, or under, at diagnosis and will ensure that compensation provided under the Order maintains its value.

I am sure that we all agree that no amount of money can ever compensate individuals and families for the suffering and loss caused by these terrible diseases. I am also

sure that Members across the Assembly will support the regulations to ensure that those who make a claim on or after 1 April 2015 will receive the higher amounts.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of the Committee for Social Development, I thank the Minister for bringing forward this statutory rule. The Committee considered the Department's proposal to make the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations at its meeting on 5 February 2015 and considered the statutory rule at its meeting on 26 February 2015.

Members will know that the effects of dust-related lung diseases, as the Minister outlined, can be chronic and long term and can seriously impact on one's quality of life as well as impacting on families. The effects can take a long time to develop and may not be diagnosed for a considerable number of years after exposure. Pneumoconiosis can be brought about simply by doing one's work over many years in conditions that a person believes are safe.

Therefore, the scenario in which the employer who is responsible for the dust exposure has wound up by the time that claims arise can be quite common. However, the regulations will at least ensure that the amounts payable offer some assistance to sufferers and their dependants, so it is important that the increases be provided for.

The regulations will increase the amounts payable to sufferers of certain dust-related diseases that are noted in the regulations or to the dependants of such persons who were disabled by such a disease before they died. The increase in each case is 1.2%.

The Committee for Social Development recommends that the statutory rule be affirmed by the Assembly.

Mr Storey: I thank the House for the consensus of support for the regulations. I also thank the Committee for Social Development for the positive way in which it dealt with the regulations. That has been outlined by the Chair, and we thank him and the Committee for that. I am certain that we all want to ensure that the value of compensation payable under the 1979 Order is not eroded by inflation, and the regulations will make sure that that does not happen. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

That the Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

The regulations are made under the Mesothelioma, etc., Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and will increase the compensation payable under the Act to persons diagnosed with diffuse mesothelioma or, if persons have died, their dependants. The amounts payable are to be increased in line with the corresponding scheme operating in England, Scotland and Wales.

I will briefly outline the purpose of the scheme. The mesothelioma scheme provides financial support within a matter of weeks of diagnosis without the need to establish an occupational link or, indeed, any causal link. Many people who were previously not eligible for help — for example, those who are unable to pursue a civil claim or to claim a lump sum under the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 — have access to financial help for that terrible disease through the scheme. That means that sufferers of mesothelioma are eligible for a payment whether they were employees, were self-employed or, indeed, have never worked, provided that they have not already received a compensation payment from another source.

The regulations will increase the amounts payable under the mesothelioma scheme by 1·2%, in line with this year's uprating of industrial injuries benefits from April 2015. For example, the amount payable to a person aged 37 or under at diagnosis will be increased from £83,330 to £86,607, which is the same maximum that can be paid from April 2015 under the pneumoconiosis scheme. I am sure that all Members will warmly welcome that increase in the amounts payable, which will ensure that the compensation provided under the scheme maintains its value. I am sure Members across the House will support the regulations.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): The Committee for Social Development considered the regulations at its meetings on 5 February and 26 February, at which time the Committee was content that the rule be made. As the House has just heard, the rule increases the payments to sufferers of diffuse mesothelioma and their dependants by 1·2%, in line with the uprating of industrial injuries benefits.

Mesothelioma is a cancer of the thin membrane that lines the chest and abdomen. The most common cause of the disease is exposure to asbestos, and the disease may not appear until 30 years or more after exposure. In that time, of course, companies responsible for failing to provide a safe working environment, which ultimately results in people developing the disease, may have gone out of business. The statutory rule provides a little more money for sufferers of mesothelioma and their dependants, so the Committee for Social Development is happy and content to recommend that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

Mr Storey: I thank the Chair of the Social Development Committee for the positive way in which the Committee

dealt with the regulation. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Committee Business

Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill: Extension of Committee Stage

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

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended until 16 October 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill [NIA Bill 30/11-15].

I am seeking the House's approval to extend the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill to 16 October 2015. I appreciate that that may appear to be a significant period of time for the consideration of a Bill. However, I am sure that the House and the Member sponsoring the Bill will appreciate that there is an onus on the Committee to fully consider the Bill and, indeed, to conduct a fuller consultation on it than has previously been undertaken.

As the Member will be aware, there were only 41 responses to the consultation exercise that the original sponsor of the Bill undertook. Given the significance of the principal objective of the Bill and on the basis that the consensus is that 20 mph speed limits need our communities' support, the Committee believes that a much more substantive consultation is required, particularly as the Bill has road safety, health and justice consequences that will require input from the relevant Departments and Committees. The Committee favours a minimum period of six weeks to undertake the consultation.

In addition, the Member agreed during Second Stage that the Bill would require amendment. It is important that both he and the Committee allow themselves an appropriate amount of time to consider what amendments might be required to achieve the Bill's principal objective, namely, the reduction of the level of fatalities and accidents on our roads. I very much hope to meet the Member shortly to discuss how best that can be achieved.

I assure the House that the Committee has developed a very testing time frame to complete its consideration of the Bill and to report on its deliberations to the House. That time frame also takes into account the Executive's legislative programme, which will shortly be introduced to the House, and, of course, the Department's continued scrutiny.

Mr Ramsey: I thank the Chair for the offer of a meeting. I met the Committee staff, who briefed me on the Committee's consideration stage. I greatly appreciate that and was very content with it for going forward. Given the magnitude of this Bill in introducing 20 mph speed limits across Northern Ireland, it is important that the Committee examines thoroughly every possible avenue. Coincidentally, I also met some of the senior staff of the Department for Regional Development this morning, and I am very appreciative of that too.

I look forward to Consideration Stage and to being in the position where I can address the Committee on how we can best progress the Bill, given that its principles were unanimously agreed here when it was introduced. Clearly, we have to reflect at all times on not just Members'

comments but those of the people, and we have to encourage and motivate others to participate in the consultation. Of the councils that I consulted with, separate to the original Member's consultation, only around six made a submission. There was either a lack of interest or another reason.

I wish the Committee well. It is an important matter. I have shared some ideas of who the Committee should consult, including community safety partnerships, the new councils and user groups across Northern Ireland. I look forward to the challenges that this presents and to the conclusion of that in October.

1.00 pm

Mr Clarke: I thank the Member for his conciliatory approach. I note his comments about everyone supporting the Bill. It is not a case of trying to put it on the long finger. When we get to the stage of doing it, we need to do it right. It is important that we try to widen the consultation as much as possible, and I know that the Member referred to that. There were a small number of responses, and we really need to make an effort to try to reach out as far as we can to get the public to engage.

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 until 16 October 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill [NIA Bill 30/11-15].

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I ask Members to please take their ease for a few moments before the next item of business.

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Newton] in the Chair)

Cycling: Benefits to the Economy

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The next item of business is a motion from the Committee for Regional Development on the report on the inquiry into the benefits of cycling to the economy. The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for this debate. The proposer will have 15 minutes to propose the motion and 15 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other speakers will have five minutes.

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

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Regional Development [NIA 168/11-16] on its inquiry into the benefits of cycling to the economy; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues and other relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

I welcome the opportunity to speak — if I can and my voice holds out — to the House on this very important subject and on our report on the benefits of cycling to the economy. This represents a significant body of work, and I would like at the outset to record my thanks to the many contributors to the report, including the members of the Committee; the members of the all-party group on cycling; external witnesses; and officials from the Department for Regional Development, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of the Environment. In particular, I would like to thank those from the Great Western Greenway and Chain Reaction Cycles for hosting the Committee on external study visits. I also record the Committee's thanks to our own support team, Hansard and our Assembly researcher for their invaluable contributions.

H G Wells said:

“Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race.”

The Committee recently held an external meeting in Ballycraigy Primary School. After that meeting, we had the opportunity to witness how the children were being introduced to cycling and how they were developing their cycling skills through the Active School Travel programme. The Committee would like to thank the principal, teachers and children at Ballycraigy Primary School for the inspirational display that they provided to members on that cold, snowy morning. The Committee therefore welcomes the fact that the Minister is continuing to support this valuable programme and hopes that this will continue for the long-term future, irrespective of the financial pressures that his Department might otherwise be facing.

It might be more apt, therefore, to say that every time we see a person, rather than just an adult, on a bike, we no longer despair for the future of the human race. It is also very apt that the Department's draft strategy recognises that education, both of children and adults, is a key component in helping to make the transition from inactivity to activity, from the car to the bicycle and from non-cyclist to cyclist. It is not the only action that is required, but it is nevertheless integral to helping both to change people's

mindsets about cycling and to bring about the modal shift from vehicular forms of transport.

I would like to dwell a little bit longer on the draft strategy. Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister and his officials within the very enthusiastic cycling unit for bringing forward the draft strategy. Whilst the Committee might be seen to have been critical of its content, it is nevertheless a valiant attempt to bring cycling to the fore of our thinking. It is, however, the Committee's view that it is more a statement of intent than a strategy. This viewpoint has been endorsed by the Department, as recorded in Hansard. Sustrans described the vision as being more of an aim than truly visionary.

This aim talks of culture, mutual respect, freedom and confidence as all being very aspirational, but, put in its most simplistic terms, cycling should be no more difficult than getting into a car or on a bus or train. That is why the Committee has suggested a very ordinary vision; a vision of a Northern Ireland where people from all sectors of the community cycle for transport and enjoyment. Cycling must become an ordinary, everyday event that is carried out by ordinary people, in ordinary clothes, as an ordinary form of transport. If we accept this as our vision, we can begin to plan for all those other things that the Department aspires to in its statement of intent.

We can plan for an infrastructure that goes beyond the Belfast-centric aspirations of the statement. With this will come the confidence for people to begin cycling and walking or to get back on bicycles. Our culture of dependence on the car will begin to erode. Communities will have the freedom to travel, and we will start to build the mutual respect that is needed by all road users. By striding towards this simplified vision, we can journey towards a healthier population, connected and cohesive communities, and a more affordable, integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable transport system.

Those should be our targets because, unlike the Department, the Committee and many of the cycling fraternity believe that the strategy must have targets. It is ridiculous and unacceptable that a Department has consciously chosen to set an arbitrary Northern Ireland-wide target for the percentage of people cycling, as we do not think that it would encourage people to use a bicycle at a local level.

Cambridge has just achieved 30% of all journeys being taken by means of cycling and walking, but has it consciously chosen to do away with targets? No; it has instead increased its targets for people walking and cycling to 40%, which is higher than that in the Netherlands. The Committee believes that objectives and targets are essential to provide clarity for the end vision, to drive the strategy and subsequent delivery plans forward and, very importantly, to make the Department accountable for the success of the strategy. We have made recommendations about those in our report. Additionally, the Department should not try to distort the measurement of success against the targets, as it has for rural provision. When we asked the Department to identify cycle tracks and lanes on main roads in rural areas, we were given the Sydenham bypass, the A55 Parkway, the Holywood Road, the Saintfield Road and Belvoir Road as examples, because the Department uses the classification that some of those roads have been classed as rural roads and are subject to a speed limit of more than 40 mph, while our urban roads

are subject to a limit of 40 mph and under. Such distortions are unacceptable.

The Committee made a number of other recommendations that aim to strengthen the strategy, some of which will undoubtedly be touched on by other contributors to the debate. I want to cover other contributions that cycling can make to our economy, tourism and the health sectors. A recent UK report stated that some cycling schemes have a benefit:cost ratio of 35:1. To put that into perspective, the £43 billion HS2 proposal has a benefit:cost ratio of 2:3. There is no definitive evidence about the value of cycling to the Northern Ireland economy. The Committee heard evidence from Sustrans that, extrapolating figures from a London School of Economics study, the benefit of cycling to Northern Ireland could be in the region of £89 million. CTC, on the other hand, put that figure for Northern Ireland somewhere between £300 million and £400 million.

We can substantiate some contributions to the economy. During the inquiry, the Committee conducted a site visit to Chain Reaction in Doagh, which is the world's leading online cycling product retailer. The company has approximately 500 employees and a turnover in excess of £150 million. Through employment, mail distribution, capital investment and taxes, Chain Reaction contributes around £40 million to the Northern Ireland economy annually. That is a consequence of having no targets. The Committee believes that establishing a baseline that allows you to measure progress through the lifetime of a strategy is essential, and we recommend that accordingly.

Our friend H G Wells stated:

“Cycle tracks will abound in Utopia”.

Unfortunately, the Committee fully recognises that there are limitations on the levels of investment, and many of the solutions that will most likely effect a significant change in cycle numbers must correlate to the nature and consistency of existing and future infrastructure. That is why the Committee has called on the Department to be imaginative with its budget for cycling. Cycling provision in Belfast is, for example, very piecemeal. Indeed, the Committee, while visiting public hire taxi ranks in Belfast, noted a length of cycle track that went no more than 100 metres before disappearing in its entirety.

A strategic and well-planned cycling infrastructure is needed, and, whilst it might not be segregated by separate kerbs, for example, more cost-effective segregation should be considered. Investment should not be Belfast-centric, and consideration should be given to investing in communities through, for example, funding an equivalent to Walking in your Community, which is being delivered by Outdoor Recreation and other such programmes and initiatives.

I will turn briefly to the impact of cycling on tourism. The success of the Giro d'Italia and the follow-up, with the staging of the Gran Fondo in June, have been major contributors to the impetus for cycling and cycling products in Northern Ireland. That has been recognised by the managing director of Chain Reaction, who stated:

“From our perspective as a business, it would be great to see an increased level of investment in facilities and infrastructure here in Northern Ireland because that would help to support the growth of cycling globally and tourism coming into the area”.

1.15 pm

It is disappointing, therefore, that NITB, or Tourism Northern Ireland as it is now, has not followed up on those successes through the publication of its much-heralded, but unseen, legacy report. The impetus that I have referred to must not be allowed to diminish but built upon to promote Northern Ireland as a cycling tourism venue as part of the EuroVelo cycling package. That does not require significant levels of investment, as the Committee witnessed at first hand in Mulranny, County Mayo, when it visited the Great Western Greenway. That 42 kilometres of disused railway line between Westport and Achill Island cost little more than €5.6 million. It has contributed to and maintains 65 new jobs, has in excess of 210,000 users each year and, in 2010, was estimated to be contributing over €7 million to the local economy. That is a significant return on a reasonably insignificant investment.

The Committee noted the progress that has been made in developing over 450 kilometres of off-road trails in Northern Ireland over recent years, including the international mountain bike trails in Davagh forest, just outside Cookstown in County Tyrone, and Rostrevor and Castlewellan in County Down, which attracted up to 82,000 visitors in the first year of operation. Figures from Scotland show that such trails can generate 1.3 million visitors per annum for mountain biking alone, which is equivalent to about 300,000 bed nights. In 2009, it was predicted that the economic value of mountain biking in Scotland would rise from £119 million to £155 million.

The Assembly research paper on cycling for leisure, recreation and tourism detailed the benefits of cycling tourism. Cycle tourism can provide incentives for people to visit an area and help to attract new types of visitors who can stay longer and spend more in a particular destination. It can also support existing local trade, particularly in the hospitality sector, and offer business start-up opportunities, such as bike hire, particularly in rural areas. It is an environmentally sustainable form of tourism, with minimal impact on the environment, and it can help reduce traffic congestion. It also utilises existing and often underused facilities such as quiet laneways, canal towpaths and disused railway lines. Ultimately, those who participate in cycling, while on holiday or as a leisure activity, may be encouraged to cycle more frequently, other than for utility purposes. The Committee has recommended, therefore, as a matter of urgency, that Tourism Northern Ireland, in conjunction with relevant Executive Departments, develops a cycling tourism package for Northern Ireland.

Finally, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, the Committee has received substantial evidence about the positive impact that cycling could have in respect of tackling obesity. Evidence from the Chief Medical Officer stated that just 53% of adults meet the current physical activity guidelines, whilst research shows that children in Northern Ireland are the least physically active anywhere in the United Kingdom, with 50% of seven-year-olds here not getting the recommended one hour of physical activity each day.

Those statistics support the fact that physical activity is number four in the global causes of mortality. Whilst the Committee believes that it is erroneous to claim that cycling is a cure for obesity, it is, if properly targeted, a powerful tool to encourage physical activity. That is one of the reasons why the Committee is so supportive of the

Active School Travel programme and other initiatives and events in the likes of our forest parks. Those venues offer a degree of safety and segregation for cyclists and walkers, and all efforts should be made to open up other venues. In addition, the Committee believes that future road capital infrastructure investments should be health proofed.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, the Committee is content that the potential for significant contributions to the economy through cycling can be achievable. The impacts of cycling transport can be environmental, social and economic, and the benefits of promoting cycling occur in society as a whole, as well as on an individual level. I look forward to hearing the remaining contributions from Members and, in particular, the Minister. On behalf of the Committee for Regional Development, I commend our report to the House. Thank you very much.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of my fellow colleagues on the Committee, I support the motion and call for the recommendations made in it to be implemented by the Department.

We welcome the fact that the Department created a cycling unit and developed a draft strategy, which, I understand, will be finalised this summer and with the delivery plan commencing thereafter. The strategy has a vision of establishing a cycling culture to give people the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle and where all road users can safely share a space with mutual respect. We noted that the draft strategy had not been rural proofed. However, we have been assured that the delivery plan will be subject to rural proofing, and we feel that this is extremely important.

In terms of current provision, we feel that there is a relatively limited cycling network across the North at present. At the minute, there are about 25,000 miles for vehicular traffic, compared to 800 miles designated as a national cycling network, and 700 of those miles are shared by vehicles. So, only 106 miles are dedicated as traffic-free cycle paths. We share the view of many cyclists that the current provision is relatively fragmented. This is compounded by the fact that there is no single agency or Department responsible for the current network, which has resulted in missing links and a variation in quality. Indeed, Andrew Grieve, the head of the cycling unit, and colleagues, came to Omagh to inspect the network there, and whilst we are very glad of the network that is currently there, we noticed a number of missing links. We hope that the strategy will help to fill in those missing links. I have no doubt that the situation is the same in other towns across the country.

In terms of the master plan approach referred to in the strategy, it must involve other stakeholders, such as councils and Sustrans both at reception and delivery stages.

Recommendation 26 refers to the importance of rural areas. We felt that the draft strategy was a little bit vague on rural areas. We note that the document said, "where opportunities arise", and where there is "cycling demand" in reference to rural areas. Combine that with the decision not to rural proof the draft strategy, and we are very anxious that rural and urban areas get equal treatment in the delivery of any strategy.

Recommendation 30 refers to the development of greenways. We believe that there is great potential for

the development of greenways in rural and urban areas throughout the North. We strongly feel that disused railway beds that straddle the North should be scoped out as potential greenways; indeed, that motion was passed at our ard fheis two weeks ago. In particular, we propose that the DRD should look at the Great Northern Railway with a view to bringing all or parts of it back into use as a greenway. The Minister made many references to the cycling revolution, and we think that this would be a major step forward in creating that cycling revolution.

Along with other colleagues on the Committee, I visited Westport in County Mayo to learn about the social and economic impact of the greenway there, which is based on the Great Western Railway line. It is a huge benefit to the area, with over 200,000 cyclists using it last year. Indeed, the Committee went there in May, and I went back on a family holiday with the children in August, and we cycled from Achill right back to Westport. We saw the huge impact that that has on the vibrancy of Mulranny and Newport and the number of businesses that have been established. Indeed, it has consolidated Westport as a destination for activity tourism.

We believe that, from an engineering perspective, and as the foundations are already there, the greenways should be relatively easy to construct. Obviously, there will be issues with securing the agreement of local landowners, but it should be a relatively cost-effective means of establishing a comprehensive cycling network through the North and on a cross-border basis.

In planning the development of the greenways, we propose that the DRD works in conjunction with its counterparts across the border — the National Roads Authority, the county councils and the tourist board — to ensure that the network here is connected across the island and across Europe. We believe that the Minister and the Department should look at INTERREG as a potential basis for securing funding for such greenways. We support the recommendation for pilot greenways in those areas and believe that they should be spread geographically throughout the Six Counties and on a cross-border basis.

In conclusion, I support the recommendations.

I commend Paul Carlisle and all the team on the DRD Committee for pulling this together and for organising the fact-finding visits and witnesses. I support the recommendations laid before us.

Mr Dallat: I am very happy to take part in the debate and welcome publication of the report. We accept that Northern Ireland is well behind other European centres of population in cycling provision, despite substantial and growing interest in it. That should not be the case because the man who invented the pneumatic or inflatable tyre for bicycles was Dr John Boyd Dunlop.

OK, he was a Scotsman, but he spent all his life in Ireland carrying out veterinary practices in Downpatrick, Belfast and Dublin. He used his skills in stitching to invent the first bicycle with pneumatic tyres. Dunlop's bicycles went on to win major races in Ireland and England. The famous Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Company benefited substantially from his knowledge. He was one of our great inventors. As a child, despite a humble background, I have happy memories of owning a Raleigh, a Rudge and a BSA.

The SDLP is sympathetic to the needs of cyclists. We recognise the many benefits that cycling can bring to communities and individuals socially, environmentally and economically. As well as the benefits to the economy, the cost of our excessive dependence on private cars and other vehicles is great. There is just too much dependence on motorised road transport in Northern Ireland, particularly in rural areas, where, for many people, public transport is not cost-effective or sustainable and, frankly, is not a realistic option.

As other members of the Committee highlighted, ill health, obesity, congestion, road traffic accidents and pollution could all be partly addressed by greater investment in a culture of cycling. The benefits of a greater uptake of cycling to the economy are wide-ranging, so I would like to focus on tourism. As was mentioned, the Giro d'Italia was a testament to the appetite for cycling here and to Northern Ireland's potential to attract international cycling events. I am sure that Dr John Dunlop, hopefully in a better place, must have been very happy with that and with other recent events.

There is substantial interest in cycling across the island of Ireland, as was indicated by other Members, nowhere more so than here in the North, as a sport to watch as well as to take part in. The Tourist Board has made an effort to capitalise on that and informed the Committee that it invested about £2 million over the last two years in development projects for mountain biking trails and off-road cycling trails. It is suggested that activity tourism, including cycling, could be worth £100 million to our economy. The SDLP support for investment in activity tourism runs parallel with our support for reducing VAT to 5%.

Northern Ireland has beautiful countryside and a landscape that attracts people from all over the world. With the right infrastructure and strategic vision, Northern Ireland could be a prime location for cycling holidays and international cycling events. Who is to say that the Tour de France could not come to Ireland just as it went to England last year?

If we are to reap those benefits for the people of Northern Ireland, the Minister for Regional Development needs to make a solid commitment. As we noted in the report, the bicycle strategy lacks the real commitment and funding that it needs, with no objectives or targets. The strategy needs to be reviewed and revisited if cycling in Northern Ireland is to yield all the benefits that it has to offer.

Let us build on that great man of the past, John Boyd Dunlop, who took his bicycles to Dublin in 1888 and won all the races. The people down there initially did not understand how he had done it, but it was, in fact, the pneumatic tyres.

I heard old railways mentioned a couple of times. I think that I have the attention of the Minister. Minister, don't you dare close railways to create greenways. You have done a good job so far of revitalising our railways, so that is one idea that I would shoot down immediately. No greenways from railways.

1.30 pm

Mrs Overend: As a member of the all-party group on cycling, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I read with interest the Regional Development Committee's report. I, along with the Committee Chair

and other members of the all-party group, made representations to the Regional Development Committee, and I thank it for giving us the time to do so.

Many people at home listening to the debate will not have been able to miss the huge excitement generated last May by the Giro d'Italia and the great success of the pink celebrations across Northern Ireland. Everyone embraced Giro d'Italia fever and turned out in their masses to watch and cheer on the cyclists who came from all over the world to our wee country. There was also great community involvement, with the spread of pink in town and country.

Of course, we have our very own home-grown successful cyclists, such as Wendy Houvenaghel from Upperlands in County Londonderry, who all work to highlight the increase in Northern Ireland's interest in all things cycling. Speaking of mid-Ulster, I cannot go on without mentioning the very challenging mountain-bike trails in Davagh forest, which the Chair of the Committee mentioned. It is in the heart of my constituency and is a place for people of all ages to trek the mountains on their bicycles.

It has been a prime time for the Minister for Regional Development to attune his desire for a cycling revolution, and I commend him for the time that he has spent researching what is successful in other cities and countries in Europe and further afield, for developing a bicycle strategy and for opening a consultation to listen to the views of the people of Northern Ireland. I am certain that there has been an uptake in cycling in the past year or so, with an increase in numbers joining cycling clubs and making regular visits to mountain trails in various parts of Northern Ireland. Of course, we look forward to the Gran Fondo later this year, and I hear that a few MLAs may be taking part in that.

As someone who lives in a very rural part of Northern Ireland, a bicycle, unfortunately, is not a method of transport that I can use to get to work or that my children can use to get to school. However, it is very important that we combine cycling as something that we can do for transport and enjoyment in our vision for its future in Northern Ireland. Cycling can be used for even part of a trip, and that is a mindset that we need to encourage.

As regular cyclists, I and my husband and children cycle for enjoyment, and it is important that we do so for our health and well-being. Cycling is something that we do together as a family, and we use our cycling time to teach the children about road safety and how to treat others. In other more urban areas, cycling has the ability to become a real and meaningful method of transport, and the work that can be done to encourage an increase in that is the mixed responsibility of the Department for Regional Development and the Department of Health.

I understand that over £100 million is saved in health care owing to the high level of cycling in Copenhagen. Therefore, the Department of Health can work to promote cycling as part of healthy living and the Department for Regional Development can work to provide a better infrastructure for cyclists to cycle on.

The timing has been right for the Regional Development Committee to take an interest in cycling and, in particular, to analyse the benefits of cycling to the economy. Generally, the report is very positive and shares the Minister's vision for the future of cycling. It has gone somewhat further than simply being a critique of the

Minister's bicycle strategy. I was keen to read the five articles in the terms of reference. The fifth one is:

"Identify any additional funding/funding sources required to deliver agreed objectives."

Perhaps I need more time to read the report, but I am not sure that that term of reference has been met. It may be something that the Chair will address later, or perhaps I need to analyse the report again.

Although there are many points that I agree with, I want to raise a particular issue. The recommendation at paragraph 27 states:

"The Committee recommends that the Minister seeks to ring-fence an appropriate level of funding for the delivery of the strategy as opposed to individual projects".

However, the recommendation at paragraph 40 states:

"The Committee recommends that, in the light of the restrained budgetary period facing the Executive departments, DRD produce imaginative proposals and appropriate bids to enhance the cycling experience within Northern Ireland. At a minimum, the Department should ensure that funding is ring-fenced for the Active Travel schools programme."

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring her remarks to a close.

Mrs Overend: Yes.

I think that there is a bit of a contradiction, in that we are looking at it overall, yet funding for individual projects as well.

Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I will leave it at that.

Mr Lyttle: I welcome the opportunity to speak today in favour of cycling provision. Alliance strongly supports investment in sustainable and active travel, and, as Chair of the all-party group on cycling, I have facilitated engagement with a wide range of organisations to promote awareness and the development of effective cycling policy and provision in Northern Ireland.

We have seen an increasing momentum behind cycling in Northern Ireland. The Active School Travel programme is doing excellent work. The Giro d'Italia put cycling on an international stage here in Northern Ireland. Indeed, we have a Giro legacy plan that it would be good to hear more about today. The Belfast bike scheme is ready and waiting to go. We have legislation passing through the House on 20 mph speed limits. We have fantastic organisations in the community like NI Greenways, the Fréd Festival and the plethora of cycling clubs across our community doing excellent work.

As Mrs Overend mentioned, the all-party group on cycling presented to the inquiry into cycling. As part of Bike Week 2014, we facilitated a round-table discussion that Sustrans assisted with and facilitated. I am extremely grateful for the support that it has given to the all-party group, as well as other organisations like CTC and NI Greenways, to mention a few. I am grateful to the Minister for Regional Development for his engagement with the group.

The session identified three key barriers to cycling: bike ownership; infrastructure and safety; and weather and misconceptions about cycling. Some of the

recommendations that we submitted to the inquiry on bike ownership were on the improvement and enhancement of the bike-to-work scheme. We said that there is some inconsistency in employer participation, a lengthy application process and only one bike per applicant. We also suggested that access to more affordable bikes would be a step in the right direction, as would bike storage and access to bike maintenance and repair. On infrastructure and safety, we emphasised the need for appropriate infrastructure provision for cyclists in Northern Ireland and mutual respect between road users. Where weather and misconceptions are concerned, we wanted to see improved access to changing facilities and perhaps, indeed, radio traffic updates to include cycling-related information.

I will move to the report's recommendations. Cycling has been seen as marginal for too long, and the report establishes that cycling spending has some of the best payback on transport expenditure. The report sets out a positive vision for cycling in Northern Ireland where people from all sectors of the community cycle for transport and enjoyment. It also recommends that we set targets to allow for meaningful measurement of the success or otherwise of the bicycle strategy and of progress against other important Executive commitments, such as a reduction in obesity levels and in greenhouse gases. It also makes clear that we need to see ring-fencing of appropriate levels of funding for the strategy's delivery and to establish the scale of expected cost-benefit return for the provision. It also makes an important recommendation about connecting the existing greenways, and I support the DRD vision of focusing on linking the Belfast greenways to Newry canal through Portadown up to Derry, through Omagh and Strabane and down through Enniskillen to the west as an all-island strategy that is crucial to unlocking EU funding to get the investment that we need to really move cycling forward.

Mr McCarthy: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: Yes, I will give way.

Mr McCarthy: Will the Member agree with me that, contrary to Mr Dallat's contribution, the use of disused railway lines is an ideal way of creating cycle lanes such as that that we have at the Comber greenway?

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

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for his intervention. Yes, the Members are in agreement: I think they both support the use of disused railways without losing any further railway provision in Northern Ireland. The disused greenways have an important contribution to make to the advancement of cycling in Northern Ireland.

All roads should be designed to protect all users. The report recommends that, where cycling provision in urban centres is being considered and designed, there should be an emphasis on providing some form of segregation from other vehicular traffic. We need to see much better plans in relation to the York Street interchange than are on the board at the moment. I also welcome the recommendation that Translink should establish targets in its corporate plans to increase the number of bicycles accessing trains and buses for integrated transport, and that a cycle-to-work scheme be compulsory in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

We also need to see a baseline showing the precise current value of cycling to the economy. The benefits and opportunities of cycling to transport, the environment, health, sport and the economy are many. There is a gathering momentum behind the growth of cycling and a clear need for action and investment to meet the increasing demand for improved and imaginative cycling provision in Northern Ireland.

Mr Easton: At the outset, I thank the Regional Development Committee team for putting together the report and all those who have contributed to it. It is very important that the Committee report is taken seriously by the Department and the Minister. That is why I will touch on the Department's draft strategy, which recognises that education is the key component in helping to make the transition from inactivity to being active: a key component in making the transition from the car to the bicycle.

In the Committee's view, the draft strategy is a statement of intent rather than an actual strategy. This viewpoint has been endorsed by the Department and is recorded in Hansard. Sustrans described the vision as more of an aim rather than being truly visionary. It is strange that the Department's draft strategy does not set Northern Ireland-wide targets. I do not believe that zero targets would encourage people to use a bicycle in their local community. The Committee believes that objectives and targets are vital to provide clarity in respect of the end vision and to drive the strategy and delivery of any project.

The Committee made a number of other recommendations that aim to strengthen the strategy. The Committee heard evidence from Sustrans on the benefits of cycling in Northern Ireland, which could be in the region of £89 million. CTC has put figures of somewhere between £300 million and £400 million of benefit to Northern Ireland, and that is something that we cannot afford to ignore.

If I may, I will turn briefly to the impact of cycling on tourism. The success of the Giro d'Italia and the follow-up with the staging of the Gran Fondo have been major contributors to people wanting to get on their bike and develop cycling across Northern Ireland. The Assembly Research paper 'Cycle for Leisure, Recreation and Tourism' shows the following benefits of cycle tourism: it can provide incentives for people to visit the area and spend more money in the local community; it can support local traders and offer business start-up opportunities, such as bike hire; it is an environmentally sustainable form of tourism, with minimal impact on the environment; and it utilises existing and often underused facilities, such as quiet laneways, towpaths and disused railway lines.

The Committee has recommended that Tourism Northern Ireland works in conjunction with all relevant Executive Departments to develop a cycling tourism package for Northern Ireland. The Committee also looked at the health benefits as a positive impact of cycling. The Chief Medical Officer has stated that 53% of adults meet physical activity guidelines, while research shows that children in Northern Ireland are the least physically active of anywhere in the United Kingdom, with 50% of seven-year-olds in Northern Ireland not getting the recommended —

Mr Clarke: I appreciate the Member giving way. I forgot to touch on this when I was reading my contribution. Maybe the Minister can address this point. It is obviously not in the Minister's bailiwick, but we are aware, from the day we

did the visit, that some of the funding for the Active School Travel programme was in jeopardy, not from DRD but from DOE. Can the Minister give us an assurance that he will work with his colleagues to ensure that DOE plays its part? Unfortunately, on the road safety aspect of this, the number of deaths was very high last year; probably one of the highest in quite a number of years. It is important, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, that the Minister does what he can with Executive colleagues to ensure DOE's continued support.

1.45 pm

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

Mr Easton: I thank the Member for his contribution, and, certainly, I hope that the Minister takes on board what my colleague has said. It is important that we keep DOE on board and that we do not lose funding on that aspect.

In conclusion, encouraging people to get on their bike could improve our health and, indeed, save lives across Northern Ireland, thereby helping our health service. I support the report.

Mr Moutray: I believe that this report includes significantly useful information that the Minister should analyse and use as he seeks to implement a policy to encourage further interest and community involvement in cycling. I feel that it is important to note a widespread acceptance of cycling and the enhanced cycling infrastructure can make a notable contribution to our local economy. When it gave oral evidence to the Committee, the Cyclists' Touring Club claimed that the economic contribution of cycling to the UK economy was just below £3 billion. On a pro rata basis, the contribution to the Northern Ireland economy is believed to be in the region of £300 million to £400 million. While these figures are positive, the value of cycling to our economy can be grown in the years that lie ahead.

The Committee believes that, although the Department is experiencing a restrained budget, DRD should aim to produce imaginative proposals and appropriate bids to improve the cycling experience in Northern Ireland, because cycling not only brings notable benefit to the economy overall but enhances the tourist market in particular. Only last year, we witnessed the outstanding success story that was the Giro d'Italia. This was a significant cycling event, which positively portrayed Northern Ireland on a global stage and showed yet again that we are more than capable of hosting international events and doing so successfully. Praise must go to the efforts of the Executive and others for attracting this event to Northern Ireland and also for their work in attracting the Gran Fondo of 2015-17.

Cycling tourism has many economic benefits, such as providing support to local businesses and attracting more people to visit different areas across our Province. Additionally, the further enhancement of cycling tourism offers the potential of business start-up opportunities, such as those for businesses involved in bike-hire schemes, particularly in rural areas. It must also be noted that cycling can play a major part in building exercise into our lifestyles, allowing us to become more healthy and reducing our risk of developing conditions and diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke, type-2 diabetes and obesity. Improving our health through exercise, such as cycling, benefits society at large. A healthier population

means that less needs to be spent on tackling problems like obesity. As cycling is one of the most accessible activities for people of all abilities and ages, we should not underestimate the role that it can play in a healthy lifestyle.

In conclusion, I feel that the work undertaken by groups such as Sustrans, the Cyclists' Touring Club and Outdoor Recreation must be recognised and praised, as they have played an important role in education and the development of cycling in Northern Ireland. The bike-to-work schemes introduced by public bodies and other organisations have also proven to be a catalyst in encouraging people to take up or return to cycling.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Moutray: Yes, I will indeed.

Mr Clarke: I note that the Member refers to the cycle-to-work scheme. I think that I have raised this point before, but does the Member not find it ironic that the scheme that is operated in this very Building is not open 12 months a year? Each of the Departments encourages cycling, but the Assembly, through the Commission, only opens the scheme for a very limited time, and I have to say also that it is very difficult to access. I am sure that the Member will be surprised.

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

Mr Moutray: Thank you. I agree with my colleague's sentiments. We need to be more flexible: people have busy lifestyles and work long hours, and we need to work more to tailor schemes around that. I feel that such schemes and the Active School Travel initiative should be further enhanced and expanded. I look forward to seeing how the Minister and the Department will work alongside the rest of the Executive to implement and build on the recommendations of our inquiry.

After many years, I recently started to cycle again. While I may never be a Chris Lyttle or a Sammy Douglas, I hope to do the Westport to Achill cycle trail this year.

Mr Byrne: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion and to support the Committee's recommendations. As many of us will recognise, cycling has seen a resurgence in recent years, with people seeking to use bicycles as their primary mode of transport as well as their primary mode of exercise. Needless to say, a growing cycling culture in Northern Ireland will have new impacts and raise new issues in areas such as health, public safety, tourism, transport and our regional and local infrastructure.

The expansion of cycling in Northern Ireland presents an exciting opportunity to develop a market that promotes healthier lifestyles, reduces our carbon footprint and, as my colleague said, opens new areas for Northern Ireland tourism. In my constituency in the Omagh area, I have already seen the positive effects of this developing sector. The Omagh Wheelers club is a vibrant collection of cycling enthusiasts who seek to promote cycling as an alternative mode of transport and the best form of exercise. The club was formed in 1999 with only a handful of members, but it has grown to over 140 members.

Local clubs regularly organise leisure, competitive and charity events that continually bring crowds and revenue to the local area. In 2013, for example, the Wheelers promoted around 40 events, including the prestigious all-

Ireland vets/junior time trial championships and the junior/A3 road race championship.

The club's signature event, the McCann Cup, sees an entry of around 300 cyclists across five races and attracts people from all over the island. This June, the club will help to host the all-Ireland cycling championships, one of the most prestigious racing events in the Irish cycling calendar. The event will bring world-class cyclists and para-cyclists to Omagh to compete not only for first place but for the honour of wearing the Irish national champion's jersey in this year's Tour de France. I suspect that the event will bring in an even greater number of spectators, who will spend significant amounts of money and bolster the local economy. With that in mind, I support the efforts of the Wheelers and the Omagh cycling initiative in promoting greater participation in cycling, better transport planning and in-town development to facilitate cyclists.

I have spoken about the Omagh Wheelers and the Omagh cycling initiative not simply in admiration of their efforts to promote the sport of cycling but to demonstrate that the cycling phenomenon is real and that its rise is plain to see. The expansion of cycling means the galvanisation of an economic resource. For every charity or race event that draws hundreds of people, we see a boost to our local economy. I believe that this sector needs the support of the Assembly.

A draft strategy for developing a plan for the future of cycling in Northern Ireland is now timely, and it is good to hear that the Department will, hopefully, bring forward a strategy soon. The Dublinbikes park-and-hire scheme has been very successful. It was started some years ago by the then Lord Mayor of Dublin, Andrew Montague. Hopefully, Belfast will have an equally good bicycle scheme in the future.

As the Committee rightly notes, there is an almost universal acceptance that cycling and an improved cycling infrastructure can mean a significant boost to the economy. I note how the Department for Transport report, 'Value for Money Assessment for Cycling Grants', has found that cycling schemes can have a benefit:cost ratio of up to 35:1.

The Committee was unable to come up with any exact figure for the value of cycling to the Northern Ireland economy, but Sustrans estimates a contribution of about £87 million, and the Cyclists' Touring Club mentioned that £300 million to £400 million is an estimate of the economic impact that cycling can have to Northern Ireland.

I support the Committee's recommendation that the Department must establish a baseline for the current value of cycling to the economy so that we may regularly assess all progress going forward. I want to mention the comments of the managing director of the Antrim bicycle retailer Chain Reaction, who said:

"it would be great to see an increased level of investment in facilities and infrastructure here in Northern Ireland because that would help to support the growth of cycling globally and tourism coming into the area."

It is a sentiment that I support.

As my fellow Committee members no doubt know, Chain Reaction in Antrim is the world's largest cycling product

retailer, selling over 600 brands and 60,000 products to more than 1.5 million customers —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Byrne: — in over 100 countries by electronic retail. I support the motion.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: As Question Time begins at 2.00 pm, I suggest that the House takes its ease until then. The debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be Sammy Douglas.

The debate stood suspended.

On resuming (Mr Speaker in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Speaker: Ms Megan Fearon is not in her place. She called to my office to indicate that she was feeling unwell and she has gone home. We wish her a speedy recovery.

St Patrick's Barracks: Update

2. **Mr Frew** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the St Patrick's Barracks site. (AQO 7834/11-15)

Mr P Robinson (The First Minister): OFMDFM officials have been engaged in discussions with Department for Social Development officials and other stakeholders in relation to the future regeneration of St Patrick's Barracks. A public-sector stakeholder group has been established and continues to meet to ensure that public bodies with an interest in the site will have an opportunity to shape its development. The Department for Social Development is preparing a proposal to purchase the site from OFMDFM for the purposes of regeneration. This approach should enable early progress to be made on the regeneration of the site and the delivery of a range of economic and social benefits, subject to any formal commitments required by the Department for Social Development from the stakeholders.

Mr Frew: I thank the First Minister for his answer. Given the impact of the JTI Gallaher job losses on Ballymena and the Province as a whole, what discussions has he had with the new Social Development Minister about the proposed plans for the site to ensure that progress is made as quickly as possible, not only for public-sector investment but private-sector investment alongside it?

Mr P Robinson: I suspect that the Member has had some discussions with the new Social Development Minister on this matter as they share the same constituency and the same interest in this scheme. I spoke with the Minister on Friday to see how we could speed things up. He is keen to have the site and we are keen to pass it on, so my hopes are that this will happen in the very near future. Of course, there are some legal issues to be resolved around the transfer of the site.

The Minister is also keen that the proposal is worked up for the future shape of the site. There is already a proposal in relation to housing and he is looking at some educational value on the site. I know that he has had meetings with the Minister for Employment and Learning in relation to ensuring that there is some skills element to the site as well. Who knows whether there might be some possibility of the future use of the site for the private sector as well? I understand as well that it is possible that it might help some of the traffic flows in the Ballymena area, which would be useful to local residents.

Mr Swann: I thank the First Minister for his answers so far. He said that there had already been communication with the Minister for Employment and Learning in relation to the relocation of the Northern Regional College's (NRC) Ballymena campus. Does he think that there will be any delay? We do not want to lose the capital investment that is there for the NRC.

Mr P Robinson: If there is delay, it will not come from our side. It is a simple transfer exercise. There are some issues relating to the potential contamination that has existed on the site. We understand that this is not as profound as in some of the other military sites that we have taken over. We had an initial decontamination survey carried out which showed that the contamination was fairly low-level. The stakeholders and DSD required a further survey, which is under way at present but I do not expect that to be a major issue. As far as the rest of the transfer is concerned, the Department for Social Development has, at the same time, to start working up the scheme and, no doubt, the Minister's stakeholder group will assist with their views as to what could be on the site.

Mr Allister: Speaking of delay, in 10 days' time, I think, it will be four years since the site was transferred to OFMDFM, so there has been substantial delay already. When this and other sites were transferred, they were gifted on the basis, it was said, that proceeds from the sale of them would be used to meet the exceptional pressures caused by the devolving of policing and justice. Is that still the intention, and will there be an actual sale at market value of this and other sites, or has that been overtaken by events?

Mr P Robinson: No, if one Department transfers to another, it does so at a value set by the valuation office. My understanding is that, in December, it was gauged that that was about £3.5 million for the remainder of the site. That is a sale, because, if the Department was going out to carry out a regeneration scheme and purchasing land, it would probably purchase it from the private sector or wherever, so it is a sale. As for where the money goes, it will go eventually into the Department of Finance, which will determine, on the basis of the priorities, where it should be spent, because, in the interim, funding has been given to the Department of Justice.

Mr Speaker: Before moving on, I further inform Members that questions 3 and 9 have been withdrawn within the appropriate time frame.

Faith: Equality Commission Approach

4. **Mr Craig** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the Equality Commission's approach to the actions of individuals and organisations of faith. (AQO 7836/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an Executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and, as such, is independent of government and Ministers in respect of its operation. Unfortunately, there is no departmental authority to interfere in operational decisions of the commission. In addition, there is no shared departmental position on the matter between the deputy First Minister and me.

Mr Craig: I thank the Minister for that response. Minister, taking note of a poll published in the 'Belfast Telegraph'

today, is it not remarkable that 70% of those polled were in favour of Ashers, but, more astonishingly, 90% believe that equality issues should not be used to force people to say or do something that they oppose? Does he agree with me that there is an overriding issue of the right of religious freedom as well?

Mr P Robinson: To me, the only thing that is surprising is that 30% of respondents to the poll thought that Ashers should not be given sympathy for the way that it has been treated by the Equality Commission. We live in a society where there will always be competing rights. This is not an issue of discriminating against any section of the community, in terms of the gay or lesbian community, nor is it a matter of attempting to get some special privilege for people of faith. The issue, where there are competing rights, is ensuring that there is a reasonable accommodation so that people can express their views and behave in a way that is consistent with their beliefs. I think that that is what the Equality Commission has missed. When you consider that they have set aside potential spending of £33,000 for the court case, in which they are seeking damages of £500 against Ashers, it is fairly clear to me that there is a better use that that money could be put to, particularly in the tight fiscal situation that the Executive face.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Will the First Minister update us on progress in the development of the sexual orientation strategy?

Mr P Robinson: This is a new question, not the one that is on the Order Paper. Of course, as I understand it, the strategy is out for consultation, and responses have been returned. The responses are being considered in the Department in order that it can draft a potential strategy document for us, and hopefully that will happen reasonably soon.

Mr Attwood: My view is that the Equality Commission has overreached in this matter, but I also believe that any legislation in respect of a conscience clause is overreaching. That said, do you agree with me, First Minister, that the Equality Commission would be better advised to spend its time and resources dealing with the structural long-term male Catholic unemployment, which has been unchanged for decades, and the increasing long-term male Protestant unemployment that is now witnessed in too many of our communities in Northern Ireland?

Mr P Robinson: If I were to look through the list of issues that the Equality Commission has responsibility for, I could find an awful lot that it would better serve the commission to deal with. However, it is an independent body and has the ability to decide for itself what its priorities are. Equally, we in the House have the independence to comment on or criticise what it does.

Ms Lo: What does the Minister believe the Equality Commission's thoughts would be on recent media reports regarding the alleged vetoing of a proposed unionist unity candidate in South Belfast on the basis of his sexual orientation?

Mr P Robinson: I am delighted to see that the nerves are beginning to jangle in the Alliance Party about unionist pacts. It is a matter entirely for individual voters which party and candidate they vote for and a matter for each party whether it stands or does not stand in any constituency and, indeed, for what purpose. I rather

suspect that the Equality Commission will not spend an awful lot of its time on this issue at least.

Child Poverty Strategy: Implementation

5. Mr Rogers asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline how they will monitor the implementation of the child poverty strategy 2011 across Departments. (AQO 7837/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: With your permission, Mr 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): The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires the Executive to prepare and publish annual reports on the strategy and to review it formally every third year. To date, three annual reports have been published. A review of progress was completed in 2014, in consultation with Departments. As the Member is aware, the new framework, Delivering Social Change, was launched in 2011 to oversee the delivery of the Executive's commitments under priority 2 of the Programme for Government. One of the key programme building blocks is the delivery of a child poverty strategy. The framework is supported by two Executive subcommittees — the poverty and social inclusion subcommittee and the children and young people subcommittee — and a programme board that is charged with overseeing the work of the subcommittees.

In 2012, OFMDFM commissioned work to develop a joined-up approach that would allow each Department to understand better its role in tackling, addressing and, indeed, reducing child poverty. That resulted in the publication of the child poverty outcomes framework in October 2013. It proposed the introduction of outcomes-based accountability as a method of both planning and assessing performance. It sets the baseline information relative to where we are at present in relation to meeting our targets and helps us ensure that actions taken are measurable through the established indicators. A child poverty advisory group with representatives from the Departments was established to oversee the development of a new outcomes-based child poverty strategy. That new strategy will allow us to assess and review the action taken and is due to be published shortly.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for his answer. We know that access to education is extremely important in addressing child poverty. Considering the recent cuts to Sure Start, early years and the special educational needs budget, how can we address the needs of our young children and raise the achievement levels of our disadvantaged young people?

2.15 pm

Mr Bell: The Member's question hits on the key aspects of reducing child poverty, namely, education and the role of organisations such as Sure Start. It is important that, as an Executive, we say what we are doing, because a lot of good work has been undertaken to tackle child poverty. Let me give some examples of that. There was the expansion of the Sure Start programme to the top 25% most deprived wards — previously, it was the top 20% — and that is under way. Secondly, the Bright Start childcare grant scheme was launched in March 2014, and, to date, nearly £2 million has been allocated to it. Thirdly, £80 million was

allocated through the Executive to the social investment fund, which is aimed at making life better for people who live in targeted areas, reducing poverty and unemployment and tackling physical deterioration.

The Member asked about education in particular. We have 20 new nurture units operational in 20 primary schools across Northern Ireland. At the end of the 2013-14 preschool admissions process, 99.9% of target-age children whose parents fully engaged with the process were offered a funded place in a preschool setting. We put in funding of £38.4 million to provide free school meals and gave £4.2 million to provide school uniform grants in the 2013-14 school year. In its first year, approximately 9,700 of our pupils have received support through the Delivering Social Change literacy and numeracy programme, giving children the opportunity to lift themselves and, indeed, their families out of poverty.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. Can the Minister explain the delay in bringing forward the updated child poverty strategy and provide an update on when it will be brought to the Assembly?

Mr Bell: We have the draft child poverty strategy. It is coming to the Executive imminently or shortly. I cannot do any better than that — I think that that was the question that was asked. That strategy has been the result of a lot of work. It began in 2012 with the development of the child poverty outcomes framework. It was published in 2013. A review of the previous strategy to see what we got right and wrong, where the gaps were and what we needed to do was completed in 2014. The public consultation on a new strategy was launched in 2014, and further work followed that to take on board the views and comments that arose.

The next steps will be to publish the new child poverty strategy to set out a new approach to child poverty. We will also set out what we are looking to achieve — the outcomes and the indicators — at the beginning and to establish the group that will monitor and implement the work. We want to include our external partners and representatives of the relevant stakeholder groups and to work with our partners so that we can agree, implement and evaluate all our actions to reduce and mitigate the worst effects of child poverty. Those future annual reports will seek to report progress against those outcomes. We are looking to see evidence-based reports on the agreed indicators, the measures that are set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 and the key agreed actions.

The annual report on child poverty for 2013-14 was published in March 2015. In that report, we set out the measures that we undertook in line with the child poverty strategy.

Mr Beggs: The junior Minister highlighted the importance of education in allowing our young people and their families to move out of poverty in the future. Can he explain why early years funding has been reduced for a number of organisations in my constituency, including Kids Korner in the Antiville area, where there are some of the highest levels of child poverty in Northern Ireland?

Mr Bell: In the first instance, we had to look at the key areas. That was the evidence that came to us from a lot of the charitable organisations. We regularly meet Barnardo's, Children in Northern Ireland, the NSPCC and Include Youth. Many of those organisations came together.

Secondly, we had to look at what the evidence was telling us and where best practice actually came from. In previous mandates and under previous authorities, we had dealt with only 20% of the most deprived wards through Sure Start specifically. The evidence was telling us that, what we had to do in those wards, was to up that by an additional 5%. We have actually increased the amount of help that we are giving to the areas of most acute need. When we go into child poverty statistics and specifically into targets, I am always very conscious of saying how well we have done, but against much of the assessed need in the specific areas of relative low income, absolute child poverty, combined low income and material deprivation, and persistent poverty, we have seen a consistent reduction.

The Member mentioned children and education in his constituency. I am not sure how many of the 9,700 children are from East Antrim. I can get him those statistics. I know that some of them are. We were told that the key aspect was to help children in numeracy and literacy because that was the way in which they could lift themselves and, in many cases, their families out of poverty. With that numeracy and literacy strategy, we will certainly have helped a number of children in the East Antrim constituency who were never helped before.

Mr McCallister: I welcome the junior Minister's responses. I have consistently made the case in this Chamber about the need for early intervention and those strategies that address child poverty in particular.

Does the junior Minister agree that those are the places where government and this Executive should focus? What cost will there be if we do not move on welfare reform? Can he keep some of those programmes going? Are the programmes that he has outlined not a better use of money than squandering it on paying penalties to Treasury?

Mr Bell: There are ongoing discussions on welfare reform. One thing that I am particularly keen on is that no front-line service or service that delivers to children can be adversely affected. The work that we are doing on child poverty is an Executive programme. It is not just OFMDFM: every party is included in that and is signed up to do work, particularly around Delivering Social Change.

What we are doing specifically is ensuring that our strategies are informed by the research that has been undertaken; that we assess the impact; that we challenge ourselves in terms of child poverty; and that we also use organisations like the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which we commissioned to provide projections of how child poverty in Northern Ireland and in the UK as a whole is likely to evolve, not only in 2013-14 but right through to 2021.

We are using the best evidence that we have and translating that into very practical measures, such as the early interventions that he mentioned; early support in childcare; developing social enterprises in childcare specifically so that more people can afford to send their children; looking at how we can use Northern Ireland's school estate, where children already are, so that we do not have to deal with the significant costs of transportation for many parents who want to get back into work and lift their families out of poverty; and looking at how we can use the school estate for those particular enterprises, which we have done in Bright Start and, as I said earlier, one of the key strategies for literacy and numeracy in primary schools. We will not see the results of those

measures in GCSE outcomes for many, many years to come, but we are already seeing some initial evidence that children's educational achievement is going up. That is what we need to do to ensure that children can lift themselves out of poverty.

Welfare Reform: Delay Impact

6. **Mrs Cameron** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what impact the delay in implementing welfare reform will have on the enactment of the Stormont House Agreement and its associated timelines. (AQO 7838/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The Stormont House Agreement implementation group, attended by the five party leaders, continues to meet with officials every Monday and to work towards the previously agreed timescales. However, unless an agreement can be reached on welfare reform, the other elements of the Stormont House Agreement cannot be implemented. The Secretary of State has made clear the repercussions of such a failure: corporation tax will not be devolved, despite the Bill having passed its Final Stage in the House of Lords last week; there will be no funding for the public sector voluntary exit scheme, which could have created a potential saving of up to £500 million per annum; and the planned reduction in Departments and reduction in the number of Assembly Members will not go ahead.

The failure to agree welfare reform is already having a direct financial impact. Every day that welfare reforms are not implemented is another day of shortfall payments having to be made. Having already been fined £100 million by HM Treasury, a failure to agree welfare reform will result in a further penalty of £114 million, which would have a dramatic impact on our Budget; that is, £2 million every week being lost. If we do not reach agreement, the Executive will still have to confront the challenges of how people in Northern Ireland will be paid their social security and tax credit payments in the future, as the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs will be closing their legacy IT systems, which we are presently using. Their systems currently make all the £5.5 billion of payments made each year to over 700,000 people and families in Northern Ireland, and if there is no agreement, there will be no method of payment.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the First Minister for his answer. Does the First Minister agree that further financial resources, beyond what was agreed at Stormont Castle, are not available to be allocated to welfare reform?

Mr P Robinson: The Executive can do whatever they want and could allocate further funds. To do so would be taking those funds away from front-line services. I want to make it clear that we are all agreed, as five parties, that we already have an agreement. It was an agreement that we reached at Stormont Castle, and it was fronted up in the Stormont House Agreement. That agreement at Stormont Castle set out spending limits and an envelope of spending over a six-year period. We are looking at implementing that agreement, not changing the figures in it.

It is clear that there are a number of benefits, and we were given estimated figures by DSD, so we are flexible about what the allowances might be within that, but the overall spending envelope has to be maintained or we will have to reduce front-line services, and I am simply not prepared to put my hand to that.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Does the First Minister agree that it is more important to get welfare reform right and, in so doing, to ensure the full implementation of the Stormont House Agreement?

Mr P Robinson: It is vital that we get it right, but we should be mindful of what the process was and is. There is a Bill that needs to be passed by this Assembly. Arising from that Bill, there will be schemes that will outline how we intend to take the agreement reached at Stormont Castle forward. That would need to be passed by the Executive. Arising out of that, there are over 800 regulations, which should keep his Committee fairly busy for the next year, I would have thought. That is the process. There is nothing to stop us moving on with other elements of the process. The Bill going through the Assembly is the trigger — if I can use that word — for corporation tax powers to be devolved and the decision to be taken by us and the various arrangements that there are with the Treasury involving £2 billion of spend. All of that will be actioned by the passage of the Bill. Those are the steps in the process. The stage that we are now at is looking very seriously at how we can put together the scheme for Executive approval consistent with what we have agreed at Stormont.

Mr Cree: The First Minister has mentioned the penalty of £2 million a week. Will he perhaps develop the implications of the change in the IT system and what that is likely to mean for us?

2.30 pm

Mr P Robinson: If we do not agree the Bill, the scheme and the regulations, we will end up in circumstances, in a year or two, in which we will have no IT system to make payments. If we were to have to purchase the IT system, it would cost us close to £1 billion. If we were not to purchase the IT system, we would be asking staff in offices around the Province to do manual payments. One can imagine the kind of difficulties that that would raise.

Those are the implications of not getting it done. It is still doable; it is still doable within the time set out in the Stormont House Agreement, but it requires everybody to roll up their sleeves and make sure that we get it resolved.

Mr Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Racial Equality: OFMDFM Action

T1. **Mr Lyttle** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Assembly and the community can draw any conclusion other than that the delivery of racial equality is not a priority for their office, given the extreme delay to the racial equality strategy, the revelation that outdated race relations law in Northern Ireland will not be updated during this Assembly mandate and the poor administration of the minority ethnic development fund. (AQT 2281/11-15)

Mr Lyttle: I give the First Minister my reassurance that it will take an awful lot more than anything the DUP has to throw at us to rattle the nerve of the Alliance Party at this stage.

Mr P Robinson: Mr Speaker, I am shaking too much to answer that question, so I will ask my colleague the junior Minister to do so.

Mr Bell: If people care to take a serious look at what we have done on racial equality, at the funding that we have secured for the minority ethnic development fund or at my diary for the last four years — be it work with the Chinese community, at the Belfast Mela with the Indian community, with the Somali community or with the representative legal bodies — they will see the level of priority that has been attached to the work that we have undertaken. We have also put out our work on racial equality. We are working on that in consultation, because we are listening to what racial minority groups are telling us. In previous work, I spent several hours looking at the people who are falling through the gaps in our strategy. I looked at how best we can help and support them, and what better legal support can be provided to them.

If people look at the budget and the budget cuts that we received, and then looks at what we delivered by way of support to groups and our work on the minority ethnic development fund, they will come to a very different conclusion to the political point scoring that just happened.

Mr Lyttle: I guess that we have seen the priority that the First Minister gives to the issue; he cannot even answer the question. Given how late his office will be in calling for and awarding minority ethnic development funding for the 2015-16 financial year, which is just upon us, will he consider extending the current level of funding for another year to allow a proper system to be put in place?

Mr Bell: It is disappointing that, having done cheap political point scoring in his first question, the Member feels the need to continue it into his second question, particularly given that the First Minister and deputy First Minister tasked junior Minister McCann and me with taking this under our portfolio and meeting the groups. I notice that the Member did not come back on any of the points of substance. Have we met all the ethnic minority groups? Have we given serious time to that? Have we looked at their needs? Have we been at every major ethnic festival from the Chinese new year to the Belfast Mela to support groups? Absolutely we have. Have we developed the ethnic minority development fund? Yes we have. Have we sought to protect that fund against large and competing items? Yes we have. Have we sought to show and highlight the very positive role that our Chinese, Indian and ethnic minority communities have played in our society? Have we pointed out the net contribution that they have made to the economy, education and the health service? On each of those points of substance, we have sought, as best we can, to support our ethnic groups.

Indeed, at 4.30 pm this afternoon, junior Minister McCann and I have a meeting with Ms Anna Lo in relation to the ethnic development fund. If we are serious about supporting our minority ethnic communities, I encourage the Member to develop some substance to what he has to say, to see what the needs of the ethnic groups actually are and to see what has been provided. Certainly, if there are positive and constructive ways to take that forward, we will listen to them. Cheap political point scoring on ethnic minorities is not helpful.

Mr Speaker: Mr Sammy Wilson is not in his place.

OTRs: Comfort Letters

T3. **Mr Kinahan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to comment on the reports that the PSNI has

identified six additional individuals whose circumstances are similar to those of John Downey and on the fact that detectives now believe that the so-called comfort letters do not protect suspects from prosecution. (AQT 2283/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: Yes, I read the article on the issue. This has, perhaps, confirmed the necessity to have the investigation carried out by Lady Justice Hallett. Her recommendation is that there should be a clear statement from the Government that the letters of comfort have no further validity. They should never have been sent in the first place but, as they have been sent, I recognise that the Secretary of State has made a statement in the House of Commons indicating that they cannot be relied on. I am sure that it will be of interest to all of us to see what happens if and when those matters come before the courts.

Mr Kinahan: That is very good to hear. I would very much appreciate confirmation also from the First Minister that at no time did his office know anything about those letters until the Downey case came forward.

Mr P Robinson: I can give an absolute assurance to him that we had no awareness at all of this outrage before the Downey case. I cannot say that other parts of the office may not have been aware of it. Certainly, as far as the First Minister's part of the office is concerned, we were not aware of it. Everybody also recognises that the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee has carried out a very detailed and prolonged investigation, and I expect its report to be out literally within days.

US Visit: Update

T4. **Mr Humphrey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on their recent visit to the United States of America. (AQT 2284/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: First of all, it was the speediest in-and-out visit that I have had. We literally arrived and did not get a chance to get cases to rooms, but went straight to the first engagement. The next day, we carried out a list of appointments and got the flight back that night.

The engagements that we had were very valuable. We met two very significant world brand name companies that have been spoken to by Invest Northern Ireland over a prolonged period of time. I have — I do not want to say "certainty" — certainly a very firm view that both of those companies will be looking to invest in Northern Ireland with a substantial number of jobs. Northern Ireland continues to be a very attractive proposition, not just for North America but for countries throughout the world. We have a very skilled workforce; we have good infrastructure; we are cost-competitive when it comes to salaries and property. All of those factors joined together, along with the loyalty of staff and the low churn rate that comes with that, shows that Northern Ireland has a hard-to-beat proposition for inward investment.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the First Minister for his answer. I very much welcome the news that he has given to the House of the interest that has been expressed to him. Is there genuine interest from other potential investors to invest in Northern Ireland should we get reduced corporation tax?

Mr P Robinson: There are two elements to the answer to that question. First of all, while we were in New York, the deputy First Minister and I met a large group of business

heads over lunch. He and I heralded the coming of a lower level of corporation tax in Northern Ireland. There has been significant interest.

The second element is that the chief executive of Invest Northern Ireland has already indicated that he has been taking enquiries about when that decision will be taken by the Executive, what rate will be struck, when it will commence and whether it will be a long-lasting development. We hope that now that the Bill has passed, if we can clear the issues of welfare reform we can look to take those decisions, which would have a significant impact on job creation in Northern Ireland.

Delivering Social Change: Literacy Scheme

T5. **Mr Moutray** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they agree that the Delivering Social Change literacy scheme should continue. (AQT 2285/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The scheme has been running for, I think, two years. I recall answering questions a few weeks back when I gave some evidence that the success rate was such that it not only justified our decision to start this scheme but would justify its continuation.

I understand that there are budgetary difficulties. It was to have been mainstreamed and taken on by the Department of Education. The Department of Education has suffered real-term reductions, which makes it difficult for it to take on new schemes. However, the success level of the scheme thus far would justify us making every effort to ensure that it continues.

It is helping those who are, in many cases, disadvantaged. It is helping those on the borderline of getting five GCSEs. It is also helping at primary-school level. Reports from teachers have all been positive. Indeed, the education and library boards are indicating that they and their members firmly believe that the scheme should continue.

Mr Moutray: I thank the First Minister for his answer. What measure of success has the Department been using? If the scheme is successful, is it not a priority that it should continue?

Mr P Robinson: There is no question that it has been successful. The statistics from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) for the first year of the scheme show that there has been an increase at grammar and non-grammar schools in the percentage who have been able to achieve five GCSEs.

In grammar schools it increased by 4.3% and in non-grammar schools it increased by 6.3%. This means that grammar schools have gone from just over 60% to 65%. That is a marked change. We would look for NISRA's confirmation of the statistics for the second year to see if that pattern develops. If it does, it makes it an easy decision for the Executive to take, namely that the scheme has shown its value and should be continued. We would have to try to find the money from somewhere to do that.

Domestic and Sexual Violence

T6. **Mrs Dobson** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given the rise in domestic and sexual violence and recent figures that show a prevalence of domestic

abuse in Craigavon, Londonderry and north Belfast, what steps are being taken to address these worrying increases and the needs of victims. (AQT 2286/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: Mr Speaker, this also is the junior Minister's portfolio, so I will ask him to answer.

Mr Bell: I thank the Member for a serious question and for highlighting what we are aware of, which is the alarming rise in cases of domestic violence in those areas that have been identified.

2.45 pm

Junior Minister McCann and I visited a specialist facility in Londonderry. What we need to do, in the first instance, is make sure that victims report what has occurred. Secondly, we need to make sure that the place where they report it is tailored and sensitive to their needs and that it has all the relevant psychological and emotional support, and, in some cases, the necessary medical interventions, to achieve and gather evidence.

I was thoroughly impressed on that visit to Londonderry with the professionalism of those involved. They are very much over the detail of what a person needs when they have experienced a violent sexual or physical assault.

We have seen huge progress in the work that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has undertaken. We have seen the public protection units develop from the child abuse rape inquiry units; we have seen dedicated domestic violence officers and an enhancement in their training; and we have seen a growth in the support services available to women, and, in a number of cases, men, who have had to suffer sexual and physical violence. Developments in the Department of Justice in how we treat victims and how that is taken forward have also been significant in what is a very real and very present problem.

Regional Development

Mr Speaker: Questions 1, 2 and 4 have been withdrawn.

Road Safety: Schools

3. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister for Regional Development what additional steps his Department can take to enhance road safety outside schools. (AQO 7849/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department takes the safety of children on their journeys to and from school very seriously and has implemented a significant number of safety schemes, many through the Safer Routes to Schools programme, which was introduced in 2005. Those schemes use engineering measures to warn drivers of the presence of pupils and to reduce vehicle speeds.

The Safer Routes to Schools measures included enhanced electronic signing, road markings and coloured road surfacing to draw drivers' attention to the presence of school children. As each school is unique, additional measures, including central islands, footpaths, lay-bys, drop-off and collection areas, and enforceable keep clear zigzags can also be considered.

My Department also provides road safety awareness and bicycle training each year in 60 schools through the Active

School Travel programme, which is jointly funded by the Public Health Agency. The programme was supplemented in 2014-15 with additional capital funding of £1 million, which provided infrastructure near or en route to a number of schools with the aim of encouraging safe active travel for the school journey. That included the widening of footways, new and improved crossing facilities, and new cycle tracks.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his answer. He will be aware that I have been working with Carniny Primary School and Clough Primary School over the past number of years. The hold-up seems to be match funding or investment from the Department of Education. Does the Minister agree that the Sinn Féin Minister of Education would be better using money for school safety than for a new Irish school in Dungiven?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary. He makes a very valid point. In these days and months of very constrained financial circumstances, clear priorities have to be established, not least of which is the safety of our school population. I agree very much with what the Member said, and I hope that, on further reflection, sense will prevail with the Minister of Education.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his responses so far. A recent survey indicated that eight in 10 of those surveyed had seen people using their mobile phones in the vicinity of schools. Given that serious and alarming level, is he prepared to work with his Executive counterparts and the police to tackle that very serious issue?

Mr Kennedy: In circumstances in which that is happening, it is to be deplored. It is a worrying circumstance indeed, and I hope very much that parents and drivers will reflect on it carefully and cease such activity. Obviously, road safety is a matter principally for the Minister of the Environment and DOE, but, as the Member rightly indicated, there are the cross-cutting issues of road infrastructure, justice and potentially health and education to be considered. I am open to anything that will improve the situation, because it is intolerable that people behave in such a way. They clearly pose a danger, not only to themselves but to people in the immediate area.

Mr Byrne: Can the Minister state whether any formal meetings have taken place with Departments such as DOE and the Department of Education, and, indeed, with the PSNI, on how to tackle the problem in a coordinated way?

Mr Kennedy: The Member may know that there are regular meetings on road safety issues involving agencies and Departments, under the chairmanship of the Minister of the Environment. I and my officials play a part in those meetings through looking at issues and identifying areas in which progress needs to be made, not only through education but, if necessary, through enforcement.

Mr Lyttle: I commend the Minister for his investment in the Active School Travel programme and Sustrans for the delivery of the project. Will the Minister be able to maintain the current level of funding for the programme, which I understand to be around £1 million a year, and extend on-road cycle training to all P6 pupils?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his comments. I think that he makes a very important point. It is my view that the Active School Travel programme should continue to be funded, and I will look at every possible

method by which I can continue to do that. My Department, along with the Public Health Agency, continues to fund Sustrans to promote cycling and walking in schools as part of the Active School Travel initiative. We are currently meeting other Departments and the Public Health Agency to consider the future of this programme beyond 2016.

Road Safety: Fermanagh and South Tyrone

5. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister for Regional Development what larger scale local transport and safety measure schemes will be progressed in Fermanagh and South Tyrone in 2015-16. (AQO 7851/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: At the outset, I express my very sincere sympathy to the family of Jamie Nelson after the recent tragic accident on the A4. Indeed, I express my sympathy to families of all recent accident victims.

I am aware of traffic congestion on the A4 through Enniskillen town at peak times and have decided to include a road widening scheme in the 2015-16 programme on the Dublin Road, close to its junction with Wickham link. The scheme, which will have construction costs in the region of £650,000, will create an additional traffic lane exiting Enniskillen and travelling eastbound towards Belfast and Dublin and will improve traffic flows in that part of the town. Delivery of the scheme in 2015-16 will be dependent on successful completion of land negotiation processes. As well as taking forward the scheme in 2015-16, my Department will be taking forward a number of other smaller local transport and safety measure schemes, and that programme is currently being developed.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that, and I add my sympathy to the family of Jamie Nelson, who was killed in a tragic accident on the A4 last week.

The Minister mentioned land negotiations for the project on Dublin Road. He also mentioned some smaller schemes. Have there been any negotiations at this stage on land for the Enniskillen southern bypass, which is a larger scheme? What is the situation with that? I think that discussions on the southern bypass must be into their third decade now, and I am wondering whether any progress has been made on it in the Minister's time.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I am certainly not prepared to take responsibility over 30 years, but to give an update on the Enniskillen southern bypass, my officials are seeking to grant approval to stage 2 of the scheme assessment report before the end of March this year. That would leave the Department in a position to announce the preferred alignment and to hold a public information day to help to inform and invite comment from the public.

The new road will be almost 2 kilometres in length, and the overall project cost is put in the region of somewhere between £25 million and £30 million. Costs are dependent on whether the new River Erne crossing will be a landmark structure or a more conventional design.

With modest funding in 2015-16, the scheme could be advanced to draft order stage. That would be the notice of intention to make the direction and vesting orders and the publication of the environmental statement. That would facilitate holding a public inquiry in 2016, if required, and possibly making the direction order in 2016. Thereafter, the delivery of the bypass would be dependent on the

availability of finance. In the event that capital funding becomes available, the bypass could commence in 2017, with construction taking approximately 20 months to complete. Landowner consultations have been ongoing, and the project is being reasonably well received.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his answer. He is probably in a unique position, in that he is also responsible for public transport. He will be aware that, in recent times, 23 buses have experienced fire. Can the Minister assure the House that everything is being done to investigate the causes of those fires, which I believe resulted from leaking fuel and electronic problems? Can he reassure those tens of thousands of people who travel daily that the transport system is, in fact, safe?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. I absolutely and firmly state, on behalf of myself, the Department and Translink, that safety remains our prime concern and absolute priority. That goes for the maintenance of the entire fleet. The Member has my assurance on that.

Grass Cutting/Weed Spraying

6. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether grass cutting and weed spraying will be carried out to acceptable safety and amenity standards, in 2015-16. (AQO 7852/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's grass-cutting policy provides for two cuts per year in rural areas and five cuts in urban areas. It also includes the areas required for sight lines. However, due to severe pressures in my Department's resource budget, routine grass cutting and a number of other essential services will either have to be scaled back or stopped altogether in 2015-16.

The budget allocated to my Department leaves no funding whatsoever to employ external contractors to carry out grass cutting. I do, however, appreciate the hazards and economic issues that would result from the complete cessation of grass-cutting services by my Department. I am, therefore, likely to approve some limited work by my Department's internal workforce, allowing it to commence a single cut of grass for 2015. I will be able to confirm that that cut can be completed only after I see the outcome of the June monitoring round.

In some areas, my Department has previously part-funded grass cutting by councils that wish to have a higher standard of grass maintenance for aesthetic and amenity reasons. I will have to cease that practice in 2015-16. Budgetary pressures in 2015-16 are such that my Department will not be able to employ external contractors. However, my Department will endeavour to ensure that it meets its legislative requirement on noxious weeds.

3.00 pm

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he accept that road users and residents have real concerns about road safety and amenity of areas? Is it the understanding that grass cutting will not be carried out to acceptable standards? It is my clear understanding that, in the southern division, which covers north Down, grass cutting will be carried out internally, as it was last year following the Minister's decision to ditch external

contractors, and that there are no contractors in place to manage weed control.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. He highlights the severe challenge I face in balancing the books of my budget. I indicated in my answer that I simply cannot afford external contractors even at this stage. Addressing that situation will depend on in-year monitoring rounds. It is a very challenging situation, and I understand the concerns expressed, but I also understand that I cannot provide services for which I do not have the money.

Mr Kinahan: I congratulate the Minister. When I have raised issues of lighting or spraying or something that has been a risk to health or safety, it has been sorted out very quickly. How much are we going to need to carry on with the cutting, lighting and everything else that we require?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his comments, his sympathy and his supplementary question. It is a relatively small amount of money in the context of the overall budget, but I face cutbacks of about £60 million over the responsibilities of my Department, and we therefore have to look closely at all aspects of the business as they affect NI Water, Translink and Transport NI. We are trying to be as creative as we can, but, ultimately, the scarcity of resources is the really big issue. Whilst, as some people say, it is a 0·6% impact, in real terms, it is a deficit of some £60 million. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain all front-line services as we desire, or even as we need to, when facing cuts of that magnitude.

York Street Interchange

7. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister for Regional Development how he will ensure value for money for the proposed York Street interchange. (AQO 7853/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The formal consultation on this much-needed £125 million project, which links three of the busiest roads in Northern Ireland, concluded on 10 March 2015. My officials are collating and reviewing the responses before submitting the information to me for a decision on whether to hold a public inquiry.

Officials will prepare and forward a full business case to the Department of Finance and Personnel for approval when the full context of the scheme is determined, following the outcome of the consultation and a public inquiry, should I decide one is appropriate. The scheme will then be procured through an open tendering process in accordance with my Department's procurement policy.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his answer. He may note that the Committee for Regional Development discussed recently an alternative to the full-scale model that has been suggested for the interchange. Will the Minister take that on board when considering the results of the consultation that he has embarked upon?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question and for his interest in the scheme. It is, potentially, a very important scheme. In very large measure, it could unlock some of the key congestion issues in central Belfast.

I am aware of the alternative suggestion that was made. In fact, my officials met the individuals involved, and we are, of course, prepared and open to consider such suggestions. Ultimately, decisions will have to be made,

and I will continue to advise and update the House accordingly.

Mr Clarke: Following on from the previous question and maybe the one before that, when the Minister was complaining about his budget, given that the other solution will save probably in excess of £100 million, I do not take from your language today, Minister, that you are exploring it with much vigour. Maybe the Minister could outline exactly how much more consultation there has been with the person who made the suggestion, where exactly those plans stand and whether they will work or otherwise.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. I assure him that there is no lack of enthusiasm for any of my responsibilities. I have indicated that officials met the individual concerned. They are currently reviewing what might be called the alternative proposal. When they are in a position to report to me, they will do so. If further discussion with the proposer of the alternative is necessary, we can engage in that.

I have an open-door policy; I think that the Chair of the Regional Development Committee realises that. He does not always use it, but it is important that we leave ourselves open to other ideas and engineering solutions.

Mr McGimpsey: I thank the Minister for his answers. This is a very important scheme for Belfast because of the tremendous traffic congestion that we get in that area. All things being equal, as we go forward, can he indicate what steps he will be able to take to minimise disruption during the actual construction process, bearing in mind the disruption to traffic in the area at the moment?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his comments. He is absolutely correct about the importance of the scheme. It is important that we move forward on it because even this scheme has been talked about for quite a long time. Earlier, Mr Elliott talked about delays with the A4 Enniskillen bypass, and other Members will bring to mind schemes that have been delayed. It is important that we get these schemes to a shovel-ready position. That is what I fully intend to do.

Mindful of the point that the Member has made, my project team has examined the construction programme and developed plans to demonstrate that the project can be built while maintaining access for all traffic movements. The project economics take account of the inevitable disruption that will result, and any compensation payable will be in accordance with departmental policy. That does not include compensation for any reduction in trade, as access to all property will be maintained. Any detailed compensation claims will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Translink: Fare Increases

8. **Mr Attwood** asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department planned for the impact the recent increase in fares by Translink is having on passengers. (AQO 7854/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Given the difficult financial context facing Translink this year and next, unfortunately the recent fare increase — the first since January 2013 — was unavoidable. It should, however, be recognised that, since coming to office, I have ensured that fares have increased at around half the rate of inflation. Translink is also continuing to promote the various smart ticketing

options, which will help to reduce the impact of the recently introduced fare increases on passengers. For example, an annual rail ticket includes a substantial discount for a regular commuter.

No one, myself included, wanted to see the recent fare increase, but it has been kept to an absolute minimum. It remains the case that Translink fares compare very favourably with those in the rest of the United Kingdom and, indeed, the Republic of Ireland. I had been able to freeze public transport fares for over 18 months, but, given the shortfall of some £60 million in my overall budget for next year, revenue grants to Translink will be cut by around £13 million. If I were to insist that Translink continued with a freeze on fares, that would have a detrimental impact on Translink finances into the future.

In the 2011-12 financial year, the number of passenger journeys was just over 77 million, and, in the current financial year, Translink is on target to achieve 80.5 million passenger journeys, an increase of over 4.5%. This growth is most significant on the railways but, in overall terms, compares very well with trends in other parts of the UK and in the Republic of Ireland.

It is important to say that Translink will be expected to save £7 million next year from greater efficiencies, and this helps to minimise fare increases. I am hopeful that the positive trend in passenger journeys in recent years will continue despite the increase in fares.

Mr Attwood: The Minister will be aware of the efforts that were made to protect the consumer interest by ensuring that the future of the Consumer Council was not put in jeopardy, as some had proposed. Will he indicate what consultations his Department and Translink undertook with the Consumer Council in advance of the decision that has been referred to?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. He may recall that this ground has been covered not only by me in the House but through correspondence with the Committee for Regional Development. I had a very friendly and successful meeting with the acting chief executive of the Consumer Council in the wake of the decision. There had been concern on the part of the Consumer Council that procedures had not been completely followed through. I was able to give an assurance that, in this case, the reasons were quite exceptional and that there was no intention of excluding it from any information in any such future discussions.

Mr Beggs: A reduction in the public transport subsidy has been passed down through the Finance Minister, and, despite the increase in local fares that has been implemented, some think that Translink is still under significant pressure. Would the Minister agree with a second fare increase for Translink?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his question. Let me say this: absolutely not. I do not believe that it would make any economic sense or in any way attract greater usage of our public transport system to put forward a second fare increase at this time. I rule that out without any reservation. The situation is challenging, and there is a need for streamlining and for savings to be made. However, simply putting up fares is not a solution that is on my radar at this time.

Mr McNarry: Should the Consumer Council ever again be ignored in the manner in which it was ignored by Translink, will the Minister tell the House what action he would take?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his question, but I do not foresee such circumstances. I believe that the oversight was relatively minor, and I do not think that it will be repeated as we go forward. As I said, I was heartened by my discussion with the acting chief executive of the Consumer Council.

Mr Clarke: Following on from the previous question, Minister, we would not describe it as minor, given that you were told by the chief executive of Translink on 4 November and you did not make the decision until around 11 December. It is not somewhat minor. You ignored the chief executive of Translink, who reminded you of the protocol with the Consumer Council.

3.15 pm

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. He will know that final decisions were not made until much later. That has been explained not only to him and the Committee but to the House, and it is time to move on.

Mr Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move onto topical questions. Questions 1 and 2 have been withdrawn. I call Mr Patsy McGlone.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Question 3.

Mr Speaker: We have moved to topical questions, so please proceed.

Mr McGlone: Oh, sorry.

A6: Dualling between Randalstown to Castledawson

T3. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the dualling scheme between Randalstown and Castledawson. (AQT 2293/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question, even though it might be number three in his book. My Department continues to look at the A6 scheme, and he will know that we brought forward a scheme by which we could, subject to the available finance, move on-site at the Castledawson section fairly quickly. That remains our position, and I hope very much that, whilst the economic situation is relatively bleak and challenging, at some point capital moneys can be released to bring forward that element of the A6 scheme.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire chomh maith. I thank the Minister for that. Can he provide us with any clarity at all? I realise that tender documents were issued on 7 January for the scheme. Has he any clarity at all on any sources of funding that might secure at least a wee bit more progress on this? I regularly travel that route, along with thousands of others, and it is really a problematic route.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. I can update him by saying that the tender process commenced with the publication of a notice in the Official Journal of the European Union on 28 July 2014 seeking expressions of interest from contractors to provide a shovel-ready

contract that would enable an early start to construction when finance became available. Tender documents were issued on 7 January 2015 and returned, after a six-week tender period, on 17 February. However, as I said, actual construction of the scheme will not commence until further funding is confirmed by the Executive.

Railway: Londonderry to Coleraine

T4. **Mr McNarry** asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration there is in his 2015-16 budget for the Londonderry to Coleraine rail track project. (AQT 2294/11-15)

Mr McNarry: I cannot think of a more topical issue than one that is breaking news.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his topical question. I can confirm that the signalling procurement is still ongoing and the original tender timetable has been extended by a few weeks. However, depending on a successful procurement process, the end date for the substantial elements of the project is still expected to be towards the end of 2016. Of course, that means that we have earmarked and allocated funding for that outcome.

Mr McNarry: That sounds like good news, and I thank the Minister for that. In light of what he has said, will he advise the House how many expressions of interest in tendering for the project have been registered?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. Rather than work off the top of my head, I would prefer to confirm that answer in writing to the Member as quickly as possible.

Mr McNarry: Is it one or two or three? It cannot be hundreds.

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Mr George Robinson.

Mr G Robinson: Mr Speaker, question 5.

Mr Spratt: You have to ask it.

Mr G Robinson: Sorry about that; my apologies.

Traffic: Castlerock Road, Coleraine

T5. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of how traffic will be managed in the Castlerock Road area of Coleraine after the merger of Coleraine High School and Coleraine Inst. (AQT 2295/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his topical question. Obviously, it is very topical in the Coleraine area, particularly with the merger of the two schools. The Member may well know that I attended a meeting with the representatives of the boards of governors and the teaching staff of both schools recently. We discussed and looked at the various options as that merger moves forward. Yes, it is in a fairly constrained part of town and congestion, though not inevitable, will always be a challenge to deal with. My officials are aware of that and will work positively and constructively, not only with officials from the local education board but with the management of the school.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he confirm if he will have any meetings with public representatives on the future merger?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. I am aware that his party colleague the mayor was at that meeting, and a representative from East Londonderry, Claire Sugden MLA, also attended, so I believe that the council interest was represented and reflected successfully at that meeting and will be included in any ongoing discussions.

Mr Speaker: Questions 6 and 7 were withdrawn within the agreed time protocol.

Transport Investment: North-west/West

T8. **Mr Dallat** asked the Minister for Regional Development what he plans to do to address the historical deficit in transport investment in the north-west and the west, given that there has been no progress on the A5 and the A6 and people there are concerned that the distribution of resources is not panning out as it should, especially as he has been highly successful in attracting capital investment to the east of Northern Ireland, with some people even saying that he has been toying about it. (AQT 2298/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. I want to absolutely assure him of my commitment to enhance and improve the entire road network infrastructure and public transport aspects of all of Northern Ireland. There are no areas excluded. The Member will know the commitments that I have made good, particularly the reopening of the Coleraine to Londonderry line and the saving of that line, effectively.

I understand the point he makes and, to a certain extent, I understand his concerns on it, but, as far as I am concerned, I have a commitment to enhancing and improving the entire network wherever it is and as quickly as I can possibly do it. Indeed, my Department has the best record of drawing down European subsidy and grant aid for schemes that we have been involved in. We are always on the lookout to see how that can be enhanced and improved.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his answer. He seemed to struggle with my use of the word "toying", which is really just a country term for boasting. Of course, the Minister is not responsible for the historical neglect of the north-west, but he is the current Minister. Will he tell the House, in view of the applications he has currently made to the European Union, what impact that might have on the north-west to address the serious historical problem that exists there in terms of transport, both road and rail?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. Indeed, I was not familiar with the expression "toying". I was generally always told that boasting is not a thing to engage in. I have always tried to show an attractive modesty.

As I indicated, we continue to bring forward schemes. Part of the job of the specially created section in my Department that looks at EU funding opportunities is to seek out and identify where we can do that as quickly and as speedily as we can. He will know the European funding record that gave assistance to the track relay scheme. If there are other road infrastructure schemes that we can pursue, we will pursue those opportunities. We might have some hope in terms of the A6, although I do not want to predict, boast or tove about anything.

Mersey Street: Road Works

T9. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the major work that has been taking place at Mersey Street, which has been closed for the past number of months, and its timescale. (AQT 2299/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. Of course, there are significant schemes happening through capital moneys in all areas and all parts of Northern Ireland. It slightly surprises people then when they hear of budgetary concerns, but it is due to the difference between the resource budget allocation and the capital budget allocation. Happily, we have been able to bring forward schemes. There will always be a level of inconvenience in the practical outworking and working through the completion of any scheme, whether it is resurfacing, pipeline, track laying or whatever. We seek to work with communities, and our contractors and those engaged in it, to continue to do that.

Mr Douglas: I am sure that the Minister will agree with me that, when working in those areas, you need to work along with the local communities. The Connswater Community Greenway also operates in that area, so would the Minister encourage his workers to continue to work in partnership with the Connswater Community Greenway?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful that the Member makes that very important point. I am very much aware of the Connswater greenway project. All agencies, including other agencies not even under my remit, are cooperating. I expect that of the officials and agencies of my Department.

Derry to Coleraine Rail Line: PAR Review

T10. **Mr Maskey** asked the Minister for Regional Development when he will publish the PAR review into procurement for the Derry to Coleraine rail line, albeit that he could publish a redacted version. (AQT 2300/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. The Member will know that the Committee for Regional Development has made repeated requests for sight of the project assessment review (PAR) report produced for the Department in September 2014. The Department has been consistent in its position that it will share the report with the Committee following the conclusion of the procurement process, which is under way. However, it is not in a position to do so immediately due to sensitivity around the commercial confidentiality of the report. The scope of the review has been released to the Committee already. I should tell the House that there is an ongoing competition. I have taken the view that the report should be released when the competition is complete but not before then. I also want to stress that I have acted throughout on legal advice. I believe that I have not breached the law in any respect.

Mr Speaker: Order. Time is up. We will not have time for a full supplementary and answer. I ask Members to take their ease while we change at the top Table. We will then return to the debate.

3.30 pm

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Newton] in the Chair)

Committee Business

Cycling: Benefits to the Economy

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Regional Development [NIA 168/11-16] on its inquiry into the benefits of cycling to the economy; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues and other relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations contained in the report. — [Mr Clarke (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development).]

Mr Douglas: As the vice chair of the all-party group on cycling, I welcome and support the motion. I thank the Committee for the sterling work that it has engaged in. I also want to thank my colleague — in fact, I do not have too many here at the moment. *[Laughter.]* I want to thank my colleagues for turning up now and again. *[Laughter.]* Stephen Moutray made some very kind remarks about me earlier, and I am delighted that he is now involved in cycling and has applied for the cycle-to-work scheme in Stormont.

I took up cycling three years ago in a serious way, in that I got on my bike for the first time in many years. For me, it was mainly for health reasons. I had gone through a very difficult time — I experienced a traumatic death in my family — and I found that, when I started to cycle, it really helped me to get out into open spaces and to relieve stress and pressures. I can honestly say that it is one of the best decisions that I have made this century.

I would certainly encourage all those MLAs who do not cycle to consider cycling and to get on their bike. For me, especially in the early days, I came across areas of east Belfast that I did not know existed — some wee streets — but you also get to see the issues as you cycle along those streets and roads that you certainly would not see driving past in your car. The only regret that I have about cycling is that I did not embark on it when I was much younger. I wish that I had done that.

Last year, as a birthday treat, my family sent me and my wife to Utrecht in the Netherlands for a few days, and I experienced cycling there. It was the first time in my life that I had been in a traffic jam of cyclists. There were hundreds and hundreds of cyclists, and it was a new experience for me.

I believe that the Minister is personally and genuinely committed to a cycling revolution, and I am glad that that revolution is under way. I see it on a weekly basis.

I recently spoke to a person whom you will know, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, Glenn Kinning, who runs a cycle repair and sales business on the Castlereagh Road. He told me that, since last year and the Giro d'Italia, the number of parents who are coming in to buy bicycles for themselves and their children has increased dramatically. The cycling revolution is definitely under way, and an increase in cycling has led to an increase in business

for the Kinnings and other cycling businesses. Sales of bicycles and bicycle equipment are definitely up.

Mr Clarke (The Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): Will the Member give way?

Mr Douglas: I will.

Mr Clarke: This is unprecedented from me, but I join the Member in his congratulations to the Minister. I know that he and the Minister were at the event last year. If more people could have embarked on something like that, they could have opened up their imagination to what cycling is about and the enjoyment that they could get from it. If I had not gone, I could not have appreciated what some of the contributors brought to the event.

As the Member says, it is about lifestyle and how you change it, but you have to embrace it. If it had not been for the conference in Belfast last year, many of us would not have had that experience. It was a very useful event.

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

Mr Douglas: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I certainly welcome the Member's intervention and concur with him that it was an excellent event. It brought so many people together and was a great opportunity.

I was out in Victoria Park and Orangefield Park yesterday, and it was amazing to see the number of families and children out cycling.

Not so long ago, I spoke to one of the key civil servants in Stormont. He is from Lisburn, and he told me that he drives from Lisburn to Victoria Park in east Belfast. The reason he does that is not just that it is a wonderful park with beautiful scenery, ducks, swans and everything else but because of the quality of its good, clean surfaces on which his children can actually cycle in safety. That is very important as well.

I am certainly aware, as all MLAs are, that money is scarce. The Connswater Community Greenway was a major project that brought £23.5 million from outside sources, and we need to look at how we can attract more resources from outside and other agencies.

I know that my time is running out, but I just want to finish with a quotation from the excellent NI Greenways site:

"An impressive year from a politician who is working from no party manifesto commitment to cycling and operating in a space which can easily draw criticism from lobbies hostile to cycling."

I wish that they had said that about me, but they actually said it about the Minister.

Mr Agnew: I welcome the debate and the focus that the Regional Development Committee has brought to cycling. It is a perfect example of an issue that, if we invest in it, can bring benefits to the economy, people and our environment.

It is worth saying at the outset that I think we should separate two things that, whilst they are connected, are different: cycle tourism and leisure cycling and, I suppose, cycling as a mode of transport. The needs of the two types of cyclist, whilst connected, will in many cases be different, and the provisions that are required may be different. If we are going to achieve the modal shift in what we use as our

daily or commuting transport, it is important to bear that in mind to ensure that the two are not confused and we end up doing neither one nor the other. As the Committee Chair rightly said at the start of the debate, cycling should be a normal form of transport. It should be an option along with taking the car, using public transport or walking. It should be one of our choices for how we get to and from work and go about our daily needs.

I will speak of my own experience of public transport from Bangor. Despite the numerous civil servants etc who travel from Bangor to the Stormont estate and although it is easy to get to Stormont, if you work past 5.15 pm, you cannot return home by public transport. When I worked as a researcher for an MLA, I discussed the possibility of biking it here with another worker in the Building. We decided that the Craigtantlet hills were a bit dangerous — and a bit hilly, I have to say. They were a bit of a challenge. We thought that we could cycle to the train station, get the train, get off at the nearest stop and cycle to Stormont, which might be safer and easier. Then, of course, we faced another hurdle, which was the fact that we might not get on the train with our bikes during the morning rush hour, when cyclists are not always permitted on trains with their bikes. The barriers are there to making that modal shift and that transition to cycling being one of the choices.

To change that, we need investment. I recently asked the Minister to outline the ratio of spend of public to private transport. I was delighted to see the projection of 35% spend on public transport in next year's budget. I know that this is about cycling, but the two very much need to link together, as my experience shows. To date, the numbers have been going in the opposite direction, and the percentage spend on public transport has been decreasing. So, I welcome the Minister's answer to that question, and I hope he meets his commitment to a 35% spend on public transport.

To come to the other side, I believe that there has been a failure. In another question for written answer, I asked the Minister about the recent resurfacing works in Ballymiscaw, and, in the same answer that he told me that there was no consultation with his cycle unit about cycling provision on the road, he told me that his Department would seek to seize opportunities as they arose. With the continuous road works that we are doing around the country, we should always consider cycling and consider the opportunities. It is a wide road, and there is definitely the space for it. Prior to that, I had noted that Massey Avenue was being resurfaced. It is a very wide road, which confuses people as to whether it is one lane or two. There is plenty of space for cycling provision, but, again, the focus was not given to it. Furthermore, an example of where we have, to some extent, failed with existing cycle lanes is on the Newtownards Road in Bangor, which is in my constituency. There is a perfectly good cycle lane —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Agnew: — but there is just one problem with it: there are cars parked the full length of it.

We need to ensure that we put the investment into public transport and into cycling and that we do so in a strategic way to ensure that the provisions that we create are not tokenistic but strategic.

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):

At the outset, I welcome the Committee's year-long inquiry into the benefits of cycling to the economy and the report that it has produced. I am encouraged that we have an opportunity to debate the report in the Assembly today. I thank all Members for their contribution to the debate and assure them that I have been taking careful note of all that has been said.

The Committee for Regional Development's decision to undertake the inquiry was timely and opportune. Following on from my announcement in September 2013 that I wanted a cycling revolution for Northern Ireland, it sent a very clear signal of shared determination to drive real change. For my part, this is not change for the sake of change or cycling for the sake of cycling; it is about seizing the economic, social, environmental and health benefits that higher levels of cycling can deliver.

I am grateful to the Committee for providing me with an advance manuscript copy of the report in January. I have read the report, and I must say that I am encouraged that it has much in common with my draft bicycle strategy in the benefits and priorities that they each identify. I assure the Committee, the Chair and Deputy Chair that I will make a detailed formal response to the report. I particularly welcome the Committee's recognition that progress is not a given but requires strong leadership, political commitment and funding, and I look forward to working with the Committee to provide that leadership. Together, we can build political support and make the case for increased funding for cycling. Part of the challenge is to build support in the Chamber, but there is also a need to engage businesses and communities. Alongside my bicycle strategy, the inquiry provides us with the foundations on which to do that, and I commend the Committee for its work.

The report makes 23 recommendations. More than half of those are specifically for my Department. Of those, seven are recommendations in respect of my draft bicycle strategy, and I welcome that input. The Committee's recommendations reflect many of the public responses to the consultation on my draft bicycle strategy. As with the public responses, the Committee's recommendations can strengthen my strategy, and I believe that they do. For that reason, I am sympathetic towards many of the points that the Committee has made and others have echoed during today's debate. I want to explore some of those briefly.

I agree that it is important that the cycling unit has a specific annual budget and that funding is ring-fenced to allow it to deliver on the strategy. I have done that for 2015-16, despite the very challenging budgetary position in my Department. In addition, I have ring-fenced the funding for the Active School Travel programme. My officials are also looking at ways in which the programme might be extended beyond 2016, working with other Departments.

3.45 pm

I believe that building cycling provision at park-and-ride facilities, railways and bus stations offers significant opportunities to make cycling linked to public transport a viable alternative to the car. That is something that we heard latterly from Steven Agnew. That is under way, and I am determined to build on it. I previously set out my intention to bring forward primary legislation to encourage

active travel. I look forward to the Committee's support in taking that forward.

I can assure Committee members that their comments and, indeed, those of other respondents will be used to reshape the content of my bicycle strategy as it is finalised. As a result, I have asked my officials to revisit the vision to make it more concise. To develop baselines for monitoring, my Department is also working with Sustrans in developing a Copenhagen-style bicycle account for Belfast.

At this stage, I want to move on to address a number of issues raised by the inquiry that would, I feel, benefit from further clarification. The Committee has suggested that the draft bicycle strategy is more a statement of intent. I recognise the criticism, and I take that in a positive manner. If we are to build support and drive change, a statement of intent is exactly what is needed. However, I am equally clear that change needs more than a statement of intent if it is to happen. It needs direction and direction supported by action. I believe that the draft bicycle strategy also provides that direction, and I expect that to be clearly reflected in the final strategy.

I am also sympathetic to the recommendations relating to the cycle-to-work scheme. I would support it being extended as widely as possible, and I will do everything I can to see that happen. I think that the Chair of the Regional Development Committee raised a very fair point about how it is handled by the Assembly Commission and how Members and the staff associated can participate in the scheme. We need to make that better and easier for people to join. I remind Members that the cycle-to-work scheme is a Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs scheme. While my Department actively promotes the scheme, individual employers must decide to join the scheme and are responsible for how they implement it.

I have carefully considered the Committee's recommendation that rural proofing be undertaken as a matter of urgency. That was, I think, raised by Mr McAleer in his contribution. I am committed to rural proofing as a Minister and as a rural dweller, but it must be meaningful and must benefit rural communities. In order to do that, my officials spoke to their DARD counterparts to explain how best to carry that out. They agreed that it would be more meaningful to rural proof the bicycle strategy delivery plan. I can give a very clear commitment that that will happen. I also remind Members that the draft bicycle strategy directly addresses the issue of rural routes and that that will be an area for development.

I am a little puzzled at the Committee's statement about the perception that the strategy is anti-motorist. That issue did not arise in any of the 106 consultation responses. Let me be clear: I believe that it does not reflect the spirit, tone or content of my bicycle strategy or any part of my departmental policy. This is not war on the motorist. It also, I believe, potentially creates a tension where none need exist and undermines efforts to build support. As I said, I welcome positive criticism, but I do not welcome criticism for the sake of criticism.

I think that those comments do a disservice to all those who contributed to the development of the strategy.

At the suggestion of the Committee, my officials specifically wrote to motoring organisations about the draft strategy. In response, the RAC warmly welcomed the development of the strategy and, indeed, suggested

that it provided a sound basis on which to move forward. However, I agree with the Committee that we need to balance the needs of all road users. Too often, we refer to motorists and cyclists as if they were two different species. They are all people — people who sometimes use a bicycle and sometimes drive. People are important, and we must promote the health and well-being of people. I am very mindful that the message —

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for giving way. I think that that is an extremely helpful clarification about the shared use of our roads and footways. That contribution in the Committee's report may reflect an isolated individual's view of the strategy rather than the view of every member.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful for that clarification. I do not think that I will pursue that much further today.

I am very mindful that the message that we want to continue to communicate is one of respect for all road users. I agree with the Committee about the need for a cross-cutting approach to cycling in Northern Ireland. That is why I established and chair the cross-sectoral cycling group, which includes representatives of other Departments and agencies: the Public Health Agency, the PSNI, Sport NI, Northern Ireland Local Government Association, Belfast City Council, Sustrans and Translink.

Mr Clarke, the Chairman of the Committee, asked about ensuring that the Department of the Environment plays its part in developing cycling. I am happy to confirm that my officials work with DOE colleagues to develop cycling issues, and it is also done through the cross-sectoral group.

Mr Clarke: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Kennedy: Yes.

Mr Clarke: I do not want the Minister for one minute to think that I was suggesting that his Department does not work closely with the DOE, because, from the day that we spent at Ballycraigy Primary School, I know that they work very closely. My concern is that one of the DOE officials said something about funding being withdrawn. Road safety should be part of the DOE's bailiwick. If we do not teach children at school, an opportunity is missed. I encourage the Minister to work with Executive colleagues to make sure that they do not remove funding from the DOE and that there is an effective mechanism in schools. As I said that day, we had cycling proficiency at school many years ago, and it seems to have drifted away. The work that is being done now is invaluable in educating children at a young age.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for expanding on his point. I accept that fully. I think that there is an ongoing role to play not only in input but on finance to ensure particular safety issues. That will also be helped by the realignment of Departments, as road safety, together with my cycling unit, will potentially be housed in the same Department. I suppose that there is comfort there too.

We are working to ensure that there is greater joined-up working between all of us, and we are striving to develop and promote cycling in Northern Ireland. I note the Committee's recommendation that targets should be included in the final bicycle strategy; that was one of the significant points raised in the consultation. Let me be absolutely clear to Members: I am not against targets, but I am very clear that, if targets are set, they should be appropriate and measurable and should reflect the

political commitment that the Assembly and the Executive are prepared to make to promote and provide for cycling — everyday cycling and every-way cycling. It is essential that the Committee acknowledges that, if targets are to be achievable, wide-ranging political commitment and funding will be necessary. I ask the Committee to continue to give me that support.

I am convinced that Northern Ireland has the potential to develop a successful cycling culture over the next 25 years. I have stated before that it is my ambition for us to be the UK's cycling capital and the cycling capital on this island. Taking into account the Belfast bike share scheme and my plans to progress a number of other schemes in Belfast city centre over the next few months, it is an ideal time to push on with the promotion of the bicycle as a convenient, accessible and viable way to travel.

With the support, enthusiasm and influence of Members, and with their political commitment and the commensurate funding, even in fiscally restrained circumstances, we can look forward to a bright cycling future that I believe we can and should deliver for all the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr Lynch (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle.

I welcome the opportunity to make a winding-up speech on what was an important debate. As Deputy Chair, I want to put on record my thanks to the many contributors who made this report a success and made it possible. I thank the members of the Committee; the all-party group on cycling, a number of whom spoke in the debate; and all the witnesses and officials from the Department for Regional Development. I thank the Departments of Health; Culture, Arts and Leisure; and Environment. In particular, I thank those who we met when we visited County Mayo. I thank our support team, Hansard, and our Assembly researcher for all the excellent support. I thank the Minister for coming here today, and the Members for their contributions.

As I said, this was an important debate. The range of contributions show how important cycling is to the economy. If I may, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, I will refer briefly to some of the points made.

My colleague Declan McAleer noted that the strategy had not been rural proofed, which is a valid point and one that the Committee laboured over during the inquiry. I welcome the Minister's commitment in his speech to rural proof the strategy. Declan referred to the need for equal treatment between rural and urban areas. That supports the Committee's position that the cycling strategy and cycling initiatives are urban-focused.

Declan and others referred to INTERREG funding. The Committee supported the Department in calling for a larger budget for cycling within the INTERREG programme, and saw at first-hand the desire for cross-border cycling projects. He highlighted the potential for opening greenways across the island of Ireland, citing the Great Western Greenway project at Mulranny. I think we would all agree that that is an example for success across the island.

John Dallat, in welcoming the report, highlighted the relevant fact that the North lags behind the rest of Europe. Whilst I am sure that he was referring to a particular rail line, I think we received clarity that he would be supportive of disused rail lines being developed as greenways. Again,

the Committee is supportive of that concept, but it did not want to see any further pilot projects as there were sufficiently successful greenways operating.

Sandra Overend, as a member of the all-party group that came before us, welcomed the report as positive, although critical of the Department's strategy. Other contributions today supported that criticism. She suggested that recommendations 27 and 40 of the report were contradictory. The Committee does not necessarily agree with that, and cites examples of innovative projects in recommendation 40. I find it somewhat rich that the Committee is criticised for not identifying alternative funding streams when the Minister and his officials have not identified any sources of funding in their strategy.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Member for giving way. The only reason I raised that issue was because it was a point in your terms of reference that you did not meet.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Member, and I take her point.

4.00 pm

Chris Lyttle is another member of the all-party group who came in front of us and made a valuable contribution. He referred to the three barriers to cycling, including ownership.

The Committee, as the Chair indicated during the interjections, has called for an extension to the bike-to-work scheme, including making it a compulsory programme in the public sector. He also, quite rightly, highlighted the absence of integrated transport solutions. We have called for Translink to identify better means of integrating cycling with public transport.

Alex Easton and Stephen Moutray highlighted the health benefits of cycling. We have called for roads to be health proofed, similar to the assessments being carried out on the Connswater greenway, through the World Health Organization's health economic assessment tool.

Joe Byrne spoke about the cycling phenomenon, particularly in his home town of Omagh, and the positive impact it had on the local economy. He highlighted the need to establish appropriate baselines.

Sammy Douglas said he took up cycling three years ago for health reasons and that his only regret was that it was too late. Sammy, I do not think it is ever too late. Like you, I took up cycling and I totally agree with you that the health benefits are significant. He rightly encouraged more people to cycle and heralded the benefits, personally and for the wider population, including family outings. Sandra Overend mentioned family cycling as well. Sammy welcomed the cycling revolution, and both he and the Chair commended the Department on its cycling conference.

Steven Agnew welcomed the focus that the Committee has brought to cycling. He spoke about cycling creating a modal shift and said that it should be one of our choices of transport. He also spoke about the hurdles and barriers to using public transport and cycling.

The Minister welcomed the report, said that the inquiry was timely and opportune and commended the work of the Committee. He welcomed the fact that he is sympathetic to many of our recommendations. He also indicated his

continued support for the Active School Travel programme, which is welcome. We look forward to working on the primary legislation on physical activity in due course. We agree that the strategy needs to drive forward, and we look forward to helping it do that. We again welcome his comments on the cycle-to-work scheme.

The Minister stated that the strategy was not a war on motorists, and they will be glad to hear that. Those were not criticisms for the sake of it, they were perceptions expressed by one or more members during the inquiry. He said that hopefully there will be a successful cultural change over the next 25 years. I hope we all live to see it, Minister. Go raibh míle maith agat.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Regional Development [NIA 168/11-16] on its inquiry into the benefits of cycling to the economy; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues and other relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Adjourned at 4.04 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 24 March 2015

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Social Inclusion Work Sector

Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): In accordance with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, I wish to make the following statement on the sixth ministerial meeting of the British-Irish Council (BIC) social inclusion work sector, which took place in Edinburgh on 11 March 2015. The First Minister and deputy First Minister were unable to attend, and, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, they nominated junior Minister McCann and me to attend in their place.

The Scottish Government hosted the ministerial meeting, and the heads of delegations were welcomed by Shona Robison MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport. The Welsh Government were represented by Mark Drakeford AM, the Minister for Health and Social Services, who was unable to be present but joined the meeting via telecon. The UK Government were represented by Jon Rouse, the director general for social care, local government and care partnerships at the Department of Health. The Irish Government were represented by Ann Phelan TD, a Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The Isle of Man Government were represented by the Hon Howard Quayle MHK, the Minister for Health and Social Care. The Government of Guernsey were represented by the Chief Minister, Deputy Jonathan Le Tocq, and the Government of Jersey were represented by Senator Paul Routier MBE, the Assistant Minister at the Chief Minister's Department.

At the meeting, the joint chairs of the work sector — the Scottish and Welsh Governments — gave a presentation of the work of the sector, which included visits to all eight jurisdictions, and highlighted the models of good practice that were visited. Following the presentation, we discussed and reviewed the final report of the work sector, 'Spend to Save: Innovative Approaches to Preventative Spend'.

We noted the many different, creative and, importantly, community-based approaches to supporting older people to optimise their independence and help them to remain in a place that they call home, in a community that they feel connected to, for as long as they possibly can. The report was unanimously welcomed and approved for publication on the British-Irish Council website, www.britishtoirishcouncil.org.

Turning to the future work programme, at the meeting, we discussed the proposal to have carers as the next topic for the work sector. After discussion, it was agreed that carers should be the next topic and that our officials, working closely with the BIC secretariat, should begin to consider how we can support carers by looking at best practice, new and creative policy responses and community actions across the eight Administrations. Given that the policy for carers lies with the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, it will be for DHSSPS to represent the Northern Ireland Executive on the work sector. The BIC secretariat will confirm the arrangements for the first meeting, which is likely to be in May 2015 in Edinburgh.

To allow the work sector to complete its work on carers, it was agreed that the next ministerial meeting for the social inclusion work sector will take place in Wales in late 2017 or early 2018.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for bringing the statement to the House this morning. How important does he believe it is to move from our current model of intervention to preventative spend?

Mr Bell: The Member raises a critical point that is a thread throughout the report. We have some very good current interventions, but when we look to the future and celebrate the fact that we have a population that is growing older, living longer and, in many cases, living healthier lives, we need to look at whether the current model is fit for the future.

Two things come through from all the good practice across the jurisdictions. One is that no one size fits all. We have taken approaches in Northern Ireland such as having the Commissioner for Older People, which is recognised across the House and, more importantly, by the elder care sector to have been a huge success and an excellent piece of legislation that has translated into excellent practice by Commissioner Claire Keatinge and her staff and by the elder care sector that provide them with advice and support.

No single model will fit everywhere. We need to look to where future needs will lie. We know that there are major concerns around social isolation, loneliness and the impact that these place on physical and mental health. There are many models of governments looking at the networks and support systems they already have, and putting money in early to prevent some of the later problems that will come about if they do not do it. It is not something that we have the option not to do. Preventative spend is the key to how we can deliver a service, to our elderly people, that is fit for purpose into the future.

To answer Mr Moutray's question directly: preventative spend is the key future intervention.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his statement. Regarding the final report on Spend to Save, can the Minister give any examples of models of good practice in supporting older people to remain in their home? I was speaking to an older person over the weekend, and they told me that the only things that are important to them are meat and heat.

Mr Bell: The Member has probably hit on the two critical factors for elderly people: "meet" to combat social isolation and loneliness, and the fact that, because older people are, in many cases, not in work environments, they have to heat their own homes. Through you, Mr Speaker, did I get that right?

Ms McGahan: Meat.

Mr Bell: Meet?

Ms McGahan: Eating.

Mr Bell: Eating as well, of course.

The first model that I would say is best, which was universally recognised at the time, was — when you ask a psychologist to go into science, it becomes difficult, and I am unsure of the technical term — the telerobot, I call it. Basically, it allows people to be remotely assessed by a consultant in a different venue, who is given a clear and accurate picture of their symptoms and vital signs, so that they have an interaction without being displaced. That is the first critical model.

Secondly, we realise that we face a huge problem, not just in Northern Ireland, but in Guernsey, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with severe loneliness in our ageing population. There are a number of mechanisms to deal with that. One was the concept of the men's shed, of which we have an example in Northern Ireland. I spoke to those who run the men's shed in Belfast Castle, which is a facility for groups of men to meet through different initiatives, such as crafts. Service users reported that it was a lifeline.

We have to ensure, finally, that there is proper financial provision for the elderly, because diet is critical to their well-being; that is a given.

Mr Attwood: The report confirms that Spend to Save was unanimously welcomed and approved for publication. I note that one size does not fit all, but there were, nonetheless, a lot of examples in the report of best practice. Can the Minister outline how his Department, and other relevant Departments, will use a report that was unanimously welcomed and approved to identify other best practice that could be mainstreamed into the life of government here in advance of the next comprehensive spending review (CSR), which, as we know, if the Tories get their way, will be even more severe over the next four years than it has been over the last four? What will your Department, and other relevant Departments, do to take forward a report that was unanimously welcomed, and will there be subsequent reports to the Assembly? Otherwise, this is good work that will sit on a shelf.

Mr Bell: It is a strong question, Mr Speaker. First, what my Department does in the active ageing strategy will be embedded in the work of all other Departments, because, as the Member will know as a former Minister, once it is agreed at the Executive, it becomes an Executive strategy

and all other Departments are obliged, and would want, to take it forward.

I pay tribute to the active ageing working group, which is working alongside us. The group has asked for a further meeting, which why we have not brought the strategy forward just yet. We will have one further meeting before bringing the strategy forward together. It is based on ensuring that older people can maximise their personal independence. We have already involved older people and the age sector in the decision-making. From the very beginning, the strategy has been informed by the views of older people to ensure their participation in the work of government for their future. We know that, in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, there is an issue with care, particularly how it is received in the home or the community — wherever works best.

10.45 am

Some of the examples that we have used from other Departments are taken from spatial planning, in particular.

Spatial planning is not solely for older people. A person close to me has multiple sclerosis, and I know about some of the difficulties that can occur when you push a wheelchair. You can see the spatial difficulties that exist for people when it comes to parking, when roads are half blocked by cars, when obstacles are left on roads or when you have to negotiate your way around wheelie bins and those sorts of things. There are practical things that we can do in our future spatial planning, not only for this sector but for many other people, such as mothers with prams and buggies and different things.

In the older persons' sector, we want to move towards self-fulfilment. We want to consult with older people to see how we can maximise their potential and their contribution. The final piece of work that we are doing, which contributes to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, is to do with dignity. How do we make sure that the care that an older person gets maximises the dignity that we can offer to them? That work will all be taken forward in the active ageing strategy and will be embedded into the work of all the other Departments. A lot of what is in the strategy will come before you all shortly and, because it was informed by older people, it will help us to deliver more for older people in our society.

Mr Lyttle: I welcome the fact that British, Irish and Northern Irish Ministers are working together on social inclusion. I welcome the publication of the Spend to Save report, which looks at best practice in supporting older people, and that carers are going to be focused on at the next meeting. However, I have to be honest; I am none the wiser as to what actual policy proposals or actions are going to be taken as a result of this particular piece of work. Why is the next ministerial meeting not scheduled to take place until 2018?

Mr Bell: Obviously, a number of pieces of work have to go ahead. In this piece of work, all eight jurisdictions were visited and the models of good practice were examined, tested and audited. The two particular pieces of good practice, which go on day and daily and for which Northern Ireland, in many ways, stands head and shoulders above others, are the work that the Commissioner for Older People is doing and the work of the telepresence robot, which, as I said earlier, facilitates older people not to have

to go through that level of displacement and transportation and all the difficulties that that can bring about. It keeps people in their own areas, closer to their families and with their communities, which is the best model, in many cases, for helping an older person to heal. Those were the two practical examples.

Each jurisdiction is visited, the models are examined, and then they are brought together. I am glad that the Member has welcomed the need for preventative spend. That will put a huge challenge to us all in the House. The easiest thing to do would be to continue to throw money at an existing model, but, if we are going to future-proof the needs of elderly people in our society, throwing money at the current model will not meet their needs. A paradigm shift needs to take place where we move towards preventative spend. Initially, this will cause difficulties, because when you slice a cake, there are only so many ways to do it. If you move more money into preventative spend, you have to take it from elsewhere. Unless we make that paradigm shift in health, particularly for the elder care sector, in order to put more money into prevention, the cost will become very difficult to bear in the future. The critical lesson that was learned from this piece of work was about preventative spend.

Mr Spratt: I thank the junior Minister for his statement to the House this morning. Many old people will welcome creative and community-based approaches to supporting old people to be independent and to live in their own homes. That would be very much welcomed. What does the junior Minister see as the most pressing risks facing our older people at this moment in time?

Mr Bell: I thank Mr Spratt for his question. I will answer it in two words: loneliness and isolation. They are probably interlinked. When I think of the health service, preventative spend and what we can do to try to ease the burden and make all our lives, including older people's lives, healthier, there are certain things that stick out. Obesity is a major problem for the health service. Many of us, me included, are carrying too much weight. Then, there is alcohol abuse and smoking. Those are the three things that stick out to all of us as the issues that we are all talking about.

What surprised me at the meeting with the professionals and in the work that our officials did very well in the working group was that isolation and loneliness are as big killers — I use the word advisedly — of our elderly people as obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse. That came from a professional recommendation. It puts a major challenge on all of us as to what we do with older people whom we care for in our families. Can we realise and focus on it for a moment? Isolation and loneliness are as much of a killer of our elderly people as some of the difficulties encountered with alcohol abuse, smoking and obesity. Again, another paradigm shift needs to take place so that, when giving resources, we look at what we spend but also at what networks we currently have. How can we use what we already have to make sure that isolation and loneliness are no longer such a major threat to our elderly people?

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his report. I note that, in relation to the future work programme, there is a proposal to have carers as the next topic. It seems to me that, if sufficient resources were given to carers, that in itself would be a very progressive step in preventative spend. Will the Minister give us a flavour of what is meant

by the topic of carers? In what direction does he think the various jurisdictions will go?

Mr Bell: I thank the Member for his question because I think it highlights the contributions that carers make in our society, which, all too often, we forget. It is not hyperbole to say that, as the Member indicates in his question, unless carers are properly supported, the health and social care system would literally collapse without their contribution. I know that the Member for East Belfast talked about the actual meeting coming later on, but the next meeting of the work sector that will look at that should take place in two months' time in Edinburgh.

There are a couple of things. First of all, we need to speak to carers to find out where the gaps in their support are. Secondly, we need to find out what training and resources they actually need. In many cases, it will be physical equipment, and, in other cases, it will be training that they need, because often many carers find themselves in the situation because they just happen to be a family member. I saw it in my own family as well. What training does that person actually need? Thirdly, I do not want to do the work sector's work for it here at the minute, but, if we look at the cost of what it takes to bring a person into hospital and the difficulties that that causes in not having other operational work carried out because beds are not available, add up all of that cost and examine it against the cost of properly financially supporting a carer within the person's own home, we could well find out that, if we do it properly, we could not only do it well but do it at less cost and provide a better flow.

I speak to older people as part of the responsibility that we have in ministerial office. None of them wants to stay in hospital. They often stay in hospital because the provision of care in their own home would be inadequate to meet the dignity of what they need. Many people out there in the health service and the private sector have the skills to help keep a person in their home at a fraction of what it would cost to use a care facility or a hospital. In the future, in preventative spend, we need to look at what a person needs and what standards of quality they need in their care. It is not just a question of a cheaper service. What is the standard that we expect an older person to have? What is the training level that we need to give to a person to meet that standard? What financial resource do we need to give that carer, so that, if they have to give up work to care for somebody, as happens in many cases, they can get adequate financial support for their own families to allow them to care for the person they love? Those are the models that we are going to have to look at in the future.

We know that older people want to spend as much time with their families as possible. We know that, not always but in the majority of cases, older people are telling us consistently that they want to live in their own homes and within their own communities because that is where they get physical, mental and psychological stimulation and draw emotional support. We need to ask how we redraw a model that says, "Instead of caring for you when you take sick, we will put in resources so that we can care for you to prevent you getting sick."

North/South Ministerial Council: Agriculture

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. With your permission, a Cheann Comhairle, I wish to make a statement in compliance with section 52 of the 1998 Act regarding the 24th meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in the agriculture sector held in Armagh on Wednesday 25 February. The Executive were represented by Minister Jim Wells MLA and me. The Dublin Government were represented by Simon Coveney TD, Minister in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), and Ann Phelan TD, Minister of State at the Department of Environment and Local Government. Minister Coveney chaired the meeting on this occasion, and I have agreed my statement with the accompanying Minister Jim Wells.

Ministers had a discussion on the opportunities that exist for the agriculture sector in various EU funding streams. The Council welcomed the ongoing collaboration and cooperation in this area and agreed that every effort should be made to maximise the drawdown from these funds where it is mutually beneficial to do so. The Council noted the recent developments in plans for implementation of the common agricultural policy reforms agreed in 2013, including administrative measures for direct payment schemes. Ministers also welcomed the ongoing cooperation between the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and DARD on these issues.

The Council welcomed the continued work on the delivery of the all-island animal health and welfare strategy action plan since the last NSMC agriculture meeting. Key points of note in the action plan include: the ongoing high level of cooperation between both jurisdictions as manifested by participation in a successful and useful epizootic disease contingency planning exercise dealing with African swine fever in November 2014 and a whole-house poultry gassing exercise in October 2014; parallel applications to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for classical swine fever disease-free status; the introduction of a common chapter in the event of an outbreak of African horse sickness on the island; and progress made by DARD on its goal of submitting an application for officially brucellosis-free status to the Commission in March 2015. DAFM is maintaining a cow cull monitor, abortion notification and post-abortion sampling, and will liaise with DARD colleagues on the timing of the removal of the pre-movement test requirement.

Our improving animal health status and mutual contingency preparations contribute towards our reputation for the production of quality agriproduce for sale to export markets. I am pleased to note that China and Australia have confirmed their intention to visit pork establishments here in the near future, with a view to agreeing export protocols.

Ministers noted that, in October 2014, the DARD and DAFM plant health subgroup commissioned a scientific appraisal of further actions to implement the policy to contain and eradicate ash dieback in both jurisdictions. The scientific group concluded that the eradication of ash dieback was still possible and recommended a continued programme of surveillance and eradication. The Council also noted that the plant health section of the EU Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed met on 19 and 20 January and that both Britain and Ireland secured

agreement from member states and the Commission for ash dieback measures to remain in place for 2015 while efforts continue to eradicate the disease.

11.00 am

Ministers agreed that, in addition to the planned proactive support by DARD and DECLG for LEADER cooperation activities, including the provision of appropriate staff resources, there should also be a focus on wider opportunities for accessing support from other EU funding programmes, not including the European agricultural fund for rural development. They also agreed the provision of funding for 2015-16, initially to support the further development and promotion of social farming, and welcomed the ongoing cooperation of officials in closing their respective current rural development programmes, preparing for the 2014-2020 programmes and developing rural recreation. The Council agreed that the next meeting in the agricultural sectoral format will take place in autumn 2015.

Mr Irwin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development): I thank the Minister for her statement. She referred to a:

"discussion on the opportunities that exist for the agriculture sector in various EU funding streams."

Will the Minister elaborate on that and, at the same time, indicate when she expects the EU Commission to sign off on Northern Ireland's rural development programme for 2014-2020?

Mrs O'Neill: We are working collaboratively and in cooperation, particularly in looking towards Horizon 2020 and the opportunities that exist there.

The Executive have a Programme for Government commitment to increase our drawdown of European funding, and that is also a very clear target of the economic strategy. The Executive and DAFM in the South now have contact points in place. They work very closely together, particularly on the work that is done by the all-Ireland steering group on Horizon 2020. So quite a lot of work is going on jointly between officials to explore all the opportunities for funding collaborative research projects, and not just opportunities within the EU and Horizon 2020. They are also looking towards the US. There is a body of work ongoing that is attempting to facilitate that collaborative work.

There are opportunities for us, and we need to work together collaboratively on any opportunities. Given the financial climate that we all face, where there are areas of mutual benefit, we should exploit them to the maximum.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. In her statement, the Minister referred to the potential of new export markets in Australia and China. Can she elaborate on those possible new opportunities?

Mrs O'Neill: Export markets are essential for our growth. They are at the core of our economic strategy, particularly for Going for Growth and the agrifood sector. DAFM colleagues recently provided assistance and advice to DARD following their experience of the preparation that they undertook for the US beef inspection last year, which led to the opening up of that market. That work is key for us as we also try to unlock that market. I am glad that that work at official level is ongoing.

As I said in my statement, preparations are also under way to facilitate inward inspections by China and Australia, and those will happen over the next number of months. Particularly for the pork sector, we are very keen to make sure that we get that inspection so that we can open up that market. The industry here has been keenly awaiting that.

The Member will be aware that a number of inspections have been cancelled in the past, but we are very positive that we will achieve those inspections over the next number of months. We have received confirmation of the names of the inspectors who are coming. That is further than we have ever got in the past and therefore is quite positive. China and Australia are important for the pork sector, but the Philippines is another key market for the beef sector.

We are working with the industry on the markets that it has identified as being priorities and with whatever partners that we need to work with, whether DAFM in the South or DEFRA in England, to get into and secure access to new markets. That is key for the growth and sustainability of the sector.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for her statement. What lessons can be learnt from the Republic about CAP pillar 1 so that our basic payments system can be less bureaucratic and more farmer-friendly in administrative terms? Will she also outline why the Republic seems to be more successful in tackling bovine TB? It has a much lower incidence level compared with our past experience.

Mrs O'Neill: When the CAP negotiations started at European level, we went out with a clear desire for a simpler CAP. The reality is that Europe has given us a more complicated CAP. It will be difficult for the farmer to understand it and for the Department to administer it. That said, we are trying to get as much information out there as possible.

We have devised systems and practices and put them in place for the new CAP to try to keep things as simple as possible, but there is no doubt that it is a time of big change for the farming industry. We have to work with the industry to try to manage that and to give farmers all the information that we possibly can. I have attended quite a number of large gatherings and public meetings that have been very successful in reaching out and giving information to farmers. For people who wish to avail themselves of those opportunities, a number of DARD roadshows will be happening over the next number of weeks to try to get that information out there. That is key to embracing the change that is occurring.

It is certainly not a simpler system. Europe has given us something quite difficult: moving from a single farm payment to possibly up to three payments. That is quite a difficult system to manage. However, I think that we are charting our way through that in the best possible terms that we can.

The Member's second question relates to TB. Obviously, TB levels are different in the Twenty-six Counties. We have a very strong eradication plan in place and are working hard to eradicate TB. We will continue on that path. We have our EU-approved plan. The Member will be aware that we have a TB strategic partnership in place that looks at all aspects of TB, given the complexity of the disease and the difficulties that most EU countries face in tackling it. There is quite a large ongoing body of work. I hope that we can be in a position at some stage in the future to be TB-free right across the island, which will obviously help

and enhance our opportunities of getting into other export markets.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for her statement today. She mentioned that work is being done to achieve officially brucellosis-free (OBF) status in Northern Ireland. Will she expand on what that would mean for trade and on the differences in the approaches of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in working to achieve OBF status?

Mrs O'Neill: The Twenty-six Counties are already free of brucellosis. We have now applied for our free status from Europe and are on target to achieve that. We are talking about savings to the industry of £7 million for pre-movement testing for farmers. That is quite a significant financial saving and a cost that farmers will no longer have to worry about. That is significant in itself.

It is a win-win situation for us, because our free status will open up new markets in local industry and right across the island. The aim of the animal health and welfare strategy is to get us to a stage at which we have the same disease status across the island so that there are no barriers to trade. The NSMC, Minister Coveney and I, and officials, are involved with that ongoing work. There are significant savings for the farming industry by our achieving this free status.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her statement. Has the industry here reached the conditions yet to allow her to introduce compulsory bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) testing?

Mrs O'Neill: The Member will be aware that I previously announced that I was minded to introduce legislation and to make it compulsory for herd keepers to test newborn bovines for BVD. Since then, the Department has been working closely with industry in developing the legislative framework to support an eradication programme.

The Department has now finalised the draft legislation that would require all newborn bovines here to be tested for the BVD virus. The legislation is being considered by the EU Commission and could now be entered into the legislative process here, which involves consideration by the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Executive before it can become law. However, before I am in a position to introduce legislation here, it will be necessary for Animal Health and Welfare NI to demonstrate to the Department that it has sufficient private sector funding to enable it to maintain the implementation of the eradication programme going forward without the need for further public funding. That will be particularly important not only because of the pressures that are on public funding but because of the need for the industry to lead in tackling this production disease. I am very supportive and commend the work that Animal Health and Welfare NI has done to date. It has presented a first draft of its viability and sustainability plan, which is under consideration by officials.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for her statement. I welcome the ongoing cooperation, but considering the end of the US embargo on European beef and the very successful trade mission recently by Minister Coveney and beef producers in the South to the US and the resultant ABP deal, and considering that the Irish Government have really done the spade work here, what discussions have taken place? Does the Department have a strategy for marketing beef from here in the US?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, we clearly have a strategy: it is called Going for Growth. That is the premise. Central to that piece of work and that strategy is the fact that we need to reach into new export markets. We can only do that in conjunction with the industry because it identifies where it wants to go. So, we have a working group in place that identifies the areas and the countries, and, from DARD's point of view, our role is to make sure that everything is in place to facilitate the export licence. So, collaboratively with DETI and DAFM in the Twenty-six Counties, we are working very effectively around new markets.

The Twenty-six Counties have been very successful recently, particularly in relation to China and America, and all credit to them. We obviously want to be part of that, and we are working very closely to learn from the experiences that they have had, and, as I said in a previous answer, along with DAFM officials and DARD officials, they worked around a mock inspection and looked at best practice and how best we could secure the markets.

There are a number of markets open to us, and I think that if the Twenty-six Counties are successful in opening doors, we will not be behind the door about making sure that we also can avail ourselves of some of those opportunities. As I said, Philippines, China and Australia are all potential markets for us, and we are very close to being able to secure increased access in some cases and new access in others.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for her statement this morning. Paragraphs 8 and 9 speak of the ash dieback scourge that arrived on this island a few years ago. Thankfully, it seems that that is on the road to eradication. Can the Minister give the Assembly any recent figures for incidents of ash dieback taking place here in the North of Ireland in recent times?

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have any figures with me, but I am happy to provide them to the Member. Suffice it to say that I am delighted that we are not at the stage where we are writing off the disease. We are at a stage where we still believe that there is an opportunity to eradicate the disease. The strategy that we have in place is very much a flexible strategy, which allows us to adapt to a change in circumstances and has served us well over the last number of years in dealing with the disease.

We have a very strong scientific group in place, which is working very hard to contain the disease and eradicate it. So, it is very much a work in progress, but I will provide the Member with figures on the numbers of outbreaks, and you will be able to analyse those for yourself.

Mr Allister: The statement purports to look to the future of the industry. Research and development is obviously key to the future of any industry. Why is it then that the Minister is contemplating, it seems, the closure of the plant testing station at Crossnacreevy, which has done, and continues to do, such vital work?

Mrs O'Neill: I agree with the Member that research and development is key for going forward. That is why, for Horizon 2020, there is a particular focus on research and development and exploring all the opportunities that are there for us here at Executive level and also working with partners in DAFM in the Twenty-six Counties or working with DEFRA in England.

In respect of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) and its considerations around the future of its site, we all have to look towards the sites that we have. We need to look at efficiencies, and we need to look at the future of AFBI's needs for research and development. There are no proposals on my desk for any closures. We are working our way through all the issues with AFBI. The Member is very aware of the financial position that we are in because of the cuts to the block grant and the ongoing raiding of the block grant from the Tories. We have to deal with that situation, but there are no proposals on my desk at this time. I have a very healthy portfolio of work ongoing with AFBI — £40 million-plus in research and development. That is work that we are very much committed to taking forward.

AFBI will bring forward proposals on its future as an organisation, and we will have to consider all the issues that come forward in the round.

Mr Speaker: I ask Members to take their ease while we organise the top Table.

11.15 am

Executive Committee Business

Pensions Bill: Consideration Stage

Mr Speaker: I call the Minister for Social Development, Mr Mervyn Storey, to move the Bill.

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): First, Mr Speaker, may I apologise to the House for not being here on time?

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

Moved. — [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Mr Speaker: Members will have a copy of the Marshalled List of amendments detailing the order for consideration. The amendments have been grouped for debate in the provisional grouping of amendments selected list. There is a single group of amendments — amendment Nos 1 to 6 — that deal with consequential and technical issues. I remind Members intending to speak that, during the debate on the amendments, they should address all the amendments in the group on which they wish to comment. Once the debate on the group is completed, any further amendments will be moved formally as we go through the Bill, and the Question on each will be put without further debate. The Questions on stand part will be taken at the appropriate points in the Bill. If that is clear, we shall proceed.

Clauses 1 to 24 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 25 to 32 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 33 (Power to prohibit offer of incentives to transfer pension rights)

Mr Speaker: We now come to the single group of amendments for debate. With amendment No 1, it will be convenient to debate amendment Nos 2 to 6. The amendments deal with consequential and technical matters. Members will note that amendment Nos 4, 5 and 6 are consequential to amendment No 3. I call the Minister for Social Development, Mr Mervyn Storey, to move amendment No 1 and to address the other amendments in the group.

Mr Storey: I beg to move amendment No 1: In page 17, line 16, leave out “section 89(1A)” and insert “section 96D”.

The following amendments stood on the Marshalled List:

No 2: In schedule 12, page 55, line 27, at end insert

“The Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
43A. *In section 97 of the Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (benefit cap), in subsection (8), before paragraph (a) insert—*

“(za) state pension under Part 1 of the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015;”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

No 3: In schedule 17, page 84, line 26, leave out “applicable rules” and insert “scheme rules”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

No 4: In schedule 17, page 84, line 37, leave out sub-paragraph (6) and insert

“(6) In sub-paragraph (4)—

(a) the reference to “scheme rules” is to be read in accordance with section 96B of the Pension Schemes Act;

(b) “benefits” means—

(i) money purchase benefits other than money purchase benefits of a prescribed description, or

(ii) benefits of a prescribed description.”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

No 5: In schedule 17, page 91, line 3, at end insert

“(2A) In section 96B(2) (meaning of “scheme rules”: occupational pension schemes)—

a) in paragraph (a), after sub-paragraph (x) insert—

“(xi) regulations made under Schedule 17 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”;

(b) in paragraph (b), after sub-paragraph (vii) insert—

“(viii) regulations made under paragraph 16 of Schedule 17 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

No 6: In schedule 18, page 94, line 11, at end insert

“(2A) In section 96B(2) (meaning of “scheme rules”: occupational pension schemes)—

(a) in paragraph (a), after sub-paragraph (xi) (inserted by Schedule 17) insert—

“(xii) regulations made under Schedule 18 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”;

(b) in paragraph (b), after sub-paragraph (viii) (inserted by Schedule 17) insert—

“(ix) regulations made under paragraph 6 of Schedule 18 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Mr Storey: The amendments are minor technical amendments. Amendment Nos 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are in consequence of the Pension Schemes Act 2015, which received Royal Assent on 3 March 2015. Members may recall that, on 26 January, the House agreed a legislative consent motion relating to the provisions of the then Westminster Pension Schemes Bill, including provisions in schedule 4 to the Bill relating to rights to transfer benefits. Schedule 4 to the new Pension Schemes Act makes consequential amendments to the Pensions Act 2014 and includes references to it in other legislation.

The Pensions Act 2014 is the Westminster equivalent of the Pensions Bill. As our Pensions Bill has not completed its passage through the Assembly, schedule 4 to the Pension Schemes Act 2015 could not make corresponding amendments for Northern Ireland. Amendment Nos 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 make the necessary amendments. They do not denote new policy and, in line with the legislative consent motion, would have been carried in the Pension Schemes Act 2015 had the Pensions Bill been enacted.

Briefly, amendment No 1 updates a legislative reference. Amendment Nos 3 and 4 replace references to “applicable rules” with references to “scheme rules” as, following changes made by the Pension Schemes Act 2015, the term “applicable rules” is no longer used and is subsumed within the definition of “scheme rules” in section 96B of the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993, as inserted by the Pension Schemes Act 2015. The definition

of scheme rules in section 96B provides that references to scheme rules refer to the rules of the scheme except in so far as they are overridden by a relevant legislative provision. Scheme rules also include any relevant legislative provision not included in the scheme rules. I am sure that Members are following all that intensely. I am just checking that everybody is doing that.

The effect of amendment Nos 5 and 6 is to include provisions of schedules 17 and 18 to the Bill in the list of relevant legislative provisions in the definition of scheme rules in section 96B of the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Act 1993.

I turn briefly to amendment No 2. It amends the Welfare Reform Bill to ensure that the agreed policy that the benefit cap should not apply to state pension continues when the new state pension scheme comes into operation.

In conclusion, I merely restate that these are minor technical and consequential amendments.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for bringing forward the Consideration Stage of the Bill. Notification of the amendments was provided to the Committee by the Department on 5 March, which was after the Committee had completed its scrutiny of the Bill and had reported on it.

Mr Speaker: Will the Member point the microphone towards him?

Mr Maskey: Sorry. Gabh mo leithscéal.

The Committee considered the Department's notification of the amendments at its meeting of 12 March and noted that they were of a consequential and technical nature. At that time, no members of the Committee raised any concerns with the proposed amendments, and, therefore, there was no further consideration in detail of the amendments. As I said, the Committee accepted that they were mainly consequential and technical, and they have already been outlined by the Minister to the House this morning.

I appreciate that this stage of the Bill is mainly to consider the amendments, but, with your indulgence, I would also like to refer briefly to some of the key issues considered by the Committee and the related recommendations proposed by the Committee in our report. As part of the Committee's consideration of the Bill, a public call for evidence was issued in November 2014. The Committee sought submissions from stakeholders through advertisements placed in the local press. The Committee also proactively contacted the stakeholders who had contributed to the Department's consultation on the Bill to determine whether they also wished to make a submission to the Committee. Notwithstanding that effort, the Committee received only three substantive written submissions to the call for evidence, as well as three email responses.

Throughout its consideration, the Committee took oral evidence from the three stakeholders that provided substantive written submissions, and regular written and oral briefings from the Department. The Committee welcomed the Department's proactive approach in addressing in a timely and comprehensive fashion the issues raised by stakeholders and for providing detailed briefings on these matters. I place on record the Committee's thanks to departmental officials who attended each evidence session and were, therefore, able to give

almost simultaneous responses to questions and concerns raised by stakeholders.

The Committee's report outlines a range of issues raised by the Committee and addressed by the Department. Therefore, I intend to confine my remarks to the key issues raised by stakeholders and the related recommendations made by the Committee.

Members will note the inclusion in the Bill of changes to bereavement benefits. I thank Cruse Bereavement Care and the Childhood Bereavement Network for providing evidence to the Committee about the introduction of the bereavement support payment. Cruse expressed concern at the replacement of a number of benefits, including widowed parent's allowance, with a single bereavement payment and the likely impact of that on widowed parents with dependent children. The Committee recommends that the Department monitors the impact on widowed parents with dependent children as a result of replacing widowed parent's allowance and other bereavement benefits with a single bereavement support payment.

The Committee noted that the bereavement support payment will not extend to surviving unmarried cohabiting partners, which is also the case with the payment of widowed parent's allowance. It noted that the main stated reason for that is the difficulty in officially verifying such relationships. However, the Committee shares the concerns of Cruse and the Childhood Bereavement Network that that might impact negatively on the children of such a relationship. It therefore recommends that the Department investigates how verification of such relationships can be established with a view to providing access for the surviving partner of such a relationship to the bereavement support payment.

The Committee was concerned that those with multiple part-time jobs or in zero-hours contracts might struggle to make the lower earnings limit required to trigger National Insurance contributions and, therefore, not reach the minimum qualifying period of 10 years' contributions to ensure a state pension. That issue was also raised by the Commissioner for Older People when giving evidence to the Committee.

The Department noted that National Insurance was an excepted matter and, therefore, fell outside the remit of the Assembly. However, the Committee was informed that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HMRC were looking at this matter for the longer term. The Committee noted that the number of people who fell into this category was likely to be very low. According to the most recent figures, for 2012-13, only 110 people who put in a claim were getting a pension of less than the 10-year amount.

The Committee recommends that the Department provides an update when HMRC and DWP make progress towards effectively capturing information on those with multiple jobs and struggling to reach the lower earnings limit to ensure, in the context of this Bill, recognition of their service to society and that qualifying years can be accumulated accordingly.

The Committee highlighted the importance of making sure that informal carers received formal credit for their work that might otherwise go unrecognised, for example the carers' allowance, to ensure that that contributes to the number of qualifying years. The Committee noted that an officially recognised carer could potentially obtain a full state pension

depending on the duration of their caring responsibilities. It therefore calls on the Department for Social Development to work with stakeholders and other Departments, particularly DHSSPS, to maximise the number of informal carers officially recognised as carers to ensure that they receive an appropriate level of state pension.

On behalf of the Committee, I welcome the introduction of a single-tier pension. It provides simplicity in an otherwise complex area. It also provides greater certainty in respect of what an individual can expect to receive on retirement. It is, and has been, described as a mixed bag and is, of course, part of ongoing wider changes and reform of pension provision.

I hope that I have given a fair reflection, a Cheann Comhairle, of the Committee's concerns on the broader issues, and I thank you for the latitude you gave me to do so. On behalf of the Committee for Social Development, I support the amendments and passage of the Bill.

Mr Beggs: As we progress this Pensions Bill, it is important, when considering any amendments, to consider the complexity of pensions legislation. For example, in the legislation, there are references to the Pensions Schemes Act, which the Minister mentioned, welfare legislation, the National Insurance (Northern Ireland) Act 1966 etc. It is all tied together, and any changes must be very carefully considered.

11.30 am

Equally, changes to pension parity with the rest of the United Kingdom, if included, would have to be carefully considered as they could have huge implications for our block grant and the cost of and ability to deliver any adjusted pensions locally. I am thankful that, to date, parity has been retained and that the amendments will continue such parity.

Turning to the amendments, it appears that they are consequential and technical in nature. Whilst I acknowledge that the Committee was advised early in March of the intention to bring forward amendments, it was disappointing that the formal notice of amendments was not issued to the Assembly and published to Members until 16 March. It would have been better if that had been done earlier to ensure that all Members were aware of changes.

Turning specifically to amendment No 6, it would be helpful if the Minister could provide some elaboration and explanation. The note that was given to the Committee about that amendment refers to the "Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Act 2015", which, of course, is not in place. We were advised by his officials that that had originally been removed from the early drafts of the Pensions Bill as a consequence of the delays in the passage of the Welfare Reform Bill. This amendment brings it back in. We are still facing delays, so it would be helpful if the Minister could, when he sums up, give an explanation and state whether there has been progress on the Welfare Reform Bill, because the amendment refers to an Act, and give us some clarity on whether it is proper to refer in legislation to an Act that does not yet exist.

Mr Attwood: I apologise for being delayed. I was at another meeting and missed the beginning of the debate. I missed the new broom and his contributions on this occasion. I also apologise on behalf of Dolores Kelly, who has pressing personal responsibilities and is unable to

attend the Assembly today. Consequently, I am speaking, no doubt inadequately, in her place.

I should, as all Members should, declare an interest, because I am far too close to 65, 66 or 67, and some of these provisions will affect me. I have on my left one of the youngest MLAs, if not the youngest, for whom the retirement age will no doubt be 75, 76 or 77. Maybe we should all declare a bit of an interest in this matter.

I am advised by Dolores Kelly that the amendments are technical, as was indicated by the Chair of the Committee. Consequently, we will support them, but there are some broader comments that I want to make, if I am allowed, in respect of where we are in relation to all of this, noting that we reserve the right, as a party, to table amendments at Further Consideration Stage, subject to conversations with the party and Mrs Kelly.

There are points that I ask the Minister to take on board, although, in part, they are really the responsibility of DFP. It was not long ago that the Assembly passed legislation in respect of pensions globally, which included a lot of the Hutton proposals. As Members will be aware, at the Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage of that legislation, with a lot of drafting help from the Bill Office, amendments were tabled and approved by the Assembly, and then further amendments were tabled after backroom negotiations between DFP and ourselves and other parties. Those amendments were aimed at mitigating the effects of pension change for appropriate categories of worker.

At the cuts action day on 13 March, members of the Fire Brigades Union spoke to me and my colleagues about the provisions in that pensions legislation as they affects firefighters. Provision was made in that legislation, Minister, to do some further review and assessment — the full details of which escape my mind at the moment — of other categories of workers that might be protected when it came to general pension provisions, given the nature of their work. I think that firefighters and police officers were protected under that legislation but that nurses, porters and teachers, who work in very strenuous physical and other environments, were not.

Should the debate go on beyond Question Time, my question is this: where are we with the review provisions that were in that legislation, if my mind is correct on that point? For reading across to this legislation, that is relevant, because it raises the age levels at which people will be entitled to their pension and covers various circumstances around their entitlement to a pension. That will then make even more acute the fact that there are certain categories of workers who, because of the nature of their work, are under particular physical, mental or emotional strain and, as such, might deserve some protection. However, in the Bill before us, the time at which they will get their state pension is to be adjusted. As a consequence, a spike will legitimately arise for people and their pensions where they are seeking early retirement because of ill health. How does that work itself through to any and all of this?

My next comment will not necessarily surprise the Minister. We argued at Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill for a dedicated Committee of the House to interrogate welfare matters. Given the scale of pension changes

that are already in law and those that are going to be in law following the passage of the Bill, we again make the argument — we are going to write to the relevant authorities in the Assembly in this regard — to have a Committee of the House to look at welfare and pensions.

A trip was organised, I think, last Friday by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) to Glasgow, where it and various other organisations involved in welfare advice and provision met members of the welfare rights community in Scotland and people in and around the dedicated Welfare Reform Committee of the Scottish Parliament, which is a model that we urged the House to adopt at Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill. It met people involved in the delivery of welfare and the oversight of welfare change in Scotland. I think that all the parties were invited to attend. We certainly sent one of our senior policy people on that trip to get better informed about the roll-out of welfare provision in Scotland. I think that a lot of people came back from that trip saying that there was merit in having oversight of welfare change in the Assembly. I broaden the argument, Minister: given the scale of pension change through not just your Ministry but DFP, there is a need for dedicated oversight of welfare and pension change and provision arising from this Bill and the other legislation.

The third general point that I make is that pensions and changes to pensions are very much on the radar of the Conservative Government. Although last week's Budget was substantially the reheating of the Chancellor's autumn statement, there were still further pension changes in the Budget narrative. Just as we have seen significant changes through Hutton and the adjustment of the entitlement age for a pension, I anticipate that, if the Tory Government are re-elected, we have not seen the half of it, not just with austerity, whereby the Chancellor is making it very clear that the scale of austerity as he sees it will be greater over the lifetime of the next Government than it was with the previous Government.

On the scale of welfare reductions, he has put into the Budget statement — it was not just comments or briefings to the media or statements issued through his office but was in the Budget statement — £12 billion more of welfare cuts. He has already declared his ambition to reduce the tax burden on individuals without explaining how that will be funded. It is my view and that of the SDLP that, just as welfare and austerity are in play, pensions will be in play with the next Tory Government — if there is a next Tory Government. All that confirms that we should have more oversight —

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will in a second.

We should have more oversight of what is passing through the House today and what is yet to pass in terms of the ambitions of the Chancellor as he competes to become the next Prime Minister. They will all be outdoing each other. They will all be saying, "I can go further on austerity, pension change and welfare reform than you can. I'm the true Tory. I'm the successor to Margaret Thatcher". I certainly get the sense that the Chancellor very much views himself in the image of Margaret Thatcher, so those are not idle words. These things could come to pass in the next 50 days, because, as we have said in this House before, on the far side of the Westminster election, if the

Tories are re-elected, they will do what they did in 2010. They will have a replay of an election in May and an urgent emergency Budget in June, which will be about accelerating austerity in the early years.

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member will be aware that I have given him considerable latitude to introduce some wider aspects. I think that it is time to return to the amendments. You have been asked for an intervention, so the same health warning goes to the person who wants to intervene.

Mr Attwood: I will give way to the Member.

Mr Beggs: I will take the Speaker's advice, so I ask the Member whether, considering the amendments — he mentioned that he thought that there should be greater oversight of pensions in the Assembly — he will acknowledge that the place to adjust such legislation is Westminster. If excesses are occurring there, that is the place to go, and Members from Northern Ireland should fight the changes there. In reality, we do not have the funds in our block grant to make significant changes here.

Mr Attwood: As you might have anticipated, I will conclude by replying to that question. If it is the case that there is an emergency Budget in the image of the hard Tory right on the far side of the election in May, and it is across the life of pensions, welfare and austerity, the obligation is to try to impede and block that and to vote it down. Given that it is highly likely that there will be a hung Parliament, it is not good enough for people to say, as they said last Friday, that there could be welfare negotiations after the election with a future Labour Government if there is no future Labour Government because the votes are not there to bring it into power. Mr Speaker, I have never in my life quoted the 'Daily Mirror' in the Chamber —

Mr Speaker: Do you really need to do it now? *[Laughter.]*

Mr Attwood: Its deputy editor — I think that he is the paper's chief political correspondent — wrote yesterday that the scenario that now faces us is Labour having insufficient numbers to form a Government in its own right, and with fewer numbers than the Tories. The scenario is that Labour comes second but goes into power, because, as he put it, the SNP, Plaid Cymru, the SDLP, the Greens and the remnants of the Lib Dems will bring it into government.

Mr Speaker: OK, I think —

Mr Attwood: That is the political point revolving round this legislation.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to resume his seat, and I call Mr Kieran McCarthy to bring us back to today's topic for debate: the amendments.

11.45 am

Mr McCarthy: Mr Speaker, I will bring you back; I will not be very long. Like Mr Attwood before me, I am speaking on behalf of a colleague who sits on the Social Development Committee. Also like Mr Attwood, who declared an interest — it was an almost-interest, I think, if I am correct from what he said — in what we are discussing, I declare an interest, and I am delighted to be where I am. I do not think that what we are discussing will have any effect on me, although having listened to Mr Attwood and his dire forecasts about the Tories coming in, I am a bit nervous that what we have will be shattered and interfered with by

an incoming, relentless Tory Government. Anyway, I will continue.

The Bill will provide the means to implement reforms to our state pension system to ensure that it is on a par with that in the rest of the UK. The key changes are the creation of a single-tier pension system, changes to the pensionable age, bereavement support and alterations to the law on private pensions. Part 1 of the Bill introduces a single-tier pension that is to start from April next year, increasing the number of qualifying years to 10 and the number of qualifying years for a full pension to 35. That presented a number of concerns to interested groups during the Committee Stage. The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland in particular expressed concern that women may be more adversely affected than men. Following discussions with DSD, the Committee was content that impacts would ultimately be ironed out. Let us hope that that is the case.

Another issue that I am keen to ensure is effectively monitored is the increase in the years of National Insurance contributions required to qualify for a state pension. The Committee was concerned that, in a changing labour market, with many people being underemployed, many would not meet the earnings threshold for National Insurance contributions. They would ultimately not qualify for a pension after 35 years because, even if they have worked, they would not have earned enough to make National Insurance contributions. However, I have hope that, with HMRC and DWP discussions, there can be a solution that means that years of work can be counted towards pension entitlement.

Part 2 of the Bill will also raise the pensionable age to 67. As a society, we need to recognise that we are living longer and that, therefore, the pensionable age should be adjusted to reflect that. Nonetheless, it is vital that the Department effectively communicates those changes to allow for effective financial management for those approaching pensionable age. Furthermore, I am also reassured by the assertion that any further increase in the pensionable age will require additional primary legislation to come before the House.

Part 5 of the Bill institutes a bereavement support payment. The Committee expressed concern that unmarried couples would not benefit from that payment, and it urged the Department to investigate means of validating long-term relationships to allow payments to be made. After all, it is important that the spirit of the bereavement support is upheld and that those most affected by loss are properly and, indeed, justly supported.

In conclusion, let me say that the Alliance Party supports the Bill at this stage, as well as the departmental amendments, which, as has been said, are mostly technical. I urge the Department to continue to scrutinise the progress of the Bill's implementation, particularly for those groups that have been identified as most at risk of being considerably adversely affected. We must ensure that our pension system is fit for purpose and fits the needs that the 21st century will place upon it.

Ms P Bradley: I welcome the opportunity to make a few very brief comments on the Consideration Stage of the Bill. As I said previously on the Bill, changes to our pension scheme are necessary not only to make it in line with Westminster but to meet the changing demographics of

our society. I agree with the Chair's comments, especially in highlighting the concerns about cohabitants and informal carers. I hope that the Department will undertake to review and monitor that situation.

The Bill was thoroughly scrutinised, debated and agreed in Committee, and as this debate is about focusing on the amendments, all of which are technical, there is very little else to say. Of course, I will not prolong the debate any longer, other than to say that I support the amendments.

Mr Storey: I thank the Members who took part in the debate. Mr Attwood referred to me as the new broom, and I think that one or two bristles of the new broom are starting to disappear because the last few weeks have been challenging. However, like others, I may need to declare an interest as I am now heading towards the category that becomes part of the outcome of the Pensions Bill. As one who turned the big five-0 recently, I have a vested interest.

I thank the Chair of the Committee, and, in his absence, I want to say how much we appreciate the detailed work carried out by the Committee on this issue. I know that the Committee sent out an extensive trawl to get information, and I assure the Chair and the members of the Committee that the Department is giving detailed consideration to the Committee's recommendations that followed on from the report. Those were referenced by a number of Members, and we trust that we will be in a position to reply shortly to the issues that were raised in relation to the recommendations.

Mr Beggs raised the important issue of parity, which we always need to keep in mind when we deal with these issues. Of course, I can confirm that this is a parity measure, and it is a matter that has been addressed. In reference to the tabling of amendments, the Pension Schemes Bill only completed its passage and received Royal Assent in early March, and the admissibility of amendments to the Welfare Reform Bill is a matter for the Speaker and for the House. I defer that issue to those authorities.

I will clarify one point. I can understand why the Member may have made the reference that he did. He referred to amendment No 6, but it actually is in reference to amendment No 2. It may have been that it has subsequently changed. What does amendment No 2 do? It inserts a paragraph into schedule 12 to the Pensions Bill, which deals with amendments consequential on the introduction of the new state pension. The new paragraph will amend clause 97(8) of the Welfare Reform Bill to provide that the new state pension cannot be caught by the benefits cap. This continues the agreed policy that the state pension cannot be included in the benefits cap. That leads us on to the question —

Mr Beggs: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Storey: Yes.

Mr Beggs: For clarification, the Minister is in fact correct. I referred to amendment No 6, which is what it was in his earlier correspondence. He is correct that it is amendment No 2 on the Marshalled List.

Mr Storey: Thank you. On the point that the Member raised on the Welfare Reform Bill, I am, along with my colleagues, continuing to work extensively to ensure that, as far as my party and I are concerned, we deliver the deal

that we agreed on. I have heard Members today talk about the fears and the worries of an incoming Tory Government, but they had no fears or no worries about an incoming Government when they signed the petition of concern. Obviously, if they were so concerned about protecting those whom they claim they want to protect, they would have allowed the progression of the Welfare Reform Bill when I stood in the House two weeks ago. Then we might not have had the crocodile tears that we have seen over the last number of days in trying to outdo others on an issue. I think that that is shameful; it is using people to score political points.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Minister for giving way. He makes a very important point, but I expect that the concern that he has talked about is more a concern for people's own party political position than for the poor. Can he assure us that, just as the parity principle is important in pensions, in any discussions that there have been, there will not be additional money made available to those who sought to blackmail the Assembly when they did a U-turn on an agreement that they made just before Christmas?

Mr Speaker: I will point out the obvious, which is that that point is well beyond the scope of the debate. I ask Members to return to the subject matter.

Mr Storey: Suffice it to say that I will confirm, as the First Minister and Finance Minister have confirmed, that we are working within the financial envelope agreed by the parties in the Stormont House and Stormont Castle agreements. I am working, along with my colleagues, to ensure that that is what we deliver. It is time for others to make progress and come to a position where we can bring the Welfare Reform Bill back to the House and continue to make progress on the other issues, such as corporation tax and all the other financial benefits that flow from that agreement.

Returning to the Pensions Bill and to Mr Attwood's remarks. I have to say that he never fails. One thing about the Member is that he is consistent: the day of doom and gloom is coming. With the previous Welfare Reform Bill, it was that I was working under subterfuge with DWP, who were pulling my strings. Now it is the case that we have an impending Tory Government, and all is going to come to an end. There is no doubt that, irrespective of the outcome of the general election, we will continue to face challenges in the weeks, months and years ahead. It does not matter whether it is a Labour Government, the sister party of Mr Attwood's. They will face the same challenges, but let us remember that it was that Administration that got us into the difficulties that necessitated the search for changes to the economic prosperity of our nation.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. Would he agree with me that, however much concern a Tory Administration delivering Tory cuts would cause the House and those of us sitting on these Benches, the prospect of a Labour Administration, which got this country into the mess it is in, being propped up by the SNP, Plaid Cymru and the SDLP, which is fiscally and financially illiterate, would scare the wits out of all of us?

Mr Storey: Yes, and be assured that when my party's members return to the House on 8 May and thereafter, following what I trust will be a successful election for us, the DUP MPs will continue to ensure that the best interests of Northern Ireland are protected and put to the fore.

In relation to the public service —

Mr Attwood: I thank the Minister for giving way. I have to say to him that, rather than sounding like a new broom, he now sounds like a broken duster. Putting that aside, would you not agree that it is a very strange place that, when your colleague to the right says that Labour were responsible and that that necessitated what had to be done, your party opposed the bedroom tax most of the time? Is the Member to your right —

Mr Wilson: Your party introduced it.

Mr Attwood: Well we have dealt with that at a previous debate, when the argument was overwhelmingly against Mr Wilson's —

Mr Speaker: I will rule any further digressions out of order. I have reminded Members a number of times, and I want to remind the Minister: it applies to you as well. You have brought the business before the House. Let us do the business that you brought before the House.

Mr Storey: Thank you, Mr Speaker and, at the risk of being named, as has happened already this week, I think we will try and make progress on this issue.

Let me come to the point that the Member raised about the public-service pensions, and he made reference to a number of other categories. Public-service pensions are not a matter for my Department and, as I think he said, they fall to DFP and other sponsoring Departments.

There is merit in the Member raising those issues. I am quite happy to seek clarification from the Finance Minister and will come back to him.

12.00 noon

He also referred, in the debate on the Welfare Reform Bill, to the special committee for what is now welfare and pensions and to a very successful visit by NICVA to Scotland to see how they deal with operational matters. I have to say, as I said then, that the primary responsibility for the scrutiny of legislation belongs to the statutory Committees established in and by this House. The Social Development Committee did a very good piece of work on the Bill before us. I have a particular bias as former Chair of the Education Committee, but I think that the work of our Committees in scrutinising issues, gathering evidence and listening in an impartial, open and transparent way to the arguments is the way in which it should be done. That is where those issues should rest. Of course, we have already referred to the future, and we look forward to the outcome of our national election. We will deal with the consequences and outcomes of that in the weeks and months that lie before us.

Mr Attwood: I thank the Minister for giving way again. Going back to the point about the Committee, in a year's time, come what may, the Committees of this Chamber will be reconfigured because the Departments are being reconfigured. At that stage, welfare will be in the Department for Communities, which will be of a vast scale. I put it to the Minister that, in anticipation of the scale of that Department and of changes to welfare and pensions — and more is likely to come — that there is an argument that we should anticipate what will happen next year by having at this stage a Committee that looks at other DSD business and another Committee dedicated to looking at welfare and pensions.

Mr Storey: The Member makes a valid point. Post-2016, we will have nine new Departments, all of which will have been enhanced and enlarged and have taken on considerably different responsibilities and emphases and new roles, but I still believe that the Committees that would then be created to mirror the nine Departments need to be able to continue the work that has been done. I do not think that any Member in this House questions the validity and the value of the work that is carried out by existing Committees. It is one of the best elements in what goes on here. A lot of work is done by our Committees that sometimes does not get the credit it deserves. If you start to do a trawl of the Committees in this House, you would see the extensive work that they do. I do not believe that by creating some other subset — of course there is, maybe, one way that it could be done. If the Committee for Communities or whatever new Committee is established, were to decide to establish an ad hoc Committee, as it did for the Welfare Reform Bill, then that would be up to that Committee, but I believe that that is their responsibility and duty to hold me, as Minister for Social Development, and whoever is the Minister for Communities in 2016 to account.

I move on to comments made by Mr McCarthy. I recognise that, unfortunately, some Members who contribute to the Social Development Committee have other duties and cannot be with us. I appreciate that he was speaking on behalf of his colleague. He made reference to the issues that were raised about the bereavement support payment, and, as I said in response to the Chair, we are considering the recommendations that flowed from the Committee's report, and we will be, very soon I trust, in a position to respond, at which point Members will be able to see the detail of that response.

He also made reference to the question of the 35 qualifying years. It might be useful to give some context to that issue. We are merging the two schemes; the 30 qualifying years required for the full basic state pension and up to 52 years for the state second pension. It strikes a balance between enabling the majority of people who contribute to achieve a full state pension and retaining the contributory principle. It avoids the unnecessary complexity of a phased approach in which the value of the new state pension qualifying years could differ from the different cohorts.

By the mid-2030s, 80% of people reaching state pension age will get the full new state pension. In 2020, around 90% of males and 80% of females under the new state pension will have 35 or more qualifying years. This is true both at state pension age in 2020 and for all pensioners under the new state pension in 2020, so no one will be disadvantaged by the increase to the 35 years. Under the current scheme, 30 qualifying years provides a full state pension entitlement of £115.95 from April 2015. Under the new scheme, 30 qualifying years will provide a state pension entitlement of £129.64. I trust that that helps Members and places that on the record.

Those are all the comments that I want to make about the matters that have been raised by Members. I thank Members for their help and indulgence and I also want to place on record my appreciation of my officials for the work that they have done, particularly for the extensive work that they did — it was mentioned by the Chair of the Committee for Social Development — when the Bill was being considered at Committee Stage. A lot of this is technical

and very detailed, and I appreciate all the work that my officials did to inform the Committee and, subsequently, the House.

Amendment No 1 agreed to.

Clause 33, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr Speaker: No amendments have been tabled to clauses 34 to 49. I propose, by leave of the Assembly, to group these clauses for the Question on stand part.

Clauses 34 to 49 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr Speaker: No amendments have been tabled to clauses 50 to 54. I propose, by leave of the Assembly, to group these clauses for the Question on stand part.

Clauses 50 to 54 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr Speaker: No amendments have been tabled to schedules 1 to 11. I propose, by leave of the Assembly, to group these schedules for the Question on stand part.

Schedules 1 to 11 agreed to.

Schedule 12 (State pension: amendments)

Amendment No 2 made:

In page 55, line 27, at end insert

“The Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

43A. In section 97 of the Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (benefit cap), in subsection (8), before paragraph (a) insert—

“(za) state pension under Part 1 of the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015;”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Schedule 12, as amended, agreed to.

Mr Speaker: No amendments have been tabled to schedules 13 to 16. I propose, by leave of the Assembly, to group these schedules for the Question on stand part.

Schedules 13 to 16 agreed to.

Schedule 17 (Automatic transfer of pension benefits etc.)

Amendment No 3 made:

In page 84, line 26, leave out “applicable rules” and insert “scheme rules”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Amendment No 4 made:

In page 84, line 37, leave out sub-paragraph (6) and insert

“(6) In sub-paragraph (4)—

(a) the reference to “scheme rules” is to be read in accordance with section 96B of the Pension Schemes Act;

(b) “benefits” means—

(i) money purchase benefits other than money purchase benefits of a prescribed description, or

(ii) benefits of a prescribed description.”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Mr Speaker: Amendment No 5 is consequential to amendment Nos 3 and 4.

Amendment No 5 made:

In page 91, line 3, at end insert

“(2A) In section 96B(2) (meaning of “scheme rules”: occupational pension schemes)—

(a) in paragraph (a), after sub-paragraph (x) insert—

“(xi) regulations made under Schedule 17 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”;

(b) in paragraph (b), after sub-paragraph (vii) insert—

“(viii) regulations made under paragraph 16 of Schedule 17 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Schedule 17, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 18 (Power to restrict charges or impose requirements in relation to schemes)

Amendment No 6 made:

In page 94, line 11, at end insert

“(2A) In section 96B(2) (meaning of “scheme rules”: occupational pension schemes)—

(a) in paragraph (a), after sub-paragraph (xi) (inserted by Schedule 17) insert—

“(xii) regulations made under Schedule 18 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”;

(b) in paragraph (b), after sub-paragraph (viii) (inserted by Schedule 17) insert—

“(ix) regulations made under paragraph 6 of Schedule 18 to the Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.”.— [Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development).]

Schedule 18, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 19 and 20 agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

Mr Speaker: That concludes the Consideration Stage of the Pensions Bill. The Bill stands referred to the Speaker.

Private Members' Business

Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

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 in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I beg to move

That this Assembly expresses concern that men outnumber women by nearly three to one in high-level science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) posts; welcomes the statement by the Minister for Employment and Learning on 4 June 2013 reiterating the importance of women in the STEM sectors; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues, to publish a strategy and action plan that addresses specifically the issue of gender imbalance in the STEM sectors.

Our economy needs more skilled scientists and engineers, and that need will not be met unless greater efforts are made to retain women in STEM careers. 'Addressing Gender Balance', a report published in 2013, identified the fact that, while high-level STEM posts constituted over 11% of the workforce, men outnumbered women by nearly three to one in those roles. That is not a problem that is particular to the North or to Britain, but it is a problem for the island of Ireland. Figures in 'The Irish Times' recently identified the fact that, of 118,000 people working in STEM, only a quarter were women.

In the North of Ireland, we do not have a strategy that specifically addresses the issue of women and gender imbalance in STEM careers. The most relevant government strategies are Success through STEM and the gender equality strategy. Success through STEM contains 20 recommendations, one of which pertains to the issue of gender imbalance.

12.15 pm

As we commence our debate, I take the opportunity to commend the much good work that is done in our primary and secondary schools by the Executive to tackle gender stereotypes in education. At the same time, raising the importance of engagement with the STEM industry needs to be part of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). After much inquiry in Britain into this important matter, no new issues have been uncovered on the topic of gender diversity in STEM subjects. While problems and solutions have long been identified, more needs to be actively done to improve the situation. While competition for jobs is beneficial for science, careers should not be constructed in a way that deters talented women from remaining and progressing in STEM.

Despite clear imperatives and multiple initiatives to improve diversity in STEM, women remain underrepresented at senior levels across every discipline. The gender imbalance in STEM is caused by a range of factors. While it is commendable that an emphasis is placed on inspiring young women to choose STEM subjects, such efforts are wasted if women continue to

be disproportionately disadvantaged in STEM subjects in comparison with men. It is disappointing that biases and working practices result in systemic and cumulative discrimination against women throughout STEM study and academic careers.

The inquiry in Britain found that scientists are susceptible to the same unconscious gender bias as the rest of the population. It is unfortunate that some are unwilling to accept this simply because professional research requires them to be objective. As employers of academic STEM researchers, our universities and higher education institutions have ultimate responsibility for employment conditions and the greatest obligation to improve STEM careers for all researchers. While there are many examples of good practice in diversity management, some higher education institutions across these islands appear only too willing to devolve responsibility for working hours, career support and promotion to research groups. More standardisation is required across the higher education sector.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Athena SWAN Charter is the most comprehensive practical scheme aimed at improving STEM careers and that both our universities, Queen's University and Ulster University, are members of the Athena SWAN Charter. The charter, founded in 2005, is awarded to universities that accept and promote the six charter principles: to address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone at all levels of the organisation; to tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation; the absence of diversity at management and policymaking levels has broad implications that the organisation will examine; the high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern that the organisation will address; the system of short-term contracts has particular negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science that the organisation recognises; and, finally, there are both personal and structural obstacles to women making the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career in science that require the active consideration of the organisations.

Recommendations from the report commissioned in Britain call for diversity and equality training, including unconscious bias training, to be provided to all STEM undergraduate and postgraduate students by their higher education institution. In addition, it was found that such training should be mandatory for all members of recruitment and promotion panels for STEM jobs and all line managers and supervisors of staff. A lack of career advice and support for academic researchers can affect women disproportionately. Higher education institutions should encourage mentoring, support networks and seminars at the research group level and monitor this practice. Such activities are encouraged by the Athena SWAN Charter that I mentioned.

As scientific research cannot always take place within regular working hours, it is recommended that research departments should determine and operate appropriate core working hours, with flexibility outside those core hours. That would ensure that most staff members were available for key meetings and that those with caring responsibilities were not disproportionately disadvantaged.

Fellowships and academic positions should be advertised with the option of working part time unless there are

insurmountable obstacles to such arrangements. All higher education institutions should review the working hours of their academic staff and the management of research groups to ensure that practices are in keeping with the needs of employees with caring responsibilities. Such matters should not be devolved to research groups. Line managers who pressure staff into long working hours should be held to account by their employer.

The time has come for the Minister for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with Executive colleagues, to publish a strategy and action plan that address specifically the gender imbalance in the STEM sectors. Many excellent schemes have attempted to stem the loss of talent. If applied with energy and determination as part of a coherent strategy, such initiatives have the potential to make our region one of the best places in the world to work in science and technology, a destination of choice for talented women, with spin-off benefits for the wider role of women in our society. I believe that we have the means of developing an integrated comprehensive and coordinated strategy for change. That will require political vision and commitment from leaders and organisations in academia and business and a major cultural change in attitudes and approach. Finally, I commend the great efforts by the South West College in promoting STEM. I wish it every success in its engineering careers fair that will take place this Friday and Saturday in Dungannon.

Mr Buchanan: It is a known fact that gender imbalance is an age-old problem that has increasingly been highlighted across the board, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematical courses. It is, I suppose, inconceivable that men outnumber women in high-level STEM positions by nearly 3:1, but that stark reality goes deeper than the high-level positions. In most spheres of life and for a number of reasons, women have been relegated to the sidelines and have got used to watching on as men fulfil roles and do jobs that they feel they are incapable of doing. Many underlying beliefs accompany that gender imbalance. Traditionally, from an early age, there are roles that are seen as male and those that are seen as female. That is also transferred into the workplace. Many jobs are seen as traditionally female or traditionally male, and that entrenched notion has filtered down many generations. To change that, we need to break the pattern by radically addressing the underlying issues that lead to such imbalance in our workforce.

The future success of the Northern Ireland economy depends on increasing numbers of skilled workers in the STEM sector. That means that we must encourage all our young people, especially girls, into that area. Of course, that starts at the primary school level. Rather than persuading our girls to go down more traditional routes, we need to actively promote all school subjects as being enjoyable and accessible to all. To realistically achieve that, I agree with the suggestions in the report by Queen's University entitled 'Addressing Gender Balance - Reaping the Gender Dividend in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics', which was published in 2013. It pushes for a greater collaborative effort by businesses, government and education to engage, encourage and inspire young women and girls. Collaboration is the key point.

We need to look to other countries that have already seriously started to address the issue. In the United

States of America, the National Girls Collaborative Project was set up to actively promote girls' participation in STEM projects, culminating in STEM careers. That body addressed all the issues that have detracted from a workforce in which women lead the way in STEM. In the UK, the Women in to Science and Engineering (WISE) campaign actively seeks to increase the gender balance in the UK's STEM workforce from 13% to 20% by 2020. In light of the types of body that have been set up in other places, I feel that it is time for a similar body to be put in place specifically to address this problem in Northern Ireland. Today, I call on the Minister to develop a DEL-backed collaborative project in conjunction with the main universities here to bring together all the main stakeholders of government, business and education to have a focused, progressive and innovative approach to redressing the imbalance.

It is imperative that this is done as soon as possible to encourage females into the STEM sector. Women are very important to the STEM sector. As an economic driver going forward, it makes good business sense. By recruiting more women, the workforce talent pool is enlarged, which ensures that recruiters can employ the best staff they need for their work. Women make up half the population. By having such a small group of women employed in the STEM industrial sector, businesses miss out on the needs of customers, as their staff are male-dominated and are not best placed to understand the needs of female customers.

I believe that there is a way forward. There is something that the Minister, his Department and his Executive colleagues need to do. It is time that something was moving and something was put in place to address the imbalance that we have. I support the motion.

Mr Rogers: I support the motion, and I thank the Members who brought it to the House. Only a few weeks ago in the Chamber we discussed another motion on STEM, and International Women's Day is just two weeks gone. The gender imbalance in the uptake of these subjects in schools was frequently noted in that debate. Gender imbalance in the STEM sector must be addressed as a matter of gender equality and economic urgency.

A very recent report by the Confederation of British Industry, 'Engineering Our Future', highlighted:

"Women currently make up 46% of the UK's workforce, but just 15.5% of the core STEM workforce."

Repeated studies down the years have done tremendous work to highlight how vital STEM subjects are to the economy. This is not to disparage the arts or humanities and the important role that they play in personal education, fulfilment, society and the knowledge economy, but the lack of uptake of STEM subjects is worrying. If we are to generate a high level of research and development, we need engineers, technicians and skilled scientists working in Northern Ireland.

The demand for STEM graduates is increasing at a time when Northern Ireland faces a brain drain, with so many young people studying and working abroad on a one-way ticket out of Northern Ireland. This was aptly summed up in the Science and Technology Committee's report, 'Women in Scientific Careers', which was helpfully provided by the Research and Information Service. It asserted:

"the UK economy needs more STEM workers and we cannot meet the demand without increasing the numbers of women in STEM."

The shortfall in the sector will increase if it is left unchecked.

Various reports have noted the concern that there is a gap that needs to be bridged between STEM education and what industry requires. We cannot have a discrete departmental approach to this. The Minister for Employment and Learning, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment need to come together to ensure that the STEM curriculum is attractive to employers and equips young people with the skills that are prized by industry.

A Member mentioned earlier the good work that goes on in primary and post-primary schools. I agree, but there is not enough of it; it is not universal across the system. I am particularly concerned about the reduction in the Sentinus budget. There is one STEM bus that travels round schools in Northern Ireland. That one bus is not even enough. With less money now, we are in a serious position.

STEM is not confined to graduates. A study in 2013 by the CBI reported that 42% of UK employers had struggled to recruit STEM-proficient staff at every level, ranging from apprentices to postgrads. There is an important role here for further education colleges in helping to bridge that gap.

We must build the foundation of STEM in schools. Likewise, it is vital that students get correct career advice that is tailored to them as early as possible. STEM is male-dominated. Reasons for the lack of female representation in the industry are varied, but tackling these barriers in schools is one of the first steps that we must take. Informative and correct career advice should ensure that more girls and young women are fully aware of the benefits that studying these subjects can bring. It is not a case of forcing students into taking subjects that they have no interest in, but no student should choose not to take up a STEM subject because of a lack of information or a misperception of it being a boys-only club.

12.30 pm

Mr McKinney: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Last Tuesday, I was due to be in the Chamber to ask a question of the Agriculture Minister, but, unfortunately, I was not here to do so. I was in the Building but at another meeting that distracted me, so I apologise to you and the House.

Mr Speaker: Thank you for coming to the Chamber to do that personally. Your apology is noted. The Business Committee has agreed 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 sitting is, by leave, suspended.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.31 pm.

On resuming (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Question 12 has been withdrawn.

Boxing Clubs: DCAL Funding

1. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what departmental funding opportunities are available for boxing clubs. (AQO 7861/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): I thank the Member for his question. Sport NI recently opened the third round of the Active Awards for Sport funding programme. The programme is a lottery-funded small grants programme that is primarily aimed at organisations that are delivering grass-roots, community-based sport. Eligible groups, including boxing clubs, can apply for grants ranging from £1,000 to £10,000. The closing date for applications is 13 April of this year.

In addition, DCAL, through Sport NI, is currently investing £3.27 million in boxing through the boxing investment programme. So far, that investment has provided boxing equipment to the value of almost £170,000, which has been distributed through the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) to 94 boxing clubs. It has committed £2.5 million in capital investment, which will provide improved facilities for 40 boxing clubs across the North, and has provided funding for a club development manager, who has been appointed by the IABA to work closely with clubs to improve governance arrangements and build capacity in clubs.

Mr Easton: I thank the Minister for her answer. As she knows, some boxing clubs perhaps lack the capacity to formulate applications. Can the Department or someone else give any help or advice to boxing clubs on how to formulate applications?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I agree with the Member's sentiments. I have visited most of the boxing clubs. In fact, I have visited some of the clubs in his constituency. They are all doing great work, but their focus is on looking after children and young people. They are not there to look at due diligence and governance, although all of them are perfectly willing to do so. However, it is not their primary function. That is why we asked that money go towards boxing and a support worker for boxing.

If the Member writes to me, I will give him details of the people whom he needs to talk to. I can also put him in contact with Sport NI. If he gives the information to Sport NI, a representative can give it back to the clubs, because it is important that they have access to the money. This is not about those clubs who have the smartest people putting in applications and getting the money. It is about it going to where there is need, and, more often than not, it is usually for groups that do not have the capability to put in applications in the first place.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. How can DCAL continue to support and assist those boxing clubs that will not receive funding in this phase of the programme?

Ms Ní Chuilín: As I said in answer to Mr Alex Easton, I realise that the boxing fraternity is reliant on public intervention. As we have agreed in the past, it is a sport that has not received as much funding or support as it felt it needed. Sport NI is working with a number of other organisations, including the Department for Social Development and councils, to ensure that there is a partnership approach taken, not only to funding clubs but to trying to give some of them support. For example, my local council, Belfast City Council, has come forward with its own boxing strategy to match the funding awarded through Sport NI. Therefore, it is about making contact with your council and its councillors, MLAs and Sport NI to ensure that the boxing clubs that need support get it.

Mr Ramsey: In response to Mr Easton, the Minister referred to small grants. Will she tell the House whether that money is available to boxing clubs that want to purchase defibrillators and to help ensure that they have the capacity to manage and use them?

Ms Ní Chuilín: This is primarily to do with revenue, but there are small capital grants available as well, and boxing clubs and any other sporting organisations are perfectly entitled to make an application to Sport NI. I know that some clubs and bigger governing bodies have bought defibrillators. A player at a game in the Member's own county of Derry took very unwell last year, and it was only through the use of a defibrillator and the intervention of some spectators who were professionally and medically trained that the man's life was saved. In this case, it is about trying to get some money in — small grants — to help the sporting clubs. For boxing, that has proved to be very successful, and I know that it has been very successful for other sports as well.

Mr Allister: Why is the Minister continuing to cling to the discriminatory practice operated by Sport NI of refusing to fund clubs that are not affiliated to the IABA, and when will she embrace the freedom of choice of clubs as to which governing body they affiliate to?

Ms Ní Chuilín: This is not the first time that this Member has accused either Sport NI or me of being sectarian or of operating discriminatory practices, all of which I completely refute. I think that the Member should put it on record that he withdraws his remarks. I think that they are disgraceful. The Member continues to make disgraceful, unsubstantiated comments in the House during Question Time, and I think that it needs to stop.

Budget: EQIA

2. **Ms McGahan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the outcome of the equality impact assessment (EQIA) on the draft budget and departmental spending plans, including what actions are being brought forward on any gaps that have been identified resulting from the EQIA. (AQO 7862/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. Following the Executive's agreement on the 2015-16 Budget, DCAL published detailed savings delivery plans that summarised each savings measure, outlined

the impact on front-line services, and addressed the potential impact on equality. It also published a high-level equality screening of its spending proposals. Overall, the Department's high-level impact assessment of its savings plans is revealed as largely neutral, but with some minor negative impacts for some aspects. The consultation ended on 9 March. Officials are now considering the representations that have been made and are preparing complete and appropriate responses to them. That process is ongoing, and I intend to publish a summary of the representations and the Department's responses to them.

Meanwhile, there were equality-related representations over concerns about cuts affecting people with disabilities, disability arts, the library service and sports, which are some examples, but others have been raised.

Ms McGahan: I thank the Minister for her response. Will the Minister detail DCAL's statutory requirements under section 75 in relation to the budget?

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department, like every Department in the Executive, has a statutory obligation to meet its section 75 obligations. Certainly, with regard to our equality duties, we have a legal duty to consider the likely impact on budget proposals, particularly on section 75 groups, and make final budget decisions, having given consideration and due regard to competing or other factors. So we must evaluate the impact, particularly on section 75 groups. Measures proposed in my Department have been in the middle of our consultations. However, we need to ensure that equality impact assessments are built in to any consultation responses. All the groups that apply will get a response. When the exercise has been completed, we will publish the responses on our website.

Mr Lyttle: What message do the Executive have for our world-class artists — poets such as Michael Longley, writers such as Glenn Patterson and young actors such as Jayne Wisener — who say that the scale and level of reductions applied to the arts in Northern Ireland are wrong? What, if anything, can she do to help the organisations whose very existence seems to be threatened by the scale of those reductions?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am saddened that we are in this situation. I encourage the Member to talk to his party leadership and to join with most, if not all, other parties. We need to put the blame for these cuts on our block grant firmly where it belongs — with the Westminster Government. We have lost hundreds of millions of pounds of public money that could have been spent not only on our local economy and our local infrastructure, but on supporting our local indigenous economies such as our artists and all the rest. While that is going on, I am sure that the Member knows that, even in his constituency, the Eastside Arts/East Belfast Partnership has been awarded funds. We want to make sure that people who have never received support from government bodies and agencies get funding and get it because they deserve it and because it is the right thing to do. I ask the Member to join with the rest of us to convince his party that we need to firmly convince the Westminster Government not to continually take money from our block grant.

Cultural and Creative Hubs: Derry

3. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether, as part of the City of Culture legacy, cultural and

creative hubs in the southern part of the Derry City Council area will be considered for support and investment. (AQO 7863/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. The development of cultural and creative hubs is a key element of my Department's focus on north-west development to ensure a lasting legacy from the 2013 City of Culture year. It is also important for communities to have local access to equipment and support to improve skills development and training and ensure that people of all ages benefit from having access to cutting-edge digital and information technology.

In the current financial year, 16 hubs across the north-west have been supported, including those in Castlederg, Strabane and the city of Derry. All those hubs are in areas of significant need and where current provision is inadequate.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as na freagraí a thug sí go dtí seo. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Minister for her answer thus far. She recently visited the Cornstore Creative Hub. What support will that project, and the Seamus Heaney Centre in Bellaghy, receive from DCAL?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. He is right: I recently visited the Cornstore Creative Hub. Through the north-west social and economic development programme, DCAL has provided that facility, with £30,000 for a minibus for community transport and £20,000 for the continuation of a key rural music programme.

I was impressed by the work done by Paddy Glasgow and everybody else in that facility. It is clearly an example of how a small investment in a rural community has a wide reach. The transport has certainly helped that.

The Member will be aware that we are conducting an economic appraisal of the Seamus Heaney Centre. When that has been completed, I expect the Member, with the delegation he brought to my office, to come back and we can give him the outline and outcome of the proposal for what we now do about having that facility in Bellaghy in the future.

Mr Cree: I thank the Minister for her responses so far. What is the total budget for legacy issues next year across a wide range of spectra, bearing in mind the successful Londonderry UK City of Culture?

Ms Ní Chuilín: As the Member will be aware, the budget set for 2013 was for activities in that year. That was supported by the entire Executive. I was delighted that the Executive also supported the legacy programme, even though that was not in the original programme. We felt that there was such momentum, particularly in the city, that the surrounding areas needed to have some of the benefits of that.

So far, we have spent £6 million looking at the legacy. We are continuing to go around the neighbourhood renewal areas and areas at risk to try to get investment and establish community groups. We have not got an indicative figure for that yet because it is work ongoing but I am certainly committed to try to get money and to work with the Department for Social Development, Invest NI, councils and other partners in government to try to make sure that people are not disappointed after expectations were built up and that there are tangible outcomes for them in their areas.

Somme Centenary Commemorations: South Antrim

4. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the funding her Department has provided for Somme centenary commemorations in South Antrim. (AQO 7864/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her question. As yet, no funding has been allocated by my Department or its arm's-length bodies for activities earmarked for commemorations in South Antrim.

An extensive and diverse range of activities, events and initiatives exploring the decade of centenaries is being delivered by organisations including the Ulster Museum, libraries, creative learning centres, PRONI and the wider arts sector. Many plans are still in development but will reach out to and include people and communities across the region.

Groups and individuals in the south Antrim area, for example, could develop ideas and proposals to match the objectives of existing funding programmes of bodies such as the Arts Council and NI Screen. Such programmes are not exclusively for the decade of centenaries but proposals with First World War themes might also address the underpinning creative and TV and film production goals of those arm's-length bodies.

The community festival fund operated by local councils, and supported by my Department, can also support events promoting inclusive approaches to marking historical events in the Member's constituency.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for her answer. Does she agree that any commemoration should recognise that those who fought and made the ultimate sacrifice were from across the religious and political divide, and, indeed, from every part of the island of Ireland?

2.15 pm

Ms Ní Chuilín: I certainly do. The approach that the Executive took in 2012 to the decade of centenaries was based on inclusivity, respect and making sure that we provided opportunities for people to commemorate and celebrate those events. I find it important to acknowledge, along with other initiatives, the sacrifices that people have made, and the remembrance and commemoration of those events needs to be done in an inclusive and respectful way. I am consistent in that approach and will remain so. Hopefully, our ALBs and other opportunities can help people, particularly in local council areas, to use the Community Festivals Fund to bring forward initiatives in their constituencies.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. The centenary of the battle of the Somme falls into the budget year 2016-17. Has any provisional budget sum been decided on to cover the run-up to July 2016?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am finding it really difficult to hear some Members' questions because there are at least three conversations going on at the same time.

Some of the councils have approached me, and I have worked with some of our ALBs to try to ensure that some of the events, particularly those around the decade of centenaries, are celebrated. If people bring forward ideas as early as possible, we can try to get a funding plan

and a package for some of those events. Certainly, I am committed to trying to get additional money not only for the activities and the commemorations in 2016 but right up until 2022, to ensure that there is a legacy and a funding stream well after this mandate ends in 2016.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Members, I ask for your ongoing cooperation to ensure that both questions and answers can be heard clearly.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her responses so far. What is the Creative Centenaries initiative, and how much funding has your Department allocated to it?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Creative Centenaries initiative was launched by the Nerve Centre, with support from DCAL, to bring information and resources about the decade of centenaries and to work with the creative sector in commemorating those events. Some examples looked at showcasing digital storytelling and educational resources to highlight the role that the creative industries and the wider cultural sector can play in exploring some of the defining periods in our history.

For younger people, a comic book was recently launched, telling personal stories from the battle of the Somme and the Easter rising, which is linked very closely to the school curriculum. Early in March, the Nerve Centre, the Community Relations Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund held a Creative Centenaries resource fair at Titanic Belfast. I am sure that the Member is aware that over 250 delegates attended that to share ideas about the projects.

Commonwealth Youth Games: DCAL Support

5. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what departmental support is being provided to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council to send a team to the Commonwealth Youth Games in Samoa in September 2015. (AQO 7865/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council intends to send a team of athletes to the Youth Games in Samoa later this year. Sport NI is assisting the Commonwealth Games Council to prepare a business case for investment in 2015-16 that includes funding towards sending a team in September. In parallel with that, I am considering the draft resource budget for my Department and its ALBs. As the Member will be aware, the funding from Sport NI to organisations, including the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council, will be finalised following confirmation of those budgets. Any funding provided by Sport NI to the Commonwealth Games Council is likely to cover a range of costs, including support with the running costs of the council itself and support for the Commonwealth Games team and the youth team.

Mr I McCrea: I welcome the support that there is in the Department and that the Minister has given to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council. The Minister may be aware that the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council is considering making a bid for the 2021 Youth Games. I am not asking the Minister to make any financial commitment, but will she look sympathetically at that, probably in conjunction with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, when it comes before her?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member will be aware that I have been very consistent in my support, not only through finance. My colleague Arlene Foster and I have been very supportive through continued funding for initiatives and events. The Commonwealth Games Council has received ongoing support from my Department.

The Member will be happy that I will soon meet the Commonwealth Games Council about preparation for the 2021 bid. I anticipate, after that, having some representation from the Member and others about how we take it forward. We are all approaching the event with a "Let's see" and, hopefully, a can-do attitude, depending on budget.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for her answers thus far. Will the Minister confirm who has the responsibility for nominating competitors from the North?

Ms Ní Chuilín: It has been and will remain the case that responsibility for nominating players and competitors for any international sports competitions — in this case, we are talking about the Commonwealth Games — rests, in the first instance, with the governing body. The governing body may choose to nominate players for such competitions in accordance with arrangements that have been mutually agreed between the body and the council responsible for sending a local team to a competition. In the first instance, it is the governing body in conjunction with the Commonwealth Games Council.

Orange Order/GAA: Cultural Awareness Programme

6. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans she has to continue the funding for the cultural awareness programme involving the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and the Gaelic Athletic Association. (AQO 7866/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and the Ulster Council of the GAA have successfully delivered the objectives of the three-year strategy. However, given the current financial climate, I have to take difficult decisions across the Department's budgets. In that context, it has not been possible to extend funding for the cultural awareness strategy beyond its original three-year lifespan. Both organisations involved in the programme know that it was always intended that it would end on 31 March this year.

At the heart of all my Department's work and programmes are the core principles of tackling poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Therefore, my Department's work and programmes are aimed at encouraging respect, understanding and tolerance for all cultures and improving the lives of communities across the North. I encourage both organisations to build, through their respective education and outreach programmes, on the levels of cooperation, respect, understanding and tolerance that both projects have demonstrated to date.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Does she recognise the good work of the cultural awareness programme? There has been positive engagement in schools and with young people, especially in the maintained sector, involving the Grand Orange Lodge and the GAA. Will she give us a commitment that she

will endeavour to find funding to support the positive programme of educating our young people —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I think that the Member has asked his question.

Mr Dunne: — about the differences of culture?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am keen to try to give support to groups, particularly when they do work across the community and work outside their comfort zone. I flagged it up as late as last year that I would not, given the indicative budget, have the money to continue beyond 31 March this year. When the project ends, I will ask for an evaluation to be completed. I anticipate that the evaluation will show that a lot of good work has been done and possibly look at an opportunity to do it through other government programmes. It is not fair to give any organisation a commitment that, after its funding ends in one month, you will find it in the next month. I cannot do that, but I certainly hope to use the evaluation to see what support I can give them in the future. I will try my best to do that, but the funding ends on 31 March this year and there is nothing to replace it.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. An dtig liom iarraidh ar an Aire cad é atá idir lámha aici le measúnú a dhéanamh ar an straitéis feasachta cultúrtha? What action is the Minister taking to evaluate the cultural awareness strategy?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member will have heard from my primary answer that I will be looking at an evaluation when the programme ends. We have had interim evaluations that have looked at ways in which the two groups work together, as well as working independently in their own community. I am looking at having an evaluation, but I encourage — I said this in response to the question — both organisations to build on the cooperation that they have achieved and to continue, in their own organisation, aspects of that work. However, in the current financial situation, it is important that we get an evaluation. If that evaluation comes back positive, the groups can build on that. That is the situation. A review is key, not only for this work but for other aspects of work that we are looking at to see how much value and what added value they bring to the community. On that basis, we will decide whether they represent value for money and whether we can find the funding in the future.

Mr McKinney: It is clear that the money is gone, but what other specific strategies does the Minister have in mind that could be employed to build on what she describes as the other good work that has been achieved?

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are other cultural strategies. This is not the only cultural strategy in DCAL. There are others, particularly around celebration, festivals, music and art. I do not know whether the Member was present when I answered an earlier question about the legacy of the City of Culture. Part of the strategy for that has been to widen things beyond the city to other areas in the north-west.

The cultural partnerships came together very late as part of the World Police and Fire Games in 2013, and those cultural partnerships are still working together. They came together almost to try to provide a strategy for festivals, activities, discussions, lectures, art and competitions, and they continue to do so, despite the fact that they have not received as much funding as they would like and as they

received in the past. I intend to ask the arts sector — I have already started this — to come together to bring about an overarching strategy for the arts and culture in the same way as it receives Executive support for sport. That has been missing for decades, to be frank. Unless it has the full support of the Executive, the arts sector and cultural practitioners will not get the support that they deserve without having a robust strategy.

Ms Lo: I am glad to hear the Minister say that the programme will be evaluated. I am sure that she will agree with me that we are now a multicultural society and that a cultural awareness programme should have included other cultures.

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member has asked a similar question before, but the criteria for this cultural awareness strategy — it was in the Department as far back as 2008 — when I asked that the GAA be included, meant that it was primarily for all-Ireland groups. That is not to say that groups from minority ethnic backgrounds are not all-Ireland in complexion now. As you know, many people who have made these shores their home have family in all counties across Ireland. I look forward to making sure that it is not just, as you say, the two big traditional communities but other communities that are included in any future funding. That missing link is crucial, but, for this bit of the funding, the criteria were that groups had to be all-Ireland in complexion. When we made the decision, those were the only two groups that met the criteria.

Sporting Facilities: Girdwood

7. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the sporting facilities being developed in Girdwood. (AQO 7867/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. The Department for Social Development currently leads on the master plan conceptual framework for the regeneration of Girdwood, which includes a community hub, sports pitch, indoor sports facility, mixed-use economic units and housing.

DCAL is represented on the DSD Girdwood project board and is committed to working in partnership with DSD and Belfast City Council to develop the indoor sports facility that has been agreed as part of the framework for the site. A dedicated sports facility at Girdwood has the potential not only to be a focal point for DCAL's cross-community youth sports programme as part of the T:BUC strategy but to act as a catalyst for promoting social inclusion and tackling poverty in the surrounding areas. The plan for the indoor sports facility is at an early stage, and funding has not been secured. However, the addition of the indoor sports facility is being considered as part of the overall package, and, to that end, business cases and appraisals will be adjusted and funding bid for accordingly.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That ends the time for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

2.30 pm

Irish Language: TV Campaign Costs

T1. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the cost to her Department of the current television campaign, which is encouraging people to learn the Irish language. (AQT 2301/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I know that the cost is not any more than it was last year, but it is a smaller ad campaign that costs anything up to probably £17,000. I will happily get the Member the correct figures and forward them to him.

Mr G Robinson: Does the Minister agree that the money used for the campaign would be better spent on keeping libraries open longer, for example, and on supporting the arts against more drastic cuts?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member obviously does not realise that language is part of the arts and of a cultural package and cultural awareness. I believe that it is money well spent. I intend not only to continue to fund and support Lóifa, but I will continue to fund and support Ulster Scots. People see languages and arts and culture as things that can be done without. Libraries need more money, arts and culture need more money and languages need more money. That is the situation that I am in, and I will continue to give them all due regard and to support them.

Library Opening Times Review: Criteria

T2. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the criteria used in the review of library opening times. (AQT 2302/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The consultation is ongoing, but I will send the criteria to the Member. The consultation on the reduction of library hours closes on, I think, 18 April, and I encourage as many people as possible to feed into it. The Member may remember that, in the draft Budget consultation, I received more responses about libraries than about any other sector. I anticipate that, when this consultation ends, as many people will still feel very dearly about their libraries. I will happily get the Member the exact criteria and send them to her.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. Can she confirm that consideration will be given to those libraries that are in neighbourhood renewal areas, such as Rathcoole in north Belfast and other parts of north Belfast, where there are considerable problems with low educational attainment? What role does the Minister believe libraries should play in that?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I believe that as many services as possible should be retained in neighbourhood renewal areas; they are neighbourhood renewal areas because they suffer multiple deprivation. Multiple deprivation, poor educational attainment and poor health go hand in hand, and removing or reducing a service in those areas has a bigger impact, and it is harder to reach those communities than any others.

It is as simple as trying to get as many people as possible to use libraries. If that means community groups using them to have meetings or for cultural or social activities, all the better. People do not need to go to libraries just to borrow books. I certainly encourage all Members to feed into the consultation in their constituencies. In areas such as Rathcoole in particular and in my constituency, which is at the other end of north Belfast, deprived areas need libraries.

Belfast Festival: Queen's University Funding

T3. **Mr McCausland** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the importance of the Belfast Festival at Queen's in the cultural life of Northern

Ireland and to state whether she agrees that it is almost unimaginable that Belfast, our capital city, will not have a major arts festival. (AQT 2303/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: First, I share the Member's disappointment at the position that the Belfast Festival finds itself in. I have not heard the festival organisers themselves say that they are not going to have a festival, but the reduction in support from Queen's and, indeed, the reduction in support from the Ulster Bank last year, has put the festival under a lot of pressure, but the festival will come back, and I look forward to seeing its scale. It still has Arts Council support.

Mr McCausland: Does the Minister agree that there is some uncertainty, or lack of transparency, about the funding issues that led Queen's University to make the decision that it did, in that there was a reference to a deficit in one year but there seems to have been a surplus in other years? Would she agree to meet the festival organisers to get to the bottom of the facts so that we are clear on the situation?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to meet the festival organisers. As the Member knows, I am happy to have meetings with many people to discuss a range of issues, particularly those relating to DCAL. However, I make one thing very clear: I will not have the money and do not have the budget to fund any deficit for the Belfast Festival at Queen's. I do not want to get the group's hopes up. Last year, in 2014-15, it received almost £240,000-plus. I am sure that the Member will agree that that is a significant amount of public money.

Arts Sector: Cuts

T4. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she is aware of the palpable anger amongst the arts community in relation to the cuts that have been made by her Department, whether she has listened to people, such as the eminent playwright Martin Lynch, who have condemned the cuts as unfair and disproportionate and whether she agrees that the cuts are definitely unfair and disproportionate. (AQT 2304/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I do think that there is a huge sense of support and solidarity in the arts sector, but the difficulty for people like Martin Lynch, Sir Kenneth Branagh, Dan Gordon and many others who have made commentary in recent times is that that sense of palpable anger is not shared in other sectors. I encourage the Member and his party to join my party in putting the blame where it lies with the Westminster Government, which have taken hundreds of millions of pounds of public money from the block grant. We need to protect our front-line services, and, for me, arts and cultural sectors are included in that.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for her reply, although I do not find it that satisfactory, and nor will members of the arts community. I will put the blame where the blame lies, with her and her party and with the Executive, which passed a bad Budget. The Minister is —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Has the Member a question?

Mr A Maginness: The Minister is supportive of that Budget. Will she now withdraw her support from that Budget?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I take responsibility for my Department, and I will stand and fall on my own sword. I am proud of my party and of Martin McGuinness because, when we make a decision, we try to protect those who are vulnerable as best as possible. We do not pay lip service, and we do not play politics with poverty. We do not play politics with disability, and we certainly do not take the money and then go out and carp about what we did or did not get. We go in and fight for people, and we do it all day every day, not just at Question Time, and at the last five minutes of it. It is pathetic.

Disability Sport NI: Funding Cuts

T6. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she accepts that the effect on the disabled community of the significant financial cuts to Disability Sport NI will be disproportionate when compared to funding reductions in other areas of her budget. (AQT 2306/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I share the Member's disappointment that, potentially, £16,000 of Disability Sport NI's budget will be cut. That £16,000 means an awful lot to it and goes an awful long way. However, as I have done in previous years, I am looking at potential end-of-year funding and potential bids along with Sport NI to try to increase that, looking through its Activ8 and sports programmes, particularly for people with disabilities, in communities and at grass-roots level. The Member may also be aware that Disability Sport has been protected at 10% while others in the sporting community have received a cut of over 11%. I am happy to try to make an argument for Disability Sport in the future.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that update. She did say to Mr Maginness in reply to a previous question that she would do all that she could to protect the vulnerable. Does she believe that the reduction to Disability Sport NI is protecting the vulnerable?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I will not take any lectures from your party. I think that you were party leader when you hitched your wagon to the Tories, so do not be lecturing me about protection. I intend to ensure that Disability Sport, in particular, which provides an excellent service, is protected as much as possible. I will make a commitment to try to get as much support as I can because I believe that it provides a valuable service on behalf of government and opportunities for inclusion and outreach to people who, by and large, face isolation and marginalisation more than any other members of this society.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Paul Givan is not in his place.

City of Culture: DCAL Funding

T8. **Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much money her Department gave to the City of Culture. (AQT 2308/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The City of Culture received £12.3 million for 2013. The Member may have been here when I responded to a previous question about legacy. At this stage, that is totalling £6 million and is certainly a legacy for the city. We included areas in the north-west to ensure that the benefits and, indeed, the outcomes that were achieved very well by Derry as part of the City of Culture are felt by others in the surrounding areas.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, and I thank the Minister for that detail. Indeed, I thank the Minister for her investment in the city and the wider region. Given the fact that the Minister has outlined the £12 million and wider legacy issue, as well as the fact that she had introduced a legacy plan for the city and the north-west, which was additional to the Executive's financial commitment —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Could we have a question?

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: What is the entire investment in the city and the wider north-west, at this point?

Ms Ní Chuilín: At this stage, the investment is almost £19 million, taken in the round. That is substantial money, but I make no apology for making that investment on behalf of my Executive colleagues, who make no apology either. The legacy programme funding has not only been spent in the city of Derry, but we are looking at areas such as Coleraine, Portstewart, Castledearg, Strabane, and we are looking at areas in Limavady, Dungiven and in Ballynascreen. The programme is ongoing, and it is important that, additionally, we try to make bids to ensure that groups that have received funding from other Departments get additional funding to make sure that the services that they provide to people, most of whom are marginalised, are good and give a good outcome, with the people feeling that there is something for them that meets needs in their constituency. So it is important that we continue to make those bids.

Paddy McNair: International Debut

T9. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, on a happier matter, albeit that we all want to see much more money for the arts, whether she will join him, as a great fan of football, in wishing every success to Paddy McNair in his full international debut at Hampden Park tomorrow night. (AQT 2309/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Yes, of course. [Laughter.]

Mr Kinahan: Thank you very much. Given the support there was for rugby last weekend, will she also wish the whole team great support for tomorrow night and for football to get as much support as rugby does?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Absolutely, and indeed the women's team. More often than not, we talk about male athletes in the House. The women deserve a special mention as well and should enjoy all our support.

Scéime Pobail Gaeilge

T10. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure an dtig liom ceist a chur ar an Aire faoi stádas reatha na scéime pobail Gaeilge? (AQT 2310/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I think the Member was asking me about the status of scéime pobail Gaeilge.

Mr Ó hOisín: Yes.

Ms Ní Chuilín: OK. The Member may be aware that Foras na Gaeilge conducted a consultation into this, and there was a lot of feedback. I know that members of his and neighbouring constituencies fed into that. I will happily meet with some of those groups and will certainly be working with Foras na Gaeilge to ensure that there is additional support for this programme.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I remind Members to provide a translation, so that all Members can understand questions and answers. I call Cathal Ó hOisín for a supplementary.

Mr Ó hOisín: Tá mé buartha faoin sin, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Rinne mé dearmad den aistriúchán. I forgot about the translation.

I further ask the Minister, given that scéime pobail Gaeilge is one of the most important deliveries that Foras na Gaeilge administers, will she bring the matter up with it and ensure that that will continue to be the case? Go raibh míle math agat.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to do that. I thought the Member was testing my skills in Irish, and I hope that my teachers were watching to see that I fully understood the question and was able to respond to it appropriately. Yes, I will continue to raise that issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): We have completed topical questions to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure. I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments, as the next Question Time commences at 2.45 pm.

2.45 pm

Education

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Questions 6 and 7 have been withdrawn.

Newtownabbey Community High School: Bus Passes

1. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Education whether pupils of Newtownabbey Community High School, who will be displaced to the Monkstown site of Abbey Community College from September 2015, will be considered as exceptional cases in relation to the issuing of free school transport passes. (AQO 7874/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The education and library boards, which are responsible for determining eligibility, inform me that pupils attending Newtownabbey Community High School who are currently in receipt of transport assistance will have their eligibility protected for the transitional period between moving to the Monkstown site and the establishment of the new school. Once the new school is established and open, all pupils in receipt of protected transport assistance will have their eligibility reassessed to the new school. This may mean that some pupils lose the eligibility that they held prior to the establishment of the new school.

Pupils who attend Newtownabbey Community High School and who are currently eligible for assistance will be reassessed against the Monkstown site following their move, which may result in some pupils losing their transport as well. These transitional arrangements apply only while pupils remain enrolled in the amalgamating schools; where they leave and apply to other schools, normal transport arrangements will apply.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does the Minister agree that every effort must be made to ease the transition for pupils who are going from Newtownabbey to the Monkstown school, given that they live in an area of

high deprivation in north Belfast? Does he also agree that there is at least a moral argument that pupils should not have to meet the three-mile criterion?

Mr O'Dowd: The boards are showing some flexibility, as I explained in my original response to the Member. I accept that amalgamating schools can be a difficult process for teachers, pupils, parents, families etc, but we need a transport policy in place that is fair to everyone. The Member may be aware that we have recently undertaken a review of the transport policy; we will publish the consultation later in the year. I believe that the board has shown flexibility.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Can the Minister indicate when he is likely to bring forward recommendations on the basis of the recent transport review?

Mr O'Dowd: I thank the Member for his question. At this stage, it is likely to be after the summer recess. Quite a detailed document has been published by the review team, which contains a significant number of recommendations. I will consult with statutory bodies and other Departments affected by the review before going out to full consultation.

Schools: Car Parking

2. **Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Education how the new Education Authority will budget for and deliver upgrades and enhancements to parent/carer car parking facilities in schools. (AQO 7875/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority will have a duty to manage its available budget, as set out in the Education Act 2014, in accordance with the priorities that I identify as Minister with responsibility for education. The 2015-16 capital budget for minor works is severely constrained, and priority will be given to inescapable statutory requirements, such as health and safety, and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, as well as to contractually committed works.

Mr Frew: I thank the Minister for his answer. Needs are often based on the health and safety of pupils and, of course, ordinary pedestrians near the school. In many cases, it may be more cost-effective, efficient and immediate to put in place a patrol crossing. Does the Minister agree that, in most cases when schools are denied a patrol crossing, common sense, flexibility and discretion should be used?

Mr O'Dowd: I hope that common sense guides most decisions in the education world. Each school will be assessed on its own needs. The boards, and then the Education Authority, will assess each school to determine whether a school patrol person or an upgrade of car parking facilities in the school grounds is the best option financially and for health and safety. Each case will tell its own story, so it is very difficult to stand here at the Dispatch Box and decide whether one case or another has more merit. Procedures are in place; they have to be fully applied, and I would hope that common sense prevails.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. An dtig leis an Aire suas chun dáta a thabhairt dúinn ar bhunú an ESA? Will the Minister provide an update on the establishment of ESA?

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as a ceist.. ESA will be established on 1 April. All appointments have now been made to the Education Authority from all the nominating bodies. We have appointed an interim chief executive, and the body will move into functioning mode from 1 April. There is a lot of work for the new authority to be getting on with in amalgamating five education boards and the staff commission into one efficient and effective delivery mechanism. The Education Authority is also facing quite a difficult budget in the months and years ahead.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Given that the original question and answer focused on road safety, will the Minister consider 20 mph speed limits around all schools?

Mr O'Dowd: It is not within my power or gift. That is a question for the Minister for Regional Development.

Schools: Job Losses

3. **Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Education how many of the projected 1,500 job losses that he warned of recently will come from schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area. (AQO 7876/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: At this stage, it is estimated that 500 teaching and 1,000 non-teaching posts will be made redundant during the coming financial year. It is too early to determine the number of redundancies that may occur in the Southern Education and Library Board area. It is for individual employers to determine their staffing requirements, and it is not possible at this stage to determine the actual numbers of posts that will be declared redundant.

Mr Gardiner: I thank the Minister for his answer. What criteria will he establish across the whole of Northern Ireland to make teaching staff redundant? Will he guarantee that the redundancies will be evenly applied across all schools and sectors?

Mr O'Dowd: The driving criterion at this stage is the financial situation that we find ourselves in. Schools have to ensure that they balance their budgets, so they will have to establish what staff complement they require to deliver the curriculum. All schools are affected across all sectors, and each sector and each individual school will have to make decisions on staffing levels. Non-teaching staff will be affected not only by the decisions taken by schools but by the decisions taken by the Education Authority in the months ahead.

Miss M McIlveen: Given the difficult budget situation that many schools find themselves in, has the Minister given any consideration to using the school surplus fund that is available to his Department in a more creative way to offset schools' needs?

Mr O'Dowd: The Member raises a very interesting point. It is worth noting that, despite a very difficult term in the 2014-15 financial year, there is still a £47 million school surplus. I am not suggesting that the majority of those schools should now spend that surplus, but there are quite significant surpluses that in some cases run to over £500,000 accumulated over several years. That money is given to schools to spend on the educational well-being of pupils now. I have said before that some schools tell me that they are saving it for a rainy day, but my answer is,

“Well, I tell you what, it’s raining”. That money needs to be drawn down in a responsible way and used. Perhaps there is a need for an Assembly debate or, without stepping on the Education Committee’s toes, further research by the Committee as to how that surplus, if it is not drawn down within a reasonable period, is reinvested in education. We cannot continue with the scenario that allows £47 million of unspent moneys in education.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. What efforts is the Minister’s Department making to protect front-line services?

Mr O’Dowd: We have invested a significant amount of money since the draft Budget in our aggregated schools budget, which amounts to an additional £80 million, to front-line school services. Schools are still facing significant pressures moving ahead, although, as I said in response to the previous question, there is a £47 million school surplus pot that needs to be drawn down. A significant amount of it needs to be drawn down this year, otherwise the Assembly and the Executive may want to look at it in a different light than they have done in previous years. I have done everything in my power to achieve efficiencies in my Department and across the education sector. The Education Authority in itself will ensure that there are savings within education over a number of years.

We are attempting to look everywhere to see if additional moneys can be provided to education. In terms of European funding, we have seen the recent intervention during the Stormont House talks in relation to funding for shared education and integrated education, and I am seeking other avenues of funding, but it is a very difficult financial year. When you listen to comments following the Westminster Budget and you hear both the Conservatives and Labour saying that they are going to continue to cut front-line services for the next three years, it is a very worrying and difficult time for public services. We have to look at how we deliver public services in a different way in the years ahead.

Mr Rogers: Minister, I think we are all concerned about the budget situation, but we know that education should be for all. How do you reconcile the increasing need to ensure that our special educational needs children have access to the full curriculum while at the same time 1,000 classroom assistants are going to lose their jobs?

Mr O’Dowd: First of all, it is not correct to say that 1,000 classroom assistants will lose their jobs. The non-teaching staff who will lose their jobs will be across a wide range of support staff within our schools. That is an estimated figure. The final figure will be known when schools make their decisions as to how many staff they can afford under their current budgets. Schools now have to go through their budgets, including their surplus — the £47 million surplus that is sitting out there and that is now required to be spent in education. It is not correct, and I think it is alarmist, to say that 1,000 classroom assistants are going to lose their jobs. That is not correct.

Schools: Community Accessibility

4. **Mr Newton** asked the Minister of Education whether he has considered making school facilities more accessible to the local community. (AQO 7877/11-15)

Mr O’Dowd: I am committed to promoting greater use of school premises to help meet the needs of local communities. Existing legislation and a range of departmental policies such as Every School a Good School, the extended schools programme and the full service programme already enable and encourage schools to make their premises available for wider community use. In seeking to enhance levels of community provision, my Department also published and issued guidance to all schools in January 2014 entitled ‘Community Use of School Premises: A Guidance Toolkit for Schools’, which is designed to assist principals and boards of governors in providing for community access to school facilities.

Mr Newton: I thank the Minister for his answer so far. In terms of the whole community, and given the constraints on his budget, will the Minister actively consider marketing the facilities along with the individual schools, not just to the local community but to the third sector and, indeed, the private sector, to make use of the facilities?

Mr O’Dowd: The Member makes an interesting proposal. As I said in response to Mr Maskey, we are going to have to look at how we deliver public services in a different way and how we ensure that our public services, particularly our schools, are used to their full extent. If there are opportunities for them to raise revenue in working with the community or to save revenue from another Department, whether it be Health and Social Services or whatever it may be, we have to look at doing it in a different way, because we are not going to have the moneys in the future to deliver the same range of public services in the same range of buildings as we currently have. We should certainly look at our schools estate to ensure that it is used to its maximum ability. I am more than happy to explore further if there is a way that the Department of Education can assist schools in marketing their premises to the community and to other sectors.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer so far. Will he detail what powers he has to intervene in cases where school facilities are not openly accessible to the public?

Mr O’Dowd: I thank the Member for his question. I have very limited — if any — powers in that area. The day-to-day running of schools is down to the boards of governors. We have done everything within our power to assist boards of governors and encourage them to open up their school facilities to wider use by the community. At one stage, it was suggested that perhaps we need legislation. I would like the toolkit that we have sent out to schools to be in place for at least another year before we consider bringing in legislation to impose it on schools to take measures.

We currently have around 81% of schools opening up their doors to the community in one way or another. We now want to encourage the rest to do likewise. To me, it is a no-brainer. Schools should be open to the entire community. They should be a community facility. It is good for the schools, good for education and good for the community, so to me it is a no-brainer.

All the information that schools require is now with them. My Department is open to engaging with any school that requires further information and support. At this stage, we want to encourage schools, but, at some stage in the future, particularly if the economic climate continues to move in the way in which it is moving, they may find that

legislation has to be brought in to ensure that they are open for other community uses.

3.00 pm

Mr Ramsey: I welcome the response from the Minister, particularly the comment that 80% of schools currently open their estate to the community. One of the greatest worries for boards of governors and principals is the ongoing insurance burdens and pressures on schools. Is there anything that the Department can do to ease those pressures to enable schools to open their doors more than they do now?

Mr O'Dowd: The guidance toolkit that we have issued to schools gives case studies of how other boards of governors have overcome those hurdles in real, practical terms. The 80% of schools that currently open up to the community have also faced issues around insurance, public liability and so on. All those things have been overcome elsewhere, so there is no reason why they cannot be overcome in the remaining 20% of schools. The toolkit provides information to schools around all the issues, and I encourage them to use it.

Primary Languages

5. **Mr Attwood** asked the Minister of Education how he is prioritising the development of primary languages. (AQO 7878/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While modern languages are not a statutory part of the curriculum at primary level here, it is a matter for primary schools to decide whether they wish to teach an additional language. To protect front-line services and the aggregated schools budget in particular, it has been decided that the funding earmarked for the primary modern languages programme, which has been running from 2007, will cease with effect from 31 March 2015. My Department recognises that teaching modern languages in primary schools has many benefits. I regard building capacity among class teachers as the most sustainable approach to primary language provision. I encourage primary-school principals who would like a language to be delivered in their school to apply for ERASMUS+ funding to build the capacity of their teachers to teach an additional language.

Mr Attwood: I thank the Minister for that answer. In advance of the decision that you have taken on funding for foreign languages in our primary schools, was any assessment made of how that could work itself through as an impediment to our people competing in the global market, developing job skills or being able to take job opportunities in the longer term, never mind how it might impact on the creation of a modern, inclusive and open society?

Mr O'Dowd: Over the seven years that the programme has been running, we have actually seen a slight slippage in the number of young people taking GCSEs and A levels in modern languages. To use your analogy, that would suggest that the programme was not delivering for the economy and encouraging young people to continue to take languages. However, I did not use that analogy.

I encourage schools to promote modern languages teaching. The question is this: how do we fund it? Our schools have a budget. They have a restricted budget, but they have a budget. There is an opportunity for schools to continue with the programme. We are talking, in some

cases, about a couple of hours a week. In some instances, tutors were in schools for a couple of hours a week. In other schools, depending on their size, it was more expansive than that. Schools will perhaps want to look at whether they can continue the programme from their own budget, and I accept that there is a challenge there. There is also an opportunity for schools to seek European funding. We will provide further information to them around European funding opportunities. We will also attempt to source other funding opportunities for schools to move forward.

This funding, which was provided by the Department, was additional to the school budget. It was there to support schools to deliver the primary languages programme, but there is nothing to stop schools from continuing with it. Another objective of the programme was to upskill teachers to assist them to deliver modern languages in the classroom. In some instances, that has been successful, but, in other instances, it has not been as successful as we would have liked.

As I have said throughout Question Time today, we will have to look differently at how we deliver public services. We face a very difficult financial year in schools. I can navel-gaze for the next year and say how terrible things are — they are — or I can lift my head and start looking for alternatives. We all need to start looking for alternatives in how we deliver public services. This is a case in which I believe that, if we use our imagination and know-how, we will be able to secure funding from a variety of sources to allow the practice to continue in schools.

Mr Kinahan: Does the Minister recognise that the heavy workload on teachers makes it extremely difficult for them to have the time to learn and to teach foreign languages? If he is looking for a way of doing things differently, he should maybe drop the sacred cows like the Irish language school in Dungiven. He should park it for the moment. We still want Irish language in the future, but why does he not put that money into languages that help children to learn so that they can get jobs worldwide?

Mr O'Dowd: Let me get this right: you are suggesting that I should not drop the primary modern languages programmes but should close down Irish language schools.

Mr Kinahan: You should park it.

Mr O'Dowd: OK. The Irish language is a modern language and is, therefore, part of the overall delivery of language provision. I do not think that it makes sense for me to close down Irish-medium schools to provide funding for tutors, some of whom only work several hours a week, to provide modern languages in schools. The evidence that it encourages young people to continue to take languages at GCSE and A level is inconclusive. If we are to do something, let us do it on an evidence base rather than having a simple knee-jerk reaction and saying, "Tell you what. We need money. Close down the Irish language sector, because we do not like it".

Mr Kinahan: I did not say that.

Mr O'Dowd: No, but it comes across that way. You have to understand that when you — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Order. Continue, Minister. Sorry. Only one person should speak at a time.

Mr Kinahan: Apologies.

Mr O'Dowd: I suspect that Mr Kinahan did not mean it that way, but when you say something you have to understand that those listening may take it in an alternative way. That applies to us all. There is an opportunity for the programme to continue in a different way; it could be funded directly by schools or directly through European or other funding. We will continue to try to source that.

My mantra for the next year may be that we will have to do things differently, because, regardless of who goes into Downing Street, they have all committed to cutting public funding. If we want to continue to deliver public services, which we all do, we will have to do things differently.

Mr McCausland: The American car manufacturer Henry Ford said that you could have any colour of car that you wanted as long as it was black. When the Minister's Department abandons a programme that offered three languages — Spanish, Polish and Irish — and, at the same time, another part of his Department is seeking to initiate a new programme to bring Irish into schools, is it not a case of "You can have any language that you want as long as it is Irish"?

Mr O'Dowd: The Member will be aware that I am looking at a new model as well — an Ulster-Scots model to introduce and enhance Ulster-Scots provision in our primary schools. The Member met me recently, along with a number of colleagues, to discuss how we can do that. I hope to call together a seminar in the near future to bring together schools that have delivered Ulster-Scots language and culture to see how we can advance it across the board. I have given the Member a commitment to do that. I am not providing only one model; I am providing at least two, and schools can continue to provide as many as they wish.

Mr Lunn: The Minister must be aware that, across the education spectrum here and abroad, it is widely acknowledged that a second language is beneficial to a child's education, whether that second language is a modern language or Irish — we could argue about that. Does he think that he gave the subject sufficient priority when assessing what had to be cut and what had to continue?

Mr O'Dowd: The Member makes a valid point. Schemes have lost funding in this budget round that, in normal circumstances, I would never have gone near. However, our Budget has been cut year on year since 2010; the education budget has been cut year on year since 2010. We have seen a reduced Budget of £1.5 billion in the Executive since 2010, so we simply cannot continue to deliver the same services with less money as we did last year, the year before that or the year before that.

When I discussed the budget with the Education Committee, I think that I said that we were now in among the sacred cows. That is where we are. Many of the areas that have received cuts or have been stopped are, in my opinion, sacred cows, but I do not have the money to continue them. It is as simple as that. We have to look at doing it in a different way. Perhaps we need to look at the entry qualifications for teacher training and whether our newly qualified teachers should be proficient in a modern language. Is that the way forward? Is that the long-term thinking in ensuring that we encourage modern languages in schools? It might be a long-term solution, but we need a short-term solution.

Schools: Capital Investment

8. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Education to outline the capital investment projects that are planned for East Londonderry in the next five years. (AQO 7881/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: With a constrained capital budget position, I currently have no plans for a further capital announcement at this stage.

In June 2012, as part of 18 projects, I announced Rossmar School in Limavady. It is anticipated that this project will be on site in 2015. In January 2013, the combined Listress, Craigbrack and Mullabuoy primary school was identified as one of 22 projects to be taken forward in planning. The development proposal for this amalgamation was approved in August 2014, and work is currently under way on the feasibility study. When it is complete, a supporting business case will be provided prior to the appointment of a multidisciplinary design team to take forward the detailed design of the new school. In June 2014, I announced 16 capital projects that included Roe Valley Integrated Primary School. A draft feasibility study has been received for this project, and work is ongoing on the business case. Currently, I cannot offer definitive timescales for the commencement of the construction works for those projects due to the constrained capital budget position.

In July 2014, I announced the first of three major projects under the shared education campus programme, one of which is in Limavady. This project will provide two new shared facilities: a shared sixth form on the St Mary's High School site and a shared science, technology, engineering and maths centre on the Limavady High School site. Work is under way on the feasibility study and business case for this project.

Finally, there is one school enhancement project in the constituency. This is for the Coleraine Academical Institution to upgrade the mechanical and electrical services at an approved cost of £1.7 million, with site work commencing in April 2015.

I think that the Member can agree: you are doing OK.

Mr G Robinson: I am actually looking for more. I am asking for Millburn Primary School in Coleraine, which has been on the list for quite a long time. Are there any plans to upgrade or replace the old Millburn school?

Mr O'Dowd: As I said at the start of my answer, I am not in a position at this stage to make any further announcements on the capital budget. I have to assess where the capital budget, which is much reduced, is, how much we can deliver in this financial year and, in projecting forward, what schemes are likely to move ahead in time. When that work is complete, I will make a decision on whether I will make any further capital announcements in this mandate. If I do, I will keep the Member's comments under consideration.

Education Authority: Training

9. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Education to outline the training to be provided to the members of the board of the Education Authority. (AQO 7882/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A bespoke training programme has been delivered to board members in advance of 1 April. A one-day training seminar was provided by my Department on 19 March that focused on governance and accountability,

roles and responsibilities of board members, managing key relationships, financial and risk management, ethical standards and code of conduct.

A follow-up training seminar was also provided by my Department on 23 March that focused specifically on education issues, including the key education priorities, the 2015-16 budget and the Education Authority's role and relationship with DE. General induction training is also being provided to members on issues such as the Education Authority's organisation and structures, arrangements and format for board meetings and human resources issues.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. Does any aspect of the training that the Minister has talked about involve financial responsibilities?

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as a cheist. I thank the Member for his question. Yes, we have covered financial issues. That would obviously be very important training for board members, both in ensuring that financial processes are followed properly and in dealing with what is quite a difficult budget for the Education Authority moving forward. It will be one of the major challenges for the authority in its first year, along with many others. It faces difficult financial times ahead, so training has been and will continue to be provided.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Schools Estate: Maintenance Regime

T1. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of Education what assurance he can give that the schools estate, particularly classrooms, is up to a fit and proper standard, with the maintenance regime stepped up, albeit that the difficulties that he is having with his finances are understood. (AQT 2311/11-15)

3.15 pm

Mr O'Dowd: I cannot assure the Member that the maintenance scheme will be stepped up, because our maintenance budget faces quite a significant cut this year. Over previous years, we have spent tens of millions of pounds on maintenance — moneys directly from the Department of Education and moneys provided from OFMDFM as part of its economic strategy. I assure the Member that we have to ensure that, where there are health and safety issues, they are dealt with quickly and robustly.

Mr Clarke: I appreciate that answer. I know that the Minister accepted an invitation from Creavery Primary School and visited it last year. However, I am sure that he was as horrified as I and other representatives from the area were when we heard that the classroom ceiling fell down. Fortunately, no children were injured, but the school has highlighted the substandard nature of the classrooms. What can you do, Minister, to make sure that the board ensures that appropriate action is taken to bring not only that classroom but the rest of the school facilities up to a good standard?

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of the circumstances. I visited the school at the invitation of the Member. I understand from the board — it will be the Education Authority by that stage — that a permanent replacement to the mobile will be in place by 20 April. Work will commence and continue over

the Easter holidays to ensure that the mobile is replaced by 20 April. Other schemes around the school are awaiting planning permission. As far as I am aware, planning permission has been sought for other elements that require improvement around the school. In a very limited minor budget programme and in a limited maintenance budget programme, I will ensure that the board and the authority focus in on the needs of that school.

Anti-bullying Legislation: Progress

T2. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Education for an update on progress with anti-bullying legislation. (AQT 2312/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Consultation for the legislation has now closed. There were almost 4,000 responses to the consultation, and I am pleased to say that many of the responses were from young people who are often the victims of bullying in our schools. I am now analysing the consultation responses. I will share them with the Education Committee and set out my way forward.

Mr Sheehan: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra sin. Whatever measures the Minister introduces, will they include training for education staff?

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as a cheist. We will set out the way forward in the weeks ahead for how we see the legislation being shaped. I also believe that education staff and boards of governors will require training on how the new legislation will affect them and how they can best deal with and prevent bullying in their schools.

Ulidia Integrated College: Eco-school

T3. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Education whether he will join him in congratulating Ulidia Integrated College in its 20th year as an eco-school. (AQT 2313/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I will, yes. It is quite an achievement for the college. I believe that it was among the first schools to achieve the accolade. I think that it is now on to its second flag, so well done to all involved.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer. I know that he has been talking a lot today, as has everyone, about resources, but, since it has been such a success, can he outline what guidance is available to other schools that might want to follow the same route and become eco-schools?

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that, as the boards did previously, the Education Authority, working in conjunction with local councils, will distribute information to schools as to how they can achieve eco-school status. Quite a number of our schools have been very successful at that. I think that over 200 schools have achieved that status. So, well done to each and every one of those schools. That work will continue through the Education Authority, in conjunction with our local councils.

Careers Inquiry: DE Recommendations

T4. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Education how his Department has dealt with the recommendations specific to it from the Employment and Learning Committee's inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance. (AQT 2314/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: We joined with the Minister for Employment and Learning in the overall review of careers education and advice in our schools, which reported earlier this year, or just before Christmas, and those recommendations are currently being worked through by my departmental officials, in discussions with DEL officials.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for his answer. What is the Minister's view on recommendation 3, which is that careers should become a compulsory subject on the curriculum?

Mr O'Dowd: Instead of picking out each recommendation and giving a response to it, I think that we, in conjunction with the review carried out by the Minister for Employment and Learning, should respond to the collective recommendations across the board. A number of elements are called for as compulsory elements of the curriculum, but I do not think that they can be viewed in isolation. An overall review of the curriculum may be required in the years ahead to decide which parts of the curriculum should be compulsory. However, it is worth saying that, in recent inspection reports, careers advice has seen a significant improvement on previous years, and we want to keep that trend going.

Computer Programming: Primary Schools

T5. **Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Education approximately how many primary-age children are studying computer programming. (AQT 2315/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department does not keep information of that level. Computer programming is not a compulsory element of the primary-school curriculum, although I am aware that many schools are involved in computer coding clubs and that a number of schools are involved with IT companies in their vicinity which, commendably, provide training to primary-school children.

Mr McNarry: I thank the Minister for his answer. I am sure that he takes the point in my question. In response to a recent Assembly question, the Minister said that 14,480 year-12 pupils sat GCSE in design and technology, which is a pointer. Is the Minister prepared to introduce an early introduction to programming? I take it from his previous answer that he is unable to give me an example of that and of how such a programme could be expanded, but I do see the need.

Mr O'Dowd: There are numerous examples. I have given you a number of examples of how schools are working with local industry and involving themselves in local computer coding clubs. As I said in response to Mr Hilditch, I do not believe that you can pick one element out of the economy or education and say, "That's going to be the next compulsory element of the curriculum." To do that, you would require an overall review of the curriculum and decide on the weaknesses and strengths of making a subject compulsory at any level.

I am aware that they have made coding compulsory in schools in England, for instance, but they have not provided any funding to back it up. I could say that coding is compulsory in all schools, but I have no funding to back it up. The ways in which a number of schools are approaching this matter are innovative and inventive, and we should continue to encourage them down that road for the time being unless and until a review of the curriculum takes place.

Class Size: Key Stage 2

T7. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Education whether he heard the choir from Dromore Central Primary School singing in the Great Hall this afternoon, whether he is aware of the school's active campaign for a 28-base classroom and what he believes should be the optimal class size at Key Stage 2, bearing in mind multiple ability and reduced support staff. (AQT 2317/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Yes, I did hear the school singing; I thought they were celebrating their new school. I have many schools in with me who, quite rightly, complain that they are not getting a new build and that they desperately need one. We have heard examples of school roofs falling in on pupils, so, at this stage, my mind is concentrated on providing suitable accommodation for schools that have not had an announcement for a new build or for which the maintenance backlog is such that we have roofs falling in on children. I think there is much to sing about in Dromore Central.

The Member asked about the optimum class size. The most important element in any classroom is the teacher and the ability, skills and leadership of the teacher.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for his answer. You walked right into my supplementary, so I thank you for that, Minister. You said that it is the quality of teaching that matters most, not the class size. Given what you have said, what should the pupil:teacher ratio be in a Key Stage 2 class, considering that modern classrooms have a smaller square footage?

Mr O'Dowd: I am not going to walk into the trap of deciding how many pupils should be in each class in Dromore Central. Dromore Central has made decisions in relation to the number of classes that it is prepared to run. I think that its model is not financially viable going into the future, but that is a decision for the board of governors of Dromore Central. I have provided a new build to that school, and I think they have done very, very well. I have bought land to build a new post-primary school in Dromore. I am dealing with roofs falling on children's heads and that is where my priority is at this time; it is not to provide more classes to a school that has a suitable new build coming.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): David McIlveen is not in his place, Alastair Ross is not in his place, and Ross Hussey is not in his place. That is the end of topical questions for today.

Private Members' Business

Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly expresses concern that men outnumber women by nearly three to one in high-level science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) posts; welcomes the statement by the Minister for Employment and Learning on 4 June 2013 reiterating the importance of women in the STEM sectors; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues, to publish a strategy and action plan that addresses specifically the issue of gender imbalance in the STEM sectors. — [Ms McGahan.]

Mrs Overend: I am very pleased to participate in this afternoon's debate on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, although everyone seems to be leaving the Chamber. Thank you for your support, Leslie.

It is clear that, whilst the working environment for women has improved markedly over the years, there remains a prominent gender imbalance in the STEM sectors. We often hear about job opportunities that are brought about by successful local companies as well as the foreign direct investments that come into Northern Ireland and the importance of having the correct skills base to fill those jobs. However, if more than 50% of the population do not see a career in STEM sectors as a viable option, we will fall a long way short of achieving our economic potential.

As I said during the debate on STEM in schools a couple of weeks ago, the importance of matching the skills set of our young people coming up through school and into the world of work to the demands of the workplace is a central issue that we should focus on and is another example of how a proper joined-up Government would be successful. We need to give all our young people the right advice about their future career, so that the focus should be not simply on the further and higher education sector but on our schools. Indeed, we need to take that skills focus right back to primary schools. The responsibility is not just with the Employment and Learning Minister but with the Education Minister.

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Newton] in the Chair)

Women in Northern Ireland are more likely to attend university than men: 58% of those in university are women. However, when it comes to women in STEM subjects, the figures are shocking. Only 30% of those who study STEM subjects at university — outside medicine — are women. Careers advice is one tool that must play a part in addressing that disparity, and I look forward, as the proposer mentioned, to seeing how that is done well at the South West College's Get Engineering careers fair this weekend.

Such a strategy, as proposed in the motion, would bring a much-needed focus on achieving targets in that area. A number of worthy initiatives are playing a part in tackling the imbalance, and I have the great privilege of being involved in one of those: the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (SEMTEA). SEMTEA and the Engineering Training Council's Women into STEM programme, of which I am patron, set out to support 20

SMEs and four large companies to develop 50 females in a successful STEM career, to promote STEM to 1,000 schoolgirls and to establish a women's network to mentor and develop women and girls in those industries. Initiatives like the SEMTEA Women into STEM programme are vital in addressing the issue.

I commend steps taken by one of Northern Ireland's major employers to encourage more women to take up scientific and technical jobs in its workforce. SQS, which is a local company in the digital ICT sector, has signed up to a STEM equality charter. The STEM charter was launched by the STEM business group with the Equality Commission in June 2014. To date, 28 STEM organisations, including several other major IT companies, have signed up to the charter to demonstrate their commitment to equality for women in STEM posts. The charter is about assisting businesses to make their workplaces more welcoming and supportive for women, and thus improve the gender balance.

In 2013, when the Employment and Learning Minister made the statement to which we refer today, he highlighted a review of the cross-departmental gender equality strategy as well as the drafting of a Northern Ireland childcare strategy that should address childcare as a barrier for women returners. Where are we now on those two strategies? It is notable that the proposer avoided mentioning OFMDFM at all, yet it is the lead Department on gender equality. In Dr Farry's statement of 3 June 2013, he mentioned a joint economic inactivity strategy with DETI. In responding to the debate, I hope that the Minister can provide the House with an update.

3.30 pm

The most recent figures show generally promising economic figures. However, 27.8% of working-age people in Northern Ireland are defined as economically inactive. This is the highest of all UK regions. That has been the case for a long time and, worryingly, there is no downward trend.

It is obvious that gender imbalance will not be served overnight. We all need to work together towards the same goal despite differences we may have on how we get there. An Executive strategy and action plan that addresses specifically gender imbalance in the STEM sectors should go a long way in setting out the road ahead.

Ms Lo: The fact that men outnumber women by nearly three to one in STEM posts is not surprising. While female students tend to do better than their male counterparts in GCSE and A-level results and are more likely to enter higher education, less than 30% of females graduate in STEM subjects. The under-representation of women in STEM jobs is not just a gender equality issue. There are wider economic consequences for our economy and international competitiveness.

The workforce of the future will need to be skilled in STEM to meet the growing demands from an economy increasingly dependent on ICT and innovation from research and development. Therefore, it is vital that more young people are encouraged to study STEM subjects. If we fail to inspire our young females, we are not maximising the potential pool of talent from both sexes.

As public spending cuts deepen, there will be fewer teachers in schools and a reduction in administrative and social policy jobs in the Civil Service, so women and girls will have much better job prospects with qualifications

in not only STEM degrees but the traditionally perceived men's trades as technicians or electricians. It is not easy to replace a "scientist equals man" image, which is deeply embedded in our culture. We need a culture shift to make those sectors more attractive to women and to make young women more aware of the wide range of career options available in those industries. We need enthusiastic parents, teachers and career advisers to encourage girls to embark on STEM careers. Role models are important for inspiring females to take up technical subjects and pursue careers in male-dominated sectors.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Member for giving way. Would the Member agree that when she talks about role models, she has and we have in our own deputy leader an example of a role model who is a qualified engineer by trade — Naomi Long?

Ms Lo: Oh, absolutely.

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

Ms Lo: Thank you. She is certainly an excellent role model with her degree in civil engineering. Media focus on prominent women scientists, engineers and STEM teachers as role models can change the perception that those are careers for only men.

Minister Stephen Farry and his Department are aware of the challenges and have led in the production and implementation of the STEM strategy, Success through STEM, which has been endorsed by the Executive. The strategy aims to encourage more of our young people, particularly females, to study and pursue a career in STEM.

DEL has been working on a gender action plan as well as taking into consideration gender bias in career and apprenticeship reviews. However, it is very disappointing that the Education Minister has decided to cut 50% of the budget for Sentinus, which promotes STEM subjects in primary and secondary schools. That is another example of silo mentality in the Assembly.

Of the 25 recommendations in the STEM strategy, five are for businesses to carry forward. To address the problem of under-representation comprehensively, the approach must be collaborative and include parents, schools and agencies. To deal with the business-specific recommendations, the STEM business subgroup was formed, with a DEL-funded post of business coordinator. An example of the success of the work undertaken by the group to address gender bias is the initiative Women in STEM, Addressing the Gender Balance, which supports women into management positions in manufacturing and engineering companies.

The initiative supports companies to develop females in a successful career in STEM, promote STEM to schoolgirls and establish a women's network to mentor and support women and girls. In June 2014, the Equality Commission, in conjunction with the group and DEL, established a STEM CEO charter for businesses to show their commitment to taking steps to recruit and retain more women in the workplace. It is by working together that we can begin to see a change in the historical deficit of female representation in the STEM sector.

Mr Hilditch: In supporting the motion, I acknowledge the Minister, his Department and other relevant Departments that have contributed to the progress that has been made

in recent years to increase the overall number of males and females studying the STEM subjects and the work that they have done to help bridge the gender imbalance. However, there is a lot of work to be done, as we have heard.

Sentinus, the Department's front-line STEM delivery partner should also be commended. It has secured in excess of 57,000 primary and post-primary pupil engagements annually across a portfolio of STEM enhancements and enrichment programmes. Hopefully, it will continue despite some doubts, as it provides the Insight into Engineering programme, which is specifically designed for girls, utilises female role models to help dispel misconceptions regarding engineering careers for females and helps bridge the gender gap.

I congratulate some local schools in my constituency for the work that they have been doing to encourage more young people to take an interest in the science subjects. In January, St Killian's College just outside Carnlough won three awards in the BT Young Scientist competition in Dublin. Three other schools in the Larne borough — St John's Primary School, Larne High School and Linn Primary School — celebrated their success in this year's prestigious F1 in Schools challenge. Linn Primary School was awarded third prize overall at the NEC in Birmingham just two weeks ago. Further to that, Carrickfergus Grammar School is going to Japan to represent Northern Ireland in the world finals. I congratulate and praise all those pupils on their achievements and their hard work that has paid off, which demonstrates some of the talent that exists in Northern Ireland.

It is those types of initiatives that are encouraging young people into the science subjects, and it is clear, when we look at the ratio of males to females in the teams that entered and won their category, that those types of events and competitions are making headway on bridging the gender gap in the STEM sector. There have been a number of suggestions of causes for those gender imbalances, including stereotypes in the education system; a lack of female role models to aspire to be like; norms governing gender roles in the household that constrain a woman's choice of occupation; and employers' attitudes to family formation and childbearing. In short, progress on reducing the gender gap in some subjects has been slow because there are those multiple barriers to challenge.

We must ensure that we break down those barriers and incite social change, as increasing female participation drives up skill levels, produces a wider talent pool and empowers women to ensure that Northern Ireland can compete in the highly competitive global economy.

However, we have to ensure that parents and influencers recognise the importance of STEM subjects as a career choice. The choice of subjects must mirror the employment opportunities in Northern Ireland. If we are to reduce the detrimental brain drain, we must ensure we develop a knowledge-based economy to compete for inward investment in the future. Our greatest resource and economic driver is our skilled and talented people, and we must ensure that they are made aware of the opportunities available in Northern Ireland with STEM subjects in order to tackle that unconscious bias.

To achieve more equal numbers of male and female students, it is necessary for social norms to evolve. However, things are changing, albeit slowly. Employers'

attitudes are changing, and our education system is slowly moving away from gender stereotyping.

Nevertheless, I question whether our society will ever be able to change social norms to achieve gender equality when choosing subjects at school. The motion states that men outnumber women by three to one in STEM posts. I am sure that the same could be said for women who choose nursing or teaching careers. Maybe the onus lies more with the student at times to take in the information. Worryingly, young people are still not seeing the benefits of choosing a STEM subject, but, hopefully, our schools and colleges can change their mindset and actions, and, in collaboration with others, they can learn how financially rewarding and life-changing those careers can be.

Students see scientific subjects as academically challenging, but some students are aware that they can lead to innovations, such as in medicine, that change the world and people's lives. Let us also be mindful of the shift in the economic balance of power. Not only is China following America in terms of STEM publication output; it is set to surpass it in the near future. It is also producing high rates of STEM graduates, with 41% of all university graduates completing a degree in a science-, technology-, engineering- or maths-related subject. There seems to be a greater drive among international students, specifically Asian students, who venture abroad to study STEM subjects. The UK and America report that the number of foreign students enrolling in those subjects has risen sharply —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Hilditch: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I look forward to the formation of the new ministerial Departments of Education and the Economy. Hopefully, we can move the subject forward. I support the motion.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome this important motion, and I thank my colleagues for bringing it forward. It is a huge issue, and I hope that our local media pick up on it. When we consider how instrumental STEM-related subjects and the STEM industry are becoming to our economy, the fact that up to three or four times as many men prosper in it than our local women is a massive issue, so I hope that our local media pick up on that.

When the Education Committee had a motion on STEM, I used the example of a recent 'Guardian' article where a child was sent home with a school exercise to talk about a famous scientist. They were asked questions such as, "What did he look like?", "Did he have a family?" and, "Was he married?". That shows the type of embedded bias that exists naturally about sciences; that it is a man's game. It is very important that we challenge that. As I said, with STEM becoming ever more important and present in the growth of our economy, it is very important that we tackle that.

We have seen some educational realignment in recent years for the growth of STEM. We have seen the revised curriculum, where schools are now given flexibility to allow a wider range of pupils to prosper. Vocational subjects, such as engineering and car manufacturing, are being looked at in school to draw in pupils who might have fallen by the wayside in the more academic side of things. It is important, now that we have done that, to assess whether we are getting the gender balance right. The Education Minister, in reply to the Committee's STEM

report, said recently that we are getting the balance right in qualifications; there is no real difference between young girls and boys when they sit those exams. However, there is maybe a wee bit of a difference in subject-specific areas. We have plenty of young women going towards medical sciences but maybe not enough going into engineering, technology or mathematics.

I welcome the work that the Employment and Learning Minister has done with the Department of Education on careers. It is important that the parents and teachers giving advice to our young people have the wherewithal about the changing world and the globalised workplace. It is very easy for parents sitting at home to say, "Law is a good degree" or "Go and get yourself a good history degree". They may not know about the changes in computer coding or ICT, so it is very important that we get careers advice right.

We have also had the Education and Training Inspectorate review of the World Around Us, which might have been touched on earlier. One of the changes to the revised curriculum gave the space to create the inquiry and everything else, but there was the thought that perhaps primary-school teachers did not have the capacity or the confidence to delve into the scientific subjects. Continuous professional development is very important. I welcome the very positive response of the Education Minister, John O'Dowd; he is willing to work around that.

3.45 pm

I think another very important educational thing coming out of schools is role models. We need to develop role models for our young women in this. The Education Committee recently went to the science park, and it was great to see so many young women involved. It was exactly the same, actually, when we went to the BT Young Scientist exhibition in Dublin lately. There are a plethora of young women who have won that competition, and they are very inspiring to speak to. We spoke to the recent winner from Cork — a very inspiring young lady. We need to work out a way to get the experiences of those young women, who are international winners and went on to win in the European context as well, into our local schools as well. BT Young Scientist, of course, has now developed links with Queen's University, so perhaps there is a platform there to build this model of scholarships and role models and to go forward.

I also want to refer to the CBI 'Step Change' report, which calls for a move away from the exam factory basis of our education. There is this fear of failure; we do not allow young people the ability to explore and to fail, if necessary. That is very important, as is building partnerships with business. As important as that is, it is also important that we keep in the forefront of our minds at all times the role of women, because when it comes to exams in schools, we know that our young women are perhaps more capable than our young men in doing the exams.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Hazzard: We need to do that, but really what we want to see today from the Employment and Learning Minister is a strategy. Let us identify the barriers that still exist. Let us implement a strategic plan, and let us evaluate in a few years' time.

Mr Anderson: As a member of the Employment and Learning Committee, I offer my support to the motion. It

highlights the need for meaningful action in an area where there has been gender imbalance for some time. The Northern Ireland education system has always given both boys and girls every opportunity to excel academically, from primary level through to secondary level and, in many cases, on to university. Traditionally, some subjects and some career paths have been regarded as being more suitable for males than females, and vice versa.

Thankfully, that is changing, but not on a radical enough scale. That is evident from new entrants and enrolments in higher education courses in 2012-13, as contained in the labour market bulletin entitled 'Women in Northern Ireland' and released last September by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). In 2012-13, more females than males chose courses in the following areas: medicine and dentistry; subjects allied to medicine, including nursing and pharmacy; biological sciences; law; social studies; languages; creative arts; and education. Males, on the other hand, tended to be in the majority in most STEM and STEM-related subjects: physical sciences; computer science; engineering and technology; and architecture, building and planning.

What can we do to redress the imbalance? I feel that the whole area of school careers advice needs to be more focused on encouraging all our young people, but especially girls, to pursue STEM subjects. The system continues to produce too many graduates in areas where it is very hard to get permanent, well-paid jobs. As a result, we are losing too many of our most capable young people as part of our brain drain. Northern Ireland's economy, like the rest of the industrialised world, is facing radical and ever-accelerating change. The older manufacturing industries are declining or gone, and in their place there are new areas of growth. I am sure the Minister will not be too annoyed if I quote his words at a recent event, organised by SEMTA and held in Parliament Buildings, to highlight the issues raised by today's motion:

"The workforce of the future will be strongly reliant on STEM skills to meet the demands of a growing economy and it is increasingly important that more young people are encouraged to study STEM subjects. I would specifically urge young females to consider studying STEM subjects in school and pursue careers in STEM."

A key area of opportunity is the IT sector and digital technology. Just recently, 200 teenagers, male and female, from 80 schools and colleges, came together at St George's Market for an annual event organised by the NISP Connect team at the Northern Ireland Science Park. The American producer Will.i.am, of TV show 'The Voice' fame, was the guest speaker at that event, and he encouraged young people to get excited about a career in the entrepreneurial knowledge economy.

The event also gave the young people the chance to talk to some of Northern Ireland's most influential start-up entrepreneurs and tech founders. That sort of event is extremely valuable, as it helps to get the message out, but we have to go further if we want to increase the number of women who study STEM subjects and who are able to compete for well-paid jobs in the local labour market.

The motion refers to the Minister's statement of 4 June 2013, but that will soon be two years ago. I know that we face stringent budget cuts, but, if anything, such

cuts require an even greater focus and concentration on STEM subjects. Within that framework, gender imbalance must be robustly tackled. That will require full Executive involvement, as the motion indicates, and I see a key role for the Department of Education, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department for Employment and Learning.

The colleges and universities must constantly assess their recruitment strategies and continue to tailor their courses to meet modern industry's needs. The business sector also has a key role to play, and I welcome that some bigger companies, such as Allstate NI, have committed to doing all they can to promote gender balance in STEM and IT. The SMEs can also play their part. I support the motion.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Thanks very much, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I support the motion, and I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate.

Women are significantly under-represented in STEM, and the need for more to enter the sector is vital if we are to meet that demand. Indeed, if we are looking ahead to the future and if corporation tax issues get resolved, it is precisely that demand that will hopefully increasingly be in the local economy. It is particularly important and relevant that we start preparatory work for that now. In fact, it should have started long ago.

In his statement on 4 June, the Minister acknowledged that this is not a new issue, and nor is it a small issue with a quick fix. We are trying to overcome numerous barriers, which will take time. In addressing the gender imbalance, we need to initiate and, in some cases, strengthen collaboration between the Government, business and careers guidance in schools. Indeed, going wider than that, I venture that childcare certainly factors in to it for many families, when many young women especially are considering what career, if any, they should choose to go with. I also think that it is important that, at this particular moment when we are discussing so much about welfare reform, its true aspect is also looked at, which is to help and support people in their transition from benefits and into meaningful work. The requirement for improved childcare certainly cannot be ignored, and whenever you are out and about, you find that it is an issue that very frequently comes up with young families.

We are trying to overcome numerous barriers, which will take time. Although the motion specifically calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning to act, other Ministers have a role to play. As my colleague Mr Rogers highlighted, the Education Minister has a role to play to ensure that the seeds are planted early. We need to ensure that young girls are encouraged to take an interest in STEM subjects and are not led to believe that those subjects are just for boys. Tackling that misperception and capturing interest early on are key if young women are to keep on the relevant subjects up to A level.

There is a lot to be said for the importance of careers guidance in schools, especially considering that the age of 16 is the critical point at which women are lost to a potential career. Imbalance in STEM begins post-GCSE, despite the fact that girls are now more likely than boys to achieve A* to C grades in maths, core and additional science, and in each of the three individual sciences. Of girls who took GCSE STEM subjects, 76.3% achieved

the higher A* to C grades compared with 75.6% of boys. Despite high achievements in GCSE and A level, it has been reported that females account for only 29.8% of those graduating from higher education in STEM subjects. More males tend to study STEM subjects, particularly computer science, engineering and technology.

That indicates that the issue is not a lack of ability and talent but a lack of information, opportunities and the support that is required to help people into those types of work. Individuals who have STEM qualifications are in demand. Wearing another hat as Chair of the Enterprise Committee, I can say that, through our inquiry into the opportunities in a lower-tax environment, which we hope will be created through the lowering of corporation tax, the evidence that we have taken already shows that skills, including the acquisition of new skills and improved skills as part of a growing economy, has emerged as a key issue for many employers in the North.

A STEM qualification puts a person in a stronger position in a competitive job market. Studying STEM subjects opens up a wide variety of exciting and rewarding career opportunities. It can be hard to make the link between what you study in the classroom and the opportunities available in the world of work, and I think that a key element is going out to visit businesses. Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you have seen that in your previous role. There has to be a strategic approach between schools and businesses. The interconnection is sporadic at the moment. There can be good employers in an area that have no connection with schools. It is important that that link be formally and strategically developed and established, not just left to the goodwill of a good careers teacher. It can be hard to make that link, but the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment needs to work with the Minister of Education, the Minister for Employment and Learning, and, of course, Invest NI, to ensure that the STEM subjects that we teach in our schools, colleges and universities equips our young people with the skills that industry looks for in its employees.

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

I strongly welcome the motion, which acknowledges the existing work of government and other stakeholders in society. In particular, it reinforces some of the themes that I have sought to pursue and address during my period in office. The debate reflects two overlapping objectives of developing skills and maximising economic participation. The first is that of investing in higher level skills in general and, in particular, delivering a critical mass of people with skills in the STEM areas: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The second is that of achieving a greater balance of gender participation in our workforce.

The need for higher level skills, especially those in the STEM areas, is increasingly well understood. Investing in skills is the most effective way of transforming our economy, including increasing productivity and wage levels. STEM subjects are of particular relevance to many of the fastest-growing sectors in the economy. The skills strategy, 'Success through Skills — Transforming Futures' is the governing document for skills in general and has some specific targets in relation to STEM. The STEM strategy itself, 'Success through STEM', is the cross-departmental Executive strategy document that focuses directly on STEM.

Female participation is important for equal opportunities and for mobilising all of our talents. Members have already commented on the stronger educational performance of women and on the strong segmentation of people in different areas by gender. Some may say that this is natural and should really not matter, but it does matter when you consider some of the most important and fastest-growing areas of the economy. There is a moral or ethical aspect to this in terms of ensuring equality of opportunity. It is important to ensure that people have the chance to compete and operate in some of the most fast-growing and innovative aspects of our economy. There is also a strong economic imperative. We need to maximise our local skills base to the full. Businesses and other organisations will not be maximising the potential of local talent if at least one half of the market in skills is constrained. Put simply, we cannot hope to compete in the global marketplace if we cannot make best use of the local marketplace of skills and talent.

OFMDFM leads on the cross-departmental gender equality strategy. That is a 10-year strategy running from 2006 to 2016, and my Department has, over the years, contributed to that strategy by providing actions for inclusion in the overarching document and the gender quality action plan. Obviously, that will have to be renewed by the Executive after 2016. Members and the motion have made reference to my statement to the Assembly in June 2013. Following that, I asked my officials to take steps to promote gender equality and to set out a departmental gender action plan. That plan has now been drafted and it outlines actions to address gender inequalities that fall under the remit of my Department. This is a matter of ongoing further development, in particular to reflect the challenges of retention and progression in the workplace. The strategy details 20 recommendations to promote STEM and outlines how government and business intend to encourage more of our young people to study and pursue a career in those subjects and aspects of our economy.

My Department has led on the implementation of the strategy, which was produced in collaboration with five local Departments: Education; Enterprise, Trade and Investment; Agriculture and Rural Development; Culture, Arts and Leisure; and Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

4.00 pm

Recommendation 4 of the strategy, which falls under the responsibility of business to take forward, addresses gender bias. In November 2012, to help business to take this and other relevant recommendations forward, my Department funded the seconded post of STEM business coordinator. Significant progress has been made by the coordinator in the area of gender balance, in partnership with my Department and the Equality Commission.

In November 2013, a report, 'Addressing Gender Balance: Reaping the Gender Dividend in STEM', was launched. The report demonstrates the business case for gender diversity and contains several tools to help business to engage with the issue, including a STEM CEO charter, good practice guidelines and case studies. The charter, which enables STEM organisations to demonstrate their commitment to equal opportunity for women in their employment, has recently had its thirtieth and thirty-first signature, by the NACCO Materials Handling Group and

Fujitsu. Other organisations that have signed up to date include Allstate, Atkins, Asidua, Bombardier, Intel, Liberty IT, Magellan Aerospace, Michelin, Moy Park, Schrader Electronics, Seagate, Ulster University, Queen's University and the Open University. It is almost a who's who of the Northern Ireland economy. The coordinator has also established a STEM employers' equality network to help employers to benchmark their practice against the 22 good practice guidelines and identify areas in which they would like further support. The sharing of existing good practice by the STEM organisations is integral to the network.

To further highlight the issue of gender in STEM, the coordinator has worked with the three main daily newspapers to produce four 24-page supplements focused at crucial decision-making times of the school year. The supplements have highlighted the world-class opportunities available in the STEM companies across Northern Ireland and featured many female role models.

In my statement to the Assembly in June 2013, I outlined a number of departmental initiatives to address gender inequalities and increase female participation in STEM. These included the reviews of apprenticeships, youth training and careers. The new Northern Ireland strategy on apprenticeships, which was published in June 2014, highlights the importance of upskilling to raise productivity, increase social inclusion and help Northern Ireland to compete in the global marketplace. Apprenticeships will form a key part of a new skills landscape and underpin the STEM strategy.

A number of projects have been established to take forward the implementation of the strategy on apprenticeships, including one that will aim to support participation through a series of interventions to secure a greater gender balance across apprenticeships. A central service will also be established, informed through new partnership arrangements. The service will lead focused campaigns to demonstrate the value of apprenticeships to employers, young people and their parents. That will include support in key areas, especially in STEM.

The Careers Service also plays an active role in encouraging the uptake of STEM subjects and raising awareness of current and future job opportunities in STEM sectors, including for females. The Department is working to develop a central work experience website to provide guidance and information to pupils, schools, employers and parents on the benefits, selection and organisation of work experience, including opportunities in STEM-related careers. Under the higher education strategy, the universities have also committed to rebalance their profile of courses so that the subject areas offered more closely reflect the needs of the economy.

Of course, maintaining this momentum will become ever more difficult as a result of the budget cuts being faced by my Department and others. However, given the importance of the STEM and skills agenda to the future economic prosperity of Northern Ireland, both universities are working to protect undergraduate STEM places from any cuts in the incoming year.

My Department continues to take forward opportunities to encourage more females to study and pursue careers in STEM. Gender considerations are also central to action plans that have been developed for the engineering and advanced manufacturing sector, and the ICT sector.

For example, I am providing funding of £71,000 through the skills collaboration fund for the Women in STEM — Upskill to Compete project delivered by industry partners, Semta NI, which is the sector skills council for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies in Northern Ireland. The aim of the project is to address the gender imbalance that exists in the advanced manufacturing and engineering services sector. The project supports SMEs and larger companies to develop female employees in STEM roles, to promote STEM to schoolgirls and to establish a women's network to mentor and support girls and women who are progressing on a STEM careers' pathway. I am delighted to endorse and support the project, and I hope that it will encourage and inspire more females to study STEM subjects and to pursue careers in STEM.

I have also committed significant funding to promote the ICT sector as a career choice to all our young people. ICT has traditionally been perceived as male-dominated, and an important aspect of the Bring IT On programme, which I support, is addressing the gender imbalance. In addition to the wide range of activities available to both genders, the programme provides an opportunity for young women to hear directly from inspirational women in ICT. Feedback has been positive, with a large proportion of the young women attending enthused and considering an IT-related degree or career as a result of the intervention. Other female-specific opportunities include the computer club for girls, which has 20 industry-sponsored schools enrolled on the programme this academic year and ongoing work to design and deliver women-only programmes.

In July last year, I also arranged for eight of our further education students to attend a STEM summer camp at the prestigious Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. Four of them studied the women's leadership strand of the programme. Feedback was extremely positive, and it is hoped that we can send a further cohort in 2015.

Ensuring that our young people, specifically women, make the right choices to maximise their potential is critical not only to their own success but to our economic prosperity. I am, however, aware that there is more work to be done and that many of the actions will take time to deliver results. It is vital that we continue to do all that we can to combat and to address negative stereotypes that exist around STEM subjects, in particular among females.

Much of this debate and the actions highlighted have focused on entry into STEM. I want to stress that, while this debate focuses on the issue of gender and STEM, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge that there are broader challenges to better participation by women in the workforce, including retention and progression. With women entering the labour market in ever greater numbers, we still have to ask why women continue to face barriers to remaining in the workforce and to progressing in line with their male counterparts. Much more must be done in that regard.

A key challenge is to encourage employers to engage on this important issue and to offer schemes such as flexible working and childcare provision to help females to thrive in the STEM sector. With the agreement of the Assembly, I have already introduced the new right to shared parental leave and pay, which has a clear gender equality focus. By extending greater flexibility and choice to working parents and challenging assumptions that women will necessarily

stay off work for a prolonged period following the birth or adoption of a child, I think that we have taken a small but important step forward. Other steps relating to the culture of business and other forms of employment will be required, and government has a key role in encouraging and facilitating challenge and change.

I assure Members in closing that, within government, we are very much seized of this issue. In my Department, we have a gender action plan, which is being refreshed and renewed, and which we are committed to publicising in the near future. That will, of course, be a living, breathing document, which will evolve in line with new challenges and new opportunities to address these issues. Obviously, a lot of the changes that are required to culture and working practices lie beyond the remit of my Department, but the Executive are themselves committed to gender equality. There is a strategy in place, which will very shortly require to be renewed, and I am sure that the comments made by Members today will be reflected on when it comes to drafting that revised strategy over the coming years.

I also want to respond to some comments that have been made by Members. It was, I think, Sandra Overend who asked about economic inactivity. Although that does not necessarily fall under the label of STEM, there will be a STEM element to some of the work that is being conducted in that area, and there is clearly an issue around economic inactivity where participation levels are lower for many women, often because of child and family commitments. Our economic participation level for females is significantly lower than that for males, which points to some of the broader challenges that we have to address. The strategy is currently before the Executive, and I hope that it can be cleared in the coming days. I have no doubt that Members will encourage their party colleagues who are on the Executive to ensure that that is agreed by the Executive as quickly as possible so that we can begin its implementation.

I am happy to endorse the motion, which is a reflection of a very serious debate. It is about equality of opportunity for everyone in society, including women, but also about ensuring that we maximise the full economic potential of the region. If we do not encourage the fullest participation in what are the most high-profile, high-growth areas of the economy, we are in danger of selling ourselves short.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his words today. Over this past while, the Committee for Employment and Learning has seen the teaching of STEM subjects as an essential part of the curriculum. We see them as an element of learning that had in the past not matched what were seen as the more prestigious roads to travel when seeking higher levels of education — subjects such as law, teaching and medicine.

We have argued that the earlier that you get people interested in what are called STEM subjects, the more likely it is that children will buy into these subjects. We have heard it said in Committee that eager young minds are enthusiastic when it comes to learning different subjects. We heard from a scientist who gave evidence to the Committee on the question of careers. He said that, when he went into primary schools to speak to children about the importance of science, they played an active role in his presentations but that, when he left, the traditional

thought process of many teaching staff re-gear young minds to a different road to travel when it came to academic importance to one's future career.

I have heard the Minister speak about the need to teach STEM subjects, but he has also said that STEM should feature prominently as part of the curriculum for all students. There is no doubt in my mind that he is totally committed to the need not only to promote STEM subjects but to equip students to meet the needs of a changing world of employment.

All reports on the provision of STEM see it as crucial for our future needs. I read recently that some of the new jobs that the Executive have fought hard to bring to the North could be impacted on by the lack of experience in STEM subjects. The Minister talked several weeks ago about the importance of STEM to the local economy and the need to address the gender imbalance in STEM sectors, with men outnumbering women by three to one. I have read the answers to a number of questions that have been asked of the Minister in the House on the matter. I have browsed a number of reports on STEM, and I welcome the Minister's commitment to tackling the issue of gender imbalance in the STEM sectors. He gave a speech to a conference on 10 March organised by Semta NI to celebrate the success of women in STEM in addressing gender imbalance.

The motion is trying to ensure that there is a joined-up approach taken to tackling the serious imbalance of men over women in the STEM sectors, and it argues for the Minister, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues, to produce an action plan that specifically addresses the issue of gender imbalance.

I will now deal with some of the comments made by Members. The Minister dealt extensively with quite a lot of them and even encouraged Members to speak to their party colleagues at the Executive table to do something about the issue. Bronwyn McGahan spoke at length about the need to tackle the conditions that impact on women taking STEM subjects. She said that the will exists to move on the matter but that it will take the Executive as a whole to be a part of the process if the situation is to move on. She commended the South West College for the work that it has carried out on STEM.

4.15 pm

Tom Buchanan said that it was inconceivable that, in this day and age, that imbalance exists in the make-up of the workforce and that it needs to be tackled. He spoke about good practice in the USA that we can learn from and maybe look at setting up similar bodies here.

Seán Rogers said that the Assembly discussed STEM some weeks ago, concerned at the worrying lack of take-up of STEM subjects. The North is experiencing a brain drain; demand for STEM jobs cannot be met. There is a need to bring more women through the STEM process.

Sandra Overend said that responsibility lay not only with the Employment and Learning Minister but with the Education Minister. The motion could deliver the much-needed strategy. The Women in STEM project is working to promote more women in STEM. She asked where the childcare strategy to encourage women into the workforce was and spoke of the need to work together to achieve a proper gender balance.

Anna Lo said that the workforce of the future needed to be STEM-educated. Women and girls would have a much better chance at employment if they were involved in STEM careers. There needs to be a focus on women scientists as role models, and that could be one way of encouraging women to take up STEM subjects. By working together we can achieve the objective of dealing with the imbalance.

David Hilditch congratulated schools in his constituency that have excelled in STEM subjects. The imbalance of women in STEM could be dealt with effectively only when the barriers that prevent women from participating are dealt with. He asked whether society would ever get to grips with many of those imbalances. He spoke of the role of China in education in STEM subjects.

Chris Hazzard said that he hoped that the media would pick up on the debate. The stereotype of scientists needs to be tackled. We need to constantly assess the problem of imbalance. He congratulated the Employment and Learning Minister on his work on careers, especially on continued professional advice for educators, especially at primary level, building a model of scholarship that will encourage young women to participate.

Sydney Anderson said that every effort should be made to ensure that every child at primary and secondary school and university should advance in STEM. He spoke about the need to go into STEM subjects. Males go into STEM subjects while females go to different subjects. There are new elements of growth. The future will be built on STEM-trained personnel for new jobs. Events that promote STEM can be invaluable and need to be encouraged. He sees a key role for a number of Departments in the matter.

Patsy McGlone spoke of how women were significantly underrepresented in STEM programmes. There is no quick fix. There is a need to strengthen the connection between government, business, education and, of course, childcare. Childcare came through on a number of issues raised by Members. Other Ministers have a role. Young girls need to be convinced that it is not just a male programme. Females shine through with higher grades. Individuals involved in STEM are sought after. STEM subjects open many possibilities. There is a need to work together with a strategic approach.

Stephen Farry, the Minister, spoke at length, again, about the need to reinforce the work that he has done with his Department and the need to get better balance. STEM subjects are relevant. Female participation is important. It is the fastest-growing part of the economy. There is a need to maximise the workforce. We cannot go forward when 50% of the workforce is not given or does not take up the opportunity. His Department has led on the strategy. He spoke about addressing gender imbalance. A report contains a number of recommendations to deal with imbalance. Major companies have signed up to STEM programmes. He has initiated strategies that will help to deal with the gender imbalance. The Careers Service plays an important role in STEM advice, especially for females, but it could be impacted on by budget cuts. Both universities are working to protect STEM, and £71,000 has been provided to help promote STEM among women. The Minister also spoke of the number of programmes that his Department is involved in that will help to promote STEM, especially among women.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly expresses concern that men outnumber women by nearly three to one in high-level science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) posts; welcomes the statement by the Minister for Employment and Learning on 4 June 2013 reiterating the importance of women in the STEM sectors; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues, to publish a strategy and action plan that addresses specifically the issue of gender imbalance in the STEM sectors.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Policing: Upper Bann

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes, and all other Members who wish to speak will have approximately seven minutes.

Mrs Dobson: I welcome the opportunity to debate this issue in the House and thank the Business Committee for allowing it to go ahead today.

At the outset, I would like to say that every person in Northern Ireland deserves the right to live safely and securely in their home, free from the fear of crime. Fundamental to that right is that people can be safe in the knowledge that, when an emergency occurs and 999 is called, help is on its way as quickly as possible. Locally located response teams are central to speedy response times for all emergency services, which brings me to the point of this debate.

The plans for a radical shake-up of neighbourhood policing in E district, which encompasses Upper Bann, are frankly unworkable and unacceptable. They would see neighbourhood policing teams relocated from Portadown and Banbridge police stations to Armagh and Lurgan. That would affect policing in all towns and rural areas across Upper Bann. In recent years, in Banbridge, we have witnessed the loss of neighbourhood policing teams from Gilford, Rathfriland and Dromore, with responses now centred in Banbridge station. This is an issue that is worrying for local people but also concerns the members of the Banbridge chamber of commerce. It was the first issue raised with me when I met them recently.

While I very much welcome the ongoing and open dialogue with Superintendent David Moore, who will be the new district commander for the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon policing area, I am concerned that this decision has been handed to him from above. Indeed, in a recent lengthy meeting, we raised considerable concerns around response times, burglaries, reducing incidences of violent crime and responses to road traffic accidents, not least on the A1 dual carriageway and our country roads. The A1 dual carriageway is the main corridor between Belfast and Dublin and has been utilised by criminals seeking a speedy exit from the town. We also discussed how the PSNI works with the policing and community safety partnership (PCSP) to raise awareness of the harm caused by use of illegal drugs; the impact of rural crime, which is a very real concern locally, especially for vulnerable elderly people; the fear that hearing that teams will not be stationed locally could cause those elderly people; and the future of neighbourhood watch teams — in short, the key policing priorities across the constituency.

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

I am deeply worried that decisions are being taken by PSNI management on a short-term basis rather than as part of a real, long-term strategic vision for the future of policing in the area. Residents across Upper Bann, including our rural areas, are set to suffer the

consequences. The lack of consultation is shocking. Community groups across the constituency have built up and are building up good working relationships with the police through individual officers working on the ground. Where is their voice in all of this?

That work is vital in establishing a network that can help to combat crime, and I am sure that I am not alone in being able to recount examples where those relationships have led directly to positive policing outcomes.

Like the health service or any other Department that comes under the remit of the House, the budget for policing in Northern Ireland was set in 2011 in a Budget that my party opposed. If we were discussing the closure or relocation of key staff from a health centre or fire station, we could hold the responsible Minister directly to account — local accountability for decisions that will affect local families and our local communities. In the case of the most radical shake-up of community policing for decades, in which communities are set to suffer, different rules apply.

The fact that we are discussing the future of policing in Upper Bann and there is no ministerial response shows a total lack of accountability and responsibility for those who will be affected. I understand that the Minister deemed, as he does with questions for written answers, that the issue is an operational matter that is within the remit of the PSNI. In short, elected representatives at all levels are simply informed and PCSPs are briefed. I am in no way arguing for the direct involvement of the House in policing priorities in Northern Ireland; those systems are in place. However, I am concerned at the lack of local accountability that has been a direct result of the way in which policing and justice was devolved to the House. When it comes to radical decisions, such as the relocation of response teams, there should be local accountability.

I am also concerned at Deputy Chief Constable Drew Harris's comments yesterday, when he said:

"We are facing unprecedented financial cuts and it is inevitable these cuts will impact policing."

He continued:

"By April 2016 we will have around 200 fewer officers due to high number of officers retiring and limited scope for recruitment."

He further continued:

"Going forward there is likely to be further reductions in officer numbers."

Those comments, coming on the same day as it was announced that the police are to hand back a £14 million underspend from last year, simply beggar belief. It does little for public confidence to hear that operational policing is set to totally move out of local stations. It does even less to hear that a shortage of front-line officers is looming while unspent money is being handed back.

The future of policing in Upper Bann is an extremely important issue for each and every family. I pay tribute to the officers of the neighbourhood policing teams in stations across the constituency and commend them for the work that they do to keep our community safe.

I appeal to the Justice Minister, if he takes the time to read the Hansard report of the debate, to look at how those radical proposals will impact on the future of policing in Upper Bann; to consider the increased potential for serious road traffic accidents as response vehicles travel further distances across our rural roads to respond to emergencies; and to consider the impact on communities in already isolated rural areas and the damage that will be wielded to important policing work that is under way.

I would also appreciate his assessment of the use of the community prioritisation index, which underpins the proposal to centre command in Banbridge and remove operational policing. Two of the key indices are deprivation and crime levels and, when applied to Banbridge, we simply do not score highly enough. Is that really how that decision has come about? Good work on the ground by police reduces crime, and Banbridge should not be penalised for successful policing. I would also appreciate an assurance that the current teams in Banbridge will be kept in place until at least October and will not be removed before then.

As it stands, I understand that the PSNI still does not know how the new proposed system will work in practice with the role profiles and shift patterns for officers. It is also frightening to think that, as Lurgan requires armoured cars, we could have the farce of officers responding from Lurgan and travelling in armoured vehicles and possibly arriving in Banbridge to get into their standard response vehicles to go out on duty and then return to Lurgan in their armoured cars. Their plans could increase costs rather than decrease them. When you think of the cost that is incurred in moving officers in a greater number of vehicles and increased fuel and travel times, frankly, it does not add up. That is not even thinking of the increased response times that people could face. These proposals are dangerous and totally unworkable.

4.30 pm

Mr Anderson: I rise to take part in this important debate on the future of neighbourhood policing across Upper Bann. I thank Mrs Dobson for bringing forward the Adjournment topic.

We are in difficult and uncertain times for policing. However, we, as politicians, must never be found wanting when it comes to highlighting provision for our district. I have always taken an active interest in community policing. I believe it to be fundamental to ensuring community confidence and safety for my constituents. I was a member of the Craigavon District Policing Partnership and the Craigavon Community Safety Partnership, which have now been taken over by the relatively new PCSP. I believed in those organisations, which I saw as powerful tools to deliver community policing. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to all who have been involved in them down through the years.

Crucially, neighbourhood policing connects the police with the people. Local knowledge and locally known faces instil community confidence. By building up a strong level of local knowledge, local police have more credibility and a better standing in the community. If we can encourage communal confidence in day-to-day policing, that can only be to society's benefit. Sadly, this is all about to change with the restructuring of neighbourhood policing across our district. I have grave concerns about that, and, for

that reason, I regard this debate as being of considerable importance.

As we stand, I feel that we are at risk of decimating neighbourhood policing in Upper Bann and undoing all the good work. It is as serious as that. There is a sense of worry and unease in our communities, both urban and rural. That must be addressed if we are to maintain community confidence in our policing structures. Patten envisaged a new dawn for policing, with peacetime officers in the region of 7,500, but this is no longer the case. One has to ask whether these proposed changes to neighbourhood policing fly in the face of Patten.

Only last week, I, along with my party colleagues Stephen Moutray MLA and David Simpson MP, met local police and the Assistant Chief Constable to raise our concerns. We all understand that we are in difficult economic times, but proposed massive cuts to the most visible element of the PSNI operation, that of community policing, is, in my eyes, foolhardy and short-sighted at best. Just yesterday, we were utterly astounded to learn that the PSNI has declared a £14 million underspend. On one hand, we are repeatedly told that front-line police services must be cut and senior police are rarely out of the media as they warn of stringent and visible cuts. Now, they are handing back £14 million. That raises serious questions about budget mismanagement. As my colleague David Simpson said yesterday, it seems absurd and a complete contradiction. Just a small amount of that £14 million would go a long way towards addressing the problems that we are highlighting in this debate. The police, in this case, I believe, have a lot of explaining to do.

My constituency will now be served by four neighbourhood policing teams in the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (ABC) area. Banbridge will, in turn, be served by the Armagh team. That will effectively leave a major rural town, which has one of the biggest drug problems in Northern Ireland and a strong nightlife culture, with no neighbourhood policing team at all. That is a real shame because so much good work has been done in recent years through neighbourhood policing in the Banbridge area in tackling drug-related crime, domestic abuse, attacks on the elderly and general rural crime. As a result, a positive relationship has been built up between the police and the people who are now at risk. We all know about the ongoing security problems that the Lurgan and Craigavon area continues to face as well. In Portadown, illegal activity is, sadly, a prominent problem.

On top of that, Portadown town does not even have a proper, modern, up-to-date police station. That says it all.

I sense a real unease in the community at large in Upper Bann. Crime levels remain too high. I could take you to a local shop in my constituency, which was raided last month for the fifth time, and, as I understand it, no one to date has been brought to book for that. While it is getting no better, we propose to cut the PSNI budget in such a way that we have fewer officers and less resource. The police and the Justice Minister are well aware of the difficulties and issues that they face in my constituency and in the wider ABC area.

A dangerous combination of dissident activity, drug crime and organised gang crime, which continue to blight our community, are all big issues. I urge the police to sit down again and to rethink this reorganisation. Proper policing is

important to us all. It is, in many ways, a basic human right. We owe it to our community to get it right. It is time for us to stand up and try to protect our constituents in the ABC area in relation to the changes.

Mr Moutray: I will be brief. I also congratulate Mrs Dobson on bringing this important matter to the House. It is very sad that the Justice Minister and three MLAs from our constituency have not found the time to come to the Chamber for this debate.

If the decision goes ahead, it will impact many people across Upper Bann. Like my colleague, I sat on the DPP in Craigavon council from its inception, and I saw the good that was done by community policing across the borough of Craigavon. I saw the police interact with people and communities whom they never could have interacted with before, and, slowly but surely, relationships were built up. I fear that, if the mooted proposals go ahead, we will seriously lose out. Relationships will not be there, and trust will not be there to the same extent.

Last week, our MP, David Simpson, Sydney Anderson and I met senior police officers at Knock and expressed our concerns. We were not convinced by what we were told. I believe that this is a budgetary exercise, and that is the only thing that is driving it. I know from police officers on the ground that they also have concerns and are not one bit happy about this moving forward. We will all be the worse for it. I believe that this is probably the most retrograde step in policing since the Patten reforms in the early 2000s, and we know the impact that those had for many years. I appeal to the Justice Minister to use whatever persuasive power he has, and I appeal to senior police officers to do it before they make a decision that will impact on the lives of people.

In Lurgan, we still have a very serious dissident republican threat, and Mrs Dobson outlined how police have to travel around in armoured cars. In Banbridge, as my colleague Sydney Anderson said, we have a massive drugs problem, with several deaths over the past few years. There are other problems with Portadown and with the new communities that have come to live there. I hope that the police will listen, even if Members and the Justice Minister are not here today to listen, and that they will back off on this move.

Mr Hussey: I am sure that Members are wondering why I have taken some time to sit here this evening and participate in the debate. I will begin by declaring an interest as a member of the Policing Board and as a former member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, where I served as a part-time officer.

When you hear about the proposals, they do not make sense. In my career, when I worked with Pearl Assurance, I travelled all over Northern Ireland. I know the area that we are talking about very well. I travelled regularly from Belfast to Newry and from Newry to Portadown up into Rathfriland, which is the area that we are talking about. It does not make sense to me from a security point of view — I will deal with that first — why we would send officers from Lurgan towards Banbridge in an armoured police car.

We are going to set up patterns. To a certain degree, we could have officers targeted because of these changes. We all know that the dissidents have not gone away, and we all know that the dissidents have already murdered police officers in this constituency. We have to remember that a police officer is on duty 24 hours a day. None of us

wants to walk behind another cortège of a police officer going to his grave, having served this community.

The area that we are talking about is very rural. One of the things that sticks in my mind is the number of thefts of agricultural equipment and machinery that there have been. I asked questions on that of the police at the Policing Board. It was fascinating to discover the number of implements and vehicles that had been stolen and never recovered.

If you want to make a quick getaway out of Banbridge, the A1 is the way to go. You can be in Newry before you know it; you can be in Belfast before you know it; you can be totally out of sight very quickly. Sometimes, good roads create problems of their own and, certainly, the A1 is a major issue.

I also have concerns in relation to road traffic accidents. We have had major accidents and fatalities on the A1. We need to have the police there quickly. If they have to travel from Lurgan in an armoured car, there is a speed limit within which they can travel, and then they have to get an ordinary police car to that point. It is a ridiculous situation that I do not want to see.

The drugs issue is also a major one. None of us wants to see criminals prosper. Criminals will prosper if there is no police activity or sign of police activity. We have made reference to Patten several times during the debate. During the Patten proposals, there were, of course, proposals to extend part-time police officers. We do not have an extension of part-time police officers; in fact, part-time police officers are virtually disappearing. We need policing with the community and in the community. If the officers are not known to the locals, they will not have a rapport, and they will not speak to them or pass on information. One of the last debates I took part in on policing, Mr Deputy Speaker, related to your constituency, when we were talking about the police having to go down the glens of Antrim from Ballymena.

This has not been thought out, and it cannot be forced on a community without some form of consultation. Successful policing has been seen to happen in Banbridge. Successful policing is there because of the fact it has a relatively low crime level. Take away the police and what do you have? You basically have an open door for criminals, drug pushers and that ilk who want to use this. I have major concerns for the safety of the people of Banbridge, and I am prepared to sit here tonight with my colleague. I agree with others who have said there should be more in the Chamber. This is not just about Banbridge or Upper Bann. It is about policing in Northern Ireland.

It is a disgrace that we do not have a Minister here to make a response. The Minister is, supposedly, the Minister of Justice. Where is the justice for the people of Banbridge if the Minister cannot even come here to make a statement? Yes, the Chief Constable is ultimately responsible for the Police Service of Northern Ireland, but he is not being given the budget. That is another major issue. Yes, £14 million was handed back. That is ridiculous. It is ridiculous that £14 million had to be handed back, but that was because he is unable to carry money forward. That is because of a ridiculous situation that exists in our policing legislation. It should be sorted by the Minister of Justice, so that the police can hold such money and use it properly for the people of Northern Ireland — for the people of Banbridge, the people of Upper Bann. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Adjourned at 4.44 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 13 April 2015

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Resignation: Mr Devenney

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed to today's business, I advise the House that Mr Maurice Devenney resigned as a Member of the Assembly on 25 March 2015. I have notified the Chief Electoral Officer, in accordance with section 35 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

New Assembly Member: Mr Middleton

Mr Speaker: I advise the House that I have been informed by the Chief Electoral Officer that Mr Gary Middleton has been returned as a Member of the Assembly for the Foyle constituency to fill the vacancy resulting from Mr Devenney's resignation. Mr Middleton signed the Roll of Membership this morning in my presence and that of the Clerk to the Assembly and entered his designation. Mr Middleton has now taken his seat, and I welcome him to the Assembly and wish him every success in the future.

On behalf of the Assembly, I thank Mr Devenney and his family and wish them well for the future.

Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme 2015

Mrs Cochrane: I beg to move

That, as set out in section 2(4) of the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000, this Assembly approves the revised scheme NIA 241/11-16 laid before the Assembly on 20 March 2015 for payments to political parties for the purpose of assisting Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly who are connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties.

I moved the motion on behalf of the Assembly Commission. Members will be aware that the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000 provides for payments to political parties for the purpose of assisting Members to perform their duties. It does not provide payments to individual Members.

It is proposed that the revised financial assistance to political parties scheme — known as the FAPP scheme — will reduce payments to the parties by 3%, as part of a package of measures to meet the overall reduction in the Assembly Commission's budget for 2015-16. The Assembly Commission undertook a full review of the FAPP scheme in 2012, following recommendations highlighted by our internal audit service and raised by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. A revised scheme that provided for a range of enhanced governance and administrative controls was agreed by the Assembly in March 2013. No substantive change to the amounts payable under the scheme was made at that time and indeed the last uprating of amounts payable was in 2008.

Changes agreed during that process included that parties that employed and funded staff from the assistance provided through the FAPP scheme must use the Assembly's payroll processes in the administration of those payments. It is also now a condition that all payments will be made only on receipt of supporting documentation in the same way as office cost expenditure payments are made, and that all claims are published in line with publication of Members' expenditure. Furthermore, an independent audit of FAPP expenditure and claims is undertaken at the end of each financial year.

The Assembly Commission's budget for 2015-16 has been reduced by 5%, which amounts to 8% of the costs directly controllable by the Commission. To deal with that budget and anticipated cuts, the Commission initiated a strategic and financial planning programme known as SP15+ — strategic planning 2015 and beyond — to prioritise

the allocation of resources and to identify any budget reductions. At its meeting on 18 March 2015, the Assembly Commission agreed measures to achieve a balanced budget for 2015-16, including reducing FAPP by 3%.

There were different views amongst Commission members as to what reduction should be proposed. A range of issues was raised, including that a cut in FAPP would most probably lead to redundancies amongst support staff, who are already lower paid and have less favourable terms of employment than staff employed directly by the Assembly Commission. Those staff would also be unable to avail themselves of the generous voluntary exit scheme in place for other public-sector employees.

The majority agreement of the Commission, therefore, was to propose a 3% cut. However, to work towards balancing the Commission's budget, I did propose, and other members agreed, a separate reduction in the childcare scheme, which would have placed the burden of cuts directly on Members themselves. In its wisdom, the independent financial review panel vetoed that option, and did so with no consultation whatsoever with the Members who would be affected by the proposal. Instead, it proposed an equivalent cut, which will directly impact on constituency services rather than on Members.

The revised amounts payable under the FAPP scheme as proposed today will assist in meeting the budget reductions required by the Assembly Commission and ensure that the impact of the wider public-sector expenditure climate is seen to be shared by all parts of the public sector.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Thank you, Mr Speaker. We are debating the proposals to cut assistance to FAPP. I am a member of the Assembly Commission, but I am speaking as a party member because I had difficulties with the proposal.

It did not go far enough, given the challenges that we face. My proposal was that all parties should take a 10% reduction to the financial assistance that they receive rather than a mere 3%. That would have meant less of a reduction in other services and, with a range of other measures, would have helped to protect jobs in the Assembly.

I found it disappointing and shortsighted that, when faced with a difficult decision, all other parties voted to protect funding to themselves, some with a 3% reduction and others with a 0% reduction. It is up to those parties to explain to people losing their jobs in the Assembly why they made the choice that they did.

Sinn Féin will support the motion to reduce funding to political parties, but we do not believe that it goes far enough. Our proposal would have been for a 10% cut.

Mr Ramsey: I support the mover of the motion, Judith Cochrane, as a member of the Assembly Commission.

Financial assistance for political parties must be regulated, transparent and open to scrutiny, and this Assembly should facilitate that, offering an accurate picture of party activities. Strict conditions for the provision of public funding to parties must be in place. The sources and spending of political parties' funds should be clear and accessible to the media and the general public.

It is important to say that the Assembly Commission had a strategy day. We spent almost half a day looking at very emotive, very sensitive and very delicate issues. Ms Caitríona Ruane did not attend that, and she may have had good reasons for not doing so. Because of the extensive discussion we had, there was, as Judith Cochrane said, a balanced budget brought forward. It is unfortunate that the independent panel did not accept guidance, through a letter from the Speaker, on the proposal we brought forward for the reduction in the childcare allowance to Assembly staff, and, simultaneously, we wanted to reduce the childcare allowance to Assembly Members. Sadly, that was resisted, and the panel did not think it was relevant to do that, although that was clearly what we wanted. It is unfair now: there is no equality in this House as a result of a decision — an exceptional determination — by the independent panel, which refused the guidance from the Assembly Commission but yet and all brought forward another determination about the consumables, which, as the mover of the motion, Judith Cochrane, rightly said, will have a detrimental effect on the constituency services to all MLAs.

It is not a huge amount of money. It was initially £1,000. The Assembly Commission, in trying to get a proper balance, decided and agreed on a 25% reduction, only to find that the panel had decided to remove it entirely. That was wrong. There is no accountability. While the creation of the panel brings independence, there is no accountability with it. It increased the level of salaries to MLAs and simultaneously reduced the office allowance costs by the same amount over three years. It was never part of the panel's mandate to make cuts or savings, and it is wrong on this occasion. The SDLP will be seeking an urgent meeting with the panel to discuss that.

At the second meeting, when we were discussing the budget that had been agreed consensually at the first meeting, Caitríona Ruane did raise the issue of a 10% cut. A 10% cut in financial assistance, including to the Whips' allowance, which helps to service and manage the party teams, would have forced parties to make cutbacks in human resources. There would be no other way to do it. We looked at all the areas of funding that the Assembly Commission has, and the main one is human resources. We looked at catering, cleaning and security. We have seen a significant reduction in the amount of money that we are paying to the Northern Ireland policing service for the security that is necessary to protect Members and people who are using the Building.

The Assembly Commission, on behalf of the parties that sit on it, has taken the right decision to have direct impact on Members through the childcare allowance — a proposal that has been blatantly ignored by the independent panel — and a 3% cut to the financial assistance to parties and the Whips' allowance, which is fair and reasonable. Those were tough decisions and the meeting of the full Assembly Commission — apart from Caitríona, who could not make it — was tough. We spent upwards of four hours going through the elements of the budget to make sure that we got the round and balanced outcome we have. I support the motion.

Mr Gardiner: Like two of my colleagues who have already spoken, I am fully in support of this. It has been gone through in detail. It is just a pity that the Member who is opposing the motion before us was not in attendance

that day. I fully support the motion before the House and support my two colleagues who have already spoken in favour of it.

12.15 pm

Mr Allister: I do not quibble at all about the fact that there is to be a reduction of 3%. I do, however, quibble over whether there has been sufficient focus in some elements of the package to adequately reduce the largesse that is bestowed upon parties in this House.

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

I refer in particular to the Whips' allowance, which enriches parties very significantly with public funds. As one understands it, a party with more than 20 Members starts off with £32,000, and then, for every MLA who is not a Minister, it gets a further £530. That means that, into the Whip's office of the largest party, the DUP, something of the order of £48,960 per year is poured, and into Sinn Féin's Whip's office, something of the order of £44,720 is poured. I assume that that money does not go to the Whips but to staff. The Whips normally have the advantage of holding some other paid sinecure in the House, such as being a member of the Assembly Commission, which has always struck me as not perhaps the most overworked of bodies, but handsomely paid nonetheless. It is noticeable that Whips tend to populate the Assembly Commission —

Mrs Cochrane: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Apart, perhaps, from the Member who is about to intervene.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Member for giving way. He might want to note that my party's Whip does not hold our place on the Assembly Commission. He might also want to note that members of the Assembly Commission are the only Members whose salary has not increased since 2011. All other Members' salaries have increased. The take-home pay of those who sit on the Assembly Commission has not increased by a single penny since 2011.

Mr Allister: Maybe that is a reflection of the fact that there was a recognition that the £10,000 or £12,000 — I cannot remember which it is — was perhaps rather generous to begin with.

I was making the point that £49,000 and £44,000 goes to the DUP and Sinn Féin to run Whips' offices. Where does it go? We hear that there is transparency and that it is published. I find no publication of it, unless I am missing it, on the Assembly website. Where is the £49,000 that is paid to run the Whip's office of the DUP or the £44,000 or £45,000 that is paid to run the Whip's office of Sinn Féin? Where does that money go? Does it really go into the coffers of the parties? That is one's suspicion but I am more than willing to take an intervention and be told exactly how that money is spent. I do not see anyone rising to indicate that.

Mr Ramsey: I thank the Member for allowing me the intervention. The Whips' allowance that is given to the SDLP is used for the purposes of managing the team that we have in Stormont. That is what the Whips' allowance is for. In any House in these islands, it is a necessary level of money when you have teams of upwards of 30 or 20, or, in our case, 14, Members. You need specific staff delegated

specifically to help the Whips to manage business in the House.

Ms Ruane: Will the Member take an intervention?

Mr Allister: Let me deal with that point. I do not know how hard the 14 SDLP Members are to manage —

Mr Ramsey: Very hard. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Allister: The SDLP, for that burden, gets £31,420 into its Whip's office. Is that spent on salaries in the Whip's office or is there a surplus of money in that party and others that finds its way into party coffers? That is the question about this public money.

Of course, that comes on top of the quite generous allocations to parties under the rest of the scheme. The DUP, for example, gets £153,500 in party money. Sinn Féin gets £127,900 party money. In the case of the DUP, there is an income, under the scheme, of £202,000-plus. In the case of Sinn Féin, there is an income to the party, under the scheme, of £172,000. That is the Whips' money and the party money. I think that the public are entitled to know how, where and why that money is spent, or is this just a mechanism to enrich the political parties, particularly through the Whips' office allowances, which seem to be rather generous, not least when you remember that, under the ordinary party funding, for every MLA who is not a Minister, the party gets £3,200? For every MLA who is not a Minister, a Whip's office gets another £530 —

Ms Ruane: Will the Member take an intervention?

Mr Allister: — so why is there this duplication —

Ms Ruane: Will the Member take an intervention?

Mr Allister: — of top-up for additional MLAs? If you get it on the party funding of £3,200, why do you need an extra £530 on the Whips' allowance as well?

Ms Ruane: I thank the Member for allowing me this intervention, and I hope that he will join me in supporting a 10% cut, which Sinn Féin proposed, rather than 3%. Will he make history today and join with Sinn Féin in supporting something? I also put on the record that Sinn Féin Members take an average industrial wage, and we do not get any of the top-ups. That goes in to —

Mr Campbell: Your pension.

Ms Ruane: No, it certainly does not.

Mr Campbell: At the full rate.

Ms Ruane: It certainly does not.

Mr Campbell: At the full rate.

Ms Ruane: The Member opposite who is intervening takes his full wage.

Mr Campbell: At the full rate.

Ms Ruane: Will the Member —

Mr Campbell: I do not take any wage.

Ms Ruane: Will the Member —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Order, please.

Ms Ruane: Will the Member take an average industrial wage?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Order, please. The Member will resume her seat. I am sorry but I have to appeal to the Member opposite not to be engaging in the debate from a sedentary position. Continue.

Mr Campbell: I do not take any wage.

Ms Ruane: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Sorry. Mr Campbell, can you repeat what you have just said?

Mr Campbell: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was indicating that I do not take any wage. That is an accurate account rather than the inaccurate account made by Caitríona Ruane.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): You are challenging the Chair.

Mr Campbell: No, I am not indeed. I am not.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I have asked you not to make comments from a sedentary position.

Ms Ruane: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will repeat the question. Is the Member willing to take an average industrial wage rather than the full wage that he currently takes?

Mr Allister: Of course, the Member rather foolishly highlights a point that makes the case that, in fact, if that is the practice of Sinn Féin, the surplus above the average industrial wage, which this is funding, must inevitably and directly be going to enrich Sinn Féin as a party. That is not the purpose of public funding of political parties. It is not so that the money can be siphoned off into the coffers of that particular political party. If Sinn Féin Members genuinely take an industrial wage — who knows? — it begs the question: where is the surplus money going?

Mr Campbell: Pension.

Mr Allister: Patently, it is going to enrich Sinn Féin as a party. As for the Member's bogus point about being exercised that the cut is not enough, I think that the very fact that she did not turn up, apparently, at the relevant meeting even to make that case is sufficiently suggestive of just how bogus a stance Sinn Féin takes on this matter.

I do say to the House that all of this — every last penny — is public money. Therefore, there should and must be transparency on where it is spent. I ask the question again: where does Sinn Féin spend its £44,000 or £45,000 Whip's office money? Where does the DUP spend its £49,000 Whip's office money? Are those parties paying a member of staff that much? I very much doubt it. So where does that surplus money go?

Ms Ruane: Would the Member take an intervention and I will answer his question?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Mr Campbell: It is not for mint imperials.

Ms Ruane: Sinn Féin takes an average —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Sorry, I have to ask the Member to be seated again. Mr Campbell, you have been warned. I hope that it will not be necessary to take further action for your behaviour in making remarks from a sedentary position.

Mr Campbell: I am sitting down.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Continue.

Ms Ruane: I thank the Member for permitting me to make an intervention. First, it is incorrect to say that I was not at the meeting where the decision was taken: I was. I made the proposal that there would be a 10% cut, so there is nothing bogus about it. The previous meeting was a seminar where decisions were not taken. In relation to your point about where the money goes, all Sinn Féin MLAs take an industrial wage, including all our Ministers, because we believe that public money should be used well. You asked where the remainder of the money is used. It is used to provide services to our constituents.

Mr Allister: The purpose of this money, according to the scheme, as announced by Ms Cochrane, is not to enrich political parties in the manner and means by which Sinn Féin admits that it does it. It is abusing the system if it takes this surplus money to enrich its party. Yes, it says that it is to service its constituents. However, this money goes directly into the coffers of Sinn Féin to be used, no doubt, to fight elections and to do all sorts of things quite foreign to the purpose and intent of the scheme.

Sinn Féin stands condemned out of its own mouth as to its abuse and misuse of this money, if in fact it is doing as it says and channelling it into party funds. I do not believe that that is what the public would want to sanction for public money. If there is a case for supporting political parties in their functions in the House, and a purpose in supporting them, to a degree, as Whips in the House, that is one thing. To use and abuse that money for other purposes is quite something else. However, that is not at all surprising, given the lack of moral standing of that political party.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I call Mr Peter Weir to conclude and wind on the debate.

Mr Weir: I thank Members for their contributions in what has been, perhaps, a livelier debate than some of us may have anticipated. I am grateful that, whatever the divergence between Members, there at least seems to be a level of consensus that it is a necessary part of the overall package.

As Members indicated, there was a range of views within this, and there were those who would advocate no change and those who would advocate a 10% change. What we are left with, as part of an overall package for the Assembly, is a 3% cut.

It should be remembered that the FAPP scheme has effectively had amounts frozen since 2010, which means, from a practical point of view, that the money largely goes to pay for salaries. Unlike others where there may be, for the public service, some level of increment each year, it will mean that members of staff are left more or less on the same wage for a number of years. That is the implication from an adverse-impact point of view.

We have a situation where some of the staff who are paid under the FAPP scheme do not have the same rights and entitlements as some other staff in the Assembly or, indeed, as MLAs. What we have here is a contribution to the overall financial situation. It was one, as was indicated, that seemed to have been well discussed and well thought through and, indeed, was evidence-based. I would highlight that concerns have been raised, by the proposer and by Mr Ramsey, in relation to determination and non-

determination of the independent panel where, on the one hand — apparently without a great deal of research — it rejected a potential saving, and on other occasions seems, somewhat perversely, to have put in place something that will penalise those who do the most in relation to correspondence and that sort of thing. This is, at least, sensibly based.

12.30 pm

I turn to a couple of the issues. A case was made for a 10% cut. Obviously, the burden of any difference will have to be borne largely by parties. It is, I think, fair to say that, for some parties, a 3% cut may be reasonably challenging. Others could very easily afford a 10% cut, but then we are not all in the position in this Chamber of being one of the richest parties in western Europe. Indeed, a few additional plates in New York may be enough to pay for a 10% cut. That option is not necessarily available for all of us.

Mention has been made of the FAPP scheme by the Member for North Antrim Mr Allister. Any money claimed under the FAPP scheme has to be used for party purposes in relation to the Assembly. Everything is receipted and directly accounted for. Indeed, there is an independent audit, which I understand is taking place at the moment. So, this is not a question of people being able to siphon off money for any political party.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: I will give way briefly.

Mr Allister: He says that it is audited and has to be handled in that way. Is how the money is actually spent published anywhere, above and beyond how much each party gets?

Mr Weir: As I said, it is receipted and audited. I am not aware of the detail of the breakdown, because some of that may come under individual salaries. What is clear is the amount each party receives. He indicated that, for instance, my party receives about £200,000 via the two different elements. That will be reduced as a result of this today by 3%, a loss of about £6,000. We have, from the Whip's point of view, 38 Members to manage. The Whip's office for the TUV manages one Member, who, I appreciate, may at times be a little unmanageable, but does not require a member of staff to do that. Speaking with a DUP hat on, the financing of political parties equates to about £5,000 per Member. I note, for example, that the TUV will receive £25,600 per Member. "Physician, heal thyself", before challenging or criticising someone else from the high moral ground.

What we have, Mr Deputy Speaker, is a reasonable approach in the circumstances. We are living under a straitened financial burden, which means the Assembly has had to cut £2 million. We were able to, at least by way of majority position and, I think, on all issues eventually, reach a situation that enables us to live within budget, despite the challenges. We should remember that, if there are any redundancies arising out of the FAPP scheme, there is not the opportunity for voluntary exit, or, indeed, any form of package for anyone. That needs to be borne in mind. But it is right that the political parties also bear a share of that overall burden. Consequently, I believe that the 3% cut was seen as a reasonable approach by the majority of Commission members.

In conclusion, Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the motion to the Assembly as an important element in assisting the Commission to live within its reduced budget.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, as set out in section 2(4) of the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000, this Assembly approves the revised scheme NIA 241/11-16 laid before the Assembly on 20 March 2015 for payments to political parties for the purpose of assisting Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly who are connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties.

Committee Business

European Scrutiny Priorities 2015

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer 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 Nesbitt (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on Assembly Committees' Priorities for European Scrutiny in 2015 [NIA 225/11-16].

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is nice to see Europe packing them in the Chamber again for what is our annual opportunity to debate the European priorities that have been selected by Assembly Statutory Committees for the year ahead and also to reflect on the work done on their respective priorities during 2014.

The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister leads on European affairs, but those affairs impact on all Departments, so Statutory Committees have responsibility for scrutinising matters that fall within their own remit. My Committee's report gives an indication of the breadth and depth of work being undertaken by our Committees on European affairs that affect people in Northern Ireland.

Members will be aware that last year witnessed changes to the landscape of the European Union, with elections to the European Parliament in May 2014 and the election of Jean-Claude Juncker as the twelfth European Commission president. The Commission's work programme is normally updated every autumn, but the new Commission took office only on 1 November, and the work programme for 2015 was not adopted until mid-December 2014. It is significantly shorter than in previous years, containing only 23 legislative and non-legislative policy initiatives. It also includes 80 proposals for withdrawal or modification and 79 actions for review under the regulatory fitness and performance (REFIT) programme.

In setting their priorities, Committees consider issues of relevance to them in the Commission's work programme. That enables them to identify policy and legislation planned by the European institutions for the year ahead that will have particular relevance for people here. The work programme provides Committees with a look-ahead to see issues on which they can scrutinise and support their Department. I am sure that all Members will agree that it is vital that our Ministers and Departments work hard to ensure that Northern Ireland's voice is heard loud and clear in any UK negotiations in Europe with other member states, especially as the UK Government are engaged in their review of competences to assess the total impact of the European Union on our citizens.

Before turning to the priorities identified by the OFMDFM Committee, I take the opportunity to thank the Assembly's Research and Information Service for the excellent work that it does in supporting Committees in selecting the key priorities from the Commission's work programme.

The OFMDFM Committee has agreed four main priorities for European scrutiny in the coming year. The first two — the labour mobility package and the European agenda on migration — are closely linked. They aim to encourage and facilitate movement throughout the EU of EU citizens and those from other countries for the purposes of employment. Those initiatives, along with the EU policy of expansion, could result in greater inward migration to Northern Ireland. While immigration itself is not a devolved matter, the integration of migrant workers is a component of our social cohesion policy. The Committee will maintain a watching brief on developments regarding those initiatives at an EU level.

Closer to home, the Committee aims to complete its inquiry into Together: Building a United Community by the end of this session, the purpose of which is to help to inform the Executive's approach to tackling sectarianism, racism and other forms of intolerance. The Committee has also recently received briefings on the draft racial equality strategy from key stakeholders and relevant departmental officials, and we will continue to monitor developments in that area.

The third priority is legislation on the accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). That is a continuation from the 2014 work programme, and it is a complex issue. Indeed, the Court of Justice of the European Union has ruled that the draft accession agreement is incompatible with EU treaties. As the proposal develops, the Committee will seek a view from OFMDFM on what the EU accession to the ECHR will mean for Northern Ireland, including any potential requirement for further legislation in Northern Ireland to ensure compliance.

The fourth Committee priority is to continue scrutinising European legislative proposals to assess compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, which is the principle that the EU shall not take action unless it is more effective than action that could be taken at a national, regional or local level.

During 2015, the Committee will also undertake other work with a European focus. We will monitor progress to ensure full implementation of the 11 recommendations contained in our report on the inquiry into the Barroso task force. We will also continue to press for the Executive's European priorities for 2015-16, which had initially been promised by the end of February. Later in the year, we will review performance against the 2014-15 priorities.

I will continue to represent the Assembly on the EC/UK forum of chairpersons of the UK and devolved regional parliamentary Committees with responsibility for European affairs, and I look forward to inviting my parliamentary colleagues to the Northern Ireland Assembly later this year. In addition, the Committee will follow with interest the work of the European division of OFMDFM, including the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels.

I will now make some very brief comments on the work on EU matters that the Committee undertook during 2014. In the context of ongoing scrutiny of performance against the Programme for Government (PFG) commitments, the Committee monitored commitment 26, which is to increase uptake of competitive European funding by 20% through to 2015. That target was exceeded early in the Programme for Government period, and while that is a positive outcome, of course, it is disappointing that there has been no

recalibration to reflect that success. As each Department has a responsibility for that PFG target, I encourage all Committees to closely monitor their respective Department's performance on the matter. Simply put, it appears that 20% was not an ambitious figure.

The Committee completed its short inquiry into the Barroso task force and made 11 recommendations, which were all accepted by OFMDFM. As I said, we will continue to monitor to ensure full implementation of those recommendations.

With regard to tackling the gender pay gap, the Committee received a briefing from departmental officials on the review of the gender equality strategy in February 2014 after approval for the development of a new strategy was received from Ministers. However, a consultation on a revised gender equality strategy, which was due towards the end of last year, has not yet materialised.

The Committee has maintained close engagement with the European Committees in the House of Commons and the House of Lords and with the devolved legislatures on subsidiarity concerns on specific packages. We engaged with the European Union Committee at the House of Lords on a proposal for a regulation on promoting the free movement of citizens and businesses by simplifying the acceptance of certain public documents. We conveyed specific concerns for Northern Ireland regarding the potential regulatory burden, and the House of Lords communicated those issues in its liaison with UK Government Ministers prior to EU-level negotiations. Those communications continue as that proposal develops.

Throughout the year, the Committee was pleased to host a number of visits, including from the enlarged presidency of the European Economic and Social Committee, the Italian ambassador to the UK as part of a programme of events to mark Italy's presidency of the Council of the EU, and the Latvian ambassador to the Court of St James to discuss plans for Latvia's presidency of the Council of the European Union. I also opened an NI Assembly Business Trust event on what Europe means for your business, which drew a large audience of MLAs and business people to discuss EU business.

I hope that I have given the House a flavour, albeit in brief, of the range of work that my Committee has undertaken on European matters in 2014 and the continued focus on issues within our remit for 2015.

As I said, Assembly Committees have an important scrutiny role, and I now look forward to the contributions of Members on the work of other Committees on European affairs. I will take this opportunity to thank all Statutory Committees once again for their input into the report, and finish by commending the motion and the report to the House.

Mrs Hale: I welcome the opportunity to say a few words on the priorities for European scrutiny. President Juncker's agenda in promoting jobs, growth and investment is to be welcomed, particularly given the emphasis that the Executive have placed on those areas in our Programme for Government. It is clear that, in scrutinising European priorities across Departments, we must examine how we are working to bring greater investment to Northern Ireland from Europe.

For too long, Departments have been working in a silo mentality. The consequence has been that some

Departments have worked well and diligently, using Europe and the potential of competitive funding for the benefit of our economy, while others have had a very hands-off approach. That is why the report and the ongoing work of all the Committees in scrutinising European priorities are important.

We need to identify areas where our policy and the policy of the Commission intersect and build upon those synergies. For instance, our Delivering Social Change (DSC) agenda has a clear linkage to the social investment package. The Commission's social investment package recommends that investment be made in children and young people and in eliminating poverty, but DSC has worked across Departments and they have worked together. If we are to make inroads to develop our European priorities, we must do the same.

A vast knowledge bank exists in Europe. We need to ensure that we are drawing down from that knowledge bank and also feeding into Europe our experiences here in Northern Ireland. That should be the priority for all our Departments.

12.45 pm

While we need to identify areas of cooperation between our Departments and the Commission, it should be noted that areas of divergence in approach also exist. The drive for greater monetary and economic union is not in our interests. In the agricultural and fisheries industries, we need to ensure that our farmers and fishermen respectively get the best deal. It is important that we hold DARD to account and ensure that it works with other Departments to safeguard these important industries.

Finally, we broadly welcome the report and hope that greater collaboration on European issues across the Executive will be established. I hope that we will see a positive engagement in Europe leading to a greater drawdown of funding beyond the inroads that we have already made.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion. As part of today's debate regarding the report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Assembly Committee's priorities for European scrutiny, it is important that we put a strong focus on the need to initiate a debate on the importance of continued European Union membership for the North of Ireland and the consequences for us should an incoming British Government lose a referendum on such membership. Let me clear from the outset that, while I believe that it is important for us to increase our level of engagement with the institutions of the European Union, such an engagement must be not only constructive but critical. There are a lot of policy and legislative issues that are relevant to here and have an impact.

As we are well aware, in many instances, British interests in relation to European Union membership are not those of the North of Ireland. While we need to ensure that the North's voice is heard, which we do through the Statutory Committees, it is most important that we engage in debate with all sectors of society across Ireland. Given the adverse effect that such an exit from the European Union would have on our developing an all-Ireland economy, such a debate must include all voices North and South, as

social development North and South would be negatively impacted.

We are only too well aware that European funding, such as CAP for farmers, ESF, Peace and INTERREG, is vital in the context of jobs, growth and investment. Our priority, given the dire economic situation facing us all from the austerity agenda of the various conservative European Governments and, in turn, finding ourselves having to deal with year-on-year cuts to our block grant by David Cameron's cabinet of Tory millionaires, is to ensure that European Union funding is made as accessible and effective as possible. European funding must be directed to where it is most needed.

The European Commission's work programme for 2015 has given priority to a forward-looking climate change policy. We who are tasked with sustainable development here in the North also need to be forward-looking in this regard. Sustainable green energy must be pursued with vigour, and any attempts to introduce environmentally disastrous plans promoting fracking need to be resisted. Fracking's negative consequences for public health are certainly concentrating the minds of my constituents in Fermanagh at this time. I take this opportunity to thank my party colleague Martina Anderson for hosting a very important European conference debate on the issue at the Lough Erne Resort recently.

The issue of fundamental rights needs to be given greater priority given its relevance to our society as one that is emerging from conflict. While we need to be supportive of all efforts by the European Union to support human rights, we need to deliver a bill of rights for the North of Ireland, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement, in the hope of ensuring adequate protections for everyone.

I wish to conclude by emphasising that the North of Ireland has benefited hugely from membership of the European Union over many years. We see those benefits daily both in the North and on a North/South basis right across the island. For us in the North of Ireland, in particular those who live and work in border counties North and South, any change in our membership of the EU would have drastic consequences. Such changes have the potential to stifle the progress and development of this region. Sinn Féin representatives on the OFMDFM Committee will be tightly scrutinising our Executive's efforts to maximise the benefits of European Union membership for all the people of the North.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an deis labhairt sa díospóireacht seo. I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate.

I will be speaking primarily on the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee's European priorities for 2015, but, initially, as a Member, I want to take a moment to look at what we in the North get from our membership of the European Union. Those who are sceptical about our membership of the European Union need look no further than the amount of funding that the North has got from it.

For those of us who are pro-Europe, the true European concepts of embracing diversity, respecting difference throughout the European Union and bringing people of different backgrounds together are the important and overriding principles. However, the net benefit to the North for the period 2007-2013 was in excess of £2.4

billion. Of that, we received almost £1.3 billion in single farm payments; £330 million through the Northern Ireland rural development fund; £18 million through the European fisheries fund; £180 million through Peace III; over £300 million through the European regional development fund element of the regional competitive and employment objective; £165 million through the European social fund element; and £77 million through INTERREG IV. That is the amount of investment that others have made in us.

I hear the Euroscepticism coming from England and the message that we should pull out of Europe and no longer embrace that concept of respect for difference that has kept Europe peaceful and has avoided the potential of two awful world wars happening on a third occasion. I thank God that people had the foresight to come together and work collaboratively for that aim. At present, there is a Eurosceptic wing in England that is intent on pulling us away from that concept. There are others who talk the talk but who are not prepared to walk the walk and vote against austerity and measures that will be of serious detriment to our community and our business sector. Borders would re-emerge and, indeed, there would be a border within our country, where some 60% of SMEs from the North do business with the rest of the island. That is what we face: Euroscepticism at its worst. The important thing is to be there to vote against that and to do what we can to represent our communities.

I will move on to the priorities of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment. In February, the Committee agreed its 2015 European priorities, including the concept of setting up a European fund for strategic investments through the promotion of cooperation with national promotional banks and improving access to funding for SMEs. The Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment plans to scrutinise and investigate how SMEs from Northern Ireland can avail themselves of a range of measures to improve access to finance.

The Committee has also decided on a strategic framework for the energy union and will focus on investigating energy supply security, which is a very important issue for our businesses; the integration of national energy markets; a reduction in European energy demand; the decarbonisation of the energy mix; and promoting research and innovation in the energy field. The Committee will continue to scrutinise the introduction of the integrated single energy market and the Department's renewable energy targets.

Another Committee priority for 2015 is the internal market strategy for goods and services. We want a renewed and integrated approach for the single market to deliver further integration and improve mutual recognition and standardisation in key industrial and services sectors where the economic potential is greatest. In doing that, the Committee will, again, keep a particular focus on SMEs.

The Committee will also conduct a comprehensive review of the EU's trade policy strategy and, in particular, its contribution to jobs, growth and investment. It will also review the outcome of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and how those will impact on the economic strategy of Northern Ireland businesses and inward investment.

The Committee will spend a lot of time on European priorities during the upcoming year. In that regard, we

rely very heavily on the flow of specialist information from Europe, which could always be improved. Europe is a vast, wide policy area that has many implications for the North, but, in turn, Northern Ireland gets so much out of membership of the EU. The Northern Ireland economy has been underpinned by funding support from the EU.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is up.

Mr McGlone: That funding support accounts for 8-4% of our annual GDP. If we were to leave the EU, there would be severe social and economic implications.

Ms Lo: I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate as Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment.

On 12 February, the Committee agreed its priorities from the European Commission work programme for 2015 following a briefing from the Assembly Research and Information Service. The Committee further refined its key priorities on 12 March.

The first priority that the Committee identified is the strategic framework for the energy union, which was also mentioned by Mr McGlone. Much of the focus of the framework falls under the remit of DETI, including energy supply security and integration of national energy markets. However, the framework also includes the revision of the EU emissions trading system as part of the legislative framework post 2020.

The Committee has a particular interest in the greenhouse gas emissions reductions target that is set out in the framework and the plan to introduce a new emission reduction target of at least 40% in 2030 compared with 1990. That will build on the 2011 greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan to achieve the 35% reduction of greenhouse gases by 2025. The Committee will continue to monitor progress closely in delivering those targets. The revision of the directive will also require the Department to update associated guidance documents. The Committee will keep a watching brief on the issue throughout 2015.

The Committee's second priority relates to the communication on the road to Paris regarding the multilateral response to climate change. A new international climate change agreement between UN countries is to be developed and adopted at the Paris climate conference at the end of 2015 and implemented from 2020.

The Committee will monitor the way in which the Department proposes to prepare for the implementation of an agreement that sets targets beyond the timescales of current Northern Ireland action plans and programmes. Those include a greenhouse gas emissions action plan up to 2025, which was produced by the Department in 2011. In 2014, an adaptation programme was also introduced for 2015-19, setting out actions that are needed to respond to the impacts of climate change.

The Committee's third priority relates to evaluations that were carried out under the REFIT programme. REFIT will carry out an evaluation of existing legislation, covering a number of areas, which include a reduction of CO₂ emissions from light duty vehicles; fuel quality; drinking water; environmental noise; and the birds and habitats directives. The Committee will monitor the Department's input to those evaluations, particularly in relation to the current evaluation of the birds and habitats directives,

and any possible legislative changes resulting from the programme.

In conclusion, as part of the Committee's scrutiny and consideration of these issues, it has already sought information from the Department on its key priorities.

It will maintain its watchful brief on these and other relevant EU activities throughout 2015 by seeking regular updates from the Minister and his officials. I support the motion.

1.00 pm

Mr D McIlveen: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. Admittedly, I came to the Committee a little bit later, before the report had already been started, so I came into it when it was already well under way. I welcome its publication and many of its findings. I do so as an open-minded Eurosceptic; I have no difficulty in being described in that way because I am entirely open-minded. I accept the entire premise as to why the European Union was set up in the first place: to ensure that Europe would never again find itself at war and, furthermore, encourage greater cooperation between all the states of Europe. I am entirely in favour of that principle and concept. However, this is my difficulty: in my view, the European Union was never set up to meddle with the justice system of an independent jurisdiction, its environmental policy, or how much fishing could be done in the waters around it. Until those issues are properly dealt with, broad acceptance of the utopia to which Mr McGlone refers is perhaps some way off. I hope that, in the coming days, there will be a renegotiation of how the powers of Europe impact on us in this part of the United Kingdom.

To touch on what Mr McGlone says, my interest is particularly around business, how it can do better from engaging with the European Union, and how it can get involved in some of the schemes that are going around at the minute. There is tremendous potential for businesses in Northern Ireland to benefit incredibly from such collaboration. We think of schemes such as Horizon 2020, for example, which brings together businesses from all parts of Europe. To go back to what I said in my opening remarks, such cooperation is what the European Union was founded for, and certainly we would like to see more of it.

One thing that came out of the sessions that we had, particularly with the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels, is that its representatives probably failed to convince some of us that everything that could be done is being done to help businesses in Northern Ireland. Many of our small and medium-sized enterprises just do not have the numbers, on their own, to pursue a lot of these high-yielding, high-profit schemes. Therefore, they rely entirely on introductions to other companies, perhaps in other parts of Europe, so that they can collaborate. The staff of our European office in particular are the ones with the contacts and expertise in this matter. Unless they help to bring companies together and help our home businesses to deal with the bureaucracy and red tape involved in getting access to funds, we will, unfortunately, always lag behind other parts of the United Kingdom.

Look at what the Executive office of Scotland is doing: it is exceptionally good at almost spoon-feeding businesses the information that they need. Let us face it: most directors of local companies are getting on with running their businesses; they do not have time to fill in forms

and trawl through the endless tenders coming through the European system. So, I think that the Executive office needs to look at how it can be a little more innovative in dealing with local businesses and helping them to tap into this money.

Generally speaking, the drawdown of funds is something that Northern Ireland needs to do better, particularly in the coming days. Negotiations are going on at Executive level on how to deal with welfare reform. However, if we find ourselves in a position where more Sinn Féin cuts are put upon the Assembly as a result of failure to implement welfare reform, our reliance on Europe will be even greater, particularly for arts and cultural organisations, which will be hit tremendously hard by the budget cuts that will come as a result. Therefore, stronger, greater engagement with the European Union at that level will be even more important.

I hope that, in the coming days, as a result of this report, each Department within the Executive here in Northern Ireland will ensure that there are better and closer working relationships with the European Union and that every cent and euro that comes into Northern Ireland is used to benefit the people we represent.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. First, I apologise to the Chairperson of the Committee for not being able to be in the Chamber when he made his opening remarks on the report. I thank him for having the report tabled this morning. I speak as a member of the Committee and as Chairperson of the Social Development Committee.

I welcome the work that the Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr Nesbitt, has undertaken with regard to the scrutiny of the European Union policies, priorities and so on. As I said, I thank the Chairperson for his management of the process.

Obviously, a lot of people, regardless of their views on Europe, fully understand that we are very much linked, not least economically, but in political ways. The Member who has just spoken indicated his views, but no matter what our views are, we understand that we have very, very clear and important links.

It is fair to say, on behalf of the Social Development Committee, that we have not focused entirely on the European issues that relate to our remit. That is primarily because our priorities have been lying elsewhere in recent times. However, the Committee is very aware that we have important work to do in terms of the broader community and voluntary sector, which the Committee has a very important relationship with and on which these European matters very much impinge, particularly where you have a reduction in the budget. So, the Committee has already agreed to take a briefing from the Department for Social Development before the summer recess so that we can recalibrate our priority programme for work in the time ahead.

Many people tend to think merely of how much money we can draw down from Europe for particular projects. That is very important in its own right, but I think more of us have to think more strategically. I will give a couple of examples. We have often talked about social housing, for example, as a current priority for all of us. The provision of social housing is a major issue for us all, and demand continues to considerably outstrip supply. Meeting that demand requires major investment. As a matter of fact, the

Committee notes that the European Investment Bank (EIB) aims to invest £1 billion to tackle the lack of affordable housing in the UK. Indeed, in February, the EIB gave, I think, £350 million — essentially a 30-year loan — to one of Britain's biggest social housing landlords, the Sanctuary Group. Interestingly, in terms of scale, that group has around 96,000 properties. It will use the money and the 30-year loan to build new homes, refurbish existing homes and regenerate run-down areas — something that we are all very keen to see happening here in respect of the future for social housing provision in the North. The Committee will investigate with the Department and other stakeholders whether the EIB can play a role in assisting with our investment need to address social housing demands.

Similarly, the Committee is interested in exploring the opportunities provided by the European social fund (ESF) that will enable social enterprises, and the third sector in particular, to develop new services and markets for communities. In doing so, in terms of policy, we will look at the best practices at home and abroad to underpin the development of that sector which is very, very important for all of us, given the links that it has with the grass roots of hard-pressed communities in particular. So, clearly, the ESF has an important role.

We note, and place on record our disappointment at, the number of organisations that have lost very important amounts of money very recently. In some cases, those losses have led to the closure of key projects. Clearly, the Social Development Committee has indicated its intention to play a much more focused role in scrutinising European priorities and policies and to look at what we can do to work with the Department and those in the community and voluntary sector in particular to see if we can maximise the drawdown on a strategic basis to, first, underpin the community and voluntary sector, which is a very important element of our civic society's structures, and, secondly, and I suppose more importantly, to make sure that we are able to draw down those resources to tackle poverty by including social inclusion at the heart of all the work that we are involved in.

Again, I thank the Chairperson for tabling the report this morning. Hopefully, it will provide a lot of food for thought for all of us. I reiterate that the Social Development Committee has already agreed with the Department to have another look at the European priorities.

Mr Irwin: As Chairperson of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, I welcome the opportunity to speak in today's debate. As a Committee, we undertake a considerable volume of scrutiny work on EU issues. Many of the agenda items that we consider at weekly Committee meetings, such as statutory rules, originated in the European Commission. Therefore, today's debate is of particular importance and interest to the Committee.

Aside from that, we are fully focused on a number of key areas; namely, the implementation of CAP pillar 1, including the single farm payment and the rural development programme (RDP) 2014-2020. Any policy reform has the potential to cause concern, and, as a result, the Committee undertook in-depth scrutiny of how CAP reform in pillars 1 and 2 will be revised and implemented. We also paid attention to the common fisheries policy (CFP).

CAP is a key EU policy area and accounts for a large proportion of the EU budget. It has gone through a major reform, and how the EU funding is allocated is of great concern to not just the Committee but our farming industry. CAP pillar 1 is worth approximately £270 million to £280 million a year. That is a significant sum of money, and we intend to oversee how it is distributed. That funding makes a huge difference to the farmer and the rural community. It helps build and sustain the industry, and the Committee does not want to see a detrimental impact on our agrifood industry as a result of a change in policy.

The Committee recently met the EU commissioner Mr Hogan, and we took the opportunity to discuss some of the issues of concern with CAP pillar 1; namely, the definition of “young farmer” and of “active farmer”, direct payments and the mid-term review of CAP. We also raised the need to simplify the rules and regulations around CAP. We will be following closely the forthcoming approval of the Northern Ireland rural development programme 2014-2020. The programme is vital for improving competitiveness in the industry as well as for safeguarding and enhancing the rural environment. We want to see the EU Commission approval as soon as possible. At the meeting, Commissioner Hogan gave some indication that legal approval will be given in June or July 2015. He also said that the recent announcement on loans to farmers would mean the need to write a new programme into the RDP. We look forward to hearing from DARD on the potential of that and on the opportunities that will arise from the new financial instrument.

Volatility in the dairy, beef and pork industry is a recurring issue for the Committee at the moment. We received several briefings from the industry and heard about the current difficulties in that area owing to global market conditions. We have written to our MEPs, the European Commission, local banks and our counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. That worrying issue was discussed with the EU commissioner, and he indicated that some measures will be put in place to ease the situation. The Committee wants to see proposals for a fairer and more sustainable market for our farming industry as a whole.

This year, the Committee will remain focused on CAP, CFP and the Northern Ireland RDP, as well as on issues identified in the European Commission work programme, such as beef-labelling rules and fishing authorisation regulation. We will continue to scrutinise all proposals from the Department and the EU, including the issue of red tape, to ensure that a positive outcome is reached for farmers, the agrifood industry and, indeed, the rural community.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Committee for bringing forward an important report at an important time, and I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate.

I find it a bit strange that, throughout the 188 pages of the Committee’s report, there is very little, if any, focus on the potential withdrawal of this place from the European Union, because that should be our number one priority when it comes to how we engage with Europe going forward.

We have a situation in which the lead party in the British Government has committed to holding a referendum on the issue. It proposes a referendum on EU membership without any consideration of the potential impacts on this

part of Ireland. In my view — it is one that is widely held across society here — exiting the European Union would have a considerably negative impact on our society and particularly on our economy.

1.15 pm

We have a different relationship with Europe from that of people in parts of England, but, unfortunately, their agenda is driving the discussion. We share an economy with the rest of Ireland, and this island has done very well through membership of the European Union. In the event of a referendum on EU membership, we want to see a provision included that, if the people in this part of Ireland vote against leaving Europe, that mandate should be respected and the people here should not be dragged out of Europe against our wishes. I know from being out and about meeting people from all backgrounds, business owners and employees that people do not want to see this place taken out of Europe. Most people see the positive impact that being part of the European Union has had on our economy, and they want to see that sustained in the future. Europe has a positive impact on our local economy in many ways. Both jobs Ministers on the island promote it as a gateway to Europe, particularly for American investors and those looking to come into Europe for the first time. Are we to believe that even the threat of a referendum on exiting Europe would not have a chilling effect on those potential investors?

The agriculture sector is heavily reliant on EU funding to help it exist, and groups involved in building peace across the North and along the border are heavily reliant on EU Peace funding. I certainly do not believe that any future British Government would simply replace those funds with money from the British Treasury in the event of a withdrawal from Europe. It is important that we quantify the extent of those funds. Between 2007 and 2013 the North drew down £2.4 billion in EU funding. That funding stream would be put at risk if we were to be pulled out of Europe.

Our economic output could be reduced by 3% or £1 billion a year, if we were to be taken out of Europe. Work carried out for the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment by Dr Leslie Budd put that figure on it. He went further and said that cross-border transaction costs could “rise significantly” and that those would “act as a disincentive” to economic cooperation on the island of Ireland. What we need to see on this island is closer economic cooperation, not the introduction of formalised border crossings and the erection of more barriers to trade.

The views of right-wing, xenophobic political parties in England should not be allowed to drive the agenda in the Westminster election, particularly on our future place in Europe. The voices of people here need to be heard. For me, there is a very clear choice for voters between the politicians who want to remain in Europe and those who are hitching their wagon to parties that want to drag us out of it. That is the choice that people have to make.

I find it completely unacceptable that the British Prime Minister and the leaders of both main unionist parties advocate a referendum on future EU membership but actively oppose a referendum on whether Ireland should be united. For me, that is a much more pressing referendum and one that needs to happen more urgently.

Mr Nesbitt: I appreciate the Member giving way. I am sorry to interrupt his party political broadcast and bring him back to the motion. You began by criticising the report for not emphasising the importance of membership of the European Union. Would the Member accept that the report is based on the Committee's priorities, which are drawn from the European work programme? The EU work programme does not have a commitment to forcing the UK out of the Union and therefore that is not relevant to this debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member has an additional minute.

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Member for the extra time, but it was not somebody in Europe who wrote the report: it was 11 members of a Committee here. The most pressing priority in our future engagement with Europe is whether we are actually in it or not.

There are other issues that I want to focus on that are not included in the report at any great length because of the fluidity of things. The most annoying one for me is that we thought we had a commitment that roaming charges would be abolished. The Council of Europe has backed down.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Flanagan: The lobby from the large multinational corporations that run mobile phone companies has been successful and has delayed the abolition of roaming charges, which is completely unacceptable.

Mr Swann: I am pleased to speak on the motion today on behalf of the Committee for Employment and Learning. As Chairperson of the Committee, I wish to comment on the Committee's role in scrutinising the activities of the Department for Employment and Learning regarding European issues. The Committee is mindful of the important role that Europe has to play, especially in the sphere of employment and learning. The Committee has been very active in assessing the legislative impact of Europe, as well as the important funding and employment opportunities it offers.

At its meeting on 18 February, the Committee agreed its European priorities for 2015. The Committee continues to monitor the labour mobility package, which aims to support labour mobility and tackle issues by means of the better coordination of social security systems, the targeted review of the posting of workers directive and an enhanced EURES. This issue has been a Committee priority since 2014. We wrote to the Department requesting further information, and we received a briefing on 8 October 2014.

The Committee has requested to be kept up to date on the mid-term review of the 2020 strategy, the trade and investment strategy for jobs and growth and the recasting and merger of the three directives in the area of information and the consultation of workers. In 2014, the Committee showed a keen interest in job creation in the green economy and the possible job opportunities for Northern Ireland if the Department could ensure that the right skills were available in the local labour market. The Committee has requested that it be updated on all these issues.

As the Department has responsibility for the management of the European social fund (ESF) in Northern Ireland, the Committee has continued its scrutiny of the matter and has been briefed on numerous occasions by the Minister and departmental officials on issues arising from

the ESF funding application process, which was brought to the Committee's attention by the community and voluntary sector. The Committee has been made aware of a complaint lodged by the Commission regarding the Department's handling of the application process, and we will receive a further update on 15 March, when all the appeals processes in the ESF application funding process have been completed.

The Committee will consider any European Union memorandums identified by Assembly's Research and Information Service as relevant to the Committee and will consult the Department on what action it will take in relation to these. The Committee will continue with its European Commission scrutiny in 2015, which will include biannual briefings from the Department and the Assembly's Research and Information Service on EU issues. The Committee will also receive regular briefings on the European social fund 2014-2020 and Horizon 2020.

I support the motion on behalf of the Committee for Employment and Learning.

Mr Allister: This is a very un-EU report, because it dares to say in four pages what could be said in 400. It really does not shadow at all the European way of being as protracted in saying very little as you can be. It is a report, though, that, as has been suggested by another from a totally different perspective, avoids the elephant in the room. Particularly at this time of general election, the elephant in the room is whether or not the United Kingdom will come to the point of being able to liberate itself from the EU and whether all this moribund regulation and diktat from Brussels will ever be lifted from us.

Reading down this report, I see the 10 priorities of the Commission. You could have read those 10 priorities 15 years ago in the Lisbon agenda. That was what they were going to do then, and they are still doing it or promising to do it — and failing to do it. Of course, in the interim, we have had the catastrophic collapse of the euro and much of the European economy.

The unvarnished truth is that the EU as an institution is being passed by. It is now a declining economic power in the world situation, and it now has an ever-reducing percentage of the world's GDP. For us in the United Kingdom, it is therefore no surprise that, as a trading nation, our exports to the EU have been falling year-on-year as we build our exports to where the growth is, which is outside the EU to other parts of the world. We have now arrived at the situation where our trade deficit with the rest of the EU is £30 billion a day. Yet there are those who, indeed, used to eschew the very idea of the EU but who today are its cheerleaders. I refer to Sinn Féin. In the first European election that I fought, Bairbre de Brún was campaigning to take us back to having the punt reintroduced. Now people in that party are Eurofanatics who are campaigning on even denying the right of the people of the United Kingdom to dare to have their democratic say on whether we should be within the EU.

Mr Maskey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for taking us back somewhat to political policies. However, does he not agree that that is a wee bit rich, given that he was a representative for the DUP, interestingly enough, as a

European member, but that he no longer represents that party? People can change their political viewpoint.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member has an additional minute.

Mr Allister: Thank you.

When I represented the DUP in the European Parliament, it was unmistakably and unequivocally an anti-EU, Eurosceptic party. I do not think that one could say the same today. It is now more in the reformist mould of the Conservative Party in its attitude to the EU. It is equivocal on all those things, having gone somewhat native.

If we are an area and a nation that is dependent on trade for our economic success and growth, why would we want to be part of an institution that, as a term of membership, denies any individual member state the right to even make a trade agreement of its own with anyone? Under the EU, trade agreements can be made only by Brussels. So here we are, the United Kingdom, which is a prime trading nation across the world, and we have to go cap in hand to Brussels to see whether, in the legions of time that it takes it, it would ever consider a trade agreement with, say, the United States of America. How many decades have we been waiting for that? A trading nation needs to be liberated from the constraints of the EU and to be able to stand on its own feet, make its own decisions and spend its own money. There is all this talk about the largesse of Brussels, but never let it be forgotten that the money that we get back is some of our own. It is only some, because we are net contributors to the tune of £26 million a day. Over £1 million an hour is the financial cost of belonging to the EU —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Allister: — never mind the cost of being hamstrung as a trading nation in the trading world.

Mr Lyttle: I welcome the debate on Assembly Committees' European priorities. I am pleased to be able to make a winding-up speech on behalf of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. It is clear from Members' contributions that there are a wide range of European issues for our Committees to scrutinise in the year ahead. I thank the Chair of the OFMDFM Committee, Mike Nesbitt, for setting out our Committee priorities for scrutinising policy on labour mobility, migration, the European Convention on Human Rights and subsidiarity, and for highlighting the fact that our Committee will continue to scrutinise the drawdown of EU funding by the Executive and its delivery of our Barroso task force inquiry recommendations.

1.30 pm

I thank Brenda Hale for her comments and her advocacy that we need greater Northern Ireland Executive cooperation if we are to benefit fully from European Union funding and policy in some of the key areas that we have set as Programme for Government targets, in particular Delivering Social Change in our community, assisting our children and young people, tackling poverty and ensuring that our fishermen and farmers get the best deal possible.

I also thank Bronwyn McGahan, who stressed the importance of EU membership to Northern Ireland and encouraged the Executive to increase our engagement

in EU matters to ensure that a Northern Irish voice is heard clearly in Europe. She also mentioned the need for EU funding to be accessed and how vital it is for jobs and growth, in particular for CAP, the European social fund, peace-building investment in Northern Ireland and INTERREG for our businesses. She also mentioned the European Commission emphasis on delivering sustainable development and tackling climate change and how important it is for our Executive to contribute to those goals.

Patsy McGlone MLA spoke in a private capacity and as Chair of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, challenging Eurosceptics to remember the importance that the European Union plays in promoting and celebrating diversity among and across our countries and stressing the significant net benefit of European membership to Northern Ireland, which was £2.4 billion between 2007 and 2013. He also stressed the priorities of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee for the year ahead to look at the European Investment Fund, banks, SMEs and energy supply security and, indeed, emphasised the work to be done on the integration of a single energy market, carbon reduction and the importance of research and development to improving our energy supply in Northern Ireland.

Mr McCarthy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way, and I am also grateful that he mentioned Mr McGlone. Will the Member pass some comment on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership that Mr McGlone mentioned? Is there a real concern in your Committee that the net result of that will have advantages rather than disadvantages for Northern Ireland? I am thinking about health provision and so on.

Mr Lyttle: The Chair of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment emphasised that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership treaty will be scrutinised by the Committee, and I am sure that it will concentrate on trade, but the concerns of many Members about the treaty's implications for our health provision may also be considered by that Committee.

I also heard from Anna Lo MLA, in her capacity as Chair of the Environment Committee, who set out its priorities for 2015. She touched not only on a number of issues that the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee will look at but on greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and the way in which the Northern Ireland Executive will ensure that they contribute to what is likely to be a target of 40% reduction by 2030 and how her Committee will closely monitor that issue as well as climate change. It will monitor the targets set by the Paris climate conference in 2015 and what the Department of the Environment, in particular, will be doing to prepare for targets set by that conference and the ongoing contributions it will make to ensure that Northern Ireland delivers on climate change. Ms Lo also mentioned the need for work on the reduction of CO2 emissions, improved water quality and the birds and habitats directives.

David McIlveen set out an initial sceptical view on Europe but also emphasised the work that can be done to ensure that our local SMEs are well connected to the potential benefits of Europe, in particular through Horizon 2020 and a number of schemes and projects.

Alex Maskey, Chair of the Social Development Committee, reminded us of the important role that Europe and, in

particular, the European Investment Bank, could have to play in tackling our lack of social housing and the significant social housing waiting list that we have here in Northern Ireland, and also reminded us that our Executive should, indeed, be working hard to access funding from that bank to make progress on that vital issue.

William Irwin, Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, emphasised the importance of scrutiny around CAP, the single farm payment and the rural development programme towards growing our agrifood industry even further here in Northern Ireland.

Phil Flanagan spoke about the lack of consideration that had been given to the potential impact that exiting the EU would have on businesses, workers and people in Northern Ireland who do not want to leave the European Union and how frequently Northern Ireland is promoted as a gateway to Europe. He also mentioned the importance of the EU to peace building here in Northern Ireland and his concerns that the British Government may not match the scale of funding contributed by the European Union. In response to that, I would probably say to Mr Flanagan that I would be just as concerned that the DUP and Sinn Féin Executive here in Northern Ireland have not done much to match that level of funding either, so I think that all of us need to keep a watching brief on funding towards peace building here in Northern Ireland.

Robin Swann, Chair of the Employment and Learning Committee, mentioned the focus that his Committee will have on the green economy and job creation through that and, indeed, the important issue of the European Social Fund. I am encouraged to hear that he has been briefed by the Minister on that issue on numerous occasions. Perhaps he could give the OFMDFM Committee a few pointers on that, and we could get the First Minister and deputy First Minister in front of our Committee as well.

Jim Allister took some time to set out his intense scepticism towards Europe. It was strange to hear him speak of liberation of any kind, but, in relation to the European Union, he has a clear stance on that particular issue.

In conclusion, it is clear that the Assembly Committees must work to hold their respective Departments and Ministers to account in scrutinising what action they are taking to influence European policy and legislation in a positive way for the people of Northern Ireland. We have access to those institutions: we have the representation of our MEPs, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, and there are numerous other ways for Northern Ireland to engage with European issues.

I thank all Members who participated in the debate, and I encourage all our Assembly Committees in the ongoing work that they will do to ensure that European affairs are given good consideration at the Assembly and at Executive level.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on Assembly Committees' Priorities for European Scrutiny in 2015 [NIA 225/11-16].

Private Members' Business

Teacher Employment: Inequality

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): 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 is published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes 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 Kinahan: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the failure of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to repeal the exemption in fair employment law allowing discrimination on the grounds of religious belief in teacher appointments, as mandated by the motion Teachers: Employment Law, which was approved by the Assembly on 22 April 2013; recognises that the teacher exemption, as well as the continuing requirement for a certificate in religious education at nursery and primary level in the Catholic maintained sector, are unnecessary barriers to truly shared education; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to take action to remove these overt examples of inequality and discrimination.

I welcome the opportunity to bring this issue to the Assembly again. The purpose of this motion, which I propose on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, is to set the scene for finally ending discrimination in the field of employment in schools and to lay some foundations for shared education and a genuinely shared future. It is sad that we have no Ministers responding today, given that there are four in OFMDFM and one in the Department of Education. It is extremely poor that there is no one here today to respond.

During Question Time in this House on 9 February, the Minister of Education answered a question about the requirement for prospective teachers to have a special certificate in religious education to work in the Catholic maintained sector at primary and nursery level. He said:

"That is a matter for the First Minister and the deputy First Minister to take on board. I have written to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on several occasions, and I am awaiting a response. Personally, I believe that it should be removed. However, it is up to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister to carry that matter forward." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 101, p361, col 1].

Mr Sheehan: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not totally sure on this point, but I think that on that particular day the Minister made a mistake and rectified it by writing to all MLAs the next day to say that he confused the issue of the exemption from fair employment law and the religious certificate.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): We will regard that as a point of clarification. Continue.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I take that on board. I do not remember seeing a letter from

him clarifying that, so we will wait and look at it later. I do not think it changes what we are saying today.

I hope at the very least that, at the end of this debate, we will have an answer from the First Minister or the deputy First Minister to the Education Minister's alleged written requests, and that they will take action to remove the religious education certificate requirement in some educational employment practices on equality grounds.

This exchange reminds me of the debate I led in the House nearly two years ago on the related issue of repealing the exemption for teaching appointments in the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (FETO). The Ulster Unionist Party believes it is not only time to revisit the teacher exemption issue in teaching employment practices but time to take action and to seriously examine the whole issue of the certificate in religious education requirement for teaching in primary and nursery schools in nearly half the schools in Northern Ireland.

Regarding the FETO exemption, rather than rehashing the fair employment in teaching debate, which no doubt all Members wishing to contribute today will have revisited, I will in a moment summarise the backstory.

First, I want to make it absolutely clear that the purpose of my motion is not to have a go at Catholic or any faith-based system of education. I know how sensitive people can be about these things, and I want again to put on record my appreciation of and, indeed, admiration for, the very many excellent schools within the Catholic maintained sector. Exam results suggest that they are doing a great deal right, but, in the area of teacher employment, they are getting something wrong.

We as an Assembly, and OFMDFM as the Department with responsibility for equality, also have a duty to do something about it and to do it now. In 1976, Parliament exempted employment as a teacher in school from anti-discriminatory legislation. That is the so-called teachers' exemption. In 2000, when the European Union provided for general anti-discriminatory law, supposedly to improve labour flexibility in the single market, the UK secured a continuing Northern Ireland opt out in the directive, permitting religious discrimination in teacher appointments.

The fact that teachers in Northern Ireland are the only occupational group in 27 member states to be legally unprotected should bring a huge degree of shame to our equality laws and should be an absolute priority for the Equality Commission. It was good to see in an email today a recommendation from the Equality Commission that we should be removing the exception in secondary schools and considering removing it in primary schools.

The teacher exception, which is now nearly 40 years old, was to be abolished a decade ago, in all secondary schools at least, in the long-forgotten single equality Bill.

1.45 pm

Article 51 of the Council directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, said that the teachers' exemption should remain. Two Equality Commission reports of 2000 and 2004 said that the reform was needed. Reform is long overdue: the teacher exception should go, and it should go now.

Interestingly, not long after our previous motion was passed, senior officials from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) appeared at the Education Committee. On 29 May 2013, Jim Clarke, its chief executive, plainly said that CCMS did not rely on, and did not want to see, the continuation of the teacher exemption from fair employment and equality regulations, stating that CCMS:

"would not obstruct or seek to obstruct any removal of that exemption."

He also said that CCMS was:

"quite happy for that exemption to be removed".

Therefore, why at Stormont has there been a game of pass the parcel when it comes to doing something legislatively about this blatant discrimination? Two long years have passed, in which I have tabled Assembly questions, as have others. For example, in March last year, the Minister of Education replied to my question for written answer with the comment:

"Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998. The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has responsibility for this legislation."

In the same month, I asked the First Minister and the deputy First Minister whether they planned to review the Fair Employment and Treatment Order and bring forward legislation to remove the teacher exception under article 71. The response was:

"This is a policy issue under discussion between OFMDFM and the Department of Education. OFMDFM has legislative responsibility for this area however responsibility for developing any policy proposals rests with the Department of Education."

There are other similar examples, but, in summary, there has been buck-passing between OFMDFM and the Department of Education for two years. Whatever the protestations of the Minister of Education, I get the distinct feeling that someone, somewhere in the heart of government is blocking change.

To be crystal clear, parents in Northern Ireland have an absolute right, enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, to bring up their children in the religion or belief of their choice, without interference from the state. However, apart from a handful of independent Christian schools, all schools in Northern Ireland are fully state-funded. That should, and must, have consequences for autonomy in employment practices.

This simple question needs to be answered: should schools be free to select teachers according to their religion? They cannot in the state-controlled sector, they normally do not in the integrated sector, but they can and do in the Catholic maintained sector, which is fully funded by the state; that is, by taxpayers of all religions and none.

Regarding the related issue of the certificate in religious education, I know that those involved in the Catholic maintained sector attach great importance to it. However, there is no obvious reason that all teachers in Catholic maintained primary schools need to have a religious education certificate. One is not required in Scotland, where there is a similarly strong tradition of Catholic

schools. Many have said that there is not a particularly Catholic or Protestant way in which to teach geography or maths. I would even add that religious education is a subject for which a common syllabus was agreed between the four main denominations about 20 years ago. Therefore, in theory at least, even a religious education teacher does not need to be the same religion as the majority of the pupils whom he teaches. I am not a theologian, but when I hear people talk about and describe a distinct ethos in the Catholic sector, it does not seem to be radically different from a broadly Christian world view, ethical framework, mission statement and outlook —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Kinahan: — which most potential teachers could respect and commit to. I hope that everyone will support our motion today. When it comes to the amendment, we are intrigued to see how long "interim" is meant to be before we decide on whether to support it. Anything that leads to getting rid of the certificate suits our motion.

Mr Lunn: I beg to move the following amendment:

Insert at end:

“; and further calls, as an interim measure until this action is implemented, on St Mary's University College to provide access to the teaching of the certificate in religious education to students from other teacher training institutions, including Stranmillis University College.”.

For Mr Kinahan's benefit, "interim" means until the necessary action is implemented. That is what the motion says. It is not up to us to set a time limit; it is up to OFMDFM.

We welcome the debate. It is not only unionists who have long had a problem with this issue. In practice, the 1976 exemption enables Catholic schools to employ Catholics if they so choose. It is reaffirmed in article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. The Alliance Party has long supported the removal of the exemption. It has been broadly agreed that the exemption could be lifted, with the requirement instead being the possession of a certificate in religious education. Theoretically, that is available to anyone. Even that is difficult, however, given the segregated nature of teacher training, with only St Mary's in practice offering the certificate automatically.

We will support the motion, and we certainly advocate our amendment. The difficulty with the motion is not its content, with which we agree fully, but the time that it would take. It would involve changing law, not just policy. That is why we have left it intact but added a rider that would provide a quicker route to addressing the issue partially and would not involve legislation. The amendment would put in place an interim solution that addresses the problems pending the passage of legislation, so they are complementary.

Even a legislative ban through the amendment of equality legislation may not be completely watertight. A school could still attempt to cite a genuine occupational requirement as justification for discrimination, which may or may not be accepted by the courts if it were challenged. That is why the amendment is necessary to achieve the desired objective, not just as a means of speeding things up.

There are a range of issues and problems relating to the teacher-training system in Northern Ireland, which have been discussed in detail over the last few months. There is little point in returning to them, other than to note that all four other Executive parties ganged up to stop the obviously necessary reforms from taking place. This debate is specifically about equality issues. It is for OFMDFM to initiate legislative change. It will be interesting to see whether the two First Ministers can agree on this issue and take necessary action. I do not know whether one of them was supposed to be here to reply to the debate, but nobody is here at the moment.

Under the cover provided by the exemption to Northern Irish equality law, there is the ongoing requirement for a teacher to possess a certificate in religious education to work in nursery and primary schools in the Catholic-maintained sector. That is a requirement in place via CCMS, which has the power to modify or remove that restriction. That has been discussed with it on many occasions. We continue to welcome the step of giving a three-year window to teachers who have been made redundant and who wish to teach in the Catholic sector to acquire the certificate. The issue is about how easy that is to achieve and whether it should be relevant at all.

Changing demographics and enrolments in the school system mean that almost 40% of job opportunities require the possession of the certificate. That seriously curtails opportunities for graduating teachers without the certificate, who actually constitute a majority. That would never be ideal, but we really need to hear from every party in the Assembly that it now agrees that that is intolerable in a competitive job market with fewer and fewer opportunities and openings. The principle is that any professional teacher, regardless of background, should be treated as equally capable of teaching in any type of school, including Catholic-maintained schools. That is an absolute requirement. Any party taking itself seriously as a party of equality would and should recognise it. Teaching opportunities are becoming ever more restricted.

Mr Sheehan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Yes.

Mr Sheehan: Does the Member accept that no person of any religion or none is barred from teaching in a Catholic school? They simply need to have the certificate in religious education as a qualification to prove that they can teach the curriculum as laid out in that school.

Mr Lunn: I do not disagree with that. I thank the Member for his intervention.

As I said, teaching opportunities are becoming ever more restricted as schools close and pension arrangements encourage teachers to stay on as opposed to encouraging early retirement, as they once did. Restricted opportunities make equality of opportunity even more important and mean that there is an urgent need for intervention and change in policy and the law. If we are to maintain the certificate, there must, as a bare minimum, be absolute equality of access to it.

In general, the issue predominantly affects Stranmillis. It does not apply to Queen's, and training for the certificate is delivered in conjunction with the Church at the University of Ulster. The only option at Stranmillis is distance learning through the University of Glasgow, and many

students leave Stranmillis with absolutely no knowledge of the certificate at all, even including the extra time and resources required for it. Some may argue that Stranmillis graduates have no interest in the certificate, but the principle is absolute, and it should be agreed by all parties. Every graduating teacher should have access to the full range of opportunities for which they are qualified.

Stranmillis has recognised the problem and is seeking an immediate practical solution that meets the requirements of that principle. MLAs from various parties have also recognised the problem and the potential solution of the use of St Mary's to teach the certificate as a distinct module that is open also to Stranmillis students. The lack of availability at Stranmillis affects everyone who trains there, regardless of background. There are Catholic students at Stranmillis, and they can leave without the certificate just as anybody else does.

Our amendment does not take away from the motion but complements it. Implementation of the amendment, which calls for collaboration in the teacher-training system, would be a powerful statement but would not and should not preclude moving on to the necessary legislative change to deliver on the original motion. This step would also amount to a powerful example of collaboration in the Northern Ireland teacher-training system.

In closing, I want to make it clear that the existence of a requirement for a teacher to possess a certificate in religious education to work in the maintained sector at primary level is a tradition that has served the sector very well for many years. Catholic education has a long and proud record of success in Northern Ireland. It has a religious basis grounded in the Catholic faith, and it is absolutely valid that teachers should be equipped to contribute to that ethos at the early years and primary level. The Alliance Party's preference is for a much broader based solution than a Catholic-based religious certificate. Our objective is for a single certificate, recognising diversity and pluralism, and it should be shared by any party advocating equality. This is not about refusing to accommodate a different ethos. On the contrary, it is about accommodating it fairly and equally. It is important that teachers are trained for working in a range of different settings. This means fair access to preparation for the Catholic maintained sector, but, in an increasingly diverse society, it particularly means catering for that growing diversity, including those of non-Christian faiths or no religious background in our school system.

We have a long way to go. The amendment puts us on the right road. The motion makes sure that we are heading in the right direction, but no one with a true interest in equality has anything to fear from that destination. We will support the motion and the amendment.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): 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 next Member to speak will be Miss Michelle McIlveen.

The debate stood suspended.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Anti-discrimination Legislation

1. **Mr Rogers** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of anti-discrimination legislation being extended to under-16s in regard to goods, facilities and services. (AQO 7889/11-15)

3. **Mr McElduff** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the budget necessary to progress age discrimination legislation in respect of goods, facilities and services has been secured. (AQO 7891/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will ask junior Minister McCann to answer this question.

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will answer questions 1 and 3 together.

The written statement made by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 19 February gave a commitment to extend legislation to give legal protection from unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services to those aged 16 and over. It also announced the intention to bring forward a consultation document, setting out proposals for legislation. Our proposed consultation is the first step towards ensuring that anti-discrimination legislation is brought forward as soon as possible to protect people over the age of 16 from harmful and unjustifiable age discrimination.

It is important to say that there are a lot of very challenging issues for people from the ages of 16 to 18, and we recognise this as a step forward. We also recognise that the decision on the scope of the proposed legislation has come as a great disappointment to some, and we will continue to work with a wide range of people in the children and young persons' sector to seek to redress issues affecting children under the age of 16.

In answer to the question on the budget, the cost of developing this legislation will be met using in-house resources.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Member for her answer and ask her to give an estimated timeline for the roll-out of this legislation.

Ms J McCann: Obviously, the consultation will have to be agreed at the Executive first, and a consultation paper will be put out. Until we see the results of the consultation, and the people's views, we will not know what we have to do next. We are hopeful that it will be within the current mandate, but will not know until the consultation is out. We are very clear that we want people to voice their views, and for their views to be listened to.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I ask the Minister whether this legislation has or will be subject to equality impact assessment.

Ms J McCann: The public consultation on the draft policy proposals for the proposed legislation will be conducted in compliance with the Department's statutory equality requirements. The equality impact assessment will be completed in line with section 75 and schedule 9 obligations, as well as Equality Commission guidelines. The assessment will consider the impacts on each of the nine groups in the various categories in section 75. On age, consideration will also be given to those who are going to be impacted and are not covered by the proposed legislation. Officials will be meeting key stakeholders over the next few weeks to discuss the development of the equality impact assessment.

Mr Lyttle: I ask the junior Minister whether delays in the delivery of age discrimination legislation, the racial equality strategy, the gender equality strategy and the sexual orientation strategy bring into question OFMDFM's commitment to the delivery of equality for everyone in our community.

Ms J McCann: There is certainly no question on the commitment of our party to delivering equality legislation. The Member was part of some of the meetings that we had, inside and outside the Committee, and he will be aware that there were difficulties in getting political consensus on this particular agreement and on the scope of the legislation. That is where the delay was in this instance.

Lord Morrow: I am sure that the Minister would agree that discrimination can raise its head in many forms. Does she agree with me that the recent attempt to deprive people of their right to vote in their own village, namely Moygashel, is also a matter of a fundamental right? Would she like to see that addressed, and does she agree that that right should be afforded to them?

Ms J McCann: People have a right to vote. You discriminate against people when you say that certain people cannot vote. I am very clear and we are very clear on this side of the Chamber that no one should be discriminated against, whether because of their sexuality, their age or for any other reason. No one should be afraid of legislation that brings equality for everyone.

Mrs Dobson: What message does the junior Minister think is sent to under-16s by their exclusion from the proposed goods, facilities and services legislation?

Ms J McCann: As I said before, when this was introduced to the Assembly, I would rather be here today saying that the legislation covers all ages. It is very clear that, when you do any sort of anti-discrimination legislation, discrimination against one section is wrong. However, all Members will be aware of the issue. This was the only way we could get political consensus to take it forward. At the minute, we do not have any age equality legislation on goods, facilities and services. This is a starting point, and I hope that we can continue to make improvements to include all ages.

Mr Speaker: Before we proceed, I inform Members that questions 4 and 10 have been withdrawn within the appropriate protocols.

Maze Site: Redevelopment Progress

2. **Mrs Overend** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on progress made in redeveloping the Maze site. (AQO 7890/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: There is no current agreement on the regeneration of the Maze/Long Kesh (M/LK) site. We continue to discuss a way forward.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for the update. Given that the peace-building centre at the Maze is, as I understand it, dead in the water, what is the attitude of the EU to locating a peace-building centre at a location other than the Maze, and will the deputy First Minister actively lobby to locate it elsewhere?

Mr M McGuinness: First, the Member needs to recognise that the development of the Maze/Long Kesh site was a Programme for Government commitment. The first stage of that process was the relocation of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society from the King's Hall, alongside the construction of the peace-building and conflict resolution centre, to which many millions had been allocated by the European Union. The Member's description of the project as dead in the water is not something that I recognise. I have a very clear view that, when we make commitments, we keep them. There is a very strong commitment in the development of the Maze/Long Kesh site for the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society for that to move in parallel with the construction of the peace-building and conflict resolution centre. That has not happened, but I have kept my word to the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, and, even in the last couple of weeks, I had no difficulty in giving clearance to its request to the First Minister and me for the relocation of a pavilion from the King's Hall to the site, greatly enhancing its sustainability on the site.

We have to continue our discussions to see whether we can find a way forward. I am determined to find a way forward, and I hope that those who opposed the project in the first instance, including the Member's party, recognise the opportunities that the construction of a peace-building and conflict resolution centre can provide for the purposes of reconciliation and peace-making among all of us.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Does the Minister agree that the M/LK site should be open for wider public use?

Mr M McGuinness: I believe that a great opportunity is being missed at the Maze/Long Kesh site and that we are all the poorer for that. You just have to look at the success of the relocation of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society from the King's Hall to the site. It demonstrated absolutely that people were literally voting with their feet for the development of the site. I am not going to repeat what I said earlier, but I made a commitment in the Assembly in September 2013 to the RUAS and I have abided by that commitment and wish them every success. The First Minister and I, alongside our Agriculture Minister, have been to the last two shows at the site, and we have spoken at the DARD breakfast. It is clear that the site has been a massive success with increased numbers of people each year from all over the island of Ireland turning out, which is heart-warming to see.

From our perspective, we need to recognise the importance of the prison buildings, the peace-building and conflict resolution centre, the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society and all the other very exciting developments that were mooted several years ago in relation to the overall development of the site. We will continue to work at it in the hope that, at some stage in the not-too-distant future, people will recognise that this is an enormously valuable site that can bring huge employment opportunities to

people not just in the Lagan Valley constituency but from all over the North and the island of Ireland. Let us continue to work at it and let us hope that those who tried to argue that it would be a shrine to something other than reconciliation and peacemaking will see the error of their ways.

Mr Allister: Given the deputy First Minister's shameful and churlish blocking of further economic development at the Maze site, why are we continuing to pay the chairman of the Maze development corporation £30,000 a year plus expenses? Is that value for money?

Mr M McGuinness: This is a very important site. A board and a chair were appointed, and we did that in the belief that we could develop the site in the interests of all our people, particularly people from the local constituency and, indeed, wider afield. It is important that we keep a board in place and that we have a chair of that board who, I think, has done a good job in very difficult circumstances. I also believe that the work of the board can be beneficial in the context of ensuring the ongoing success, for example, of the relocation of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society alongside, hopefully, making an argument further afield to people who previously opposed the construction of the peace-building and conflict resolution centre to recognise that it should be constructed for the purposes of reconciliation and peacemaking between us.

Mr Speaker: Before I proceed, on behalf of the Assembly I welcome the Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament and his colleagues, who have just joined us in the Public Gallery.

Mr McCarthy: Will the deputy First Minister along with the First Minister, who is with us in the Chamber today, acknowledge the huge financial loss to Northern Ireland's economy as long as the Maze site is not developed?

Mr M McGuinness: I add my words of welcome to the Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives and his colleagues, particularly in the aftermath of their success in the Cricket World Cup. They are probably here to reconnoitre for the upcoming Rugby World Cup. We are delighted that they are here with us.

I absolutely accept the economic importance of the development of the Maze/Long Kesh site. I am a fervent supporter of the development of that site. The fact that I stuck to my word on the relocation of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society from the King's Hall to the site is very firm evidence of my commitment to the development of the site. We need to recognise that we have a difficulty and a problem.

I think I am a problem-solver; I am a solution-seeker. What we need to do is find a solution to the difficulties that we face at the moment that will see that site move forward, be developed and provide the unique economic and employment opportunities for all our people and, indeed, for our economy.

2.15 pm

Victims' Commissioner: Recruitment

5. **Mr McGlone** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether two applicants were deemed appointable as Victims' Commissioner following the recent recruitment process for the post. (AQO 7893/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: As the competition to appoint a new Victims' Commissioner is still live, it would not be

appropriate to comment further at this time. However, we place great importance on ensuring that all victims and survivors have an appropriate representative voice through the commissioner, and we want to ensure that we have the right person for the job. The closing date for applications was Friday 3 April, and interviews for the post are scheduled for May.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Aire. Thanks very much, Minister. If there was no deficiency in the recruitment process, if two applicants were deemed appointable under the appointments criteria, what objective reasons for no appointments can be given?

Mr M McGuinness: The process to appoint a new commissioner was taken forward by HR Connect, and advertisements were placed in local and national newspapers. The closing date for applications was 12 September 2014. Interviews took place in and around October 2014. The Victims and Survivors Forum was consulted on the skills and qualities needed for the role, and those were taken into consideration when finalising the necessary skill sets for the incoming commissioner.

The appointment process was regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and followed the code of practice for ministerial appointments. Considering the importance that we place on ensuring that all victims and survivors have an appropriate representative voice through the commissioner, we want to ensure that we have the right person for the job. Therefore, as the current process did not produce a sizeable pool of appointable candidates, we agreed that a further competition will be launched. As I said, the new competition launched on 9 March and the closing date for applications was 3 April. The commission continues to operate without a commissioner but remains fully committed and accessible to all victims and survivors and to organisations working with victims and survivors.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he give an assurance that all future services for victims and survivors of the conflict will be victim-centred?

Mr M McGuinness: It is crucial that any services put in place to help and support victims and survivors of the conflict have the needs of victims at their centre. In order to ensure that that happens, it is important that discussions with victims, families and other stakeholders take place on a regular basis. Following the review of the Victims and Survivors Service, a number of recommendations were put forward, and a report on the progress of the implementation of those recommendations has been positive, acknowledging improvement in many areas.

The remaining outstanding recommendations relating to the assessment process, monitoring and evaluation protocols for dealing with the psychologically injured and better management of communication with individual victims and survivors will be taken forward as part of a collaborative programme of work to examine the service delivery model that currently provides services to victims and survivors. Preliminary discussions have taken place with a number of key stakeholders to communicate the approach being taken and to seek early feedback on key issues. The collaborative design programme will continue throughout 2015-16 to progress the strands of work and

seek input from the sector on the redesign of the service delivery model.

Mr Lyttle: When will OFMDFM publish the research conducted by the Victims' Commission with regards to the pension for the seriously injured?

Mr M McGuinness: That is part of an ongoing body of work, and we hope that it will be published as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker: Peter Weir is next, if he has recovered his breath.

Urban Village Projects: Update

6. **Mr Weir** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on urban villages projects, under Together: Building a United Community. (AQO 7894/11-15)

8. **Mr G Kelly** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the plans in place for the north Belfast urban village project, as part of Together: Building a United Community. (AQO 7896/11-15)

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

Ms J McCann: Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will answer questions 6 and 8 together.

On 20 March 2014, the First Minister and deputy First Minister announced the first two urban village locations as Colin town centre and lower Newtownards Road. Work is progressing, and stakeholder engagement is ongoing regarding the development of both locations. Plans are progressing to develop a coherent town centre for the Colin area, with inputs from a range of Departments. Community engagement commenced on the lower Newtownards Road in October 2014. Options on developing concepts to deliver a sustainable urban village are being considered in conjunction with stakeholders. Junior Minister Bell and I announced three further urban village locations recently: the Markets, Donegall Pass and Sandy Row and the Bogside and the Fountain on 21 January; and Ardoyne and Ballysillan on 16 February. That brings the number of urban village projects to five, which is one more than was originally committed to in the strategy.

The next step is to establish a project team for each new urban village to engage and work with the community to determine the boundaries of the urban villages, assess what is needed and develop the priorities for each area. The Department for Social Development has convened a programme board to coordinate and oversee the planning, design and delivery of all aspects of the urban villages. Project boards will be set up for each of the urban villages. Those will be supported by the urban villages strategic board, which is chaired by junior Minister Bell and me.

Mr Weir: I thank the junior Minister for her response. Can she elaborate on the more recently announced project for the Markets, Donegall Pass and Sandy Row? What progress is being made there, and what is the timeline?

Ms J McCann: They are all at different levels. At the minute, people are consulting community stakeholders to see first what the boundaries in the urban villages are going to be and then what the priorities are. The difference between urban villages and other things that have happened is that urban villages are going to be

community-led. There will be three different governance structures: one at the strategic level; another at a board level; and one with stakeholders from the community sector, who will be engaging. The project that the Member mentions is in the co-design process.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo.

The junior Minister went through a number of projects. Can she tell me, even by rule of thumb, when the physical work might start? I am interested to know that for any of the urban village projects, but particularly that in north Belfast.

Ms J McCann: As I said in my previous answer, each area is at a different level at the moment. The indicative costs for each urban village will be different, and, as we are in the co-design process — each of the urban villages will have its own unique design — it is impossible to give a sense of the cost. However, once we have a sense of what is needed, we will put a cost to it. It has been confirmed that £2.46 million will be taken out of the Together: Building a United Community overall budget to take forward the urban village programme. Once we see the co-design and work with people on the ground, first to design the boundaries and then to see what the people in each local community want — because this is about what the people in the local community want for their urban village — we can put a cost to it and hopefully see something happening. However, the process for both the resource and capital build is ongoing.

Mr Humphrey: What is the structure and process that will take forward the Ardoyne and Ballysillan urban village in my constituency, which I very much welcome?

Ms J McCann: As I said, there are three different levels of governance. There is the strategic board and then a board working under that, which is made up of the Departments. The reason for having the strategic board that junior Minister Bell and I chair is so that we can ensure that there is buy-in from all Departments and that they are working together on this. You then have the other level, where you have the person responsible — particularly in DSD, because it is the lead Department — taking the project forward and the community sector involved. There are three different governance levels, and they are all working together, particularly on the co-design.

As I said in my previous answers to the other Members, the co-design process will take place first. People will decide what they want from that, and we will then have to look at the resource implications of its delivery — that includes the Strategic Investment Board — and what capital build is required. As I said, each urban village will be unique in its own right, but the thread that will run through all of them is that they will come from the community and will be about its needs and getting to those needs.

Racial Equality Strategy: Deficiencies

7. **Mr A Maginness** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they plan to address deficiencies identified in the consultation responses to the racial equality strategy. (AQO 7895/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Following a full public consultation, we received 97 written responses and 49 online survey responses in addition to input from a number of public consultation events with key stakeholders. The analysis

of those responses is ongoing, and officials continue to liaise with the sector to ensure that the evolving strategy is relevant to the needs and aspirations of the minority ethnic community.

Whilst we are happy that the emerging consensus is in line with our vision for a revised strategy, there are challenges and requirements emerging that will require thought, planning and careful exploration. Officials are working through those issues and plan to engage further with representatives of the sector soon to tease out some of the content that has been included in responses to the consultation. It is important that we take the opportunity to do that. We must also take the time to identify how best to align the policy and implementation mechanisms of Together: Building a United Community and the final racial equality strategy, in line with the views expressed through the consultation.

In further refining the final shape of the new strategy, we can give an assurance that it will be relevant, realistic and robust enough to deliver for minority ethnic people and society in general. The significant contribution of our minority ethnic residents must continue to be acknowledged and supported during this critical time as we finalise the strategy.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the deputy First Minister for his reply. Given the overall fairly critical responses by consultees — I note the deputy First Minister's point about having a thoughtful look at it — is it not necessary to do more radical surgery to what has been outlined by your Department?

Mr M McGuinness: The Department recognises the importance of the issue and the importance at all times of continuing to review the effectiveness of the strategy and how we take it forward. Look, for example, at the weekend's events, particularly in north Belfast, where there have been attacks on people from ethnic communities that I unreservedly and totally deplore and condemn: we obviously have a tiny minority of our citizens who are racist and sectarian and are determined to make life very difficult for new people who arrive on our shores. That represents a real challenge to us with the racial equality strategy. It is important to get it right; it is also important to take on board the views expressed by the Member just now.

Given the situation that we are dealing with, it is important that we all work closely together. It is all very well putting a strategy together — I am very much in favour of doing so — but, in combating racism in our society, it is vital that the community comes together. More important than anything else, politicians from every political party need to be pugnacious in working with the local community to defeat the activities of those who bring shame on all of us. That represents a real challenge. In the past, there appeared to be reluctance to combat the issue in a way that it needed to be combated. The way to do it is through strong community action that involves the community and voluntary sector, the churches, local residents' groups, political parties and the Police Service, whose chief responsibility is to apprehend these criminals.

All of us need to be seen to be working together in a collaborative way to send a very clear message to the racists in our society that this is deplorable behaviour which should end immediately.

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: I have not got time for another supplementary, which is why I allowed you to run over two minutes, Minister. I will remind you about it in any event. That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Strategies: OFMDFM

T1. **Mr Cree** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given that they will be aware that there are several strategies within their Department, when those strategies were commenced and when they will be completed. (AQT 2321/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Can the Member repeat his question? I did not pick up the first part of it.

Mr Cree: There have been several draft strategies in the Department for some time. Can the deputy First Minister advise the House as to when work on them first commenced and when they are likely to be completed?

Mr M McGuinness: There are many strategies in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, across a whole range of issues, to do with how we ensure delivery for everybody in society. I am not really sure what sort of answer the Member is looking for. I am willing to meet him. If he wishes to have a meeting, we will gladly do that. The Member has not indicated which aspects of the several strategies he would like an explanation for. I would like further information on those aspects specifically.

Mr Cree: I appreciate the deputy First Minister's comments. The point that I am really getting at is that so many of these strategies never seem to be completed. We really need to have some sort of system whereby we actually deliver on these things. For example, some have actually been out to consultation more than once. Perhaps I will take that option up with the deputy First Minister with a view to moving that forward.

Mr M McGuinness: It would have helped me greatly if the Member had given an example.

Desertcreat Community Safety College: Financial Commitment

T2. **Mr McGlone** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what financial commitment the Executive have made to the Desertcreat Community Safety College outside Cookstown. (AQT 2322/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The Member will know that this is a project that is very close to my heart. The reality is that the project was also a Programme for Government commitment. The circumstances around its not coming to fruition have been very disappointing indeed for all of us in the Department and also in the Department of Justice.

I have to say — and it is not often that I get the opportunity to put something on the public record — that I have been aware from the very beginning of this project to locate the community safety college at Desertcreat that there was opposition within the Police Service, going back years, to it going to County Tyrone. I heard this years ago, and I have not changed my view. The people who have been to the forefront of opposing this project and encouraging others to oppose the project's being located in County

Tyrone need to recognise that what they are actually doing is trying to undermine a Programme for Government commitment.

The Member will also be aware that, just recently, the First Minister and I met a very representative delegation from the local council and the business community. Both of us put on record our commitment to the project. I think that a Member, in another circumstance during earlier questions, used a phrase like, "dead in the water." I refuse to accept that the Desertcreat project is dead in the water. The First Minister and I are on record as saying publicly that we want this to succeed. There is work to be done. The Minister of Justice and his Department have to bring forward a paper to the Executive. It will be discussed there. My commitment to Desertcreat is absolute.

Mr McGlone: Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire chomh maith. I asked what the Executive's financial commitment was to the project. Perhaps the Minister does not have those details to hand.

Mr M McGuinness: The financial commitment would have to be in the context of the scale of the project to go forward. The Member, as much as I know, knows well that the essential services that were going to relocate to Desertcreat were arguing that, in the intervening period, their needs and requirements had changed. The argument was put forward that the scale of the project would not be as large as first envisaged, so I cannot give the Member a financial figure for the simple reason that what I want to see next is a paper coming forward to the Executive proposing the establishment of a community safety college. I will argue that it should be at Desertcreat. Whatever scale that will be on, the financial commitment from the Executive will be made to meet it. However, we will face a battle on this. There are powerful forces in the services, particularly within the police. In my opinion, they have, disgracefully, been opposed to this project of relocating from Belfast to County Tyrone. They have been at their work for the last number of years. It gives me no pleasure to say that, but I believe it to be a fact. So, let us deal with it on the basis that a paper will come forward and the fact that this is a Programme for Government commitment. It is one that I want to see brought to reality.

Francis McCabe Jnr

T3. **Mr Brady** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given that it has now emerged that Francis McCabe Jnr, who was injured in a bomb attack in Crossmaglen in February while removing a poster, is set to lose his sight in one eye, to join him in condemning the activities of the criminal gangs that are attempting to intimidate and coerce those in south Armagh who are opposed to them. (AQT 2323/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: I have no hesitation whatsoever in unreservedly condemning the criminals who were involved in such a serious attack on Francis McCabe Jnr, and I am saddened to hear that his injuries are such that he is likely to lose the sight in one eye. Francis is a lorry driver by trade, and this will have a huge impact on his life and family, so I totally and utterly condemn those behind the attack. As I have said, they are criminals and they have absolutely nothing to offer the community in south Armagh and north Louth. It is very clear to all of us how the local community has responded to this cowardly attack by

taking to the streets in huge numbers in support of the McCabe family. These gangs have no support in the local community and they must be stopped. One way of dealing with their activities is for people in the local community, whenever criminality raises its head, to work very closely with both the police services north and south of the border.

I extend my support and best wishes to Francis Jnr and the McCabe family and hope that he can recover from his very serious injuries.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he also join with me in calling on the PSNI and an Garda Síochána to step up their activities against these criminal gangs in order to bring them to justice and ensure that we do not see a repeat of the injuries received by Mr McCabe? Go raibh maith agat.

Mr M McGuinness: First of all, I want to pay tribute to both the Garda Síochána and the PSNI for the very effective way that they have worked together in the course of recent years in thwarting the activities of those who would attempt to use violence to undermine these institutions and destroy the peace process.

The PSNI and the Garda Síochána have a role and responsibility to deal with these criminal gangs. Both must demonstrate that they are supporting communities who oppose criminality. Actions and delivery from both police services are key, and I call for greater cooperation between the PSNI and an Garda Síochána to take these criminals, whether in south Armagh or north Louth, off the streets.

We all understand and know that we have a particular difficulty in this part of the North of Ireland and, indeed, on the border, in relation to a very small number of people who are part of armed groups, looking to benefit financially from their criminal activities. The local community in south Armagh has been at the forefront in supporting the peace process and the police services, North and South. In fact, the McCabe family were one of those families in the area that were very proactively involved in seeking support for the Police Service in the local community. Maybe that is one of the reasons why Francis Jnr was attacked.

The attack on Francis McCabe Jnr is, effectively, an attack on all of us who support these institutions and the change that has happened in policing here as a result of the various agreements that have been made down the years. I encourage everybody in society to work very closely with the police services, North and South. Do not be afraid to give information on the activities of those groups, which are acting against the interests of the local community.

Mr Speaker: Time is up.

Mr M McGuinness: They are basically criminal in everything that they do.

Mr Speaker: Question 4 has been withdrawn within the agreed procedures.

Block Grant: Cuts

T5. **Ms McGahan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the cuts to the Executive's block grant have impacted on Departments' ability to continue to deliver services. (AQT 2325/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: I think that every Member knows that the British Government are effectively crucifying

the Executive as a result of the swingeing cuts to our block grant. Over £1.5 billion has been stripped away by a Westminster Government led by the Tories, who have no mandate here whatsoever. Despite their decision to parachute candidates into a number of constituencies, with the exception, of course, of Fermanagh and South Tyrone and North Belfast, I am confident that they will have little or no mandate come 8 May. The cuts that they have imposed on the block grant have obviously had an impact on the ability of Departments to deliver public services to the highest possible standard. However, it is my view that many of our Ministers have performed heroically in the face of that onslaught by protecting front-line services and the most vulnerable members of society. We will continue to do that, but the new British Government need to end this ruinous austerity policy.

It has been quite interesting to listen to a number of interviews that David Cameron, Theresa May and George Osborne have been involved in over the last couple of weeks. When they are challenged about where the £30 billion of cuts will come from, including £12 billion of cuts that will affect some of the most disadvantaged, vulnerable, disabled and marginalised people in society, they refuse to give an answer. My attitude is this: if the Tories are re-elected, given the threats that they have made about the continuation of austerity, we should all be afraid; we should all be very afraid.

Mr McNarry: Take your seats at Westminster.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Will he comment on the potential impact of plans by the current Westminster Government to impose further cuts, if re-elected?

Mr M McGuinness: I am on the public record as saying that the £1.5 billion of cuts over the last number of years have been directly responsible for the huge difficulties that all our Ministers in the Executive have faced in recent times. It is sometimes very dismaying when it is reported in the media that the cuts are the responsibility of the Ministers in the Executive when, in fact, the cuts originate from London, directly from the austerity agenda that is being developed by this Tory-led Administration.

When we hear that further cuts are coming down the track within two years in the aftermath of the election, if the Tories are re-elected, it raises huge concerns for our Administration. In my opinion, the Tories do not get it. They do not get the fact that a society emerging from conflict, with all the problems that that entails, requires to be dealt with in a way that ensures that people who were subject to that conflict benefit from the fruits of peace. What we are seeing now, with the stripping away of funding from Departments, is a full-blooded onslaught by a Tory-led Administration on a people who deserve better.

These are difficult and very challenging times. The outcome of the British general election will be very important. Whoever emerges as leading the new Government will need to recognise the special circumstances that exist here and in no other place.

Mr Speaker: I call Ms Megan Fearon. I will not have time for a supplementary question, so, if you wish, you can choose to use it now.

Child Rights Indicator Framework: Update

T6. **Ms Fearon** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the child rights indicator framework. (AQT 2326/11-15)

2.45 pm

Mr M McGuinness: With your permission, Mr Speaker, junior Minister McCann will answer this question.

Ms J McCann: The aim of the child rights indicator framework is to develop a set of indicators that can be used at a strategic level to measure and monitor the Executive's progress on effectiveness and achievement against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UNESCO report represents a major step forward, and we are reviewing the child rights indicators identified in its final report. As it stands, the report and the outcome indicators that it contains do not represent a full or comprehensive child rights indicator framework. However, we acknowledge that it is an important first step and advocates an approach to the development of the comprehensive framework.

Mr Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for topical questions.

Employment and Learning

Mr Speaker: Before we begin, I inform Members that questions 1, 4 and 13 have been withdrawn within the agreed time frame and protocols.

Corporation Tax: Employment

2. **Mr Givan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the impact of a reduction in the rate of corporation tax to 12.5% would have on the level of employment in Northern Ireland. (AQO 7905/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Recent estimates by the Ulster University's economic policy centre show that a reduction to 12.5% from April 2017 could lead to an increase in employment of 38,000 jobs by 2033 compared with today. To prepare for such a lower corporation tax environment, I commissioned research that considered the impact that a lower rate would have on the demand for skills, labour and innovation capacity. That research set out the importance of developing our skills base and the employability of our people in a lower corporation tax environment and highlighted in particular the importance of strong skills in STEM, management and leadership, and literacy, numeracy and employability if we are to capture the full benefits of a lower rate.

The Department is already working to address those issues, and they are central themes in the overarching skills strategy. However, although the Department is already on the right path, the research shows that it will need to go further to address the quantum of skills required in that type of scenario. Therefore, my Department has developed a draft action plan to prepare the way and to put in place robust measures so that we can move swiftly in the event that a rate is determined.

Mr Givan: I thank the Minister for that response. He touched on the need to ensure that we have the

appropriate skills to pick up the type of jobs that would be generated through a reduction in corporation tax. Has his Department given any consideration to what further jobs could be created if we had a corporation tax rate that offered more of an advantage over our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland?

Dr Farry: I do not think that the actions that we need to take will be that much different in the context of whether we are talking about a 12·5% rate or a lower rate. While it is not my individual responsibility as a Minister to set the rate, my view, as part of a collective Executive, is that it would be foolish for us to have a race to the bottom by trying to undercut the rate in the Republic of Ireland, because it would simply move to match us. There are advantages in having a common regime on the island so that we can both compete based upon our other strong attributes in our respective jurisdictions.

The Member stressed the importance of skills. We have to make further investments in skills, and it is important that the full House understands that, if we are to go down the route of a lower level of corporation tax, it cannot be successful in a vacuum and we have to invest in skills. A standstill in what we are doing is not good enough. At the moment, we are de-investing from a lot of our skills drivers, so we are taking the wrong action if we are supposed to be planning for something that should give the economy here a major boost.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire. I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the experience of geographic clustering in the Republic subsequent to the reduction in corporation tax, will the Minister work with businesses and, indeed, Executive colleagues to ensure that the business growth is not concentrated in the greater Belfast area to the exclusion of other areas outside Glengormley?

Dr Farry: First, I put on record my appreciation to the Member and his Committee for the work that they are doing through their inquiry into what is necessary in terms of the supporting drivers. I have no doubt that they will be looking to consider the distribution of job growth. It is important to stress that a lower rate will stand to benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, with the proviso that we invest further in the right supporting mechanisms. Although it is right that we look to the distribution of jobs, it is also important that we encourage labour mobility in what is still a reasonably small and compact region. We can encourage jobs to go to different parts of Northern Ireland, but, equally, we need to be realistic and understand that we cannot seek to over-micromanage decisions that companies are making. They will make their decisions based on other sound economic rationale.

Yes, we can do what we can to encourage that to happen, but it is important that Members are also realistic and understand that we are not here to direct where investment happens. Let us get it into Northern Ireland and make it work for the benefit of everyone.

Mr Kinahan: Northern Ireland is ranked just behind London for FDI, and that is really down to the calibre of our graduates. Does the Minister believe that there will be better support for graduates under a Department for the Economy rather than under a Department for Employment and Learning?

Dr Farry: I very much welcome the move to form a new Department for the Economy. That is not to diminish the work that has been done by my Department or, indeed, the work of my colleague the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and that of Invest Northern Ireland, as separate entities. All have worked very closely together. Indeed, the leadership in all those organisations has worked very closely together as well. No doubt, there are some inefficiencies from having separate and distinct bodies. Bringing all the economic policy levers and delivery mechanisms under one roof is the logical thing to do, so I very much welcome the creation of a brand new Department that will be greater than the sum of its individual parts.

Mr Allister: Does the Minister agree that the only certainty attaching to the devolution of corporation tax is a huge year-on-year reduction, running into hundreds of millions of pounds, in the block grant? The Minister has some experience of the pressures that that brings. Does he draw any caution from the fact that, at the very time when it is promised that corporation tax will be devolved, one of the largest manufacturers in my constituency, JTI Gallaher, is choosing, in spite of that, to leave? Is not that a warning that corporation tax is far from the salvation for our economy?

Dr Farry: I will make a number of points. A lower level of corporation tax is going to be a major financial commitment for the Executive. I believe that it will be of benefit and can create jobs and more wealth, which will benefit our society as a whole. Of course, that is by no means certain, and that is why it is so important that we do not try to do this in a vacuum and that we continue to invest in other economic drivers. I say to the Member that, if we seek to fund a lower level of corporation tax by continuing along the current path of cuts to economic drivers, including our colleges and universities, the lower level of corporation tax will be counterproductive and not produce the results that we are expecting.

If we do it properly, it will be successful. For example, we are seeing the Republic of Ireland sticking by its lower level of corporation tax through some very deep and challenging financial and economic times over the past seven or eight years. We should take very strong lessons from that. We should also be very clear that all the business organisations in Northern Ireland are very clear in their support for that type of intervention, and we should listen very strongly to those voices.

The final thing that I will say is that it is important that we also recognise that a lower level of corporation tax will not work in an exactly uniform way across all types of business. For example, there are companies here at present that perhaps do not have major profit centres. As such, a lower level will not have huge relevance for them. Other companies may, for other reasons, wish to de-invest from Northern Ireland and locate elsewhere. At the same time, we will bring in more companies to Northern Ireland under the lower rate and see more of our existing companies grow than we will see companies — companies that the lower rate will not directly benefit or for whom there are other factors regarding the decisions that they make — leave.

European Social Fund: Applications

3. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the recent difficulties surrounding applications to the European social fund. (AQO 7906/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department recently invited applications for funding to the Northern Ireland European social fund programme 2014-2020. Members will be familiar with the background to the issues regarding the programme. Phase 1 of the assessment has been completed, and applicants have been notified of the outcome.

A total of 15 appeals from phase 1 have been heard by an appeals panel and the outcomes notified to applicants.

The panel upheld appeals for three applications, which have now been assessed by the assessment panel. All applications that progressed to phase 2 have now been assessed by assessment panels, and all applicants were notified of the panels' decisions on 26 March. Those applicants who have been unsuccessful were afforded an opportunity to receive details on the outcome of their application. In addition, those applicants were afforded an opportunity to appeal. An initial date for appeals was amended to 10 April, due to a number of applicants seeking an extension and to the Easter holidays. Twenty-seven appeals were received by the closing date, and those will be reviewed by an appeals panel.

Successful applicants have been offered funding from 1 April 2015. As previously advised, the programme was heavily oversubscribed in terms of the number of applications received and the funding available: 134 applications were originally received, and the total value of those applications exceeded the budget available. Sixty-five projects, worth £102 million, were offered funding from the fund over the three-year period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018. Over the initial three years of funding, the projects will assist over 42,000 individuals to fulfil their potential by providing them with better skills and better job prospects to take steps into employment. Additionally, the programme will provide assistance to over 2,300 families.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he confirm what support his Department intends to provide to the 220 people who will lose their jobs as a result of the debacle around applications to the European social fund?

Dr Farry: I am not quite sure in what context the Member is using the term "debacle". It would be useful, if Members are casually going to throw out such terms, to explain what they mean. However, let me be very clear: this is an open, competitive process for funding; no organisation was guaranteed funding as part of this process. Those organisations that had funding under the previous rounds were not guaranteed a continuation of funding; fresh applications were being made. Every organisation had its application assessed on its merits, and a rank order developed in that regard. As part of that process, some organisations will gain and some will lose. Sadly, there will be occasions where jobs are lost if organisations feel that that is the only path open to them.

By the same token, a greater number of jobs will be created in the overall package. It is worth reminding Members that the European social fund (ESF) package for Northern Ireland is significantly greater than in the previous round, between 2007 and 2013. We are able

to do more overall in Northern Ireland, but the allocation of the funds will be different from the pattern under the previous round because we are considering a fresh round of applications.

Mr Swann: The Minister referred to the assessment panels a number of times. For the sake of clarity in the House, can the Minister say what training was given to the assessment panel members, and, indeed, whether all the panel members attended that training?

Dr Farry: Again we have this theme of seeking to undermine the qualifications of those conducting the assessments. These people are all experienced individuals in the public sector. There is a rigour to this process, and when the Member asks about training, there seems to be an insinuation that the people doing this are not fit for the job. Let me again stress to the House that this process has been handled by people who are qualified for the tasks asked of them and that they have conducted the tasks that they have been asked to do in a fair and impartial way.

Mrs D Kelly: Minister, at the last Question Time you said that you had to intervene to put some integrity back into the process, so it has not been without blame, in a sense. Does the Minister acknowledge that the community and voluntary sector, in particular, has had a splendid role to play over the last number of years in providing training and employment opportunities, particularly for women, people with disabilities and older people? If some sectors have lost out in this round, will the Minister widen his net in any future call for funding to allow them to be better represented in any successful application of the criteria?

3.00 pm

Dr Farry: Again, I wish that the Member would clarify where she feels that sectors have lost out. Certainly, we can all think of organisations that may have lost out, but a number of projects across all the sectors that the Member referred to were awarded funding in the announcement that was made towards the end of March.

The community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland is going through a difficult time. Indeed, the Member's own Minister has scythed his way through the community and voluntary sector bodies that support the environment in Northern Ireland. I have taken the approach of seeking to work very closely with the community and voluntary sector. We have made it clear that we value its contribution. I stress again that we have a bigger pot of the European social fund available, and it has been distributed in a fair and impartial way. As part of that process, some organisations will be perceived as winning while others will be perceived as losing. That is part and parcel of an open and competitive process.

This is about ensuring that we are funding the best projects that are available to us and that meet the objectives that are set out in the operational programme. Indeed, the Executive as a whole agreed that. It is there to ensure that we are doing the best with the money that is available to us so that we can create the biggest impact for the people of Northern Ireland, especially the most disadvantaged.

Workplace Mentoring

5. **Mr Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any plans to introduce workplace mentoring. (AQO 7908/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department recently completed a review of youth training in Northern Ireland for 16- to 24-year-olds. That comprehensive review included an in-depth examination of international best practice in youth training, including the provision of mentoring. The research indicated that one-to-one support for young people while they are in the workplace is vital, with dual mentoring in work and training identified as a key ingredient in successful vocational education and training schemes.

Based on the international best practice that was identified, the review of youth training consequently and duly proposed that the provision of a workplace mentor should be a key component of the proposed new youth training offer so that young people can be assisted to complete their training and to progress into higher-level options. It concluded that, as a minimum, all young people in training should have a named individual in the workplace who is responsible for their development.

The review consultation recently concluded, and the new strategy for youth training is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. Following that, it is intended that elements of the proposals, including workplace mentoring, will be piloted.

Mr Ramsey: I welcome the Minister's response. For the record, I chair the all-party group on learning disability, and what triggered this question was that parents and groups representing that sector are deeply worried, because we know the facts, including that somebody with a learning disability is four times less likely to secure employment. Will the Minister give us an assurance that more skills and advisers will be available to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community will have access to those same mentoring facilities? I know that in my constituency, those in the Ardnashee special needs campus are working very thoroughly on this matter under the model of good practice.

Dr Farry: I am very happy to give the Member that reassurance. It is also important to read the new strategy on apprenticeships and the forthcoming strategy on youth training in conjunction with another piece of work that we are working on in the Department: the development of a disability, skills and employment strategy. We are seeking to make additional investments to mentoring to support people with a range of disabilities through a range of interventions for the training and employment environment. Indeed, the concept of workplace mentoring is relevant not just to those with an identified disability but to other young people as they work through the system. We have learned very keenly about this from international best practice, and it maybe stands in contrast with how developed the current system is, which Members will be more familiar with.

Universities: Globally Competitive

6. **Mr Poots** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the options he is considering to ensure that local universities can continue to be competitive globally. (AQO 7909/11-15)

Dr Farry: A stable and globally competitive higher education sector in Northern Ireland is fundamental to future economic prosperity. To compete successfully on

the global stage, teaching must be of the highest quality, the learning environment must be flexible and supportive, and the research base must be dynamic and impactful. To ensure that, the sector's financial sustainability is crucial. However, the financial position that our higher education sector now finds itself in is eroding due to the cuts to budgets that we have seen, not least in the most recent Budget that the Executive struck. There is already a funding gap between our higher education institutions and their counterparts elsewhere in the UK to the tune of £1,000 to £2,500 a student.

The annual deficit for university research funding now sits at around £9.2 million per annum. The deficit that already existed has only been compounded further by the Budget settlement, and the higher education sector is now facing a further reduction of £16.1 million in the forthcoming financial year.

Some 38% of our higher education sector's income comes from grants, mostly provided by my Department. We cannot continue to expect our higher education sector to meet local skills needs, generate wealth and job creation and compete on a global stage for staff and students while continuing to diminish our level of investment. It is my intention to have a wider discussion about the future funding of higher education locally. Therefore, I will be launching a wider debate as to how Northern Ireland can support a financially sustainable and internationally competitive higher education sector.

Mr Poots: Does the Minister recognise that the pincer movement on the universities of capped tuition fees and reduced funding from his Department as a result of the Budget completely undermines the great leadership that we have in our universities and their attempts to ensure the quality of education? Does he agree with me that the consequence of spending the money on welfare as opposed to things like higher education will ultimately lead to more people remaining in poverty and more students having to go to England and other places to receive the appropriate qualifications, and the competitiveness of our universities will decline as a result?

Dr Farry: In the main, I concur with the comments that the Member has made. Our universities are in a very perilous state at present. They have had their ability to generate income restricted by the decision of the Executive to freeze tuition fees. There is cross-party support for that, but we have not seen the same level of revenue investment to meet the shortfall and to match the level of investment happening elsewhere on these islands.

We also now have a situation where that structural problem is being compounded by further Budget cuts. While the situation that the Executive find themselves in with regard to the Budget is, in part, explained by the decisions or non-decisions around welfare, there are other factors regarding a number of decisions that the Executive have taken or not taken, including addressing division in our society, which are further compounding the situation. That will have major impacts on our ability to provide the skills needed by our economy, and I am deeply worried by the path that we are currently on. Indeed, if we have a lower level of corporation tax, those pressures will be even more acute.

The Member is also quite right to identify that this will impact on individuals. We will shortly see the universities, very regrettably, having no choice but to remove a number

of places. That will force some of our young people to go to Great Britain to study, and not only will they have to face higher fees, but the likelihood is that they will not return to our Northern Ireland economy. Other young people may find themselves priced out entirely from higher education and will simply not take that opportunity. Those skills will be lost to our economy as well. Indeed, the life opportunities of those young people will be severely compromised.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Given the budget that the Minister is forced to work with, which will, bizarrely, result in us cutting student numbers when we are trying to grow an economy, what impact does the Minister think that will have on his widening participation strategy for higher education?

Dr Farry: As the Member will be aware, one of the steps that we have taken is to give the universities a little bit more flexibility in how they meet the targets that we have set for them for widening participation. So, they have been able to redirect some of their investments towards protecting front-line places. They have also given an assurance that they will not seek to diminish it, indeed, they will seek to improve upon the strong track record that we have. Ultimately, the biggest threat to widening participation will be the loss of places, so if we do not have the places for people to access, we will see problems with participation. That will disproportionately affect people from the more marginalised and vulnerable groups in our society. So, again, that reinforces the importance of a solid settlement for our higher education institutions and our wider skills environment in the Budget for the 2016-17 period and beyond.

Mr Beggs: Our people and their skills are our greatest asset when attracting new employers to Northern Ireland, and I am sure that the Minister would agree. Has he made any assessment as to how those cuts in university places are being received globally in terms of attracting new employment, new skills, new bases and new opportunities for our young people?

Dr Farry: We have to have a certain degree of care in how we say this and put it across, but, in very simple terms, yes, this is having an impact. It is one thing to say that all we need to do is rebalance the investment in higher education and focus more on STEM subjects, and that is an important thing to do in its own right. However, in a situation where we are actively disinvesting in higher education and removing places — every place is of relevance to the economy and the provision of higher-level skills and, consequently economic growth — that sends out a very worrying message to potential investors.

We will seek to attract investors by saying that we are on the brink of having a lower level of corporation tax. However, if they see question marks around our ability to invest in skills, they are going to ask even more searching questions and, potentially, look elsewhere when making investment decisions if they do not have the confidence and the certainty that we can produce for them. We have done extremely well over the past number of years, but that situation is not sustainable if we continue down the same road that we are on at present in cutting our skills budgets.

E-books: Universities

7. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether universities set a minimum target for

course directors to include e-books that are available through their library catalogue as part of the core reading material for undergraduate degrees. (AQO 7910/11-15)

Dr Farry: As my Department does not hold this information, officials have received confirmation from each of the universities that they do not set a minimum target for course directors to include e-books as part of the core reading material for undergraduate degrees. Students are therefore free to choose their own preferred method of accessing reading material. Universities are responsible for their own policies and procedures, including course delivery. There is no requirement for them to set targets in relation to the medium of delivery.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Given that e-books are more cost-effective, will he consider setting a target to assist pupils with their studies?

Dr Farry: I am happy to encourage the universities to go down that route. They are clearly aware of the very tight financial situation that they find themselves in as a consequence of the current funding cuts that are being passed on, not least in terms of the attitude that his party is taking to welfare at present. It is, ultimately, for the universities to run their own provision. It is not the job of the Department to micromanage exactly how they go about that. I fear that setting a target would be a disproportionate way of interfering and that we would end up with the Department running the universities rather than letting the universities get on and do the job that we want them to do for the economy as a whole.

Mrs Dobson: What additional support has the Minister provided to the Open University since devolution?

Dr Farry: The Open University is very much part of the higher education family in Northern Ireland, and it now receives its funding directly from my Department. It is obviously under a degree of financial pressure as well. In some ways, it is perhaps slightly more adaptable in the sense that it has part-time provision. Because of the nature of some of the new opportunities that are emerging through, for example, our apprenticeships strategy, particularly higher-level apprenticeships, it can take up some of those opportunities. It also has a much stronger tradition of virtual learning than many of the more traditional universities in the approach that is taken to learning. It is well placed to take advantage of new developments in higher education, such as MOOCs.

Higher Education Funding

8. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the review of higher education funding. (AQO 7911/11-15)

Dr Farry: The higher education funding review commenced in September 2013. In December 2014, I decided that it would not be appropriate to undertake a consultation of the funding review amid the uncertainties about my Department's future budgets. The consultation was, therefore, put on hold until the budget settlement for 2015-16 became clearer.

The higher education sector is facing a one-year budget reduction of 8.4% for teaching and research grants. That equates to a reduction of £16.1 million.

This has led to serious questions over the future financial sustainability of higher education that I do not believe can be addressed through the limited scope of the higher education funding review. Although my Department will now be taking forward aspects of the review separately, I have identified the need for a wider discussion with all stakeholders about how Northern Ireland can support a financially sustainable and internationally competitive sector. The work undertaken in the higher education funding review will be crucial in informing and facilitating this wider discussion.

3.15 pm

With regard to student finance, I will shortly be launching a consultation on part-time and postgraduate taught student support. That will ensure that policies relating to a new student support package for part-time and postgrad learners will be in place for the academic year 2016-17. Student finance has long been a crucial enabler of higher education study, and I want to ensure accessibility into and through higher education for all types of learners. During my discussions with NUS-USI at its annual conference, representations were made on potential modifications to the frequency of student support payments. I am happy to explore that issue in more detail, and the first step in that process will be a public consultation exercise.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, we are out of time and I am not able to take your supplementary. That ends the period for listed questions. We now move to topical questions.

Assured Skills: Success

T1. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the success of the Assured Skills programme. (AQT 2331/11-15)

Dr Farry: Assured Skills has been an outstanding success and can be viewed as almost a unique contribution to the approach to inward investment relative to different approaches that are taken around the world. It is very much based on working with companies to address their skill requirements. We know that we can attract companies to Northern Ireland on the basis of the quality of our workforce and our people coming through colleges and universities in a general sense, but companies will often want the assurance that we can provide the particular skills that they require for their business to be a success. I am pleased to say that we have moved from Assured Skills being a pilot programme over the past number of years to it being mainstream provision. As we look ahead to lower corporation tax, the work that we do through Assured Skills will become even more important.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. From his engagement with business, industry and various companies, does the Minister believe that the Assured Skills programme is essential for attracting inward investment?

Dr Farry: Very much so. The Member will note from the large number of investments that we have seen over the past 12 months in particular how closely my Department has worked with Invest Northern Ireland to make those a reality. We offered Assured Skills programmes in a considerable number of those investments. The feedback from companies is that that type of intervention is critical in their decision-making. That is something we have to build on.

Apprenticeships/Vocational Training: Update

T2. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the implementation of the apprenticeships strategy and his work to ensure parity of esteem for vocational training in Northern Ireland. (AQT 2332/11-15)

Dr Farry: As the Member knows, our apprenticeship strategy was launched in the Assembly in June 2014. We are phasing in the introduction of the new strategy between then and September 2016. Work is well under way in developing pilots in higher-level apprenticeships. We also have in place an interim strategic advisory forum. I was pleased that Bryan Keating has assumed the chair of that at our meeting at the end of March. Over the next number of months, that group will work on various aspects — legislation, for example — and how we can better encourage the uptake of new opportunities among employers. We have a successful bid to the change fund for £7.5 million to support apprenticeships and youth training over the forthcoming 12 months. That is a valuable asset to develop what should be a critical investment in delivering for our young people and ensuring that companies get the direct skills that they require to be a success in Northern Ireland.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for his update. I find the work being done on apprenticeships encouraging. What will the main opportunities and challenges be in the coming months, and has progress been made on companies working together to deliver apprenticeships in a joined-up fashion?

Dr Farry: I am certainly pleased that we are seeing sectoral partnerships emerging. We have sectoral partnerships in place for the IT, engineering and food and drink manufacturing sectors. We have also seen some very strong work happening on apprenticeships in life sciences, finance and accountancy. We hope shortly to see sectoral partnerships in those areas.

It is important that we encourage businesses to come forward and create opportunities for apprenticeships. It is important that businesses are in the driving seat in creating fresh opportunities. It is not about the state trying to second-guess where apprenticeships should be created but about companies identifying their future training requirements. The real challenge is to ensure that we can keep up with and meet the expectations of businesses and that we do more to encourage our young people to consider apprenticeships as a legitimate pathway that is on a par with some of the more traditional pathways, such as university. Both are good ways of achieving higher-level skills, and we need to ensure that we have a balanced approach in our economy.

Mr Speaker: Mr Chris Hazzard is not in his place. Mr Daithí McKay is not in his place. I call Ms Bronwyn McGahan.

Jobs Fair: Dungannon District/Killeeshil

T5. **Ms McGahan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department will consider holding a jobs fair in the Dungannon district, particularly in the Killeeshil community centre, which is in the heartland of a rural area that has experienced high levels of immigration. (AQT 2335/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am happy for my officials to engage with the Member and consider her proposal. We are committed to holding jobs fairs in different locations across Northern Ireland. We want to see a critical mass of employers who are willing to use that type of forum to engage with those who are unemployed or looking to change jobs so that we can make the event a success. We have run successful jobs fairs in different places over the past number of months, and the feedback on those has been very good, so we are more than happy to look into what the Member has proposed.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his very positive response. Given that economic inactivity is highest in rural areas, does he agree that holding such an event in the heartland of a rural area is an important step in tackling unemployment in rural areas?

Dr Farry: Absolutely. A few weeks ago, I visited a jobs fair in Claudy. We are focusing very much on engagement in rural areas. The approach that we take as a Department is not the one-size-fits-all approach of doing big events in Belfast or Derry and expecting people to go there. We will show a degree of flexibility in accommodating people in different settings, and that includes the urban/rural split.

North West Regional College: Strabane

T6. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the work to develop the North West Regional College in Strabane. (AQT 2336/11-15)

Dr Farry: At this stage, I must make it clear to Members that there are no immediate plans for capital investment in Strabane. We are committed to working with the North West Regional College to ensure that it delivers a balanced curriculum across its area. If there are particular questions or points that the Member wishes to raise about what should or should not be provided in Strabane, I am more than happy to take them on board.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister for his answer. Is there any intention in your Department to increase the number of places on offer in Strabane? Is that an area that you would be willing to look at? Go raibh maith agat.

Dr Farry: That, again, is very much something for the North West Regional College to consider. It is for it and the other five colleges to consider their curriculum offer and the distribution of that offer across the campuses. It is important that Members appreciate that the role of government is not to micromanage how we deliver further education, in the same way as we do not seek to micromanage the delivery of higher education. That is why we have colleges, and that is why they have their own board of governors and principals and staff who work to those boards. That is the essence of pluralism, but, if the Member has particular concerns about what is or is not being provided in Strabane, I am happy to take them on board and speak to the powers that be in the North West Regional College. Ultimately, those are decisions for the college to take, but we can seek to express views to it, and that is perfectly legitimate.

NEET Strategy Forum: Funding

T7. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he thinks the £108,000 that he recently announced for the NEET strategy forum will be spent. (AQT 2337/11-15)

Dr Farry: It is important to recognise, first of all, that we are going through difficult times in our ability to deliver the Pathways to Success strategy, which is the Executive strategy for dealing with NEETs. The forum has been very successful in engaging different organisations from the community and voluntary sector in best practice and in sharing best practice. It has also created our ability to engage in a more structured manner with young people. The voices of young people were very clear about advocacy: we should seek to have a continuation of the NEETs forum. I expect that we will be able to continue that type of work, albeit in a slightly more constricted format, given the reduction of available resources. Nonetheless, in terms of our ability to find resources, I regard this as a priority for our continued ability to make some investments in working with those who are marginalised from the labour market, particularly young people.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his explanation. One of the recommendations from the previous forum was the continuation of the Pathways to Success education maintenance allowance. The Minister withdrew that within a couple of days of assigning the £108,000 to the NEET strategy forum. Will he tell me how those two balance up? If he has removed the education maintenance allowance from young people who are on the Pathways to Success programme, they are NEET and are more in need of that provision.

Dr Farry: The Member is aware that my Department had a significant budget allocated to it for investing in the Pathways to Success strategy. That money came to an end on 31 March 2015. Had we been in different financial circumstances, it would have been my hope and, indeed, expectation that a similar amount of money would have been found by the Executive to continue that work. All that money has now dried up. We have seen a migration of some of the organisations that worked under the collaboration and innovation fund towards seeking funding under the European social fund. Sadly, it is my view that, at present, we were not in a position to continue with the training allowance. That automatically came to an end with the end of the funding.

Given the limited resources available to us, it was my judgement that the continuation of the NEETs forum — the money involved to make it a success — was a more productive use of resource. That is not to take away from the importance of the training allowance. I have asked my officials to continue to look at existing, albeit diminished, budgets to see whether there is a means by which we can have the continuation of a training allowance for young people on some of the schemes. That work is under way. As the Member appreciates, budgets are now incredibly tight, and we have to make a lot of difficult decisions. We have to make sure that we use resources in the most efficient and effective way possible.

European Social Fund: Newry and Armagh

T8. **Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning which projects in the Newry and Armagh constituency have progressed to the next stage under the European social fund. (AQT 2338/11-15)

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Tá ceist agam ar an Aire faoi chiste sóisialta na hEorpa.

Dr Farry: There is a comprehensive list of the organisations that have been offered funding in the press release that we issued on 26 March, and I encourage the Member to peruse it. There will be some organisations that are particular to that subregional area in Northern Ireland; other schemes may have a wider application but will still impact on that part of the world. There are also appeals that are still in process, as I mentioned earlier. The situation may change if some of those appeals are successful in moving particular proposals in the framework within which we are making funding offers to organisations.

Mr D Bradley: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. How will the Minister ensure that an appropriate geographical spread of funding will be achieved?

Dr Farry: We have conducted some analysis of the current funding decisions that we have made, and I am satisfied that there is a fair distribution across the Assembly constituencies in Northern Ireland. It is not entirely uniform, and it cannot be, given the nature of the process under way. It also reflects a lot of work that was conducted by officials at the roadshows across Northern Ireland that took place last autumn, where we were raising awareness of the opportunities to bid. Again, that was all solid work to ensure that, as far as possible, we could ensure a fair regional balance with the funding offers that were being made.

3.30 pm

Private Members' Business

Teacher Employment: Inequality

Debate resumed on amendment to motion:

That this Assembly notes the failure of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to repeal the exemption in fair employment law allowing discrimination on the grounds of religious belief in teacher appointments, as mandated by the motion Teachers: Employment Law, which was approved by the Assembly on 22 April 2013; recognises that the teacher exemption, as well as the continuing requirement for a certificate in religious education at nursery and primary level in the Catholic maintained sector, are unnecessary barriers to truly shared education; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to take action to remove these overt examples of inequality and discrimination. — [Mr Kinahan.]

Which amendment was:

Insert at end:

“; and further calls, as an interim measure until this action is implemented, on St Mary’s University College to provide access to the teaching of the certificate in religious education to students from other teacher training institutions, including Stranmillis University College.” — [Mr Lunn.]

Miss M McIlveen: I am speaking first as Chair of the Education Committee. Around two years ago, the Committee considered the Department of Education’s report on the review of employment opportunities for teaching staff, including the assessment of the equality impact of the religious certificate requirement. Whether the House agrees or disagrees, as the report finds, some non-Catholics clearly view the requirement to possess the certificate of religious education as a bar to employment in the Catholic maintained primary school sector.

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

The report suggested that there was no statistical evidence of an adverse impact on employment opportunities for newly qualified non-Catholic teachers. Nonetheless, the Department suggested that the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) should consider limiting this requirement to designated posts only in the primary and nursery sector. Some Committee members do not view the certificate as necessarily discriminatory. They accepted the Department’s findings that there is no evidence of material disadvantage for non-Catholic teachers.

The majority of Committee members highlighted considerable concerns about CCMS’s continued insistence that teachers in Catholic maintained primary schools be required to obtain the certificate of religious education. The majority of members felt that the present arrangements are unfair and represent a significant inequality. These members felt that the approach of CCMS was particularly unhelpful given the need for flexibility on all sides in the face of primary school area planning. The majority of members believed that cross-sectoral amalgamations and enhanced

sharing between schools can only be hampered by what some have described as this unfair employment practice.

The Committee heard quite recently from CCMS and the Commission for Catholic Education on shared education. We were advised that CCMS wishes to enhance access to the certificate. Other than that, I think that it is fair to say that nothing has changed in the intervening two years on the issue of the certificate.

Speaking as a Member, I want to widen the debate on this matter. I will, of course, be supporting the motion. My party has been calling for the removal of the teacher exemption for many years. The Minister of Education, of course, should have been included in this motion, and, while OFMDFM has a responsibility in relation to equality, it is the Education Minister who has the responsibility for teacher recruitment. However, the context of the debate has moved on considerably since this matter was last before the House. Previously, this was discussed when an earlier incarnation of the Education Bill was before us. It proposed to create a single employing authority. Now, we have a new Education Authority, which has an obligation in terms of shared education. There is the new Lisanelly site, advanced proposals for shared education at the Moy and forthcoming proposals for Brookeborough. Of course, there is also the Education Committee's inquiry into shared education.

There is always a danger that we use yesterday's language rather than tomorrow's vision. The exemption should be removed, but it is only part of the wider issue that needs to be addressed. Debating a motion on it is great for headlines but does little to solve those other issues. I am pleased that the Churches in Northern Ireland have been working closely with the Department on proposals that could push shared education forward quite dramatically. This was outlined to us as part of the shared education inquiry, and I believe that the publication of a circular on this issue is imminent. My party has been at the forefront of the debate on shared education and creating a more cohesive system. The proposals are ambitious and are not only an indication of a step forward in education in but a symbol of the progress that is being made in Northern Ireland. They represent a means by which the entrenched sectorism that has existed for far too long in our society can be diluted and a more coherent system of education developed.

Joint faith schools should assist in normalising the recruitment of teachers. The Catholic certificate has always been an irrelevancy when it comes to doing the job. The current legislative exemption permits its existence. There would be an understandable outrage if a Protestant certificate were proposed. As for Mr Lunn's aspiration for a single certificate, in my understanding that is a teacher's PGCE or bachelor of education —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member draw her remarks to a close?

Miss M McIlveen: — degree certificate. Nothing else is required. The exemption, along with the certificate, creates a problem where Protestant teachers are the ones who potentially suffer. When those who are not in possession of a certificate look for a job, the options are more limited —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member's time is up.

Miss M McIlveen: — than those who are in possession of one. The answer is not to let anyone —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I call Pat Sheehan.

Mr Sheehan: There are two issues in this debate: the exemption from the fair employment legislation, and the use of the religious education certificate. Let me deal first with the issue of the exemption from fair employment. When Jim Clarke from CCMS spoke to the Education Committee on 29 May 2013, he stated clearly that CCMS had never used the exemption and had no intention of using it. He went even further when he said:

"We have no qualms whatsoever about that being taken away."

I would also be in favour of the exemption being removed, even though it appears it has never been used. How do we do that? We do it by bringing forward a single equality Bill that covers all the remaining outstanding equality issues. I look forward to the party that proposed this motion and those that support it also giving their support to a single equality Bill.

Let me move on to the issue of the certificate in religious education. The motion states that the requirement for the certificate in primary and nursery schools in the Catholic sector is a barrier to "truly shared education". I do not know whether "truly shared" is different from shared, but maybe somebody can explain that later.

The report from the ministerial advisory group, in March 2013, used a definition of shared education stating that it:

"Involves schools ... of differing ownership, sectoral identity and ethos, management type or governance arrangements".

From that definition, it follows that a shared approach accepts the diversity and distinctiveness of our school system and our society. It respects all types of schools, including controlled, Catholic, integrated and Irish-medium.

The certificate is a requirement in Catholic primary and nursery schools, aimed at protecting the Catholic ethos in those schools. No one would expect the integrated or Irish-medium sectors to abandon policies or practices aimed at protecting the ethos of those particular sectors, so why are the proposers of this motion and amendment seeking to undermine the integrity of one particular sector? On the face of it, this is a long way removed from the respectful spirit that we require for shared education.

Let me make the point that the certificate is a qualification just like any other, whether it be maths, English and so on. We all know that the teachers in primary schools teach the full curriculum, and they need to be versed in the religious education that they are teaching in the classroom. The Catholic sector wants to protect that ethos in their schools. What is the difficulty with that? What is the difficulty that the proposers of this motion and amendment have with diversity in the system? Are we going back to a situation similar to that which we recently had with the debacle over St Mary's, when the Minister for Employment and Learning — an Alliance Minister — was trying to force the integration of teacher training?

The respectful spirit required for shared education was absent from the Minister for Employment and Learning's recent attempts to undermine St Mary's University College by financial coercion. I know that St Mary's is committed to a shared future for teacher training based on respect for diversity and parity of esteem. In fact, on 17 September last year, the principal of St Mary's, Peter Finn, told the

Committee for Employment and Learning that the issue of the religious education certificate could be resolved by collaboration. I am sure that, when there is evidence of a genuine desire for collaboration, St Mary's will not be found wanting.

Forced integration is not the answer, and the Alliance Party, by its recent actions and its amendment to the motion today, creates an atmosphere of distrust. All of us sitting over here believe that this is aimed solely at the Catholic sector. The potential for progress has been set back. We will oppose the motion and the amendment. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Rogers: I welcome the opportunity to speak against the motion.

First, I must address the wildly misleading and, frankly, wrong assertion in the motion that the certificate in religious education permits discrimination on grounds of religious belief. Those Members who are more inclined to exaggerate need to be reminded that a certificate is a qualification, not a conversion. Catholicism, let alone strict adherence to the Catholic faith, is not a prerequisite.

The SDLP is a strong advocate of parental choice, which is why we fought so hard to ensure that the Irish-medium, integrated and voluntary grammar schools were represented on the board of the new Education Authority. We have a unique education landscape in Northern Ireland, which must be managed respectfully and inclusively. Many parents want their children to be taught in a Catholic ethos, but by no stretch of the imagination does that mean that they want their children to be segregated.

As a former teacher and principal who has colleagues, and has taught many pupils, who were not from the Catholic tradition, I find the motion disappointing and, indeed, ignorant of what a Catholic education entails. Faith formation is an integral part of a Catholic education. It is like a three-legged stool: what happens in the school, the parish and the home. They are all complementary; if you take one away, the stool crashes. The religious education provided by our teachers is essential for the right foundation in life and the development of the Catholic ethos. Our primary-school teachers do not teach just religious education but the whole curriculum. The Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of the curriculum.

Reference was made to barriers. The certificate itself is not a barrier; it is additional training to enable nursery or primary-school teachers to conduct religious education classes confidently through a Christian ethos. That also involves sacramental preparation in primary 4 and primary 7, which constitutes an important milestone in the religious education curriculum. Rather, the barrier is for students who face practical difficulties in obtaining the certificate. Students at Stranmillis University College can obtain the certificate by distance learning. A lack of awareness coupled with little information about the course presents the first barrier for students. Subsequently, the need to pay upfront fees and the lack of support and available resources can prove off-putting.

The motion calls for the removal of an opportunity for our student teachers to achieve an additional qualification. We need to ensure that students from Stranmillis are fully informed and aware of this opportunity and given the full support necessary to work towards it. That may include looking again at the provision of fees. Students

at Stranmillis should not be denied the opportunity to enhance their CVs in our increasingly competitive job market, one that will become all the more competitive with looming education cuts.

Mr Lunn: I thank Mr Rogers for giving way. Does he not agree that, if a student at Stranmillis would like to obtain the Catholic certificate — for want of a better term — the obvious way to do it would be by cooperation between St Mary's and Stranmillis?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Rogers: I am quite happy to have greater cooperation between Stranmillis and St Mary's, but the key point is that the certificate has to be open to all students, not just those in St Mary's. I am quite happy with that.

3.45 pm

There are just one or two other points to make. Mr Kinahan talked about Scotland. I will quote directly from the Scottish Catholic Education Service's website:

"For those teaching posts which impact on the teaching of Religious Education, teachers will be expected to provide evidence of having obtained an appropriate teaching qualification in Catholic Religious Education."

The same is the case in England and Wales. It is very annoying when I hear it said that the Catholic certificate is an irrelevancy. I find it very hard to comprehend where that comes from, having spent so long in the classroom. The Catholic certificate in religious education is a requirement for any teacher who wants to teach in a Catholic school, whether it is in England, Scotland or Wales, and it should be the same in Northern Ireland. We need to make the certificate more available to all our trainee teachers.

Mr McCausland: I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue. As I will say later on, it is important that we have not only debate about the issue but informed debate. I come at it at a slight disadvantage as a member of the Education Committee in that these are issues that were discussed by the Committee at some length some time ago before I joined the Committee, so I am not privy to all the discussions that took place at that time. However, I want to pick up on the fact that in the motion there is a word that is important for education: the word "inequality".

One of the things that is very distinctive about our education provision in Northern Ireland is the range of sectors, the complex architecture that was developed over the years and some of its inbuilt inequalities. We have a substantial number of sectors and a system that was there for 40 years from the creation of the education and library boards. We are all very familiar with the difficulties that there were in reshaping and reconfiguring the architecture of education to create an Education Authority. Once the whole issue started to be unpacked, suddenly a whole range of other things started to open up. I am, however, keen to see that inequalities are addressed wherever they can be. It is incumbent on us all to ensure that we commit ourselves to that.

I was interested in Mr Sheehan's comment that the certificate is the same as every other qualification. I would suggest that it is not quite the same as every other

qualification. The fact that such strong views have been expressed today in favour of retaining it suggests that I am right in that assumption and that, contrary to what was said by Mr Sheehan, there is something unique and different in that it is something that is particular to one sector and for one sector alone. That is why it is not the same as every other qualification. It is unique, peculiar and distinctive to one sector; in this case, the Roman Catholic sector. The comment was also made that some of the observations, critiques and comments were aimed solely at the Roman Catholic sector, but that is the very nature of the thing because it is a certificate for teaching religious education in a Roman Catholic ethos.

When I said earlier that it is not good enough just to have a debate and that it needs to be an informed debate, I would certainly want to be better informed as to why there has to be a certificate in religious education. What is there in it that is not in any other primary education training for teachers? Other teachers at primary level are taught and equipped to teach religious education with a syllabus which, apart from the sacramental element, is the same across all schools.

If that is the case, what is different, what is unique and why is there a need for that particular certificate? People who are listening to the debate and who have a general interest in education may well ask who validates the certificate, who is authorised to deliver it and who authorises them to deliver it. If somebody else were to create a certificate in religious education, who would decide whether that is acceptable or not? That is why I say that I think that we need to have a debate about it, but it needs to be an informed debate.

Seán Rogers got very close to the point when he referred to the issue of sacramental education, because the earlier part of his justification for a certificate did not really stand up strongly, in that, as I have said already —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McCausland: Teachers elsewhere are learning those things for the primary teaching of RE. Therefore, in my view, there is a need for a more informed debate, and for answers to some of those questions so that we can have that informed debate.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I speak as a member of the Education Committee in opposition to the motion and the amendment. I welcome the opportunity to have the debate in the House, albeit for the second occasion.

I agree with the Chair of the Education Committee that there are two distinct issues here and that it is appropriate and important that we do not cloud one with the other. One of the issues, as has rightly been pointed out, concerns the Fair Employment and Treatment Order and the exemption issue. The second is clearly about the use of the religious education certificate in the appointment of teachers to both primary and nursery schools. As the proposer of the motion indicated, the exemption from fair employment law has well outlived its sell-by date. I think that there is consensus in the Chamber around that. It is very clear that our society and our education system are growing in culture, tradition and diversity. Our education provides for children from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, the same opportunity must be given to those who want to teach in schools.

As a party, we have supported, and continue to support, the claim that the continuation of the exception is wrong and outdated, and we have called on OFMDFM to take forward proposals for the removal of the exemption in article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order following the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority. It is clearly now a matter for OFMDFM.

I agree with Mr McCausland when he talks about having a genuine debate and discussion. The place for that genuine debate is after the introduction of the single equality Bill to address all those outstanding equality issues. The Education and Skills Authority is now agreed. Such an approach would provide a basis for open dialogue with key interest groups and provide for ample debate in a neutral environment.

I — like many Members, I hope — welcome the removal of any barrier in front of aspiring teachers, but March 2013 provided the assessment of the impact of the religious certificate required to teach in Catholic maintained primary and nursery schools. As Pat Sheehan quite rightly pointed out, the certificate is a qualification. There is no statistical evidence to suggest that the certificate requirement has resulted in inequalities in employment. However, the review did identify barriers to accessing the certificate, which may lead to inequalities for those who wish to attain it. The review highlighted three main reasons for students not taking up the certificate: financial outlay; time commitment; and lack of support. That is where our attention should lie — on making the process accessible for all. I oppose the motion and the amendment.

Mr D McIlveen: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this motion as a member of the OFMDFM Committee. It is abundantly clear that the Catholic certificate of education is providing fuel to a culture of discrimination in our education sector. The last Member who spoke tried to make the point that there is no statistical evidence. There is statistical evidence. The statistical evidence is the minuscule number of young Protestant teachers who teach in the Catholic education sector. That statistic is clear for everyone to see.

Mr Hazzard: Will the Member give way?

Mr D McIlveen: I will in just a moment.

The teaching of a Catholic ethos in schools was also raised, and I am certainly one who has some sympathy for that principle. I think that it was Mr Rogers who said that, if a parent is teaching their children a certain ethos in the home, which they are perfectly entitled to do, and there is a contrary ethos being taught to them in school, that could be very destabilising to the needs of the child. However, that is not what this motion is asking for; it is certainly not what we have been calling for.

What we have been asking for is that when it comes to religious studies, which is obviously a very specific issue where there may be varying views from sector to sector, parental choice should be taken into consideration. However, I will happily take an intervention from the other side of the House if somebody can tell me the difference between Catholic maths and Protestant maths, Catholic English and Protestant English, or Catholic science and Protestant science. Those subjects are universal and can be taught by people who are Protestant, Catholic or any other particular religion, as indeed is the case in the rest

of the United Kingdom. That is where we have to be very careful not to fall into a trap.

The precedent has already been set. In primary schools today, where a teacher does not have the ability to teach music to primary-school children, the class will move to where such a teacher is for a time, be it an afternoon or a couple of hours, to be taught music. There is no reason why such a system would not work in our primary-school sector, and it would completely remove this discrimination.

I will give way to Mr Sheehan.

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for giving way. I thought that the Member had come in before me.

The Member said that there exists a “culture of discrimination” in education. Perhaps the Member would want to reconsider those words or outline examples of where this “culture of discrimination” exists. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr D McIlveen: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was formerly a member of the Employment and Learning Committee. The last time the head of St Mary's was before the Committee when I was a member of it, I asked this very question: how many Protestant students are there in St Mary's College? The answer was a small number. I cannot remember the exact figure off the top of my head. When I took it a little bit further and asked how many of those students were not in liberal arts but in the teacher-training side of the college, the answer was a very clear and resounding zero. There is no appetite.

It is so clear. I am sorry to the Member, but I represent a constituency where people are being very heavily affected by this. It is seldom that I go round the doors of my constituency and do not meet a parent whose son or daughter has been unable to find employment in the education sector; in the worst-case scenarios, they may have had to leave Northern Ireland completely. They have applied for jobs in the Catholic sector, and it is clear that they do not get them because they do not hold this certificate. It is perhaps the worst form of discrimination: silent discrimination. The statistics perhaps are not always there, but that does not mean that discrimination is not in place. We have to be very clear on that.

Mr Sheehan: Will the Member give way?

Mr D McIlveen: I am sorry, but I have a few other points that I want to get through.

There needs to be a consultation. If a decision is not taken voluntarily in the sector, we will have to look at equality legislation to see what can be done to deal with the issue. However, it would be much better if the sector stepped up to the mark and dealt with these issues itself. Furthermore, there is still an issue with the oversupply of teachers, which is inextricably linked to this issue.

There is a systemic problem as well. Think of the health service for example. The Department that pays for the training of new doctors is the same Department that pays for their employment. That is not the issue that we have in education. There is a laissez-faire attitude in the Department of Education. It is quite happy for DEL to continue to fund and churn out teachers, knowing full well that the jobs are simply not there for them. I believe that a penalty should be enforced on the Department of

Education if it continues to allow an oversupply of teachers in the sector. I think that we have to —

4.00 pm

Mr Lunn: Will the Member give way?

Mr D McIlveen: I am sorry, I am coming very close to the end of my remarks, and I want to make one final remark about the single equality Bill. If we take a view that the single equality Bill will be the panacea that sorts everything out, we are living in cloud cuckoo land. To suggest that the needs of the education sector —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr D McIlveen: — are the same as the needs of every other sector across our community is a myth. It suggests a misunderstanding of the whole principle of equality by the Members on the opposite Benches.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. As with my colleagues who have spoken previously, I oppose the motion and, indeed, the amendment. There has been some confusion with very many of the issues. I see three distinct issues. The amendment is disingenuous to the issue at hand. It is an overhang from a previous debate that was had in recent months and is not relevant to the motion in question. I also think that the motion is in two distinct parts, and that has been discussed.

On the last point that was touched on, of a culture of discrimination, Jim Clarke and the CCMS — this was perhaps referred to earlier — have agreed that, in principle, if a teacher takes a job, it could take up to three years to gain the certificate, but it is available online through a Glasgow university. I would understand if you could not access the certificate whatsoever if you were not a Catholic, but that is not the case. If there issues with accessibility, a cold house or whatever it might be then —

Mr Girvan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: Go ahead.

Mr Girvan: Is there a necessity for somebody who is a maths teacher to have the Catholic teaching certificate if they are teaching only maths?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for his intervention, but, again, there is some confusion from the Benches opposite. In one debate, there is a protection of ethos and ethos is very important, but, when it comes to this debate, ethos can go out the window if we discuss music or maths. That is not the case. We know that, very often, ethos is very important in those schools, and the DUP cherishes ethos at all times when we discuss other topics.

Going back to the point about accessibility, if that is an issue — there are certain valid points about that — it can be looked at. The process at looking at accessibility has begun.

Of course, the exemption goes back to the fair employment Orders, and there are points there. In 2009 the Equality Commission said that the exemption should be repealed, and that is an issue for OFMDFM. The point, which has

been made time and again, is that a single equality Bill would deal with that. The last Member who spoke said that it is not the same type of equality as another type of equality, but equality is equality. If the motion is such a passionate plea for equality to dispel the notion of a culture of discrimination and everything else, they should support a single equality Bill that will deal with that.

I will not rehearse any of the other arguments that have been made. It is disappointing that the motion tries to catch all. In fact, the valid point that it maybe has in its first part was ruined by including far too many other things. I oppose the motion and the amendment.

Mr Ramsey: The SDLP will vote against both the motion and amendment. It is a motion that many parents and teachers across Northern Ireland will see as an attack on their choice to educate children in a Catholic ethos. Teachers in nursery and primary schools that maintain a Catholic ethos have a particular responsibility to prepare pupils and young people to undertake the sacraments.

Catholic schools represent 40% of the overall school estate in Northern Ireland and employ almost 6,000 members of staff — 5,900 staff. The certificate enables teachers to carry out the requirement to prepare children for the sacraments and to do so with confidence and training. Catholic schools have provided an excellent academic education that is enveloped in faith-filled pastoral care in our society, and the certificate plays a key role in achieving that.

The SDLP will defend parental choice, as it has done in previous debates. Parents know their children, their needs and how they want them to be educated. The certificate plays a key role in maintaining the Catholic ethos that so many parents across Northern Ireland want for their children.

To brand the certificate as an overall example of inequality and discrimination is a blatant and huge exaggeration, to say the least. This is not about an individual teacher's personal belief; it is about ensuring that an individual is fully qualified to teach in a Catholic school. The certificate in religious education is not a barrier but a leveller that qualifies teachers of all faiths or none to deliver the education that so many parents want. It is a not a test of personal faith; it is a certified qualification that means that anyone can be fully trained to handle the aspects of education that are unique to Catholic education.

This motion has come at a time — Pat Sheehan made this point — when previous attempts by the Minister for Employment and Learning to effectively try to close down St Mary's teacher training college remain fresh in our minds, particularly those of us who believe that it should be protected. It is disappointing that Members who stood here literally a few weeks ago with the SDLP defending the autonomy of this excellent institution seem now to be attacking the very ethos that it nourishes and promotes. Shared education is key to a shared future. A shared future is not about eradicating difference —

Mr Lunn: I thank the Member for giving way. He mentioned shared education. Would he not agree with me that shared teacher training is a way forward as well, and that St Mary's should be open to the suggestion to allow students from Stranmillis to apply for the certificate of education in cooperation with St Mary's instead of having to do it through a long-distance learning plan?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Ramsey: I welcome the intervention. I will put the question back to him and other Members who have quoted concerns that have been raised by constituents: if those concerns are valid and live, how many times have you asked to meet the board of governors of St Mary's? How many times have you asked to meet CCMS to discuss these issues? If you are so sincere and genuine about them, you would take that to them and ask them. Pat Sheehan made the point that Peter Finn would be open to dialogue on providing the certificates that are in question here today. Shared education is key to a shared future.

Mr Lunn: Will the Member give way again?

Mr Ramsey: Yes, I will give way.

Mr Lunn: I just want to confirm that the Minister you talk about has had extensive discussions with CCMS about this and it is not against the principle that we are trying to put forward here.

Mr Ramsey: It is very clear that, over the past number of years, the Minister in question has been very determined and dogged in his approach to try to undermine and put the "for sale" sign up on St Mary's college in west Belfast. That is clear and obvious. My question to the Alliance Party is this: how many times, given its concerns around the certificate, has it asked to meet either the principal or the board of governors of St Mary's if these live concerns are there?

A shared future is not about eradicating difference; it is about celebrating diversity and accommodating beliefs and traditions that differ from our own. Inflaming difference with exaggeration and misrepresentation is a barrier to our shared future, not a qualification. That is clear and obvious. I am somewhat disappointed about some of the language that has been used, as Seán Rogers has explained.

We have a centre of excellence. This is really getting to the bottom of it about St Mary's college: it is a centre of excellence, not just for education but for culture and support in the heart of west Belfast. We have seen the student body up here — many hundreds, if not thousands, of them — celebrating those paths. I think that Members in this House should not ignore the valued work that St Mary's college does and the principle of and acceptance and respect for faith-based education, which is as important to me as my political beliefs. I believe in the protection of faith-based education, which means a lot to parents in Northern Ireland. When 40% of the schools estate in Northern Ireland is Catholic faith based, that is where the parents of these children want them to go.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Would the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Ramsey: They see their children's futures in Catholic schools, whether they be primary or post-primary schools, or for their sons or daughters themselves to go into teacher training. Again, I make it clear that we oppose the motion and the amendment.

Mr Kinahan: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of the debate, Mr Sheehan made a point of order that the Education Minister had written a letter to everyone. During the debate, we have been trying to find

a copy of that letter. It does not seem to exist. My point is that the Minister said that he believed that the document should be removed. In a further one, he went on to say that it should be done away with.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I am not sure that that is a point of order, but the Member has raised it, and it is on the record in Hansard. I am sure that it can then be pursued.

Mr Sheehan: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The previous Deputy Speaker said that my earlier point was a "point of clarification", so maybe this is something similar. I remember reading the letter that the Minister sent round in which he said that he had confused the issue of exemption from fair employment and that of the certificate in religious education, and he corrected the mistake that he made in the House. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has put his view on the record, and perhaps if letters can be exchanged, everyone will be happy.

Mr Craig: The only thing that I can confirm is that I have no recollection of any letters, of clarification or otherwise, from the Minister.

This afternoon, we need to look at the Catholic certificate, the religious education certificate that we are debating, and what it is. It is at the root of what is being discussed. Is it discrimination or not? To be honest with you, from my personal background, I have absolutely no idea what it is. I come from a deeply evangelical Protestant background, and I have no idea what it is all about. However, I listened to and questioned the CCMS representatives with deep interest when they came to the Committee. In some respects, Father Tim Bartlett let the cat out of the bag when he said that it is very much about not only teaching the sacraments of the Church but turning each maintained teacher into a religious education teacher.

If you go into a maintained school, not only are you a teacher of maths, English, physics or whatever but you are a religious instructor. The difference is that you are a religious instructor of one religious viewpoint. From an equality point of view, is that acceptable? Everyone in the House has to make up their own mind on that. My great difficulty is the fact that the state pays for this. I would have thought that that is the role of the Church.

I see a completely different set-up in the controlled sector. The Protestant Churches' viewpoint is not rammed down people's throats by every single teacher in that sector. Only those who wish to teach religion do so. Even when they teach religion, they follow the Northern Ireland curriculum, not the viewpoint of one single Church.

Does this discriminate against those who disagree with it or who disagree with the Roman Catholic faith? I can come to only one conclusion: in some respects, it does discriminate because, even if I can get a certificate that allows me to teach the Roman Catholic faith, I have no wish or desire to do so. Am I being discriminated against? I have come to my own conclusion, and the answer, in my mind, is yes.

Will this have a negative impact on our shared education future, to which everyone on the Committee, basically, agreed to? It could have a negative impact, but the presentation made by both Brookeborough primary schools is reassuring for everyone in the House because

those schools are already working together on a shared future. I asked this question: "Are you having shared classes in those schools at present?" The answer was a very clear yes. So, I asked the obvious question when I said, "I take it those shared classes can only be taken by teachers who have the Catholic certificate". The blunt, fundamental answer from both principals was no. So, those two schools have, in their own way, come to a solution that allows those without the Catholic certificate to teach subjects to shared classes in that school environment. If that is the way forward for shared education, so be it. I for one will back that situation.

4.15 pm

When the transferors were in front of the Committee, I asked them the question about the Catholic certificate. They made it very, very clear that there were ongoing negotiations between the four main Churches around the issue so that a solution agreed by all the Churches could be found. In some respects, that is maybe the best way forward. However, as far as this goes here today, I have to support the motion, because no matter what I think, I see an element of discrimination in the Catholic certificate which I, as an evangelical Protestant, cannot support.

Mr McCallister: I welcome the debate and congratulate Mr Kinahan on tabling today's motion. One of the most important things to remember about this debate, and one of the reasons why I am disappointed that there is no ministerial response, is that, for me, it is about shared education. It is much wider than just the aspects of what Mr Kinahan has in his motion, and there ought to be a ministerial response from the Department on it. That is why I brought amendments forward to the Education Bill around a duty to promote shared education and why I have said repeatedly that it cannot simply be about bussing children between different schools. It must be about making sectors within our education system more open, more pluralist and more reflective of society.

Ensuring that more children from different backgrounds are able to learn together every day is vital for the future of our society and economy. I firmly believe that that can be done whilst maintaining those different sectors' rights to teach according to a certain ethos. That is why I have been so disappointed in the Minister's draft shared education Bill. In my view, it is almost taking minimalism to a new level in its lack of ambition.

I believe that the real debate about shared education must be on the issues such as those we are debating today, because I fully support the motion and, indeed, the amendment from the Alliance Party. Removing the exemption in fair employment law would, in my view, be a progressive move. There is a challenge to those who claim to want a shared future and genuine equality. They need to articulate in detail why they oppose such a change.

I will take several of the points, Mr Deputy Speaker. Sinn Féin claims to want an Ireland of equals; it claims to be the party of equality. Why then would it be opposed to changing this? I take Mr Ramsey's point on the value of faith/ethos education entirely. I get that, and I buy into it. I look at schools and results from other parts of the UK; I look at parts of England and Wales where they have shared schools and where they have faith/ethos schools that are outperforming other schools. That is something that we want, but that does not require an individual

certificate. As Members opposite and, indeed, Mr Kinahan pointed out, a special certificate is not required if you are teaching science, maths or English. That is where the difference is.

Take, for example, Liverpool. There are shared schools there between the Church of England and Roman Catholic faiths. There are also Anglican schools, where the majority of pupils are actually from a Muslim background.

There are other Catholic schools in which a large percentage of the pupils are from a non-Catholic background, or, indeed, from no religious background. Parents are opting for those schools because their ethos is right. We should surely be able to get that right. We have an opportunity to amend the Minister's Bill and to make decisions. We need to go much further than the changes that the Minister has been suggesting.

What are some of the changes that I would like to see made? I would like an education system that incentivises ethos schools to look at other issues and to increase their intake of children from different backgrounds. I also want to change regulations for governing bodies so that schools and board of governors have a more diverse background. I want us to make it easier for schools to change ethos or sector if there is a genuine demand from local people. There is an opportunity in the forthcoming Bill to do that. It is a much better opportunity than trailing our feet and hoping that a single equality Bill will somehow deliver the answer. We can protect and defend a faith/ethos education and make it more diverse —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McCallister: — and pluralist, but take the need for a certificate out of the equation altogether.

Ms Lo: I thank all the Members who referred to our amendment.

The Alliance Party recognises that the motion seeks to address equality of opportunity, and, although we support it, it is important to note that any change would have to be made by amending legislation, and that could take a few years. For that reason, we tabled our amendment as an interim solution. There are a number of issues relating to teacher training, but the debate primarily concerns the existence of the teacher exemption in equality legislation. That is based on article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, and it is OFMDFM's responsibility to initiate legislative change. A number of Members referred to that.

As Members outlined, there is an ongoing requirement for a teacher to possess the certificate in religious education in order to work in nursery and primary schools in the Catholic maintained sector. The crux of the matter is access to the CRE for students at Stranmillis University College and others who may also be affected. At present, Queen's focuses on PGCEs for secondary-level education, where this is less of an issue. Ulster University students study for the certificate as part of the training that is facilitated by the Catholic Church. At St Mary's, provision for the certificate is also part of the course. However, students of Stranmillis have no direct access to studying for the certificate. Their only option is to undertake distance learning through the University of Glasgow, which

means additional time and resource costs. A number of Members referred to that.

The Alliance Party respects the fact that there is a range of sectors in the Northern Ireland education system. Across those sectors, different ethoses may need to be accommodated. However, our ideal would be to see a more pluralist certificate that ensures that teachers are trained to work in any context, particularly given the growing diversity in our society, so that those of non-Christian faiths or from no religious background are catered for in our schools system. However, for now, we seek to address the imbalance by calling on St Mary's, as an interim measure, to provide access to the teaching of the certificate in religious education to students from other teacher-training institutions, including Stranmillis University College.

I will now refer to Members' comments on our amendment. Sinn Féin and the SDLP stated that they will oppose the motion and the amendment, although I found that the Members who spoke were all really saying that they wanted to see more collaboration between St Mary's and Stranmillis in not having that barrier for our undergraduates when learning their teacher training.

Mr Sheehan said that the debate today creates an atmosphere of distrust, setting back the potential for collaboration. I hope that that is not the aim of the Alliance Party.

Mr Rogers said that the SDLP advocates parental choice, but he said that he would like to see Stranmillis giving more information and support to students in getting the certificate. That is our aim as well. He said that he wants to see access —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member draw her remarks to a close?

Ms Lo: — to a certificate being open to all students.

Ms McLaughlin said that access to a certificate is important —

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member's time is up.

Ms Lo: — and that the exemption has outlived its sell-by date.

Mrs Overend: I rise to wind on the motion, and I share the disappointment that there is no response from any Minister.

My colleague Danny Kinahan, who very rightly proposed the motion this afternoon, asked the following question: do we actually want a shared society and a shared future? That is something that everyone in the Assembly must ask themselves. If some want the perpetuation of inequality, segregation and a shared-out future, they should be honest and say so. Some recent debates in the House suggest that more than a few prefer the status quo; however, there can be no genuine shared education under the current circumstances. Without change, the shared education concept can never succeed. Unless schools have interchangeable staff, the whole project will not be balanced and, for practical reasons, will not work.

On 22 April 2013, the Assembly passed an Ulster Unionist Party motion calling for an end to an exception to fair employment law allowing discrimination on the grounds of religious belief when appointing teachers. It was passed on an oral vote. It is fair to say that nationalists were lukewarm, not to say suspicious; but, at least, Sinn Féin did not oppose the motion. In the subsequent two years,

we have seen little or no progress at Executive level. That is why we are debating the motion, which has the added issue of the requirement for a certificate in religious education to the teacher exemption from fair employment regulations.

The Education Minister indicates that he thinks that the requirement for the Catholic certificate should be removed, and that he has written to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on several occasions. "I am awaiting a response", is what the Education Minister said. Has he had no response in nearly two years?

I want to add to the debate some remarks about the Catholic certificate requirement and its availability, or otherwise, to trainee teachers. As we know, to take up a teaching post in Catholic-maintained nursery and primary schools applicants must possess a recognised religious education certificate. The certificate is offered at St Mary's College; it is also an option for students on the postgraduate certificate in education courses at the Ulster University. It is worth noting that, in contrast to the other providers, St Mary's does not use the UCAS system for entrance to its undergraduate teaching course. So, not only do you have another chance to get into St Mary's if you do not get accepted elsewhere, if you graduate from St Mary's armed with a certificate in RE you can apply for a position in any school in Northern Ireland. That opportunity is denied to graduates of Stran.

Stranmillis College has always been, and is increasingly, a mixed teacher-training college, which provides teachers for all sectors in our education system. I was quite concerned recently to learn that attempts made over recent years to enable its students to access the RE certificate offered at St Mary's have been rebuffed. I understand that they are trying again. Surely this is the way forward, at least in the short term. It would be a positive step forward if student teachers could study for and obtain the certificate at Stranmillis, just as they can at Ulster University. I really cannot understand why this has been blocked by certain interests. It sounds like restrictive practices. Let us face it: it sounds like looking after your own.

4.30 pm

Increasingly, the make-up of the teachers in state controlled schools reflects the wider population, but Catholic schools are effectively kept for Catholic teachers. It is just wrong in this day and age of fair employment and equality legislation. On that score, it really is high time that the Equality Commission had a look at this again. I appreciate that religious instruction and the sacraments are important for many Catholic parents, but it can be done in the integrated sector. It can also be done elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In England and Wales, section 58 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 allows for what are known as reserved teachers in types of schools broadly described as faith schools. These schools are allowed to reserve up to a fifth of their teaching posts for teachers selected on the basis of their competence to give religious instruction according to the tenets of that particular faith.

In the short term, I see no reason whatsoever why Stranmillis students should not be given the opportunity to study for and gain their certificate at that institution. It is available for PGCE students at the Ulster University, after all. The more fundamental question is this: do we actually

want a shared society and a shared future? Members of this Assembly talk a lot about equality and a shared future, but we all must recognise that dropping the RE certificate obligation is a necessary precursor to effective shared education.

I will refer now to some contributions from other Members. I appreciate the participation of so many people in the Chamber this afternoon.

Mr Lunn and Ms Lo from the Alliance Party, I appreciate your support for this afternoon's motion. You support the exemption's being lifted. You talked about the time taken to implement legislation, and therefore see your amendment as a non-legislative stepping stone towards our aim.

Michelle McIlveen from the DUP talked about using:

"yesterday's language rather than tomorrow's vision."

She complimented the Churches' work of pushing shared education forward. She also said that joint faith schools should do their part in moving this forward as well. Her colleagues Jonathan Craig and David McIlveen also spoke this afternoon. Jonathan referred to the negative impact on the shared education future, and David — sorry, Mr McIlveen — referred to the laissez-faire attitude towards this issue.

I refer now to Mr Sheehan from Sinn Féin.

Mr Sheehan: Pat.

Mrs Overend: Sorry?

Mr Sheehan: Pat.

Mrs Overend: That is fair enough. I will call him Mr Sheehan from Sinn Féin. He referred to the single equality Bill and Sinn Féin's proposal, but this particular issue that we are raising today is something that can be addressed in the short term. If Sinn Féin is genuinely in support, progress can be made in the short term. Mr Sheehan talked about neglecting their ethos in not having the certificate, yet we are not asking those in CCMS to neglect their religion but to ensure equality of opportunity for all teachers.

Mr Rogers from the SDLP spoke against the motion, strongly supporting the Catholic ethos, as did Mr Ramsey. I really feel that this motion is not targeted against the Catholic education system. I want to reassure them of that. Mr Rogers referred to the stool aspect — school, parish and home — of the Roman Catholic ethos in schools. I have to be honest: my children go to a school with a very similar ethos. We learn at school; we talk about what is going on in the area, in the world around us and at home. I find it difficult to understand how, if that is the Catholic ethos, so many schools that share it are not in the Catholic maintained sector.

As for the matter of the Catholic certificate in Scotland, it is not required. I understand that it does exist. We did not say that it did not exist, but it is not required in Scotland.

The Member was clearly very much against getting rid of the Catholic certificate, but we know that the post-primary schools have already dropped it. So, I think that we can progress that.

Mr Hazzard from Sinn Féin again raised the single equality Bill. That Member's party has been in OFMDFM since 2007, but we have yet to see that Bill come before the

House. We have not seen it. We want action on the issue sooner rather than later.

To conclude, the exemption to fair employment in teaching through the RE certificate should go.

"My personal view is that it should be done away with. In the teaching of the sacraments, I believe that there are other ways of achieving that objective and goal for the Catholic sector rather than every teacher having a certificate." — [Official Report (Hansard), Bound Volume 101, p364, col 1].

Those are not my words; they are the words that the Minister of Education spoke in the House on Monday 9 February. On checking Hansard, I found that he said it twice. So, it is over to his colleagues the First Minister and deputy First Minister to act.

In my last half minute, I will emphasise that the Ulster Unionist Party will not wait any longer for progress on the issue. We will be seeking the first available opportunity to repeal the exemption in fair employment legislation for teachers and to legislate to end the requirement for primary-school teachers in the maintained sector to hold the Catholic certificate in religious education.

I commend the motion to the House, and I will accept the amendment.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Order, Members. I ask Members to resume their seats. Order, Members.

Question, That the amendment be made, put and negatived.

Main Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 51; Noes 38.

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kinahan and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, 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 M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKevitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Maeve McLaughlin and Mr Sheehan.

Main Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the failure of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to repeal the exemption in fair employment law allowing discrimination on the grounds of religious belief in teacher appointments, as mandated by the motion Teachers: Employment Law, which was approved by the Assembly on 22 April 2013; recognises that the teacher exemption, as well as the continuing requirement for a certificate in religious education at nursery and primary level in the Catholic maintained sector, are unnecessary barriers to truly shared education; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to take action to remove these overt examples of inequality and discrimination.

Mr Hazzard: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I apologise to the House for missing my topical question earlier. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I thank the Member for doing so. It will be on the record and will be passed, therefore, to the Speaker.

Mr McKay: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I echo the comments of my colleague: I also apologise for missing my topical question earlier. Thank you.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): I thank the Member for putting that on the record.

Adjourned at 4.55 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 14 April 2015

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

Members observed two minutes' silence.

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 mhian liom ráiteas a dhéanamh, ag comhlíonadh alt 52 de Acht 1988, maidir le cruinniú den Chomhairle Aireachta Thuaidh/Theas i bhformáid oideachais. Tionóladh an cruinniú in Ard Mhacha ar 25 Márta 2015. 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. The meeting was held in Armagh on 25 March 2015. This statement has been agreed with Minister Storey and is made on behalf of both of us.

Turning to EU funding opportunities, the Council noted the ongoing work of both Departments on the shared education theme of the forthcoming Peace IV programme. I will be asking my officials to explore the potential for collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills on the ERASMUS+ programme. I am looking forward to receiving an update on progress at the next NSMC plenary meeting.

The Council noted plans by both Departments to draw up a model for a future cross-jurisdiction engagement event on educational underachievement issues. I look forward to receiving that from officials.

The Council received a joint presentation from both inspectorates, covering the main conclusions from their work on literacy and numeracy. I welcome the continuing work of the inspectorates and their plans to publish joint work on literacy and numeracy, their continuing programme of inspection exchanges and their plans for the inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills to quality assure the Education and Training Inspectorate's review of the outcomes of its Promoting Improvement in English and Mathematics programme.

I welcome the continuing progress by both Departments and the Middletown Centre for Autism in facilitating the expansion of the centre's range of services since it commenced expansion in April 2013. Minister O'Sullivan and I had the opportunity to visit the centre following the Council meeting. We received a presentation by the centre on its current work and its plans for 2015-16.

We also had the opportunity to observe intervention work with children referred to the centre and learn about the centre's whole-school referral work and meet parents and children. Minister O'Sullivan and I were delighted to meet the children and parents and see first-hand the invaluable

support that the centre offers to them. We will continue to support the centre in its vital role in working with some of the most vulnerable children and young people with autism.

I turn to teacher qualifications. Both Ministers noted that the work on the professional accreditation of reconceptualisation programmes of initial teacher education has now been completed by the Teaching Council Ireland. Ministers noted that the North/South teacher qualifications working group has asked both councils to revisit the Teaching Council Ireland desk-based qualifications assessment process and provide an assessment of the issues impacting mobility by the end of September 2015.

Ministers were pleased that the criteria encompassing guidelines for the Irish-language requirement programme design have now been approved by the Teaching Council Ireland, and they have recently invited St Mary's University College, Belfast to submit a formal programme proposal for approval. The Council also noted the progress made on the implementation of the 2014-15 programme plan developed by the Professional Development Service for Teachers and the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS).

Ministers noted the positive outcome of the independent evaluation of the North/South collaborative programme of work for 2010-11 to 2013-14, the findings of which will inform future programmes of work. It was noted that approval in principle has been given to a collaborative programme of work over the next three academic years based on digital literacy and history and that support services have been asked to develop a detailed proposal to include objectives, timelines and budgets for final approval of the North/South teacher qualifications working group in May 2015. Ministers noted that the twelfth annual conference, 'Always Learning, Always Teaching: Making the Journey', took place in the Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen, on 21 and 22 October 2014, and work has commenced on organising the thirteenth annual conference, 'Teacher Education for Social Justice'.

I turn to school, youth and teacher exchanges. Minister O'Sullivan and I noted the ongoing activities of the North/South education and training standards committee for youth work, particularly in relation to the professional endorsement of higher education programmes in youth work. I welcome the development of a dedicated website and the introduction of an annual monitoring process to ensure that institutions comply with the basic criteria for professional endorsement. The Council welcomed the work of the group established by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and the National Youth Council of Ireland to consider

the issue of youth work and ICT and its recent success in securing funding through the ERASMUS+ programme to carry out further research with European partners.

Ministers agreed that the North/South Ministerial Council in education format should meet again on 21 October 2015.

Miss M McIlveen (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): The Minister mentioned anticipated improvements to the transferability of teaching qualifications, and he previously announced a favourable change to the way in which universities in the Irish Republic award points for GCE A levels. Will the Minister tell the House whether he has made any progress in persuading the Irish Universities Association to change its mind and recognise our applied Northern Ireland GCSE A levels to ensure their portability? In addition, will he provide further detail on the cost associated with the three-year collaborative programme of work and confirm that key services like the primary modern languages programme will not be sacrificed to fund cross-border activities that have seemingly limited relevance to our schools?

Mr O'Dowd: I am not sure how the Member can end by saying that those activities have limited relevance to our schools, given that her first two points are very relevant to our schools. The issue of applied A levels is very relevant to our schools, and engagement through the North/South Ministerial Council has paid dividends in that Southern universities have made a commitment to review the way in which they deal with and score A levels to ensure that there is greater equitable access for Northern students to Southern universities. That is relevant to our schools.

The Member raised key services such as the primary languages programme. Will it be sacrificed in relation to the ongoing cooperation between the inspectorates etc? No, it will not be, but I think that it is vital that our inspectorate learns from its colleagues from the southern side of the border. We also cooperate with the inspectorate in Britain, so we are learning from other inspectorates around this group of islands to ensure that young people in our schools receive the best-quality education services possible.

I should also have mentioned your question about applied A levels. We will continue to lobby Southern universities to give the proper recognition to applied A levels; we have not succeeded yet, but those discussions and that lobbying will continue. We will continue to engage at both ministerial and official level, and I am aware that the Minister for Employment and Learning is also lobbying for proper recognition of applied A levels.

In relation to the primary languages programme, nothing will be sacrificed in any of our services here to ensure greater cross-border cooperation. I have been lobbied by a number of schools recently about the primary languages programme. It is not directly relevant to North/South cooperation, but the Member has raised it. One of the schools has a surplus of £250,000 and the other has a surplus of £70,000. I respectfully suggest that those schools are in quite a good position to continue our primary languages programme.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement today, and I want to acknowledge the continuing progress in Middletown autism centre. As somebody who comes from a border constituency, can I ask the Minister specifically: there is agreement, in principle, on the collaborative programme,

but what needs to happen to make that approach more formal? Can the Minister give some indication as to how that would link with further and higher education?

Mr O'Dowd: The ongoing work of the North/South Ministerial Council is paying dividends, as I have outlined, in learning best practice from the inspectorate. The autism work, through the Middletown centre, has proven to be very relevant. We visited the autism centre and met the parents, teachers and a child who was receiving services from the autism centre and were heartened to see the reality of investment in the centre and the outworkings across the educational sector. The relevance to further and higher education is really a matter for the Minister for Employment and Learning to respond to. I believe that the ongoing work, whether through the autism centre or inspection qualifications, or through any other aspect of North/South cooperation, has a relevance to our education system and is therefore a benefit to further and higher education.

Mr Rogers: We all acknowledge the great work of the autism centre at Middletown. What discussions have taken place with your Southern counterpart to share the good practice and ensure that children with ASD who fall outside the remit of Middletown have their educational needs met?

Mr O'Dowd: My counterpart in the South has commissioned different services from the Middletown centre than we have, and that is to meet what they believe to be the training needs in their jurisdiction. What I found heartening, particularly during my visit to the Middletown centre, was that speaking to teachers from our special educational needs schools, and schools that are coming to the centre and receiving training from it in their schools, is paying dividends for all the children in their settings, whether in special needs or mainstream schools. We are either training our teachers and professionals in Middletown or teachers from Middletown are visiting schools, to work with schools, parents and boards of governors. That is paying dividends for all children, whether or not they are on the autism spectrum.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for his statement. Does the Minister not agree that, while it is fine to look at North/South mobility for teachers — as the Minister refers to in the second paragraph, regarding teacher qualifications — that his priority should be for teacher mobility within and across sectors in Northern Ireland? Could the Minister clarify at what point, between 9 and 10 February this year, he changed his mind, and decided that keeping the requirement for maintained primary and nursery schools to have a certificate in RE was a good idea?

10.45 am

Mr O'Dowd: I did not change my mind. I made an error. To err is human; to forgive is divine. I notified Members quite quickly afterwards in writing. During Question Time, when different issues are being thrown at you, I, like anyone else, am capable of making an error. I rectified it, and Members are now fully aware of the position.

There are two clearly distinct issues. I have written to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister about the exemption. I believe that it should be dealt with. I understand that people are seeking to do so through equality legislation, with the support of all parties, I hope. The Catholic certificate is open to all denominations and can be obtained from either St Mary's University College

or, through online learning, the University of Glasgow. I have committed to looking at the recommendations that came out of a recent review by my Department to ensure that the certificate is accessible to all and that all teachers have mobility across sectors.

Mr Lunn: In the spirit of North/South cooperation, perhaps, has there been any discussion at these meetings on the excellent work of Educate Together in the Republic and its relevance to the work of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) in the Northern Ireland context?

Mr O'Dowd: I cannot recall any discussions about that group, but I am more than happy to engage with Minister O'Sullivan to see whether she would be agreeable to having it on a future agenda of the North/South Ministerial Council.

Mr Craig: Thank you, Minister. I listened with interest to what you said about the Middletown Centre and how you hope to expand its range of services. What impact will your reduction by £100,000 to its budget this year have on that expansion programme, and will there be a similar reduction from the Republic of Ireland?

Mr O'Dowd: I have sought to ensure that there will be no reduction in services at the Middletown Centre as a result of the £100,000 reduction. We believe that that will be dealt with through administration at the Department and in other areas. You will not see a reduction in front-line services. A decision on any funding from Minister O'Sullivan's budget is a matter for Minister O'Sullivan.

Mr Newton: I thank the Minister for his statement. The Chair of the Committee asked specifically about the budget allocation for the collaborative programme of work over the next three years, but the Minister did not cover that in his answer. Can he outline the cost of the programme?

In addition, I welcome the establishment of a group by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and the announcement of the work that it will do with the National Youth Council of Ireland. In the context of cuts to the youth budget, and the consternation that those cuts have caused in the education and library boards, which are particularly concerned about detached youth work in inner-city and difficult interface areas, is it the case that the establishment of the working group will in fact detract from existing support?

Mr O'Dowd: I do not have the details of the costs for the collaborative programme of work in front of me, but I am more than happy to share them with Members. I reiterate my welcome for the work between the youth councils on the island.

I have made my views on our local youth council very clear: it is administration that we can no longer afford. I will launch a consultation in the near future on how we move forward. Our current youth council has a legislative basis and, given the budget facing the Department of Education and the projected budgets for future years, we should do everything in our power to reduce bureaucracy and administration. We have to find an alternative solution.

There is no cut to youth budgets in the education and library boards — now the Education Authority. There are no cuts to youth budgets whatsoever, whether for detached youth work or mainstream youth work. I have ring-fenced youth services, and it is now a matter for the various management strands in the Education Authority

to decide which programmes of detached youth work that they wish to take forward. The budget is there to continue programmes moving forward in future. This is funded under what is known as the ministerial fund. I introduced that funding a number of years ago, particularly for socially deprived areas. It has been assigned to the authority and I await decisions from the authority as to how the funding will be used.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a ráitis. Fáiltím ach go háirithe roimh an chomhoibriú atá ar bun idir an dá chigireacht um oideachas agus oiliúint, Thuaidh agus Theas. Ba mhaith liom a fhiafraí den Aire cad é an comhoibriú atá ar siúl idir an dá chigireacht maidir leis an Ghaelscolaíocht. An dtig leis an Aire a dheimhniú go bhfuil na scileanna cuí ag na cigirí i bhfos a théann isteach a dhéanamh cigireachta sna Gaelscoileanna?

I thank the Minister for his statement and I especially welcome the cooperation between the two inspectorates, North and South. As part of that cooperation, what work is being done on developing inspection skills regarding Irish-medium education? Will the Minister assure us that the inspectorate here has the appropriate skills to carry out that work?

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as a cheist. Yes, there has been previous cooperation between the two inspectorates in relation to the inspection of Irish-medium provision, and that cooperation will continue. I am satisfied that our inspectorate has the appropriate skills to carry out inspections in the Irish-medium sector.

Mr Campbell: The Minister referred to educational underachievement, particularly in Northern Ireland, and the work on literacy and numeracy. Did the subject of the signature project come up? It is about to end in the next few weeks. Given the success of that project, has the Minister given any thought to a replacement for it, particularly to enable our working-class young people to get better numeracy and literacy skills?

Mr O'Dowd: It would be inappropriate for the programme to be raised at the North/South Ministerial Council in education format because it is funded by OFMDFM. I welcome the Member's support for the programme. I would like to see it moving forward, and I understand that OFMDFM is analysing its budgets to see whether it can continue to fund the programme. The initial response and reports back from the programme have been that it has been very beneficial to the schools and pupils involved. I hope that OFMDFM is in a position to continue funding the programme in future.

Mr Dallat: I welcome the Ministers' statement, and particularly their plans to publish joint work on literacy and numeracy, which Mr Campbell just mentioned. Given that the standards of literacy and numeracy in both parts of the island are equally bad and far below those in Japan, Finland and the Netherlands, does the Minister agree that recent decisions to remove funding — for example, the early years fund from nursery schools — will set us back even further than we were?

Mr O'Dowd: Again, I welcome the opportunity to clarify, or correct, the Member's assertion. There have been no cuts to early years education funding for nursery schools or preschools. The Member mentioned a cut to the early years fund but that will not impact on early years

provision for preschools because I have a Programme for Government commitment and the budget to meet that commitment to ensure that every child whose parents wish to avail themselves of early years provision will be allowed to do so. There are two separate and distinct funding regimes.

In relation to the common cause of tackling our numeracy and literacy levels, we have much to learn from across this island, these islands and the world. Our educational challenges are not unique; they are common across other parts of the world, and the more we learn from others, the more opportunity there will be for our young people to improve and have an opportunity for better quality education moving forward.

Private Members' Business

UDR Four

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 is published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes 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 Irwin: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the miscarriage of justice in the case of the UDR four; recognises the particular circumstances of Mr Colin Worton in relation to the case and that he served over two and a half years in custody on remand before the case against him was dropped and he was released; further notes the Minister of Justice's comments on the miscarriage of justice, the innocence of Mr Worton and the significant detrimental impact on Mr Worton; and calls on the Minister of Justice to seek urgently to address this miscarriage of justice by exercising his discretion to provide redress for Mr Worton.

I welcome the opportunity to once again bring the case of Colin Worton to the House. Members will recall that the previous occasion the matter was discussed in the Chamber was in an Adjournment debate on Tuesday 24 June 2011. We are some years down the line from that. However, for Colin, the situation remains unchanged. He continues to pursue his very dignified and honourable campaign to find redress.

The facts are well established in Colin's case. The fact that he spent 30 months on remand before he was released without charge has had a profound effect on him and his family. Colin feels very strongly that a heavy stigma has been attached to his undeserving association with Adrian Carroll's murder and that that has prevented him from undertaking many of the normal and honourable pursuits in his life that he would have otherwise pursued. Indeed, his passion lay with the army, and he was devastated when his contract was not renewed and he had to leave the profession that he loved. His unwarranted and erroneous journey through the legal system at that time was significant for the length of time that he was held on remand. In today's terms, it would represent a very serious sentence. Lord Morrow made that point in the previous Adjournment debate.

Through my numerous meetings with Colin, he has stressed that all he seeks is to be fully recognised as innocent and for the ordeal that he was put through to be appropriately addressed. That has always been the position, and it is one that I fully support.

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

When anyone looks at the facts of Colin's case, they see that it is very clear that, of course and importantly, whilst Lord Justice Kelly acquitted him in the first instance, he had already served a lengthy period on remand. What is obviously concerning for him is that those who were convicted and then had those convictions overturned then

qualified for compensation and were duly awarded it. I made the point in the House back in June 2011 that the process of exoneration and compensation in the instances of those convicted and then acquitted was much more public, much more publicised and much more conclusive in getting closure for the accused. Colin has never had a sense of closure. That is the crux of the issue and the injustice that our Justice Minister should move to put right for Mr Worton.

The previous Adjournment debate —

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Irwin: I will, yes; OK.

Mr Allister: I think the Member puts his finger on the perverse inequity at the heart of the matter, which is that Mr Worton is effectively being punished by being denied compensation because he was acquitted at an early stage, whereas, if his trial had run its full course and he had been convicted and then acquitted on appeal, he would have qualified for the statutory scheme. However, because on judicial direction, the case being so weak, he was acquitted at an early stage, he is being denied compensation, yet he spent the same 30 months in prison as his co-accused. Is it not the Justice Minister's failure to address that inequity and to bring justice to the case that really is the ongoing scandal?

Mr Irwin: I thank the Member for his intervention, and I agree fully with him.

The previous Adjournment debate was important for establishing the views of the Justice Minister, David Ford, and it included useful debate between Members, including those with experience of law.

Given that the Justice Minister has the necessary authority under our devolved Assembly institutions to respond to the case, Mr Ford, at the time, pledged to reassess Colin's case and gave assurances to fully take on board the contributions made by Members in the House on 21 June 2011. Those contributions, by and large, supported the case for redress to be made by the Minister. The Minister responded to Mr Worton on 28 October 2013 stating that, after a thorough review of the case, Colin was not eligible for the ex gratia scheme. I ask the Minister to tell the House today whether he believes that Colin Worton has been completely exonerated of any wrongdoing in the murder of Adrian Carroll.

11.00 am

In revisiting this important case, the main thrust of the motion is a request to the Justice Minister to further consider Colin Worton's case, thereby acknowledging the ongoing circumstances affecting Colin, and to move to exercise his discretion to get redress for Colin in light of the significant ordeal he has come through. With this firmly established, I am concerned that the Minister, through the amendment tabled by his party colleagues, has clearly signalled that he is closing the door on any possibility of discretionary redress. That, I believe, sends a very poor signal to Colin and is an unfortunate contribution from the Justice Minister's party. The amendment runs against the grain of the goodwill that was generated in the previous Adjournment debate. Alliance Party Members have sought to make an amendment that, in effect, would end any

chance of future liaising between Mr Worton and Mr Ford. I must say that I find that unhelpful.

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

There is merit in the Justice Minister redoubling his efforts to seek redress for Colin, and those should be especially directed at the manner in which the confession was obtained in light of the words of Justice Kelly in rejecting the confession as inadmissible. The following quotation is on the record of the Chamber, and it is worth repeating it today to set in context the basis of the case for redress for Colin. Mr Smyth QC stated that Colin's statement:

"had been induced by the detectives at Castlereagh by a trick which embraced threats and dishonest promises and oppressive and unfair means."

Colin remains firmly of the view that the methods used in his interview did indeed represent a serious default on the part of the police. This tallies with the findings of Lord Justice Kelly when, in rejecting the evidence before him, he said:

"the assurance of a fair trial includes the right to be protected from evidence which might have an unreliable effect on the result of the trial."

In the letter to Mr Worton of 28 October 2013, the Justice Minister confirmed that he had reviewed the case under the ex gratia scheme and, importantly, in the realm of exceptional circumstances, which included the suggestion of serious default by the police. The conclusion reached by Mr Ford that he continues to be ineligible for compensation remains a source of great concern for Colin. I appeal again for the Justice Minister to look again at the case. I take the opportunity to go further and ask him to use this very serious example as a basis for improving the criteria and guidelines under which the scheme is operated.

The word "inability" is used in the amendment. However, in the letter to Colin of 28 October 2013, it is stated clearly that responsibility for Mr Worton's application was transferred to the Department of Justice on devolution. It is therefore the case that the Justice Minister has ability in this regard, and the motion urges him to use that ability to reach a satisfactory and deserving conclusion for Mr Worton.

It is an unacceptable state of affairs in the outworking of justice that someone who is held for so long with such notable negative effects, lasting over 30 years, cannot find redress. I respectfully put the motion to the House in the hope that the wrong can be righted.

Mr Dickson: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after "further notes" and insert

"the previous comments of the Minister of Justice that Colin Worton was found by the proper authorities of the law to be not guilty of any crime associated with the death of Adrian Carroll; and concludes that the inability of the Minister of Justice to provide compensation in no way undermines Mr Worton's innocence."

I think, like most people, we will have real sympathy for the experience of Colin Worton. It is deeply regrettable that he was ever placed in this position. I have spoken to the Minister of Justice at length on the issue. His Department has looked at the case from a wide variety of angles and

with appropriate advice. Indeed, there was a review of it following the evidence of the Historical Enquiries Team (HET). However, unfortunately, it is simply outside the Department of Justice's abilities to provide compensation for Mr Worton because he was never actually convicted of a crime. I trust that the Minister will further develop on this detail. However, it is at the very heart and crux of the matter that Mr Worton is not eligible for compensation because, unlike the three others convicted at trial in that case, he was acquitted. It is for that reason that I propose the amendment to the motion today:

"that Colin Worton was found by the proper authorities of the law to be not guilty of any crime associated with the death of Adrian Carroll; and concludes that the inability of the Minister of Justice to provide compensation in no way undermines Mr Worton's innocence."

The Minister of Justice cannot provide compensation to Mr Worton as he has, I believe and understand, not the means to do this. However, the House can clearly and unequivocally state that, although the Department of Justice is not in a position to provide compensation, it remains plainly the fact that Mr Worton has been acquitted of the murder of Adrian Carroll, something that we must clearly highlight.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: I will, yes.

Mr Allister: Will the Member not acknowledge that the Minister, being the Minister, would have the power to revise the statutory scheme and bring to the House revisions to the scheme that would meet the inequity that Mr Worton has been subjected to? Instead of hiding behind the existing statutory scheme, why do the Member and the Minister not set about revising the statutory scheme to bring Mr Worton within it?

Mr Dickson: I hear what Mr Allister says, and, indeed, my next line will perhaps explain my difficulty in answering him. I am neither a barrister nor a lawyer, and I recognise that this is a complex, unfortunate and troubling case. I am sure and am convinced that the Minister of Justice will look at all the avenues and explore every aspect in respect of this case and other cases that have similar legal complexities attached to them.

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: I would like just to finish, thank you.

I trust that today's debate can bring comfort to Mr Worton. I genuinely hope that it will do that. I wish to repeat the words that I said earlier: Mr Worton was found to be not guilty by the proper authorities of the law. On that basis, I hope that other Members will join me in supporting the amendment and recognise that, while the Minister cannot provide compensation to Mr Worton, we can all speak with one voice when we acknowledge that Mr Worton has not been convicted of any crime relating to the murder of Adrian Carroll.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I want to begin my remarks by extending my solidarity to the family of Adrian Carroll. As we have said many times, I am sure that a debate such as this reminds the family of the trauma and grief that they are experiencing. I am a bit perturbed that the proposer of

the motion did not acknowledge that family in any way, but that follows the trend from the Adjournment debate in 2012, when not one Member from the unionist parties acknowledged the family at the heart of this. Perhaps they might have the good grace to correct that today.

The motion asks that the Assembly:

"notes the miscarriage of justice in the case of the UDR four".

Then the proposer came to the Floor and did not mention that case, except for Colin Worton, who was not designated by the campaign as one of the UDR four. It amazes me that a person stands convicted, yet the proposer of the motion made no case for why that is a miscarriage of justice.

There is a case to be made that Mr Worton should be considered for compensation, and I will return to that. As I have just pointed out, the motion is framed in a particular way. Perhaps if the supporters of the motion had come here today and said that this case bore all the hallmarks of many cases that passed through Castlereagh and the Diplock courts, we would be having a different debate with a different outcome. Therein lies the problem for us. Those who tabled the motion are trying to paint the scenario that this was somehow the only miscarriage of justice that went through the Diplock courts — far from it, and we have to address that as well.

That is against the backdrop over the last number of years, almost monthly, of cases that were referred to the Court of Appeal by the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) being overturned by that court, and the trial in that court pointing out abuses by the RUC, the British Army and, indeed, in times gone by, the PPS, yet those who tabled the motion take no recognition of that at all. I think that, in these types of cases, you have to be able to say that, if the process was flawed then, the outcomes, on many occasions, were also flawed. The motion does not address that in any way, which is why we cannot support it.

I turn to the case of Mr Worton. I think that you can accept that there is a case to be made. Here was a person with regard to whom the courts accepted that the RUC abused its power. That led to a man being tried and acquitted, but he was not compensated. If you accept that, you also have to accept that it is a universal principle. Many, many other cases went through the court system in which people were acquitted, and the trial judge pointed out that there were abuses by the RUC, yet those people were told that there was no legal redress. Indeed, I refer to one case in which the witness was an agent of the state. The trial judge called him a liar and said that he was unworthy of belief, fabricated evidence and was encouraged by the RUC to fabricate evidence against people. All those people were acquitted in the first instance, yet not one of them received any compensation. They were told that they were not permitted to do so legally.

Mr Brady: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCartney: I will indeed.

Mr Brady: Will the Member consider that there are many cases of people who should be compensated who are not currently provided for under the law?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCartney: That is an excellent point, and we should address it here today. I firmly believe that the Members who raised this issue are absolutely content that this was a miscarriage of justice. If you accept that, you also have to accept that there are other similar cases in which people have not been given any legal redress or compensation.

Lord Morrow: I thank the Member for giving way. He said that his party finds that it cannot support the motion, and he cites that, potentially, there are others who suffered in the same way. Surely accepting the motion in relation to Mr Worton does not diminish the cases of others if they are out there. Surely to goodness, he can support what is being said in today's motion because we are dealing with a particular case. That does not preclude any Member coming to the House with other cases.

Mr McCartney: That is a fair point, which we would accept if the first clause of the motion had not been in it. The Assembly is being asked to accept:

"the miscarriage of justice in the case of the UDR four".

A person stands convicted in that case. I did not hear those who tabled the motion make any case for that being overturned. That is why we cannot support it. They did not come here today and say that torture happened wholesale in Castlereagh and that there were Diplock courts. Indeed, I refer to Mr Allister's insight at that time, when he said that the trial judge in this case took no prisoners. That is a good commentary on that particular time because that is what judges did then: they took no prisoners. They accepted the word of the RUC wholesale, but case after case, including this one, showed that there were torture techniques and malpractice in Castlereagh and that the Diplock courts were all too willing to accept it.

I accept that Mr Worton should be considered for compensation, but, if you accept that, you have to accept that it is a universal principle. There are other people. We cannot support the case of the UDR four being considered a miscarriage of justice.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McCartney: The proposer did not try to enlighten us as to why that should be when a man stands convicted in that case.

Mrs D Kelly: In speaking to today's motion, I am very mindful indeed of the family of Adrian Carroll, who, no doubt, still mourn his loss deeply. It is unfortunate that, as we talk about matters of the past, we often reopen the wounds for the families who are left behind. We have to be very mindful of that in any such debates.

It is also right to be mindful of the fact that many in the UDR lost their lives in circumstances in which they were going about their ordinary jobs elsewhere and were murdered in a very cowardly fashion. However, other members of the UDR took part in and were convicted of the murders of innocent civilians. I am sure that many Members agree with me that they were a disgrace to the uniform.

11.15 am

The case of the UDR four was always very sensitive and prominent in terms of the many murders of the past. As others have said, we have previously debated the case of Colin Worton, who seems to have had a rather peculiar

set of circumstances in which he found himself to be ineligible for compensation for the time that he spent on remand. The trial judge, and indeed at other appeals, and the people examining his evidence all agreed that he was a very vulnerable person. That should have been picked up. There were early warning signs during his questioning by the police that he was a vulnerable person, and indeed evidence was submitted by the psychologist to confirm that that was the case. Therefore, one has to ask why, under the European convention, he was not afforded a responsible adult to be with him during that period of questioning. That is a point that Mr Worton, in my discussions with him, said that he wants to have noted. I ask the Minister to reflect on that.

Indeed, Mr McCartney is right about other people who have spent time on remand, given the miscarriages of justice littered across the past. That is why the SDLP sought not only the reform of the police but also that of the judicial system, so that people would have confidence in it. So what if it opens the floodgates? If people spent time on remand, away from their families, their names dragged through the mud, they are entitled to a form of compensation. Society should reflect on that, particularly in cases where the evidence against them was so poor and was —

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: Yes, I will.

Mr McCartney: Should that be extended to all those who were interned without trial, never mind a case that — *[Inaudible.]* ?

Mrs D Kelly: Absolutely. I have represented people who were interned without trial and who now suffer respiratory problems because of the damp and dismal conditions that they suffered under and lived in. We have no qualms about supporting such a cause. We will not go into those days in total; I want to deal with the case of Colin Worton because I know that it is one to which the Justice Minister has, in fairness, given lengthy consideration in the past, as have Secretaries of State.

Perhaps, as the parties labour over how we deal with the past, this is an element, given the miscarriages of justice, that should be included in the talks on the Stormont House Agreement.

Mr D Bradley: I thank the Member for giving way. I agree with her that support for Mr Worton's case in no way diminishes our sympathy for the Carroll family and the great loss that they have suffered. Has the Member noted that there is a wide range of support for Mr Worton from the leaders of the main Churches; British Irish Rights Watch; the Victims' Commissioner; the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, as well as substantial cross-party support in this House?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs D Kelly: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was not as aware as the Member of the lengthy list that he set out. It shows how many people have considered the vulnerability of Mr Worton in terms of his acquittal and the initial charging. That stands as testimony to how he, personally, feels so obliged and hurt by how he has been treated — or mistreated — by the judicial system and how

he still maintains, despite all the assurances by repeated Secretaries of State, the Justice Minister and this House, that he should be regarded as innocent. He very clearly feels that he has not yet been vindicated or his name fully cleared. Recognition should be given to the length of time that he served on remand. The SDLP supports the motion.

Mr Kennedy: I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I do so as a constituency representative for Newry and Armagh, and someone who has had involvement and more than a passing knowledge of this case and the personalities involved.

This has been a long campaign for justice, not only for the UDR four but for Mr Colin Worton, who is our focus today. There is no doubt that Colin Worton is an innocent man, but the justice system has not served him well, and he has suffered as a result. I pay tribute to Colin Worton for his doggedness and for how he has pursued the issue. I also pay tribute to his wife and family — his elderly mother in particular — who have supported him in his attempts to obtain justice.

The origins of the case, which became known as the case of the UDR four, have been well documented and acknowledged as a miscarriage of justice. The individual, Mr Colin Worton, was held on remand for 30 months between 1 December 1983 and 30 May 1986, when he was acquitted after Lord Justice Kelly ruled that his statement, which was the only evidence against him, was inadmissible. Mr Worton has been seeking not only justice but compensation since 1992 and has thus far been unsuccessful.

Whatever the legal niceties, the fact remains that he has been denied justice. I have lost count of the number of meetings that I have attended with Colin Worton and members of his family. We have met senior politicians, Secretaries of State, important public figures, such as the Police Ombudsman and human rights commissioners — Monica McWilliams and others — to put forward the case. It was clear in all the many meetings that no one disputed the innocence of Colin Worton. Indeed, the Justice Minister acknowledged that in the House in a previous debate and, in part, acknowledges it again in the Alliance Party amendment. However, I believe that the amendment is flawed because it effectively rules out any potential further action on the issue of compensation for Colin Worton. In listening to the Justice Minister's response, I will be interested to hear how he proposes to address that.

There has been a huge impact on Colin Worton, his life and his family lifestyle.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Member for giving way. The ex gratia compensation scheme, which was operated by successive Governments up until 2006, as I understand it, still applies to Mr Worton, and it is within the terms of that ex gratia scheme that the Minister of Justice, as the successor in title to the Secretary of State, can exercise that discretion. That is the nub of the matter. Does the Member agree?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member. I am conscious of his legal background, so I will be interested in how the Minister of Justice addresses his point later in the debate, in

addition to the point made earlier by the Member for North Antrim Mr Allister.

Colin Worton's life has been dominated, unfortunately, by a set of circumstances beyond his control. He deserves and is entitled to proper and fair justice and, indeed, to fair compensation for what he has endured. He is also entitled to an apology and to have his good name restored.

The political and legal systems have managed to find a way of releasing prisoners early. They have managed to exercise the royal prerogative of mercy in some extremely dubious cases for even more dubious individuals. They have even managed to devise literally hundreds of get-out-of-jail-free letters to hand out to so-called on-the-runs. There is no doubt, however, that the justice system has failed Colin Worton. I urge the Justice Minister, even at this stage, to exercise his discretion and prove that common sense and fairness still have a place in the justice system of Northern Ireland.

Mr Poots: The Colin Worton case has been ongoing for many years, as has the issue around the UDR four. At the outset, I will say that all our sympathies are with the Carroll family on the murder that took place. Murder is always wrong. The position of our party is that all murder is wrong. It was never justified in any circumstance. I do not need to be prompted by Sinn Féin on when I need to express my sympathies to anyone. We stand totally with that family on the loss of their son. It should never have happened. It was wrong and they deserve the support of the public.

They also deserve justice, and justice will be done when the people who committed that murder are brought before the courts of law and found guilty of having carried out that crime. Colin Worton was not one of those people but was an innocent man who was drawn into this and held for two and a half years although there was not the evidence to support a conviction. Colin's desire to have his name cleared conclusively is something that he holds very strongly. Everyone recognises the man's innocence, but we want to see more done on that front. We would also like Minister Ford to take a look at the circumstances of the case.

I listened to the debate between Ms Kelly and Mr McCartney, and I do not think that we would be supportive of throwing the doors open for every single person who was held for a period of time to receive compensation. The nature of justice is that people are brought before the courts on the basis of evidence that is before them and the Public Prosecution Service has a course of work to do in demonstrating that there is likely to be a conviction. I do not believe that that course of work was well applied in the case of Colin Worton, and, therefore, the circumstances are different from the discussion that took place between the two aforesaid Members, which would open the doors in a way that would lead to hundreds of millions of pounds in compensation having to be paid.

I think that Minister Ford has the ability to look at this, consider the ex gratia payments that Mr Maginness referred to and give proper reasoning and understanding to any compensation that could be paid to Mr Worton. Our sympathies are with him on what he has had to endure and the damage it has done to his life as a consequence. Indeed, it is the same for the others who were found innocent of the crimes committed against Adrian Carroll. They served many years in prison. They have had the opportunity to move on; Mr Worton has not, and our plea

to the Minister of Justice is that he gives Mr Worton that chance to move on with the rest of his life.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I oppose the motion. Like other Members said, our thoughts should be with the Carroll family, some of whom I know personally.

There are two aspects to this motion: miscarriages of justice and Mr Worton's case for compensation for the period he spent in prison. Whilst we have sympathy with Mr Worton as he was acquitted of the charges on the basis that the only evidence against him was a statement he made in Castlereagh holding centre, might I add that, in that respect, Mr Worton's case is similar to hundreds of other cases. I do not accept Mr Poots's statement that this should not be opened up to all cases. I believe that it should.

11.30 am

I question the methods of obtaining statements from Mr Worton. The methods that the police employed in Castlereagh and other holding centres were highly questionable during this period. Human rights organisations often criticised the police for obtaining statements under duress. I know many people who experienced degrading and threatening behaviour whilst in custody. Rather than focusing on one case, it would be better if the sponsors of the motion had called for legislation to deal with all cases of this nature.

The motion states:

"This Assembly notes the miscarriage of justice in the case of the UDR four".

It must be remembered that one person was convicted of Adrian Carroll's murder. Miscarriages of justice arise from the criminal justice system of that time — a system that my community had little confidence in. Human rights organisations accused courts of turning a blind eye to dubious police interrogation practices, which routinely led to a conviction, in the shape of a confession, not to mention the dark periods of the paid perjurer era.

More recently, the blight of the miscarriages of justice has raised serious concerns about the judicial system, with the quashing of many convictions from that period. An article in a modern law review recently explored the neglected area of miscarriages of justice and suggested that they may be much more extensive than previously realised and that the level of appeals for wrongful convictions is low. However, it said that that is not a reliable indicator of justice served. The article quotes a figure of over 300 such cases that could be reviewed.

To conclude, a Cheann Comhairle, as my colleague Raymond McCartney said, if the motion had been framed in another form that sought the review of all miscarriages of justice as a result of the criminal justice system, which included dubious interrogation methods and the role of the Diplock courts, we would have supported it.

Mr A Maginness: I know that in his campaign for the pursuit of justice, Colin Worton has been persistent and, indeed, courageous. However, if he were permitted to speak here today as a Member, he would also say that he is committed to justice for Adrian Carroll. I think that that is an important thing to remember in the circumstances of this man's case and of his suffering. He did suffer. He was held

in custody for 30 months, which, if he had been sentenced to five years, is the equivalent of five years' imprisonment. So, the extent of time in custody for a crime that he clearly did not commit gives rise to a very serious case of injustice. I think that all of us in the House should be supportive of his campaign, no matter about the generality of other issues with which I have great sympathy as a lawyer and as someone who has pursued in my political career human rights justice and fairness for everybody, irrespective of where they come from in this community.

Unlike those who were convicted in the UDR four case and then acquitted, Mr Worton is unable to obtain compensation under section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. Therefore, he is thrown to the discretion of the Secretary of State — in this instance, its successor in title, the Minister of Justice — to decide whether he is entitled to compensation.

It seems clear from Mr Justice Treacy's judicial review that the central part of the exercise of that discretion is that the relevant Minister has to be satisfied that it resulted from a serious default on the part of a member of the police force or some other public authority. That, I believe, is the essential criterion involved in this case.

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: Yes, indeed.

Mrs Foster: I accept entirely what the Member says in relation to the serious default, but does he also agree with me that the judgement then goes on to say that there may be exceptional circumstances that may justify compensation? For me, there are actually two parts to that: there is the serious default element — I believe that the case falls within the serious default element — but I also believe that there is a case to be made in respect of the exceptional circumstances part as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): The Member has an extra minute.

Mr A Maginness: I accept that point, and I am grateful to the Member for highlighting it. It is important, during the debate, to reflect on that carefully, and I think that the Minister of Justice should reflect on that and reflect on it carefully. Where I disagree with the Member, if I heard her correctly, is that she does not believe that there was serious default in this instance. I think that there was serious —

Mrs Foster: I said yes, there was.

Mr A Maginness: You accept that; thank you for that clarification. There are really two grounds: one is a wider ground, which is exceptional circumstances, and the other is serious default. What I cannot understand is this: in the totality of the circumstances of the case, where three of the UDR four were acquitted by the Court of Appeal on the ground that there was manipulation or rewriting of the confession statements, it seems to me that that represents or could represent serious default. It may well be said, "Does that affect the case of Mr Worton?". I think that it does, because you have to take the case in its totality. I do not think that you can segment the case and say, "Well, this only applied to Mr Worton. What happened to the other defendants in the case is irrelevant". I do not think that you can do that. I do not think that you can segment it.

In addition, in Lord Justice Basil Kelly's judgement there is sufficient to come to the conclusion that there was serious default. Central to that judgement was the fact that there was a vulnerable young man being questioned by the police and all sorts of things were happening, things that Mr Justice Kelly described as bizarre things — bizarre allegations and so forth. If you take those things in the round, that, in itself, comes to serious default, but, if you add the position in relation to the other defendants together with the position in relation to Mr Worton, you have grounds for serious default or, alternatively, exceptional circumstances. That should be applied in this case.

I will conclude there and simply say that we support the motion. It is important that we pursue this with vigour and that the Minister of Justice exercises his discretion positively in favour of Mr Worton.

Mr Allister: There has to be something compellingly absurd and fundamentally wrong about a situation where it would have served a man better to be convicted than to be acquitted. That really is the essence of Colin Worton's case. If he had been convicted like co-accused and subsequently acquitted on appeal, we would not be having this debate, and he would have had the statutory compensation to which he would have been entitled. However, because the case was so weak against him that it was stopped at the halfway point by Lord Justice Kelly and, on direction, he was acquitted, he is said to fall outside the statutory scheme. Even though he served precisely the same 30 months as co-accused had served, they, for that and further time, are compensated, but he is denied compensation. That is so absurd, and it is so wrong that any Minister should be stretching to the nth degree the regulations and the guidance to meet that outrageous situation.

The situation is compounded by the tone and content of what Lord Justice Kelly said in acquitting this man. He said that it was not just a matter, in his discretion, of excluding the alleged confession and added that, even if he admitted it, he could not give any weight to it, so bad was the situation. How, in those circumstances, a previous Secretary of State and this Justice Minister could reach the conclusion that there is no serious fault on the part of those who produced that scenario is beyond me.

Mr Maginness was absolutely right to say that there is serious fault to bring Mr Worton within the statutory scheme, as well as the ex gratia or exceptional circumstance aspect. It really is a running sore for not just Mr Worton but the whole sense of justice in this community that this man for so long has been denied what has been available to others who faced, we would have to say, stronger cases, in the sense that they were initially convicted, than he ever faced, yet he spent all that time in custody. It cries out for a remedy.

We are told often that devolution is about being caring, local and bringing solutions where uncaring direct rule Ministers did not bring solutions. Sadly, in this case, the local Minister has made no difference. It is an indictment of the House and the system that something crying out for a solution has been denied one. Therefore, I strongly support the motion and reject the amendment because it seeks to pull the teeth of the motion.

I apologise to the Minister and the House that, because of another compelling requirement, I cannot stay further, but I

thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for using your discretion in calling me.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I oppose the motion. It is very unfortunate that the proposer, along with so many people, did not make reference to the loss that the Carroll family had to endure and will still be enduring when they hear of this debate. I do not think we should view justice for Colin Worton through a separate prism from that of the Carroll family. That has been alluded to but, unfortunately, it has happened. It was pointed out by my colleagues that, while we heard at length about Colin Worton and the apparent miscarriage of justice in his case, there has been absolutely no reference by the proposer or any of those in support of the motion to its first sentence regarding the miscarriage of justice for the UDR four. That fault lies at the very heart of the motion, and it is why we cannot support it.

As was also pointed out, there needs to be a universal analysis of miscarriages of justice. Mr Allister just talked about a running sore: this is one of hundreds of running sores. We cannot simply look at one; it is not an isolated case. Hundreds of people have been victims of police brutality, degradation and very often torture in detention centres such as Castlereagh.

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: No, I will not give way on this. Colin Worton's case is a window through which we can look at the entire rotten lot: a wholly flawed judicial system at times, including Diplock courts, police brutality and intimidation, when people's vulnerabilities were pressed on by what can only be described as bullies in darkened rooms. That is something that human rights organisations, Church leaders and everybody else have flagged up, so to simply pinpoint one case and say that it is all we will look at and all that deserves treatment is wrong.

Of course we have sympathy with Mr Worton. I was not alive when the case first raised its head, but, looking back at the files and the information, you can only have sympathy for what Mr Worton has gone through. It is not an isolated case, but it provides a window that we need to look through.

We need to shine a light on the whole lot if we are to afford justice to everybody who has suffered such miscarriages of justice. I will not support the motion or the amendment.

11.45 am

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Let me begin by stressing that, at the heart of all our discussions about Colin Worton and the UDR four's case, is one important fact that is not in dispute: Adrian Carroll was murdered on 8 November 1983. Every time we discuss the issue, we add to the burden that his relatives and friends bear from that dreadful time. I have no doubt that this debate will create difficulties for them, as, indeed, it will for Colin Worton and his family.

The murder trial took place in 1986. Let us remember that, after exhausting the judicial process, one man, Neil Latimer, served 14 years before he was released under the Good Friday Agreement. Three others — Noel Bell, James Hegan and Winston Allen — were convicted but had their convictions quashed in 1992.

Jim Allister — I acknowledge that, unlike some others, he at least apologised to me and to the House that he would not be here for my speech — said that Colin Worton had served the same time as the other three: he did not. He served the same time pre-trial as the three who were convicted and had their convictions quashed. They served a period post-conviction, and that is the basis for the compensation scheme.

In Colin's case, the trial judge had first to decide whether to admit the only evidence that was put forward against him: his confession. After thorough consideration, with detailed oral evidence from Colin, the police and expert witnesses, the judge concluded that that confession should not be admitted. He did, however, conclude that there was nothing improper in the police questioning of Colin Worton. That point was reconsidered in the judicial review of the Secretary of State's decision to refuse compensation, which was held in February 2010. Unlike the four co-accused, Colin Worton was not convicted, as many have said: he was acquitted at the initial trial. He is innocent in the eyes of the law, but being innocent in the eyes of the law is not the test that applies for compensation in this jurisdiction or elsewhere in the UK. He was released immediately and returned to serve in the Ulster Defence Regiment for the remainder of his contract.

Mr Worton was held in custody for two and a half years awaiting his trial. It is fundamentally important that those charged with crimes should be held in custody only when it is absolutely necessary, that their continuing remand is periodically tested and reviewed and that they be brought to trial without undue delay. Delays in delivering justice are always deeply regrettable, which is why an extensive programme aimed at speeding up justice is now in place.

The motion specifically calls for me to provide redress for Mr Worton. I am aware that he has sought financial compensation for many years. Prior to the devolution of justice, several Secretaries of State considered his case on a number of occasions and concluded that he did not meet the criteria for either of the compensation schemes that were then in place. Following devolution, I first met Colin to discuss his application in October 2010. I explained to him the factors that lay behind the previous decisions and that I would necessarily have to give regard to the same eligibility criteria as those behind the consideration of compensation by the Secretaries of State. However, I said that I would certainly look at the decision, particularly in light of any new material being available. In particular, I wanted to consider any relevant material from the Historical Enquiries Team's report on the murder of Adrian Carroll. Following receipt of that report, it was confirmed that the review did not provide any new information relevant to Colin's case.

As I promised, I explored all aspects of the case and had no legal option but to refuse his claim for compensation. I met Colin on 17 April 2013 to confirm my decision with him in person and to explain the reasons for it. The key issue is this: the statutory compensation scheme applies only to people who have been convicted. Although Colin spent two and a half years on remand, he was not convicted by the court, unlike the four men who were tried with him. Compensation is not available on the basis of a charge dropped or an acquittal secured. If that were the case, every failed prosecution could attract an award. Last year alone, my Department would have been responsible for compensating

over 2,000 adults who were acquitted by the courts in Northern Ireland. I simply cannot provide compensation to Colin Worton without changing the entire basis of the scheme as it applies across the whole of the UK.

While an award under the statutory scheme was clearly not available, I also explored whether an ex gratia payment of compensation would be appropriate. An ex gratia scheme operated prior to 2006, as other Members have said, but it was closed to new cases from that year on. Nonetheless, I considered whether an exceptional case could be made for making an ex gratia payment in line with the terms of that previous scheme. However, my review concluded that Colin's case also failed to meet the criteria for the ex gratia scheme. The fact that Colin had challenged the Secretary of State's refusal by judicial review but was not successful was an important factor that I had to consider. The judge agreed that the requirements of the ex gratia scheme had not been satisfied. I also consulted the Department of Finance and Personnel to determine whether there was any scope to make an ex gratia award. However, I had no evidence to present to DFP that might help to justify the payment of such an award. DFP was unable to provide approval, as Colin did not qualify for the statutory scheme, and there was insufficient justification to provide an ex gratia payment, as the Department was not at fault.

Shortly after our meeting in 2013, Colin submitted an FOI request and was provided with copies of all the information held by my Department relating to my deliberations of his case and his claim for compensation. Colin's solicitor then contacted me, asking me to provide adequate reasons for Colin to understand how I had arrived at my decision. I trust that the response to that letter provided Colin and his lawyers with all the information that he required to conclude that I had made a careful and detailed consideration of all the relevant aspects of his case before making my decision. Colin had the right to apply for a judicial review and ask the court to review my decision, but he did not do so.

The general principle behind any payment of compensation is to make reparation where the normal machinery of justice has demonstrably failed the accused person. In Colin's case, the due process of law occurred, and he was acquitted at first trial. From my discussions with Colin, I very much recognise the pain and hurt that he has described to me, and I was happy to state publicly in the Assembly for the comfort of Colin and his family that there was no stain on his character: he was acquitted by the court. I am happy to restate that today, for the benefit of the House and others: there is no stain on Colin Worton's character; he was acquitted by the court.

I appreciate that my decision to refuse compensation was disappointing to Colin, but I repeat that I have given careful and detailed consideration to all the relevant aspects of the case. Colin has been provided with all the papers held relating to the information that I considered as part of my deliberation, and my decision has been explained fully to him in person and in writing. I therefore have no further avenues to explore in the case. I appreciate that that is not the answer that Colin and many in the House, including most of those who have spoken today, want, but I hope that the House will understand that the matter has been considered fully by me and that, unless new evidence is available, it is not possible for me to reconsider the case. I cannot, therefore, accept the motion.

References were made during the debate to the discretion of the Minister. The discretion of the Minister is not to pick and choose individual cases as he sees fit; it has to be discretion within guidelines that is applied uniformly in all appropriate circumstances. Whatever sympathy we may have as individuals, there is no ministerial pick-and-choose discretion in that respect. Danny Kennedy said, "whatever the legal niceties": I am very sorry, but, as Minister of Justice, I have to adhere to the legal niceties. As a private individual, I may have sympathy for lots of people in different cases, but, as Minister, I have to go with the legal niceties.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. Use of the term "legal niceties" is one thing, but, fundamentally, there remains a question for the Minister to answer: is he prepared even to consider some legislative amendment that will provide the opportunity to correct the clear injustice to Colin Worton? Is the Minister open at least to exploring that today, given that a large majority of Members have indicated their support for the cause and case of Colin Worton?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Kennedy for his point. I must confess that I did not realise that he could read my handwriting over my shoulder as effectively as he has done.

The issue of whether there would be a different scheme is one that the House may wish to consider, but it has to consider it in the context of what is being done to deal with the past under the Stormont House Agreement. It is not something — this is a point that Mrs Kelly made — that could be introduced solely for one or two difficult cases, and it is clear that there is no immediate and easy consensus in the House on that point.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for giving way. I understand what the Minister says about legal niceties and so on and support him in that, but at the nub of this is whether the Minister can exercise his discretion. I believe that he can exercise his discretion positively by looking at the circumstances of the Worton case and coming to the conclusion that there was serious default by the police. Are you suggesting to the House that there is no substance in that proposition?

Mr Ford: I appreciate the point that Mr Maginness makes, but my advice, on the basis of the remarks made by the trial judge that there was no improper behaviour on the part of the police and on the basis of the decision in the judicial review relating to the Secretary of State's previous refusal to award compensation, is that it is not possible to make that case of serious default. That is why, having explored all the information that has been put before me in the almost five years since the case was raised with me, I do not believe that there is discretion open to me.

Mrs Foster: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: I will give way.

Mrs Foster: If one looks at the judgement in the judicial review case, one sees that it is a very narrow judgement. It looks at whether the Secretary of State had the right to exercise or not exercise his discretion. The judge is not saying whether he believes that there was a serious default or whether there were exceptional circumstances, because that is for the Secretary of State at the time to determine, not the judicial review judge. I argue very strongly that it is still within your discretion as Minister of Justice to deal with the case.

Mr Ford: I appreciate Mrs Foster's point, but my advice is that the remarks at the initial trial were that, even though he rejected the statement by Mr Worton, the judge did not state that there was improper behaviour on the part of the police. That would have been a serious point. The precise details of that are difficult for us to get to almost 30 years on, but that was part of the information that was put to me. That is where I believe that, if we are to look at something that will provide compensation for Colin Worton, it is an issue that the House will have to address within the Stormont House Agreement discussions, looking at wider issues of the past and recognising that it would take into account a very significant number of cases. There would also be the significant issue of the retrospective effect of legislation, which is not something that the Department of Justice could promote unless it was done in the context of wider arrangements for looking at the past. That is why I believe that it is not possible, with all the information that has been placed before me, to provide specific, individual compensation for Colin Worton at this stage. That is why I believe that the amendment moved by my colleague Stewart Dickson accurately reflects the position as it stands today, and that is why I believe that the amendment is a more accurate reflection of the position than the motion. I cannot support the motion as it stands.

Mr Dickson: I do not intend to take a great deal of time, other than to remind the House once again that there are two families today who are living through this debate. There is the family of Adrian Carroll and the family of Colin Worton and, indeed, Colin Worton himself.

By way of summing up, I acknowledge the measured way in which all Members have contributed to the debate. However, they also need to acknowledge the situation that the Minister of Justice finds himself in. Today, he has given the House a clear and concise setting-out of the position he has as Minister and in the role that he holds in the Department of Justice in respect of the case. He has also reminded us that to deal with this case the House and wider society in Northern Ireland need to be able to come together to deal with the very complex, very difficult, very hurtful and very important issue of how we deal with the past as a society.

12.00 noon

I do not think I can go any further this morning in this case than by repeating the words of the Minister of Justice:

"there is no stain on Colin Worton's character; he was acquitted by the court."

Thank you.

Mrs Foster: The case of Colin Worton, of course, has received widespread support. We heard a list from Mr Bradley of those who have seen fit to support Colin in his long fight for justice over 30 years, and we continue to support him in that fight for justice.

The motion today is about what happened in November of that year. It is specifically about Colin Worton and the particular circumstances of his case, in the context of the UDR four case. There have been some spurious reasons given by Sinn Féin for why they cannot support the motion today — very spurious indeed and nearly as spurious as some of the moral authority we had from them in relation to the many deaths that occurred over the past 35 to 40

years. That fact was reflected by Mrs Kelly when she acknowledged that many murders had been committed over the years, many of them by the IRA, who, of course, murdered Roman Catholics and Protestants alike throughout Northern Ireland. I want to acknowledge the brutal murder of Adrian Carroll and the pain and grief that that caused his family, his friends and the community at that time and, indeed, continues to cause pain to his family.

This debate is the continuation of an Adjournment debate that took place in June 2011 and is an attempt to secure justice and compensation in the particular circumstances of Colin Worton's case. Stewart Dickson moved the amendment making the case that the Minister had an inability to provide compensation to Mr Worton. I hope that, as I continue with my comments, I can point out that that certainly is not the case and that there is a discretion for the Minister to exercise. Whilst he may not be able to deal with Mr Worton's case under the statutory scheme — that is accepted because Colin was never convicted of a crime — there is still a way in which he can deal with the case.

Many Members spoke, including Members from Colin's constituency. Mr Kennedy rightly reflected the wider family support that Colin has received over the years and the fact that he is entitled to have his good name restored. Mr Poots related that all murders are wrong and helpfully pointed out the particular circumstances of Colin's case, as opposed to the scattergun approach that some would seek to take in relation to the case.

Mr Maginness talked about the ex gratia scheme, and it is that that I want to concentrate on. I would firmly argue that there are two elements to the ex gratia scheme: the serious default element, which was referred to in the judgement, and the fact that Lord Justice Kelly, at that time, did not believe that there were improper actions by the police. That is accepted. That does not necessarily mean that there was not serious default. When one looks at the circumstances of the case, one sees that, as Mrs Kelly pointed out, there certainly should have been somebody present with Colin Worton when he was being interviewed by the police. If that had happened, he might not have been in the situation that he found himself in, so I would say that the circumstances of the case lead to a serious default.

Even if the Minister feels that he cannot act for whatever reason on the serious default, he could still act under the part of the scheme that deals with exceptional circumstances. Again, I appeal to the Minister. I have to accept that he has received legal advice from officials on the matter, particularly on the judicial review case, but I urge him to seek further legal advice on the matter in the context of what I put to him today. That judicial review was on the exercise of the Secretary of State's discretion; it was not on whether it met the ex gratia scheme. Wade's 'Administrative Law', which is the textbook on the issue, says that, whilst discretion is not unfettered, it can be wide or narrow. I argue firmly that you have a wide discretion to act in this case. Bearing in mind the comments that have been made around the House today, I hope that you, Minister, will exercise your discretion again and will look at the particular circumstances of the case. In doing so, I hope that you will recognise that this is a very particular circumstance and that Colin Worton deserves to have the case looked at again.

Question, That the amendment be made, put and negatived.

Main Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 54; Noes 27.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Dunne, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr I McCreagh, Dr McDonnell, Mr McGimpsey, Mr McGlone, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKinney, Mr McNarry, Mr A Maginness, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir.

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

NOES

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Lynch.

The following Members voted in both Lobbies and are therefore not counted in the result: Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle.

Main Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the miscarriage of justice in the case of the UDR four; recognises the particular circumstances of Mr Colin Worton in relation to the case and that he served over two and a half years in custody on remand before the case against him was dropped and he was released; further notes the Minister of Justice's comments on the miscarriage of justice, the innocence of Mr Worton and the significant detrimental impact on Mr Worton; and calls on the Minister of Justice to seek urgently to address this miscarriage of justice by exercising his discretion to provide redress for Mr Worton.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs): 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 sitting is, by leave, suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.21 pm.

On resuming (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Credit Unions: DETI Support

1. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on her Department's efforts in supporting local credit unions to expand the range of services they offer. (AQO 7919/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): My Department has been working closely with the sector in identifying appropriate updates to Northern Ireland legislation. That will be achieved by way of the introduction of an Assembly Bill. The Bill will remove restrictions on Northern Ireland credit unions and thereby permit them to expand further the range of services that they offer to reach out to new groups. Following a public consultation in the summer of 2013, I wrote to the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee in December 2013 with policy proposals for the legislation. Following a number of queries raised by the Committee, which have now been answered, I hope to bring the draft Bill to the Executive in early May 2015, with a view to its introduction in the Assembly soon after.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for her reply, particularly her reference to the notion of removing restrictions. Has the Minister or her Department given consideration to enabling credit unions to provide financial support to local businesses, most typically small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)?

Mrs Foster: Absolutely. Indeed, part of what we hope will be achieved by the Bill is that services from the credit unions will be more widely available. I say that also in the context of the fact that there have been a number of bank closures in rural areas over the past period of time. I recognise that that can be a difficulty, particularly for individuals and small businesses who perhaps do not have cause to go to the larger towns where the banks are now situated. It was an issue that was acknowledged by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee report on banking, which recognised that the banks' position is that closures are inevitable due to a decline in branch transactions and that that could potentially leave customers financially excluded, particularly those in rural areas. I am sure that that is an issue that the Member, bearing in mind his constituency, which is like my constituency, will have concern about. I hope that post offices, in particular, and credit unions will be able to fill that gap.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answers today. I think that we all recognise the need for the change in legislation and the reform to credit unions, and that we all see it as being very important. Will the Minister give a firm commitment to the House that she will do all she can to get those amendments pushed through in the current mandate?

Mrs Foster: It has always been my hope and desire that we will be able to do that. As I have indicated, the Committee has finished its stage, and, hopefully, I will be able to take a paper to the Executive in May of this year and then introduce the matter into the House. I know that time may not be on my side in relation to the matter, but I am hopeful that we will be able to deal with it in this mandate.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her answer. Are there any additional measures that her Department can take to encourage more people to use credit unions rather than going to payday loan companies?

Mrs Foster: That is an issue that has caused us grave concern, particularly through the work that we have carried out in our financial capability strategy; there are those who feel that they have no other option. We are not that concerned about payday loans — even though they can cause grave difficulties, they have their place — it is the loan sharks and the unregulated loans that cause us the deepest concern.

The Department for Social Development and my colleague Minister Storey have been looking at ways in which they can work with the credit union movement to allow people who are perhaps on low income to access financial products. That Department is engaged in running two pilots to try to see what support is required by credit unions that may need help in relation to the provision of longer opening hours, training for staff or volunteers, and marketing material. The second proposal is to look at the feasibility of supporting credit unions to provide enhanced banking services and products in the context of benefits. My Department, DSD and DARD have all been engaged in working with the credit union movement and that will be the case in future as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Before we proceed to question 2, Members should note that questions 7, 12 and 13 have been withdrawn.

Inward Investment: Derry/Strabane

2. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department intends to work with Derry City and Strabane District Council to attract greater levels of inward investment to the area. (AQO 7920/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has engaged extensively with the former councils in the north-west to understand the local investment proposition and will continue to do so with the new council. In addition, Invest NI's international investment division intends to hold a planning meeting in Londonderry at the end of April 2015. The programme will include meetings with council officials, university and college representatives and other stakeholders, with inward investment at the top of the agenda.

Ms Boyle: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she, along with Invest NI, continue to meet council representatives and officials to agree targets and outcomes for inward investment? Expanding on the theme of investment, is she in a position to give an update on the business park in Strabane?

Mrs Foster: I thank the Member for her question. We will continue to work with the new council, as we did with the previous two councils. She may be aware that Invest NI

has agreed to co-fund the development of the integrated economic strategy for the new Derry City and Strabane District Council area, which I wholeheartedly support. I was also delighted to see the new app promoting Strabane as an investment destination launched on 10 March this year. It has highlighted the inward investments that are already there and, on the Member's second point, it has made everyone aware of the fact that land is available in the Strabane area that can be marketed to inward investors as well as investors within Northern Ireland who may wish to set up business in Strabane.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for her answers so far. Does she agree that the extension of the gas network to the west will not only be a significant boost to existing businesses but will be an attraction for new businesses and a help to inward investment in the west?

Mrs Foster: Of course, I am particularly delighted to see the progress that is being made in relation to the gas to the west project. Ms Boyle's first question was about Strabane, and it is to Strabane that the gas network will be extended first. Work will commence on that part of the pipeline later this year, with the first customer, we hope, connected in 2016. The main pipeline works to provide for the connections in the west for the other part of the gas to the west project — to Dungannon, Coalisland, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen and Derrylin — are planned to commence in 2016 and should be completed in 2017. We should be cognisant of the importance of this piece of infrastructure because it will give individuals a chance to connect to natural gas and will be part of the investment story for the west of the Province. It is something that we should all welcome.

Mr Gardiner: Does the Minister agree that attracting inward investment should remain primarily an Invest Northern Ireland role but that the new super-councils, with their enhanced economic development role, can make their areas more attractive places in which to do business?

Mrs Foster: Absolutely, and that is the point that I have been making for quite some time. The new super-councils have a very much enhanced role with the new powers that they have been given, particularly in relation to the Start a Business programme and social entrepreneurship and, indeed, others who want to start up, particularly young people. The new councils have been given powers in that regard as well and overall in the sense of promoting their areas as a good place in which to do business. I am sure that he was delighted to see the announcement that we made just recently in Craigavon, where 320 jobs were announced for his area. That was a tremendous announcement, which I was very pleased to make.

Economic Inactivity

3. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that the most recent labour force survey shows the working age economic inactivity rate at 27.8%, how her Department is assisting people who are economically inactive. (AQO 7921/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department and the Department for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with the Department for Social Development, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Invest NI, have developed a draft strategy to reduce the high levels of economic inactivity in Northern Ireland. The draft strategy

seeks to help key economically inactive groups make the transition towards, and into, the labour market. The draft strategy is currently with the Executive for consideration. Once agreed, we will commence implementation at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagra. I thank the Minister for her answer. I am sure she will be aware that west Belfast has one of the highest rates of economic inactivity across these islands. Can the Minister tell us what specific actions are being taken to create job opportunities for people in west Belfast?

Mrs Foster: I am pleased that Sinn Féin has now agreed to allow the matter to go on to the Executive agenda and that we will be able to have the matter before the Executive, hopefully on Thursday, because the strategy has particular actions in it that I think will be of use to the Member in his own constituency and, indeed, to many members across Northern Ireland. It will have competitive pilot testing of innovative ways to try to deal with the economic inactivity that persists as a legacy issue for Northern Ireland. It is also going to establish and facilitate a strategic forum to oversee strategic delivery issues.

Whilst the Member makes the point about west Belfast — I acknowledge the point that he makes in relation to economic inactivity there — the latest figures show that there has been a sustained fall in the number of people claiming unemployment benefits in west Belfast since 2013, something that I hope he will welcome, as I do, but there is much more work to be done. With the strategy in place, hopefully, after the Executive meeting this week, it is something that we will be able to take forward.

Lord Morrow: Can I ask the Minister something in relation to the question that has been asked? Surely there is something hypocritical about Sinn Féin's position in relation to welfare reform. Many from that constituency are being deprived because of the inactivity and inaction of the party opposite.

Mrs Foster: There is no doubt that the inertia that seems to have arrived within Sinn Féin at the moment in dealing with the Stormont House Agreement is something to be deeply regretted, because I believe that we need to get on and deal with the issues that were agreed back in December. That will free us up to deal with all of the issues on the agenda, including corporation tax, because, of course, we have not had the opportunity to set the date and the rate as yet because we are in a state of limbo in relation to corporation tax until the welfare reforms, which were agreed in December, are implemented.

Mr Swann: Minister, there is a target in the Executive's economic inactivity strategy of an employment rate of over 70% by 2023. Does the Minister think that that will be achievable?

Mrs Foster: Yes, I do, particularly if we are able to continue on the route of the devolution of corporation tax, because, as I am sure the Member is aware, the studies from the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy — now the Ulster University Business School — indicate that that is going to grow the economy by 10% or 11%, so that will allow us to employ more people right across Northern Ireland and will deal with some the legacy issues that we have had to deal with over the past period. It is true that we have the highest level of economic inactivity in the

United Kingdom. Next to us are Wales, with 25.6%, and the north-west of England, on 24%. We currently stand at 27.8%, and that is something that we need to tackle. We have recognised that and, with the strategy in place after the Executive meeting this week, we hope we will be able to move forward.

Mr Allister: Does the Minister agree that the Member who asked the question and his party, by opposing all aspects of welfare reform, are in fact blocking any incentivising of the economically inactive into work? Does she accept that incentivising the economically inactive into work has to be part of a viable economic strategy?

Mrs Foster: I do think that we have to look at new and innovative ways to try to incentivise people into work. There are those who are not in work at present because of deep-seated problems — some of them mental health problems. Issues need to be addressed. That is why the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety was involved in the formulation of the strategy. There is no doubt that there are also those on welfare who do not believe that it would benefit them to go into work because it would disadvantage them. We need to incentivise those people into work, because work is not just good for bringing home a wage at the end of the week or month but is good for one's mental health. To be able to engage in gainful employment is good generally for the society and community within which people dwell.

2.15 pm

Trade: Island-wide Returns

4. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her proposals to ensure that local businesses secure greater returns from island-wide trade. (AQO 7922/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The all-Ireland market is an important market for many of our businesses, large and small. Specific industry sectors, such as construction and food, continue to deliver significant sales across the island. Invest Northern Ireland works directly with many of these businesses to support and assist their export plans.

The trade and business development body InterTradelreland offers practical cross-border funding information, advice and support to small and medium-sized industries in both jurisdictions and continues to develop an environment in which the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland cooperate to ensure that SMEs are making full use of cross-border opportunities to drive competitiveness, growth and jobs. InterTradelreland also supports businesses, through its innovation and trade programmes, to take advantage of North/South cooperation opportunities to improve capability and drive competitiveness, jobs and growth.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her answer. Has she any other proposals to ensure that we maximise the trade potential of local firms?

Mrs Foster: Around two thirds of small and medium-sized companies already take their first step into exporting by working with their nearest neighbours in the Republic of Ireland. That is their first step into the export market. Indeed, 90% of Northern Ireland exporters took their

first step into exporting by trading across the border first and then looking to new and different markets. There is a very healthy cross-border market ongoing. Of course, InterTradelreland and Invest Northern Ireland will continue to help those companies who want to take that first step.

Mr McKinney: Can the Minister outline what discussions she has had, if any, with the Irish Government and others on the proposed cuts to the budget of InterTradelreland?

Mrs Foster: Well, they are not proposed cuts: those cuts are already in place. They were agreed at the last inter-trade sectoral meeting. I think that my counterpart, Richard Bruton, understands the issue with regard to Northern Ireland, because they went through a similar issue in the Republic of Ireland a number of years ago.

Mr Givan: What impact is the fluctuation in the exchange rate — the strengthening pound and the weakening euro — having on our local economy, the Republic of Ireland and across Europe?

Mrs Foster: Given the answers that I have just made about the number of firms and the percentage of firms that take their first step into exporting by working across the border, it is a very difficult picture at the moment because a stronger pound makes our goods and services more expensive in the eurozone market, not just in the Republic of Ireland. As well as for goods, it is the same for tourism. When considering destinations, of course tourists are usually price-sensitive. It could be a barrier to those people who are perhaps looking at coming to Northern Ireland from the eurozone.

However, on a positive note, goods and services, such as energy and food, which we import from the eurozone will of course be cheaper for businesses and households in Northern Ireland. I suppose that it is a bit of swings and roundabouts, but we totally understand that, for those people who are doing business across the border, it is very difficult at the moment.

Broadband: Superfast Uptake

5. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the local uptake of superfast broadband. (AQO 7923/11-15)

Mrs Foster: According to Ofcom's latest infrastructure report, at June 2014 the number of premises that had taken up superfast broadband services in Northern Ireland stood at 22%, having risen by some three percentage points on the previous year. That is on a par with the take-up in England and considerably above that of similar services in Scotland and Wales.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for her response. It is encouraging to know that we are on a par with other regions of the United Kingdom. Will the Minister expand on that? Is she aware what the take-up in Southern Ireland is?

Mrs Foster: I do not have the figures for the Republic of Ireland because we work in the United Kingdom system. Ofcom looks at how the regions of the UK are doing. Wales and Scotland, particularly, sometimes look at Northern Ireland with envy in relation to some of the schemes that we have been able to roll out, whether it is the Northern Ireland broadband improvement project; the Superfast Rollout programme, which we began in February of this year; or the SuperConnected Cities programme, which we

hope to expand beyond Londonderry and Belfast and into the rest of Northern Ireland. So there is quite a lot going on in relation to broadband. We make no apology for that because we want to retain our position as number one in the UK.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her answers so far. What level of investment in superfast broadband is provided in Newry and Armagh?

Mrs Foster: The Superfast Rollout programme is a £17 million programme that has just begun, and its coverage will be extended to over 38,000 premises by 2017. As it has just begun, we do not have the figures for Newry and Armagh at present.

The SuperConnected Cities programme started life as a voucher scheme in Belfast; businesses could apply for a £3,000 voucher. It was then rolled out to our second city, Londonderry, and now it will be available for councils across Northern Ireland to bid into. I encourage councils in the Member's area, or in the area of any other Member, to apply to the SuperConnected Cities programme. That name is a misnomer: it started life as a cities' programme, but it will now be available right across Northern Ireland.

Mr Byrne: How happy is the Minister with the various schemes that DETI and DARD have tried to promote over the last number of years? There are still queries about reliability and speeds. When can we have 100% coverage of fixed-wire fibre-optic cabling throughout Northern Ireland?

Mrs Foster: It will be a long time before we have 100% fibre to every home in Northern Ireland. What we are trying to do at the moment is ensure that there is fibre to cabinet in some of the schemes that we have been involved in. Fibre to the home is more expensive again. We want to ensure, through the broadband improvement project, which is still ongoing and which does not finish until the end of this year — and I accept that there are still some areas have to be dealt with — that people have a basic broadband in certain areas where there is no service and improve broadband services where choice is poor or speeds are low. That is what we are engaged in at present. I must say, however, that it will be a very long time before we have fibre to every home in Northern Ireland.

Councillors: Training

6. **Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the training her Department provided to local councillors in advance of the transfer of new economic powers. (AQO 7924/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As a statutory partner in community planning, Invest Northern Ireland has been actively working with council officials and elected representatives on the transfer of functions and its community planning activities. While no formal training has been provided to local councillors in advance of the transfer of new economic powers, both my Department and Invest NI are committed to continuing to provide as much ongoing support and guidance as may be required.

Mrs Overend: I appreciate that officers have a crucial role to play in this. Will the Minister liaise with the Minister of the Environment on training needs for councillors and

officers? A lot of attention has been paid to planning powers in the new councils.

Does the Minister agree that the new local economic development powers are equally important for the new councils?

Mrs Foster: The new powers that are being devolved from Invest Northern Ireland relate to enterprise awareness, the start-a-business activity and social enterprise. I acknowledge that they are not as comprehensive as the new planning powers that are being devolved from the Department of the Environment. Because of our network of offices across Northern Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland officials stand ready to work with council officials or, indeed, council members across Northern Ireland. If a request in relation to training comes in, which has not happened to date, I am sure Invest officials will try to facilitate that.

Mr I McCrea: Will the Minister outline what funding has been allocated to councils to help them with the devolution of the powers and what role parts of her Department will have in respect of community planning?

Mrs Foster: The original allocation to the 11 councils was £3.55 million, but, as a result of budget restructuring, that has been subject to a reduction. The reduced amount transferring is £3.01 million. As I have indicated, economic powers transferring from Invest NI include functions in relation to enterprise awareness, the start-a-business activity and social enterprise. It is for individual councils to decide how they wish to exercise those powers. Some may wish to continue with the start-a-business programme. They will have to procure a new contract in relation to that, as it ends, I think, in October this year. They may want to do things in a different way that will suit their agenda and their rural area, but we stand ready to help in any way we can from a strategic point of view.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for her interesting answers. Does she envisage that the devolution of more economic power to councils will continue over the years? It seems to me that the local council, particularly in rural areas, has an important and pivotal role to play in economic development.

Mrs Foster: It is too soon to answer that question, because the new powers have just been devolved. It will be interesting to see the way in which they develop over the next couple of years. Invest will be very much part of the community planning process at each of the council area levels, so there is that connectivity between regional level and the local council area. I referred to the app that has been set up in Strabane: it is a piece of collaborative working between Invest NI and the new council, which was in shadow form at that time. I will be happy to look, in the future, at what else can be devolved, but, at the moment, we have devolved some powers, and we wait to see how they will be exercised.

Businesses: South Antrim

8. **Mr Girvan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the number of new businesses in South Antrim since 2010. (AQO 7926/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest Northern Ireland releases information at subregional level following each financial year end. Therefore, the most up-to-date figures available show

that, between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2014, Invest NI offered support to 428 start-up projects in the South Antrim constituency area. Of those projects, 400 were supported indirectly by Invest NI through the regional start initiative, formerly known as the enterprise development programme.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for her answers thus far. My supplementary question relates to businesses which, probably, have had a major turnaround. I think in particular of Mivan Marine Ltd: this time last year, it was in bankruptcy. It is a good news story. Is there any more information on how that is progressing?

Mrs Foster: Indeed. I commend Brian McConville and his team in Mivan Marine Ltd. I was due to visit Brian and his team, but, unfortunately, due to a death in the family I was not able to attend. The junior Minister attended in my place, and I understand that things are going well. In its first year of trading, Mivan Marine Ltd achieved profit with a turnover of £9.7 million to the year end — December 2014 — and currently employs 99 full-time staff. That is good news for Antrim and for Mivan in particular, because, as the Member rightly says, it was a very different story some 12 months ago.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Order. That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move on to topical questions.

2.30 pm

Construction Industry

T1. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she can confirm that there has been a slight increase in activity in the construction industry, given that that industry has traditionally provided a lot of employment, and to state how we can ensure that we retain our local young tradespeople rather than losing them to places such as America and Australia. (AQT 2341/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I recognise that it has been a concern of Members that skills may be lost in the construction arena, with young people in particular emigrating to other parts of the world because of the lack of construction jobs in Northern Ireland. It is a challenge for the Minister for Employment and Learning and me to ensure that those skills are retained and that we continue to provide them into the future. We may find ourselves in a situation where we have skill gaps in the future because young people have left. We need to be very aware of that and to make sure that we continue to train young people in those jobs. Although construction was down again in the last quarter, I believe that there are signs that things are beginning to pick up. Certainly, for the first time, I am seeing construction projects start all over Northern Ireland.

Mr Boylan: I thank the Minister for that answer. What assistance can she provide, through talking to other Ministers, to ensure that local firms can access capital projects through the public procurement process? Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mrs Foster: Of course, the public procurement rules are sometimes a mystery to all of us. Through InterTradeIreland, we have established a Go-2-Tender programme that allows companies in Northern Ireland to bid in to procurement projects in the Republic of Ireland

and vice versa so that they can access those projects on the island. We have supported companies that continue to work here. They may perhaps be engaged in projects in Great Britain at the moment, but they keep their design facilities and intellectual property here in Northern Ireland. We will continue to work with the construction industry.

JTI Gallaher: Future

T2. **Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the work of the Executive-appointed task force, of which she and the Minister for Employment and Learning are members, that was created to see a future for the JTI Gallaher's site and workers in Ballymena. (AQT 2342/11-15)

Mrs Foster: First of all, we were not appointed as a task force; we were appointed as the two responsible Ministers to liaise with the management and workers at Gallaher. We have continued to do that. As he will be aware, a proposal was put forward between the workers and the local management to the management in Switzerland. That was rejected, and, therefore, Gallaher's management has decided to proceed with the plant's closure on a phased basis. I understand that it has made packages available to staff, and that process is ongoing.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister and apologise for using the term "task force": it was incorrect. The Minister will be aware that I have sort of explored the possibility of creating the area as an enterprise zone. I know that in the past the Minister has said that it is not her responsibility but that of Westminster. Matthew Hancock MP from the Department for Business said that it is up to the Executive to approach it, and Danny Alexander MP from Her Majesty's Treasury says that it is up to the Executive to ask the British Government whether they would create an enterprise zone in any area in Northern Ireland. Would the Minister still be willing to explore that as an opportunity?

Mrs Foster: As the Member knows, the pilot enterprise zone has still to be designated in Coleraine. Whilst there has been progress on the matter recently between the council and, indeed, the private sector in Coleraine, it remains outstanding. Therefore, we need to deal with the matter in front of us, which is the Coleraine enterprise zone.

This enterprise zone is a different creature to the enterprise zone creature that was available back in the 1980s. We have planning policy devolved to Northern Ireland; indeed, it is now devolved to local councils, and the telecoms policy is there. The other issue is in relation to capital allowances, which is the only issue that we have control over, and that is one of the reasons why a data centre is well suited to an enterprise zone. If the Member wants to indicate why he believes that capital allowances would be particularly helpful in relation to the enterprise zone in Ballymena, I am more than happy to listen to that.

Antrim Coast and Glens: Promotion

T3. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assurance that, with the formation of the new Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Tourism NI, the Antrim coast and glens will be promoted to the standard set in the Programme for Government. (AQT 2343/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I could give a very short answer to that, but, absolutely, it will be. It is one of the nine tourism destinations and one that Members from his area should be very proud of. I had the opportunity to visit Whiterocks recently to see the new facilities there, and I encourage all Members who have not been to visit that new facility to do so.

Mr McMullan: Indeed, we are quite proud of having it included in the Programme for Government, but the mid-glens from Glenarm and Carnlough right down into the mid-glens is sadly lacking and has been for a number of years, and we only have to look at the promenade in Carnlough to see that. Can you assure me that the mid-glens will get the share of promotion that it desires on the back of the Giro d'Italia when we had the iconic photographs and pictures of the horses on the beaches at Carnlough? We have not capitalised on those worldwide pictures.

Mrs Foster: To be fair, if you have not capitalised on those worldwide pictures, one has to ask, "Why not?". Those were really iconic pictures. I recall a debate on the mid-glens recently when we were treated to the Deputy Speaker telling us all about the different glens in and around the glens of Antrim. It was very enjoyable, but people have to come forward with applications to Tourism NI. I very much hope that they do, and I understand that they have in relation to the tourism events fund. I am sure that the Member, like me, is very much looking forward to the opening of the Gobbins path, which will be an outstanding tourist attraction in his area, and I hope that his new council will take full benefit of it.

Conscience Clause: Sporting Boycott

T4. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given her good record in attracting foreign direct investment and major sporting events to Northern Ireland, whether she shares the concern that the proposed conscience clause Bill could have implications along the lines of the business and sporting boycott being experienced in the state of Indiana following the introduction of similar legislation there. (AQT 2344/11-15)

Mrs Foster: No, I do not share her concerns at all. What concerns me is the number of small businesses that have approached me and many of my colleagues in relation to the concerns that they have about the provision of services in the future. It is a concern that she and her party would do well to acknowledge as well because we are not just interested in foreign direct investment; we are also very interested in our indigenous companies.

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Minister for her answer. I take that point on board, but a number of concerts were cancelled, sponsorships for major tech conferences were pulled out and the planned \$40 million expansion of a company headquarters was cancelled, which was all to do with that, and I think that is a major issue. Does the Minister understand that encouraging foreign investment and tourism is a difficult enough job without added hurdles such as that and, perhaps, the negative comments that came from the likes of Kit Harington?

Mrs Foster: I could do well, as could our most major investor in Northern Ireland, without the comments of her colleague Naomi Long about Bombardier yesterday. I have been in contact with Bombardier, and it is very concerned about the comments that have been made. Bombardier is completely committed to Northern Ireland because of the

workforce that there is here, and to suggest that it would act otherwise following a referendum on the European Union when the company has made it clear that it does not have a particular stance on the UK referendum, if, indeed, it happens after the general election, is irresponsible.

I am hugely surprised that a current Member of Parliament should say such a thing about our biggest investor in Northern Ireland. I hope that the Member who made the comments reflects on the comments and, indeed, apologies to Bombardier for the embarrassment that she has caused.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): The Member listed for topical question 5 has withdrawn their name.

Concentrix/Allstate: Belfast Headquarters

T6. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the importance to the economy of plans by Concentrix and Allstate to build and develop their new headquarters in Belfast. (AQT 2346/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Allstate and Concentrix are two very important foreign direct investors in Northern Ireland. I met senior teams from both of those organisations recently, and I am aware that both organisations have plans for expansion in Belfast and both have recently submitted planning applications for new development that will be in front of the new Belfast council. I hope that they will be able to develop in the way in which they have said that they want to.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. Thank you, Minister. Do you believe that that development will result in more really well paid jobs?

Mrs Foster: I certainly know that Allstate and Concentrix have ambitious plans. They want to be on the former Maysfield Leisure Centre site in a few months' time. Both of those companies want to be on the site because they have plans for expansion in the future, and I think that we should very much welcome that. We should also hope that Belfast council will work with both of those companies to make sure that the plans go ahead.

Foreign Direct Investment: Foyle

T7. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what she believes are the major barriers to attracting foreign direct investment to the Foyle constituency. (AQT 2347/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I think that there are legacy issues, which the Member is well aware of, in relation to economic inactivity in that constituency. There are issues in relation to youth unemployment in that city. When I met his colleague Mr Ramsey in relation to the economic inactivity draft strategy, he expressed hopes that he would be able to use that strategy and the pilots that would come out of it to help to deal with those legacy issues — I call them legacy issues because they have been there for a period of time — and, therefore, that is why there is a real need to deal with those issues.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for her answer, and I agree with her. However, does she agree with me that, without proper investment in the road network to the city

and proper investment in the expansion of the university campus at Magee, we will not reach our economic potential and will not be able to attract high-end foreign direct investment to the city?

Mrs Foster: He has actually picked up on a subject that I discussed with the Chamber of Commerce in Londonderry recently. I said to it that it was not just about looking at the number of jobs that come to the city; it was about the ecosystem in the city and going out of the city. Therefore, roads are critical and telecoms infrastructure is critical. He will know that the telecoms infrastructure within the city is very, very good and is a legacy of the City of Culture that took place there. There is much to talk about the future of the city and its economic prospects, but he is right to talk about the infrastructure as well as just looking at the Invest NI job numbers.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): Ms Caitríona Ruane is not in her place, the Member for topical question 9 has withdrawn their name, and Mr Michael McGimpsey is not in his place.

I ask Members to take their ease for a moment until questions to the Minister of the Environment begin at 2.45 pm.

2.45 pm

Environment

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I inform Members that questions 2, 8 and 11 have been withdrawn.

Wind Turbines: Planning Approval

1. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications for single wind turbines have been approved since 2005. (AQO 7932/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The number of single wind turbine applications approved from 2005 to 31 January this year is 2,212. That is my Department's latest available provisional renewable energy information.

This figure is for applications approved and does not necessarily equate to the number of single wind turbines constructed and operational, as the Department does not hold information on whether the permission has been implemented. The figures may also include renewals of planning permissions and changes to existing approvals, and may, therefore, equate to fewer than 2,212 individual sites.

Applications for single wind turbines are determined by taking into account all relevant planning considerations — a wide range of factors, including the potential impact on public safety, human health, residential amenity, landscape and cumulative impacts. The details of each application, including site characteristics, locality and height of turbines, will differ. Therefore, each application is determined on its own particular location merits.

It is important that the right balance is struck between facilitating wind energy development in appropriate locations and protecting the exceptional quality of our natural environment. These are matters and issues that I considered in finalising the strategic planning policy statement (SPPS).

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): I call Mr Milne for a supplementary.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle, mo bhuíochas leis an Aire go dtí seo. Thanks, Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his answer thus far. Minister, do you propose to set a threshold for single wind turbines in, say, each council area, or what means do you imagine you will set to control, if you like, the blight of single wind turbines in the countryside?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for the question and the supplementary. As the Member will be aware — as all Members will be aware, or should be aware — as from 1 April the vast majority of planning powers were transferred from my Department to the 11 new councils. While the Department will retain overarching planning policy responsibility, including the responsibility for planning policy statement 18 — or now the SPPS — and policy for renewable energies, it is only right and proper that councils will have a fair degree of autonomy when it comes to deciding what will work in their areas and what their areas need.

Therefore, I certainly do not have any intention of introducing a threshold or limit on the number of wind turbines that may be erected in any council area, as I would not have any intention of introducing a threshold for the number of houses in any council area. However, one threshold that does exist is that any renewable energy application over 30 MW will not be dealt with by the relevant council but retained centrally by the Department, as that would be deemed to be a major or regionally significant application given its scale.

Mr Eastwood: I ask the Minister for an update on the finalisation of the SPPS.

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Eastwood for that question. The final draft of the SPPS was completed last month following extensive engagement with key planning stakeholders.

My aim is to publish the SPPS in its final form in the very near future, following Executive Committee consideration. When it is published in final form, the provisions of the SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of local development plans by the 11 new councils, and will be material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. It is very important that the SPPS be in place as soon as possible to provide the policy framework for the new two-tier planning system and, in particular, to enable the new councils to get on with the very important work of preparing their local development plans.

Pending its publication, the existing suite of planning policy statements and relevant provisions of a planning strategy for Northern Ireland shall continue to apply as a temporary arrangement.

Mr Cree: Getting back to wind turbines, can the Minister advise on whether there has been any progress on securing cooperation with NIE to get connection costs agreed early in the process so that people can see if they can go ahead?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. The issue of grid connection has been raised, largely by the industry itself, as a major problem, as it slows down the development of wind farms and single wind turbines. The Member will be aware that, while I have responsibility for planning, I do not have responsibility for energy. So, problems with, or associated with, NIE and

grid connections would be better directed towards the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister the next time the Member gets the opportunity.

It is very important. Quite a number of wind farms in the system have received planning approval but have not been able to secure a grid connection. That skews our figures when we talk about meeting renewable energy targets, because, although one has received planning approval, there may be no realistic prospect of its being connected. So, I share the Member's concerns: it is something that we need to look at strategically.

In other jurisdictions — Scotland, for example — they do it the other way round: planning permission will not be awarded to a renewable energy project unless it has a guaranteed grid connection. That is something that we need to look at, and I will look at it in conjunction with the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister and others.

Noise and Shadow Flicker

3. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to noise and shadow flicker, whether ETSU-R-97 is outdated. (AQO 7934/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In common with the approach in the other devolved Administrations, my Department's planning policy statement 18 on renewable energy recommends the use of the 'Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms' — ETSU-R-97 — standard in the assessment and rating of noise from wind energy developments.

That standard describes a methodology for the assessment and rating of noise from wind energy development that provides protection to wind-farm neighbours without placing unreasonable restrictions upon appropriate wind-energy development. ETSU-R-97 deals only with the assessment and rating of noise; it does not provide guidance in relation to the assessment of shadow flicker. Advice on shadow flicker and reflected light is set out in the associated best practice guidance to PPS 18.

While I recognise that ETSU-R-97 is the established UK-wide standard in relation to the assessment of noise, I am aware that it has attracted some criticism. I also acknowledge that the Environment Committee, in its recent report on the outcome of its inquiry into wind energy, recommended that my Department review the use of ETSU-R-97. As a result of those concerns, and in response to the recommendation of the Committee, I am considering further investigation of the use of ETSU-R-97 in the North.

I aim to complete an urgent review of strategic policy on renewable energy following the publication of the SPPS and during 2015-16, and I will consider this matter as part of that review.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer up to now. He said that he will do a review. Can he give us some indication of when he plans the update? I notice that you said 2015-16 in terms of the noise control regulations. Do you have a date for that? Will it be done in this mandate?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Kelly for the question. When I heard that I was going to be asked a question about my assessment of ETSU, my answer was going to be that he

has not done that much for Everton since he came on loan from Chelsea.

The Member's question is around the review that I have pledged of PPS 18, which is the wider renewable energy policy. I very much intend to do that this year, which, obviously, is my last year, potentially, as Minister of the Environment. It has always been my intention that, following the publication of the strategic planning policy statement, each component of that statement would be subject to a comprehensive review. It is my intention that the first components of that review will be the more controversial aspects of it, namely PPS 18, pertaining to renewable energy, and PPS 21, with which the Member's more rural colleagues are very well acquainted. However, I have to wait until the SPPS is published until I can proceed with these reviews. The SPPS is currently awaiting approval by the Executive.

Climate Change: Prosperity Agreements

4. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline how prosperity agreements can contribute to tackling climate change. (AQO 7935/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Climate change is one of the key societal challenges of the 21st century, with transport, business and agriculture all contributing to greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland. I am committed to bringing forward a climate change Bill in the next Assembly, and my Department is also being proactive in seeking to address this challenge through innovative regulatory practices in advance of any legislative instruments. Prosperity agreements are voluntary agreements through which the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and an organisation can realise opportunities for reducing the environmental impacts of energy and material use in ways that create prosperity and well-being.

To address the challenge of climate change requires a business and the regulators to take a radical new approach. Companies need to change the way they operate and recognise the environment as an opportunity rather than a barrier. This requires a partnership approach with the regulator.

The first agreement, signed with Linden Foods, included a target to reduce carbon emissions from the company's operations by a staggering 25% through investment in new refrigeration equipment. Prosperity agreements support responsible businesses that seek to move beyond minimum compliance and harness market value from innovation. A prosperity agreement can also enable the Department to leverage sector-wide change, influencing the supply chain — in this case the agriculture sector — to take action on reducing its carbon footprint. The recently signed agreement with Lafarge Tarmac includes the commitment to use alternative fuels in its cement kiln, helping to reduce fossil fuel dependency and use former waste materials as a resource. All future prosperity agreements will also include actions relating to climate change adaptation or mitigation.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra chuimsitheach sin. I thank the Minister for his comprehensive reply. Can he give us some more detail about the prosperity agreement that exists with Lafarge in

Cookstown? How does that work and when did it come in? That is the type of detail that I am asking for.

Mr Durkan: The second prosperity agreement was signed with Lafarge Tarmac on 5 March this year, and it focuses on the innovative use of waste-derived fuels to secure jobs and better environmental outcomes in its Cookstown plant, in the Member's constituency of course. The agreement is a public document and is available on the Lafarge Tarmac and NIEA websites. Details of the agreement include that Lafarge Tarmac will reduce fossil fuel or coal dependence by 35% through alternative fuel substitution. Lafarge Tarmac will reduce its total carbon emissions from production by a minimum of 10%.

That is the equivalent of taking 6,500 cars off the road. That is how big an impact we are talking about. We are also exploring options for the reuse of known Northern Ireland waste streams; for example, gypsum, chicken litter, meat meal and bonemeal, and tyres. That will obviously reduce the amount of waste to landfill.

3.00 pm

Lafarge will examine options to reduce emissions from transport, including in its haulage supply chain and staff. There will also be improved public access to the key European geological features that are found in the Ballysudden area of special scientific interest (ASSI), which is in the Cookstown quarry. It is also worth noting that Lafarge has undertaken to work with key stakeholders to develop a renewable energy strategy and to examine further options to reduce packaging. I think that those are very responsible actions that that company is taking. However, it is not taking them sheerly for the environmental benefit; it can clearly see, as these prosperity agreements highlight, that there can be win-wins and that what is good for economics can also be good for the environment.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Minister for his answers. How do the powers that he has transferred to local authorities assist them in tackling climate change?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Boylan for that question. The restructuring of local government was about not just reducing the number of councils but increasing its powers and responsibilities. One of those new powers, which has been spoken of a lot with perhaps not a lot of understanding or maybe even realisation of its potential, is community planning. I think that it is a very important vehicle through which councils can take a real hands-on approach to improving the economy, the environment, and their own area's social health and well-being. I put environment in the middle there, but I think it is very much a central plank of what new councils could and should be doing.

Regarding the powers that have transferred to allow them to do that, councils clearly have in their own gift the ability to have their own waste policies. Many of them do, and they are working together in their new councils to formulate waste policies that not only prove to be good value to the ratepayer but that help us, as NI plc, to meet European targets. If you look at the estate of councils, such as the number of public buildings that they have and vehicles that they own, you will see that all councils will already be looking, as purely a cost-

saving exercise, at how they can reduce energy use. I also very much think that, if any of the councils have potential new builds, we should put pressure on them to make them carbon-neutral buildings. I do not know whether I can do that legislatively or through regulation.

Ms Lo: I very much welcome the Minister's announcement of reviewing urgently the ETSU-R-97 and of introducing the climate change Bill. Can the Minister be a bit more specific about the timescale for bringing in the climate change Bill and about whether he is going to put in targets for mitigating measures?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. I referred to the fact that the clock was ticking in my office, or on my time in it anyway, and that, therefore, work is already well under way. Given the groundwork that is necessary to proceed with legislation, over the past 18 months to two years, I have been involved, as have my officials, in extensive and intensive discussions with representatives from a number of sectors, including from agriculture, industry, the environmental NGO sector, and with officials from other jurisdictions about how we could and should best progress any climate change legislation.

The challenges facing us in the North, while not unique, certainly differ from those in other UK jurisdictions. That is why it is important to look at the Republic of Ireland, with which we share a very similar economy, given, for example, our dependence on agriculture. We have to work closely with them and look at their incoming climate change legislation when shaping ours. It is vital that we as a Department do not do that in isolation, and the input from those sectors to which I referred earlier is and will be vital. The ball has started rolling; it is important that momentum is sustained and that I keep my shoulder to it.

Arc21 Incinerator: Update

5. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the proposed Arc21 incinerator at the Hightown site, Newtownabbey. (AQO 7936/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Arc21 planning application for the development of a residual waste treatment facility at Hightown quarry, Mallusk was submitted to the Department on 27 March 2014. The application was accompanied by a voluntary environmental statement. Consultations were carried out with a wide range of statutory bodies, including NIEA, Antrim Borough Council's environmental health department, Transport NI and the Public Health Agency. Following receipt of comments from consultees, a request for further environmental information was issued to the agent last July. The further information was submitted in September 2014 and was advertised in the local press. It included further information from NIEA, environmental health and Transport NI. Consultations were issued to the relevant consultees and all responses have now been received.

I am aware of the very high level of objections to the proposal. There have been 3,258 letters of objection to date, the main issues raised being visual impact, traffic impact, health implications, odour, noise, house values, proximity to residential areas, economics, tourism impact, environmental impact and the adequacy of the environmental statement. No letters of support have been received to date.

This regionally significant planning application is still under consideration, and my officials are currently in the process of making a recommendation to me through a comprehensive development management report. I will fully consider all relevant material considerations, including the views of local objectors, before making a final decision.

The operating permit application is also currently being considered by the Department, and all statutory consultee responses have now been submitted. It would be remiss of me to make any further comment until officials conclude their deliberations.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answer. I understand that he is reluctant to comment further but does he agree with me that, given the vast number of objections — 3,258 to date, as he has outlined — and the obvious lack of infrastructure at the Hightown site, it is wholly inappropriate for the development to go ahead?

Mr Durkan: Given my stated reluctance to elaborate on my earlier points, I cannot, unfortunately, agree with Mrs Cameron at this stage as she has requested. The number of objections to this proposal is, I think, unprecedented, certainly during my tenure as Minister. However, the number of objections to a planning application is not and never can be a determining factor when assessing an application. I have, however, given a pledge to consider all material considerations raised by the objectors. I think that is very important. The reference by the Member to what she perceives to be inadequate infrastructure has been made in many of the 3,000-odd objections. That will receive close scrutiny from Transport NI, which is the relevant consultee on such issues.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his comments so far, and I am glad that he will take on board all the objectors' comments. Will he clarify the position on funding for Arc21? I think that £50 million or £51 million was placed in your budget by the Finance Minister.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. I was delighted when I heard that I was getting a bonus £50 million inserted into my budget by the Finance Minister. That was £50 million that I never asked for. However, I then discovered what the £50 million was for. To be precise, it is £50.5 million of financial transactions capital money from the Treasury, which has sought to identify privately financed projects that the Government can finance and then have the money repaid at a commercial rate. It is the Treasury's view that the Arc21 project could be one such project; however, it cannot be one in the absence of planning permission or a successful application for an operating permit. With that in mind, I raised objections to the fact that that money was being put into the capital budget of the Department that would ultimately be responsible for making the decisions on the planning and permit applications. However, we still have it. If the approval is not granted, that money could become available to other projects. If not, it will be taken back but at no loss to my Department or any other.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his previous answers. I want to ask about the point that has just been raised about the £50.5 million, and I ask without prejudice to the Minister making any decision. If, for some reason, the Arc21 project were not to go ahead, is the Minister saying that that £50.5 million could, at some point, go back

to Westminster if there is no other project in which that money could properly be invested?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary question. The allocation of the financial transactions capital is to the DOE. The FTC fund is a Treasury loan to support the delivery of major infrastructure projects, and it is being administered — just administered — on the Treasury's behalf by DFP. As I indicated in an earlier answer, any loan must be repaid at commercial rates.

As we now know, DFP has assigned that £50.5 million from the fund to the DOE budget to assist the delivery of the Arc21 project in the event of the waste management group submitting a satisfactory business case and reaching financial close. However, in the event of that not happening and a failure to identify a similar major infrastructure project in that Department, it is my understating that that money could well go back to the Treasury. I do not know whether that money would become available to another major infrastructure project that might come forward under the umbrella of another Department, but I would be keen to explore that.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Following the review of public administration, what role does Arc21 now have in addressing waste management?

Mr Durkan: Arc21 is one of three waste management groups across the North. It is comprised, as each of them are, of a number of councils. It will be very much up to the councils what role is played by the waste management groups.

I have gone on record before saying that we should consider a move towards a single waste authority for all of the North rather than the three groups comprising the various councils. I think that for many reasons, not least because a lot of the proposals that have been brought forward — I am not singling out any particular one — have been fuelled as much by competition as anything else. As I said, it is up to the councils to decide how to proceed, but I meet councils regularly, and the regional waste management board has strong opinions on this — not always wrong opinions but always strong opinions. Work is ongoing with the councils to decide the best way forward. Waste is a massive issue, and it is only now with the spiralling cost of managing our waste that it is getting the attention that it deserves and requires, not just across the councils but in this Chamber as well.

3.15 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): That ends the period for listed questions. We now move to topical questions.

River Strule: Sewage Leak

T1. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of reports in last week's 'Ulster Herald', which stated that raw sewage may have been leaching into the River Strule for two weeks and, if so, what steps his Department has taken to investigate and remedy the situation, given the serious concerns that this raises for wildlife, public health and the aquaculture of the River Strule and, indeed, the wider Foyle basin. (AQT 2351/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. This report will cause huge concern for the public around the issues that the Member has identified, as well as for me and my departmental officials. The incident to which the Member refers was first reported to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) on 8 April, and a local inspector investigated immediately. The inspector informed Northern Ireland Water about the problem, and it then carried out work to remove the sewer blockage that had caused the sewage overflow and had led to it going into the watercourse.

It is understood that there were difficulties in gaining access to the site. NIEA classified this as a low-severity incident, with localised impact on the River Strule. I am not saying that low impact is no impact, but fortunately, due to the swift reporting of the incident and the swift reaction to that report, a more major incident was avoided. Contrary, however, to the report in the 'Ulster Herald', DOE and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency do not have a role in maintaining rivers, other than in securing improvements in water quality. NIEA will investigate water pollution reports and encourages the public to do so in a timely manner on our confidential pollution hotline. I would give you the number, but it would not be confidential then. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McAleer: I thank the Minister for that response and for the clarification. In a second incident, again highlighted in the local press last week, the carcass of a calf was dumped in the Rylagh burn outside Omagh a number of weeks ago. Does he agree that this is reprehensible behaviour by the people who dumped it there? Given the public health concerns, does he also agree that it is entirely unreasonable to expect the local landowner or indeed any member of the public to attempt to remove the carcass themselves?

Mr Durkan: I certainly echo the Member's sentiments around this act: it should be condemned. Neither NIEA nor DOE has a role in the removal of fallen animals, but a number of other bodies do have responsibility. Local councils will or, certainly, should lift and dispose of fallen animals dumped on council-owned land, roadsides, car parks or lay-bys and between the high and low watermarks on beaches. In adopted watercourses, the Rivers Agency may remove fallen animals if river flows are impeded. Where flow is not impeded and the fallen animal is a public health issue, which, as the Member outlined, they tend to be on occasion, it is a local council responsibility to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Fallen animals dumped on private land, however, do become the responsibility of the landowner. Local councils can serve a notice on the landowner to dispose of a carcass if it is a public health nuisance. Riparian owners on either riverbank are legally responsible for the river up to its central line. In the past, some local councils have removed fallen animals from private land; I know that Derry City Council has been good at doing so in the past. However, local councils have no legal remit to undertake that function and would seek indemnity from the landowner when they have to.

Sand Extraction: Lough Neagh

T2. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with local sand extraction companies about planning permission at Lough Neagh. (AQT 2352/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. I initially became aware of the issue on Lough Neagh as recently as last summer — maybe at the start of last summer — and I have had regular, and incessant, correspondence on it ever since. The practice or industry of sand dredging, as it is known, has been going on in the lough as far back as the 1930s at least, and possibly beyond. As I said, no one had raised any issue with it or objection to it until very recently. However, given the serious nature of the objections, they have not been taken lightly by any means. DOE has issued an enforcement warning letter to many — if not all — of those involved in the practice of sand dredging, and it continues to monitor the situation.

I am also aware of, and have received correspondence from those involved in the industry about, their dependence on it, their many employees and their families' dependence on it and the fact that they have been doing it for so long. If they have been doing it for so long, just how harmful can it be? It is a very difficult issue of balancing environmental and economic concerns. However, given the very real threat of infraction proceedings from Europe, we have to ensure that we do everything correctly and that the environment is protected.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas don Aire as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. Minister, you say that there are concerns from other groups. Will you express to us what those concerns are? As you said, it has been going on since the 1930s and there was no regulation put in place, so why now?

Mr Durkan: I did say that the concerns raised are very real ones, centring on the impact on habitat. That is coming from Europe as well. We have to maintain standards in certain habitats, of which the lough is one. Therefore, the threat of infraction proceedings from Europe is very real and is one that we, as a region, cannot afford to be in any way blasé about, because if a huge fine comes along with that infraction, we will know all about it.

It is my understanding that those involved in the sand extraction business are working collectively to bring forward a planning application and an environmental impact statement to, I suppose, regularise the work that has been regular to them for almost a century. That is something that we have encouraged them to do, and I have subsequently encouraged them to do it a bit more quickly.

Carrier Bag Levy: NIEA Grants

T3. **Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he can guarantee that the recently announced £1 million from the carrier bag levy/tax fund will go to current NIEA grant-funded organisations and that, given the fact that many of those organisations are under great stress, those applications will not be lengthy or torturous. (AQT 2353/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. I can guarantee the Member that that money will be spent in a way that maximises the protection and promotion of our environment. I cannot guarantee that it will go to or be split on a pro rata basis among all the environmental NGOs that have been funded to date.

I believe that a piece of work is required and is already under way with the sector itself, the NGOs affected and others, like independent environmental experts, for us to

prioritise where that money should be spent. I can assure the Member that this will not be an arduous process. Time is of the essence here. It is vital that we get the certainty to these organisations that they and their employees need.

We will look very carefully through this process at how the money is awarded. I mentioned environmental priorities. We will also look at how much match funding our funding actually enables some of the organisations to draw down — and some of them are excellent at it — as well as, I suppose, the value for money and volunteer activity that some of them can generate as well. It will not be an easy task but, as I said, it is one that we have not got a lot of time to do.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Minister for his answer. In addition to £1 million, he has further funds available in the carrier bag fund. Will he use those to create a challenge fund this year? Would he not be better actually diverting all those funds to support the NIEA organisations with which his Department has a service-level agreement?

Mr Durkan: It is projected that we will have in the region of a further £500,000, or possibly £550,000, from the carrier bag levy. However, at this stage it is my intention to use that as a challenge fund to make available to community groups, schools and other organisations to run their own, I suppose, low-level environmental projects. While they are low level, they can and do have a huge impact.

The money has been generated through the carrier bag levy, and it states in legislation that money generated through that levy must be spent on community-based projects, which restricts very much how we can look at reallocating it across the NGOs.

I understand the point the Member is making. I was, in fact, considering front-loading the money that I was going to set aside to run the challenge fund later in the year to now and then wait for money to become freed up through the voluntary exit scheme and use that for the challenge fund, but I am going to resist doing that. However, I spoke about the piece of work we are doing currently to see what projects we will continue funding and the rate at which we will continue funding them. Again, depending on how that exercise goes, there is a possibility that I may have to dip into the challenge fund. I am reluctant to do so, but it may become a necessary evil.

Planning: Super-councils

T4. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on how he feels the new super-councils will conduct their new responsibility for planning.
(AQT 2354/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that question. I have every confidence that the new super-councils will embrace their new powers, particularly the planning function, and use them to deliver for the citizens in their respective council districts and areas. I know and have spoken in the House before of a certain nervousness that existed, not just among councillors but maybe across other sectors, about the capacity of new super-councillors and super-councils corporate to deal with planning issues and, I suppose, the controversy and contention that follows many of these planning issues.

I am confident that the capacity-building programme secured by my predecessor through funding he received

from the Executive has been very successful. I know that it has built councillors' confidence as well as

competence.

3.30 pm

Different councils have spent that money differently. However, from speaking to councillors from across the North, I know that many of them are happy with the training that they have received. Obviously, no training is as good as learning on the job, so I have no doubt that a lot of learning is to be done and that a lot will be done.

Mrs Dobson: I welcome your enthusiasm, Minister. Thank you for your answer. You will be aware that, in the past, delays in applications for businesses and homeowners led to frustrations and missed business opportunities. What guarantees can you provide that the new system will operate more efficiently than it has in the past?

Mr Durkan: I am unaware of any inefficiency that has existed within the system, over the past couple of years anyway. I think it is important that we all realise that we are not talking about a brand new function. While it will be new for councillors to be decision takers and decision makers, the council staff who are there now and who will be bringing recommendations to councillors are the same staff who have been bringing recommendations to councils under the guise of DOE Planning Service. We have transferred over 400 highly competent and highly qualified staff to the 11 new councils. The Department, of course, retains overarching responsibility for planning policy. Without doubt, there will be a lot of hand-holding to be done, but it is important that that does not become handcuffing and that we are not too restrictive on the new councils and their ability to make their own decisions.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat): On that very positive note, I am pleased to say that time is up. Members will take their ease while we change the top Table.

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Newton] in the Chair)

Assembly Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before we commence the next item of business, I advise the House that I have been notified by the Business Committee that the proposer will not be speaking today to the Adjournment topic on services at the Causeway Hospital. The debate has been postponed until 21 April.

Private Members' Business

Block Grant

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 are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Maskey: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the estimated reduction of £1.5 billion from the block grant; further notes the declared intention by the current Tory-led Government to make further swingeing cuts of many millions over the next mandate; notes the devastating effect this has had on the funding of public services; declares its opposition to the austerity policies at the root of all of this; calls on the British Government to pursue, in the immediate term, a policy of economic stimulus; and further calls on the Executive to continue to defend the core public services of health and education and appeal to civic society, employers, trade unions and the voluntary and community sector to unite in lobbying the British Government on this basis.

Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I rise on behalf of Sinn Féin to propose the motion. It is a simple enough motion and I do not think that it should provide any issues for any Member or party in the House. I think most of the parties will already subscribe to the general intention behind the motion and most, if not all, of its sentiments. Nevertheless, I will make a few points on the motion.

The motion, as has been outlined, asks the Assembly to note the reduction in the block grant of £1.5 billion over the last recent number of years. It further notes the declared intentions of the British Tories to make even more swingeing cuts within the next mandate if re-elected in May. The Tories, as we all know, have said that they will take a further £30 billion from public spending, which will include, perhaps, £12 billion from welfare. Who knows precisely what a Labour-led Government may seek to do? However, that is outside our gift at this time.

Unfortunately, we already know the devastating impact that this is having on public services and what the impact on the most vulnerable in our society would be if we were to simply pass on the benefit cuts to those most in need. Those are benefit cuts that the five parties to the Stormont House Agreement have agreed should not be imposed on the most vulnerable, but which will come, obviously, at a cost to the block grant. All around us, Departments have been forced to cut budgets because of the cuts to our block grant. We know that all of that is down to an austerity programme and a Tory ideological agenda of assault on spending on public services and cutting benefits to those most in need. That, of course, drives down wages and makes more profit for big businesses, the friends of the Tories.

The motion asks all parties in the Assembly to restate their opposition to the austerity policies at the root of all this and to call on any incoming British Government to immediately pursue a policy of economic stimulus. For Sinn Féin's part, we will continue to oppose austerity as an economic policy,

which, by all evidence, is counterproductive to building an economy, certainly any notion of a fair economy.

I believe that it is important to place on record, particularly for those outside of here who choose to ignore the financial realities that the Executive have to deal with, that the British Government set the block grant. We have no fiscal powers or levers at our disposal to allow us to stimulate and build our local economy. Effectively, we are having to manage the block grant as opposed to managing the economy. Equally, we have a range of very negative indicators, which are additional burdens that our Executive have to take account of. They include having the highest cost of living; the highest levels of child poverty; some of the most deprived wards; higher levels of unemployment; and, of course, the fact that we are a post-conflict society.

I commend our Executive for working very hard, despite those problems, to mitigate many of them. Indeed, the Programme for Government commits us to build the economy and tackle disadvantage. The Executive and Departments have introduced many measures. No water charges have been imposed; there is free travel for senior citizens; there are no prescription charges; there are regional and other targeted rates relief initiatives; and there is substantial funding support for education to target areas of greater need etc. There is a range of other measures, which I do not need to rehearse but which I fully believe show the attempts that each Department has made to address some of the difficulties that many in society have to address in dealing with the austerity programmes and cuts to budgets.

Despite all of the controversy around welfare cuts, the Executive, to their credit, have agreed to not simply impose the benefit cuts, as demanded by the British Government. I acknowledge that the Executive and Departments have had to face very hard choices, and most have made great efforts to minimise the impact of reduced spending, although it is fair to say that not all decisions have been universally welcomed or even supported. I also want to put on the record the experience that I have had with the Minister who I have most direct engagement with, the Minister for Social Development. He personally and his Department have done their best to protect neighbourhood renewal areas and projects, in particular, from the massive cuts being imposed across the board.

The motion calls on the Executive to continue to defend the crucial public services of health and education, particularly as, clearly, they are essential elements of any caring society. As I said, I fully understand the concerns in many of our sectors. I am certain that our Executive can always do some things better, but the motion makes an important appeal to civic society in general, and to employers, trade unions and the community and voluntary sector specifically, to unite in lobbying the British Government against these austerity policies and the massive cuts to the block grant, because that is where the full responsibility for the cuts to the budgets lies.

As I said earlier, we effectively have to manage the block grant with our hands tied behind our back, because we cannot manage the economy without the powers to do so. We call on those in wider civic society to unite behind the parties here that have been doing their level best to tackle the austerity programme that has been imposed upon us and the swingeing cuts that have come as a result of those punitive policies.

Mr Girvan: I stand to support the motion but with some reluctance and some difficulty because I see some hypocrisy associated with what is being put forward. I appreciate that we would like to ensure that we protect as much of the block grant that we draw down as possible, and I appreciate that it is vital that we use that block grant as efficiently as possible.

I believe that it is not Tory cuts but Sinn Féin cuts that we are having to deal with in our block grant in Northern Ireland. That has happened as a result of not implementing certain things, primarily welfare reform, and is leading to a major cost to our block grant at present. There is some irony involved in stating that we should lobby Westminster considering that, when it comes to dealing with any matter in Westminster, Sinn Féin do not even take up their seats in Parliament. We think that it is vital to ensure that we draw down the maximum money into Northern Ireland, and, if that means trying to protect our block grant, we will do all that we can and ensure that it is used effectively.

It is said that we are only ring-fencing the likes of Health and Education. I appreciate that those are two very important Departments, but, as it stands, they are probably being starved of resource as a consequence of some of the cuts that we are having to put in to deal with penalties that are being imposed upon us.

We also have some major infrastructural problems to deal with in Northern Ireland, where there has been major underinvestment for many years under direct rule. As a consequence of a campaign of terrorism and bombing, we spent quite a bit of our money having to rebuild property that was destroyed and rebuild our public infrastructure, which was being systematically taken to pieces by those who claim to be the custodians of ensuring that the public and the most vulnerable in our society are protected. We are now starting to see evidence that the most vulnerable in our society are sometimes not necessarily just people who are on benefit. A lot of individuals out there are suffering because they cannot get operations or access proper health treatment, and there are those who will possibly lose their job as a consequence of the reduction in our block grant.

We have to ensure that we target what resource we have and grow our private sector but not at the expense of our public sector. We have to ensure that we have a public sector that is fit for purpose. I use the word "fit" because it has to deliver. It is not an employment agency. It is to work. I appreciate that we have to work with the trade unions to ensure that they understand that we have to deliver and have to cut our cloth accordingly. We cannot just break the Budget and go back with cap in hand and ask for more money. I appreciate that, when they came into power in 2010, the Conservative Government made major cuts to the Northern Ireland block grant. We then set the four-year Budget for the Assembly in 2011 and that has impacted on where we are today.

So, it is with some reluctance that I support the motion. It is vital that we protect the block grant, but there is a certain hypocrisy in the way that this has been brought forward by Sinn Féin.

3.45 pm

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, as an deis labhairt ar an rún

seo. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the motion. There is no doubt about it that 7 May is fast approaching, and, as we know, there is much uncertainty about the type of government that will be formed at Westminster. Indeed, it seems likely that Northern Ireland parties will have a key role in affairs at Westminster after the election.

The austerity policy pursued by the Tory coalition for the past five years has led to a huge fall in standards here more than anywhere else. Claims of an economic recovery have meant little to people who are on zero-hours contracts, on the minimum wage or unemployed. Report after report has indicated how hard we have been hit by the recession. It has been deeper here than elsewhere, and recovery has been slower. The situation here has been made worse by the reduction of £1.5 billion from the block grant.

Although the SDLP's amendment was not accepted, I will refer to it in my speech. Whilst we support the motion, I note, as I said, that the votes of MPs returned from Northern Ireland could be decisive in deciding the type of government at Westminster after the election. Our MPs will have an important role to play in holding the next government to account and in making their votes count.

The motion is right to call on the British Government to pursue a policy of economic stimulus rather than attacking our public services through reductions in the block grant. Austerity is a dead hand on economic development and serves only to stunt growth and keep us mired in recession. What we need is a stimulus to growth. We still have threats to the jobs of 1,500 teachers and 1,000 classroom assistants, and we are also looking at a £1.3 million reduction in the early years budget.

Civic society has an important role in informing, advising and scrutinising government. Trade unions, businesses, employers and the voluntary and community sector have done much lobbying to ensure that the anti-austerity message gets across to the British Government.

As I said, the results of the election are important, but the difference will be in how our MPs use their votes. It is ironic that the motion comes from a party that refuses to take its seats in the House of Commons, refuses to bring the fight to the Government where it can make a real difference — on the Floor of the House of Commons — and prefers to shout from the sidelines rather than engage where it matters — on the Floor of the House of Commons. It is more than a touch ironic for Sinn Féin to appeal to civic society in the form of the voluntary and community sector, employers and trade unions to take up the cudgel when it refuses to use its mandate to vote against these measures where it matters — on the Floor of the House of Commons.

Although we agree with the motion, it has a hollow ring to it, coming as it does from a party that will not go the full distance in the fight against austerity. What is the point of the motion? While its sentiments are good and wise, its purpose seems to be more to do with protecting Sinn Féin from criticism. However, we believe, as I said, that the sentiments at the heart of the motion are the right sentiments, which we should support —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr D Bradley: — and support on the Floor of the House of Commons at the beginning of the next mandate.

Mr Cree: It was only some seven weeks ago that we debated a very similar motion from Sinn Féin. We debated the subject at length, but it would appear that Sinn Féin still does not understand the current economic situation. We are emerging from a world economic crisis. We did not have to be bailed out by others. In fact, we are much more financially fit than our friends in the Republic of Ireland. We did not need outside assistance to prevent us from going bankrupt. It is also worth noting that the United Kingdom was able to assist with funds amounting to £7.5 billion as part of the £85 billion bailout to the Irish Republic. It is important to keep that in mind. We are part of the United Kingdom, which is a major world economy, and that is a significant strength for us.

Economic governance from Dublin, which the Members opposite advocate, would have been a disaster. Sinn Féin would also have us believe that austerity measures were just an experiment conducted by the Westminster Government. Why then did Portugal, Italy, Spain, Greece and other countries in the eurozone have the same problem? Were the Tory cuts responsible for those austerity actions? No, the Government at Westminster were taking prudent action to pay our debts following a worldwide recession. The union with Britain brings us almost £10 billion a year in the form of a top-up — a subvention above and beyond what we, as a region of the UK, are able to raise ourselves. I trust that the signatories to the motion will be able to elucidate their economic theories with practical, researched examples of how we could raise the £10 billion alone. That did not happen in the previous debate, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

The motion calls on the British Government to pursue additional economic activity. It is a pity that, despite contesting the forthcoming Westminster elections, Sinn Féin does not use the opportunity to argue the case directly with all other Members in the UK Parliament.

It is just not enough to generalise about other sources of revenue or taxation. One has to understand how they work and the effect that they may have on the economy as a whole. Scotland has had tax-varying powers for several years and has not yet used them. Scotland has obviously done its homework. There are several taxes that could be transferred, but there is a cost to all of them. Therefore, the economic benefit to be derived has to be set against the costs of the delegated tax. That is why the Ulster Unionist Party was keen to have corporation tax devolved to Northern Ireland. We know that that action will enable the Northern Ireland Assembly to develop our economy and that it will represent value for money.

It is interesting to note that statistics published last month show that Northern Ireland benefits from the Union. The figures for 2013-14 show that public spending per head in the UK as a whole was £8,936. In England, it was £8,678, which was 3% below the UK average. Scotland enjoyed £10,275, which was 15% above the UK average. In Wales, it was £9,924, which was 11% above the UK average. In Northern Ireland, it was £10,961, which was 23% above the UK average.

We are all working to grow the economy, because the creation of jobs is directly linked to the creation of wealth. That enables people to pay tax, which, in turn, provides the

cash to pay for vital services such as health, welfare and education. That is how it works.

Mrs Cochrane: First, the Alliance Party concurs with the signatories to the motion that the cuts to the Northern Ireland block grant have caused major problems for Northern Ireland, but we should be clear that Northern Ireland is not the only region of the UK being adversely affected by cuts. We are, however, also facing other pressures, and Northern Ireland is likely to end up in a serious financial crisis as a result. We face not only large spending cuts but looming Budget uncertainty due to penalties as a result of the as yet unresolved issue of welfare reform. We also have the added future funding pressure of resourcing a lower level of corporation tax, which includes replacing the lost revenue to HM Treasury and investing more in skills and infrastructure. We welcome the devolution of corporation tax but recognise that we need to have a sound strategy in place to deal with the funding pressure in order to allow us to realise the future benefits.

The motion refers to proposed further cuts over the next mandate and:

“declares its opposition to the austerity policies at the root of all of this”.

Again, we concur with the thrust of that in that the specific austerity policies of the UK Government are being forced too quickly upon us, with little balance of policies to stimulate the economy. In Alliance's 2010 manifesto, we recognised the need for the UK Government to address the deficit, but we also cautioned about the rate at which that would be done. Our advice has been borne out in events.

We have seen too steep a decline in public spending across the UK, and that has probably slowed our economic recovery. We continue to caution against addressing the deficit at too fast a rate in the next Government. Continued deep cuts in public spending will have huge implications for the Northern Ireland block grant and public services and economic investments here.

Instead of pleading a special case for Northern Ireland, we should be arguing for a slowdown in the rate of austerity at a UK level. That would be more likely to have a greater positive impact on the Northern Ireland block grant. A slowdown in the rate of austerity could, itself, constitute an economic stimulus, especially if what would otherwise have been cut from public spending at a UK level was redirected into economically relevant areas.

It is worth noting that the UK economic recovery is being seen largely in terms of the fall in unemployment and a record employment level. However, there has not really been any increase in productivity. Indeed, UK productivity levels are poor by OECD standards. That is because a lot of low-paid and unskilled jobs are being created to produce the current employment levels, but it is not healthy. That is something that the Executive and the next UK Government need to address.

The motion:

“calls on the Executive to continue to defend the core public services of health and education”.

Again, Alliance acknowledges the importance of health and education as key public services, but we would add policing and economic growth intervention such as skills

development. We would caution against simply doing any read across of any protection given to health and education in English public spending decisions and doing the same in Northern Ireland. We have a very different context here. While there is a case for some degree of protection of the health and education budgets, there is significant scope for reform. We need to be careful not to simply continue to allocate resources to a sector that is under pressure without expecting it to pursue its efficiency agenda.

That is particularly clear in education, where we are diverting almost £300 million per year to resource a largely segregated education system. Of course, that is not the only area that is costing us more to run due to our failure to address division in Northern Ireland.

If we are to lobby the UK Government effectively on any changes to the block grant, we must learn the clear lesson from the botched initial attempts to make a pitch in the Stormont House process. Making a loose, general pitch for more resources for general public spending, especially in the context of parts of GB having deep socio-economic problems, is pointless. We need to base any pitch on the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, show that we are genuinely trying to tackle the cost of division and not being reckless with public funds, and link any additional resources to specific deliverables.

Mr McQuillan: We live in significantly different economic times than when the powers to this Assembly were restored in 2007. Since then, we have seen our block grant reduced in cash terms by successive Administrations in Westminster, beginning with Labour — which Sinn Féin prefers, according to Martin McGuinness in an interview some weeks ago — and the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Administration in the most recent parliamentary term.

Those cuts were generated by the need to make savings due to the imbalance in revenue generated through poorer tax returns and higher expenditure, primarily in the public sector. The bottom line is that the books do not balance, and that is an economic reality.

I do not expect Sinn Féin to understand that, as they do not even understand that fact in the country they affiliate to. They would rather have seen the Government of the Irish Republic behave like the current Government of Greece rather than behave responsibly and accept economic changes which were responsible for the need to cut public expenditure.

4.00 pm

If the truth be told, we, as a Province, are far better off as part of the United Kingdom under the Barnett formula than we would be as either an independent state or part of a foreign nation. I therefore view the motion with suspicion, and you may ask why. The first reason is the timing. We are weeks away from a general election and one year away from a general election in the Republic of Ireland, where Sinn Féin is allegedly standing against austerity in the hope of collecting a significant portion of the lefty party votes. The second reason I am sceptical about the timing and wording of the motion is that Sinn Féin despises the Conservative Party. After all, the IRA once tried to murder the late Prime Minister and her Cabinet. Furthermore, like the Scottish National Party, they wish to fuel sheer discontent and anger in order to motivate their core vote here in Ulster.

A number of months ago, we had a similar debate with regard to the revenue-generating mechanisms open to the Assembly and Executive, and the Finance Minister was clear that they were all options on which progress had been made. However, due to Sinn Féin's rejection of the Stormont House Agreement, after it got cold feet over welfare reform, one of those key revenue-generating mechanisms — corporation tax — is on hold. We have witnessed the First Minister, along with his deputy, getting a good deal for Northern Ireland, with additional means of borrowing to plug the gap created by the failure of Sinn Féin to accept welfare reform and to fuel further enhancements to build our economy and generate additional revenue for Northern Ireland. It is therefore somewhat ironic that Sinn Féin stands here today and presents this motion calling on the Executive to look at ways to generate additional revenue and increase the Northern Ireland Budget, when a significant means of doing that was rejected by Sinn Féin after it got cold feet.

Mr McKinney: I welcome the opportunity to participate in today's debate. I have to say that I am disappointed: there are elements of the motion with which I agree, but, as it comes from Sinn Féin, I have to take issue with it. There are a range of ways that you can describe the loss of £1.5 billion to the block grant, and noting it is not one of them. Then again, if you have already voted in favour of such cuts, it is perhaps difficult to move on to stronger language. After the motion, we will all be in a safer place, because Sinn Féin has asked us to note the scale of the cuts. Then we are asked to further note the Tory-led Government's agenda, as if, somehow or other, further noting it will make a dent in that Tory ambition. That is an ambition that the SDLP has been spelling out since the day and hour that the Tories came to power but which, in the end, Sinn Féin actually backed. But, once again, Ireland will be free now that we have further noted Tory intentions. In writing this, I have had to ask myself what all the pain and suffering was for if all we can do is sit here in Stormont this afternoon, "note" what the Tories are up to and vainly appeal to them to change their mind. That is what the motion amounts to. That is all that Sinn Féin can come up with: "Let's not go to Westminster, but let's ask the Tories for more. Let's pretend that Sinn Féin did not actually back the cuts".

Sinn Féin, as my colleague pointed out, has got the gall to ask the unions and the voluntary and community sector to join it. The party that backed the Budget that led to the cuts wants the unions to stand with it. No wonder it was not too present at the recent rallies. No wonder the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) members held up placards in front of John O'Dowd at the recent conference, telling him that the DUP/Sinn Féin axis amounted to Tory cuts. The trusted teachers of Ireland know the score.

Mr Maskey: I thank the Member for giving way. I had hoped that this afternoon would not descend into a silly point-scoring exercise. Most other Members have not done that and have still been able to make their points. Can the Member identify a single pound that any of his colleagues in Westminster have brought here as a result of their participation at Westminster? I cannot identify a shilling, never mind a pound.

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

Mr McKinney: I will turn it round on him: will you tell me how many pounds you are not going to bring back by not going to Westminster?

Mr Maskey: Will the Member give way so that I can answer?

Mr McKinney: You will have plenty of time in the winding up.

Mr Maskey: Do you want me to answer?

Mr McKinney: OK, go ahead.

Mr Maskey: Go back to the Stormont House talks. If you speak to your party leader — I do not know if you speak to him or not — you will know that the five-party discussions with the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, resulted in an additional £550 million being brought in for education over the next number of years. That was a direct result of our party leading on that.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to address all remarks through the Chair.

Mr McKinney: It was our party that pointed out, way back in the summer, that two separate parties going to Stormont would not be able to do any of the work. In any event, it is you guys who have, late in the day, done a U-turn on the Glenshane Pass over welfare. In any event, it is why Mickey Brady was booed from the demo at Daisy Hill.

It is not time for noting and appealing; it is time for a real hard look at where our problems lie. There is no point in simply urging an Executive to slice up the cake more favourably when we do not have a big enough cake. There is no point in Gerry Adams urging us to socialise the wealth when we do not have sufficient wealth, and he will not get his hands dirty creating it. Chris Hazzard has a fairy-tale economics approach that we should break the link with Westminster because austerity will always be the dish of the day. It might be a cold dish, but it is a dish worth £10 billion a year and to break it now would bankrupt us completely and send any North/South ambition down the tubes. It is why Máirtín Ó Muilleoir's plans, which he revealed to the BBC's 'Inside Politics' show, to push even more taxes on to those who have properties worth over £400,000, when they may not have the income to cope with them, will not work. He also has plans to tax Coke — I assume that he means the drinking variety — but that will not bail us out either. In the midst of a financial crisis on top of an economic crisis, what is the response of the Sinn Féin think tank? It is Oliver Twist economics: "Please sir, can I have some more?".

Tilting at windmills will not sort out our problems. Agreeing what those problems are and uniting in a common ambition to resolve them may, however, make a difference. We first of all need to decide that that is what we are doing. At present, we are unsustainable, we are relying on handouts and we are powerless. If you want an answer to why we did not get on the television debates, it lies there. We have our hands out looking for more. That is not power; that is pathetic. We scarcely have an economy because two thirds of what this place produces is based on the block grant and our private sector accounts for around a third. That is unsustainable, and it becomes even more so when the grant is to be cut. Parties in the Chamber need to start addressing that issue immediately because it will continue to be increasingly unsustainable.

We need to do things differently. We need to start with an ambition to succeed, to build and to stand on our own two feet and to pay our way. Bleating to the Tories and noting what we have all known for years and what the SDLP has been saying for years simply will not cut it.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank my colleagues for tabling the motion today. The last Member who spoke called for plenty of different ideas, a different approach and alternatives. He had five minutes but did not list a single alternative to what is happening. Perhaps he wants to go away to his own think tank and come up with some ideas and he can then table a motion to solve the problems. They are probably still smarting from trying to sell the City Airport or the harbour or some other thing that was not ours to sell.

At the core of this is the notion that we need to break away from being wedded to the failed economic policies of austerity emanating from the London and Dublin Governments. We need to look around us and realise that there is an alternative. There is no reason why we should not look at places such as Latin America. In Chile, they use moneys from corporate taxes to invest in tuition fees so that children who have been locked out of education for many years can now avail themselves of it. In Venezuela, where they use their natural resources to fund social missions, they have eradicated numeracy and literacy problems, and they are genuinely lifting millions of people out of poverty. Yet, here in Ireland, Governments have sought to sell off natural assets to the highest bidder as the interests of international consortiums all too often trump the needs of the people.

Mr Nesbitt: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: No, sorry. I want to get through this next point, and I will then come back.

Some may brush off what I say today as nothing more than radical rhetoric, but let us have a closer look at what is radical. Surely, radical is sending thousands of working families to food banks for survival; surely, radical is shipping thousands of young people off to foreign lands for a job; and, surely, radical is dismantling the NHS and selling it off for parts. Despite the nonsense promoted by Western media outlets, there is an alternative. That alternative begins with taking control of our economic destiny. I give way to the Member now.

Mr Nesbitt: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. I just seek clarification. I was listening carefully, but it seemed to me that you were implying that Belfast harbour was a natural asset. Will you clarify that?

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

Mr Hazzard: I was not referring to that at all. I was talking about selling off natural assets to the highest bidder; I was not talking about Belfast harbour. If you want to look at fracking or anything else, perhaps that would be closer to home.

If we are truly to build an economic alternative to austerity we must repatriate economic powers from Westminster and empower the people of Ireland. I know that the last Member who spoke scoffed at that idea. I am not sure if he has party support for scoffing at the idea of repatriating powers from Westminster and breaking the link with the Union. I am sure that many of his party will be surprised

that he said such in the Chamber today. However, if we are to truly empower local communities to continue to raise attainment in schools and eradicate inequalities in Irish society, we must be in control of the choices that are to be made. As long as economic power resides in Westminster, we will remain locked in a Tory trap. The Union offers us nothing but the abhorrent and divisive agenda of austerity. If we act collectively, we can end the Tories' reckless mismanagement of our economy. If all sections of civil society — trade unions, political parties and the people we represent — stand united in defence of our public services and local jobs, we can build a fairer society.

We must fight for sustainable employment, a living wage and improved working conditions for our people. Our combined forces must be on promoting innovation, encouraging our life sciences sector and our tourism industry and strengthening manufacturing. We cannot repair and rebuild our economy and public services in the interests of the few; we must maximise returns for all in this society. At the very heart of that is the idea that we must smash the notion that there is no alternative. There is an alternative. There are alternatives all around the world, where the rights and interests of the many in society are put ahead of the few. We have to break away and show that this institution is full of political leaders, not political pygmies. We must stand up and take real power for our people.

Mr Allister: I have to wonder about the nature of the bubble in which those who tabled the motion and those who seem to be going to support it live. Anyone who thinks that you can be part of a nation that needs to balance its books and yet be immune from the steps necessary to do so is utterly deluded. To that delusion they then add a huge dollop of hypocrisy. The very same people voted for a Budget of cuts and austerity and trooped through the Lobby to support it. Then they come today lamenting austerity and noting, with disdain and dismay, the cuts that they voted through the House. Hypocrisy does not begin to describe the stance of some. Then, we have Mr Girvan say that we need to cut our cloth to meet our situation but in the next breath tell us that, nonetheless, he will support the motion: that too is lacking in the candour that one would expect in this situation.

The parties in the House have conspired to raid the block grant to promote and sustain unrealistic welfare payments to the tune of £500-plus million over the next few years to come off health and education — vital services. Then, of course, Sinn Féin is back demanding more. It is typical of their strategy that they pocketed what they could get at Christmas and are now back demanding more, leaving a huge ransom note on the First Minister's desk, producing the five-point plan that really seems to amount to "Give us more, more, more, so that we can pay off the Sinn Féin ransom demand and keep Stormont going".

We really need to get a grip on reality. This is the same party — Sinn Féin — that, day and daily, is depleting the block grant through penalties over welfare reform and then laments the situation of its own creation. We have Mr Maskey, on the one hand, talking disparagingly about big business but then, apparently, they want us to embrace the devolution and cutting of corporation tax. Who does he think that will primarily benefit, other than big business?

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

4.15 pm

Mr Allister: At the same time, it will further deplete the block grant, which it tells us it so cherishes.

Yes, I will give way.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Member. As I have pointed out before in these debates, corporation tax cuts have a long way to trickle down before they reach people on benefits and welfare — the people Sinn Féin says that it wants to help. Does the Member agree with that?

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

Mr Allister: Thank you.

Absolutely. The only certainty about cutting corporation tax is the further depletion of the block grant. There is hope and expectation — it is a wing and a prayer — that it might produce more jobs, but there is no certainty whatsoever about that.

If this debate is to have any value, it will come when the Minister maybe answers some of these questions. I have a couple for him. Given the situation we are in with the logjam on welfare reform and the failure to deliver the Stormont House Agreement, will he be in a position to bring the Budget (No. 2) Bill to the House in June? Will he be in a position to bring the final Estimates? That is really where the House will have to face reality. I think that the Minister needs to tell us whether, if things continue as they are, he will be in a position to deal with those fiscal necessities. If he is not, does he expect the Treasury simply to stand back and say, "That is all right then"? Or does he have a realisation and an expectation that that will not happen and that the Treasury cannot and will not stand back?

I think that we need to hear from the Minister the stark financial realities of the situation — not the aspirations, not the hopes and not what one might dream about. What are the fiscal realities? Will he be able to bring the Budget (No. 2) Bill to the House? If he is, how is he going to do it? If he is not, what happens then?

Mr McCallister: I have to say that this is one of those completely bizarre motions that a party — a party of government — brings. I am surprised at others supporting it. When I first read the motion, I was reminded of Neil Kinnock's remarks when he turned to address militants in his own party. This is what he said:

"I'll tell you what happens with impossible promises. You start with far-fetched resolutions. They are then pickled into a rigid dogma, a code, and you go through the years sticking to that, out-dated, mis-placed, irrelevant to the real needs, and you end up in ... grotesque chaos".

That is where Sinn Féin is now stuck. On the one hand, it talks about criticising big business, but then it is cutting corporation tax. It talks about the block grant, the cost and price of the Union and austerity and of how evil the Tories and Tory cuts are. Did it watch the leader of the Labour Party, who is hoping to be prime minister of our country in a few weeks, trying to sell himself as a man who will be fiscally responsible? There were no promises of reckless spending but of trying to buy in to a triple-lock.

As part of the coalition agreement, the Tories in 2010 — the Minister may wish to allude to this — ring-fenced and

protected health spending. We get a Barnett consequential for that. That made a big difference to what happened.

The Minister will probably know the Barnett consequential better than I, but if the Tory and Lib Dem Government happen to be re-elected by promising year-on-year increases in health spending by up to £8 billion until 2020, the consequential will be somewhere in the region of £230 million to £240 million. The very fact that a future UK government could protect health and education, amounting to 60%-plus of our Budget, is the kind of thing that has shielded this Executive from the real ravages of austerity.

I remember a previous debate on the Budget when Mr Nesbitt gave some figures about UK debt. I reminded the House that the Republic of Ireland had reduced its spending by some €30 billion, the equivalent of 18% of GDP. If the UK had to reduce public spending at the same level, that would have equated to £500 billion. I will let the Minister work out how much that would have been off our block grant.

There seems to be an idea that you can keep asking for more and more, and that more money is always the answer. When you are part of a union, you have to take some of the hits. The Executive boast that we have the lowest household charges anywhere in the UK. As Mr Cree pointed out, we have the highest levels of public spending in the UK. Those situations cannot be balanced with endless talk of more and more money.

There are no ideas coming from the Government. Corporation tax is, effectively, the only thing in the tank. They want to cut corporation tax and, as Mr Allister said, the hope is that all this investment will come in. That might be good, positive and could help us to grow, but not when we are cutting our skills budget.

We signed up for welfare reform. Other colleagues have talked about civic society buying into that. We had the Make it Work campaign come up to the Stormont House Agreement talks. When people saw what Make it Work really looked like, they all ran for cover. Suddenly, it was a case of, "Hang on, maybe we don't want to make it work as well as that." That included parties that are in the Government. We have Sinn Féin, which signed up to welfare reform. We debated it, were making progress with it, and things were going very nicely until they got a bit nervous because they had not read the small print or something properly, and there was a row —

Mr Hazzard: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCallister: I am happy to take an intervention at this stage.

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for giving way. Just a couple of weeks ago, the Member stood with me in Annalong in solidarity with those who had been affected by an SDLP cut to the money that was allotted to the Mourne Heritage Trust. That is the effect of austerity coming from Westminster. That is the outworkings of austerity.

Mr McKinney: It was your Budget.

Mr Hazzard: That was an SDLP cut —

Mr McKinney: It was your Budget.

Mr Hazzard: Surely you agree that that is the outworking of negative austerity from London and it is something that we stood against together.

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

Mr McCallister: I agree with that but, as Mr McKinney was shouting, it is your Budget. You voted for it. Check the record; I voted against it.

The point is that the problems with our Budget are very often made in Northern Ireland. The Minister could possibly have his Budget blown apart by June because of the £2 million a week in fines due to welfare reform not being delivered on. We also have 65,000 empty school desks, a lack of reform in education and Transforming Your Care has stalled. The only reform that the Administration are doing is reform that has been effectively forced on it by the Government —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a conclusion.

Mr McCallister: — in welfare and the public sector. If we had put a recruitment freeze in the Civil Service, you would already have the 12% instead of us having to borrow £700 million to do it. Those are as much your cuts. I also spoke in Killeel —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to conclude his remarks.

Mr McCallister: — against cuts to early years and early intervention. That was a huge blow to those services.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I think that this is the first time I have spoken in the House under your chairmanship. I know that it has been several weeks since you were elected to the position of Principal Deputy Speaker, but I want to belatedly welcome you formally to your post. It is a pleasure to sit under your chairmanship.

I have enjoyed the debate much more than I thought I would. It has been entertaining from my vantage point to sit back and listen to the various squabbles. It is always nice and heartening for unionists to listen to nationalists squabble among each other, and I do not intend to fight with any unionist colleagues too aggressively today.

We do not get enough opportunities to debate budgetary matters, and I welcome opportunities to do so. We debate the Budget frequently in the House, but that can sometimes turn into a very broad discussion that is about anything other than the Budget.

We do not often get into focused discussions around austerity policies or whatever it might be, so I welcome the opportunity that today's debate has presented. I do so even if this motion is very suspiciously like a Sinn Féin motion that was before the House approximately two months ago.

The House is very well versed, I hope — listening to the contributions it appears that it is — in the past, present and future pressures on our block grant, and it does no harm to rehearse them again. As the motion says, roughly £1.5 billion in spending power has been lost to the block grant since 2010 because our Budget has not risen in keeping with inflation over that period. It is often forgotten that while, latterly, things have changed in this respect, our capital budget was hit by a 40% reduction in the 2011-15 Budget period. That has improved slightly in recent years, but that had a devastating impact. I will come back to that

in a moment when I pick up on a point that one Member raised earlier.

In this current financial year — I have to remember that we are now in a new financial year and I cannot talk about next year any longer — we are facing a 1.6% real-terms reduction in our resource budget. We should be listening to what Conservative Party and Labour Party spokespeople are saying, and I will address that as well. Looking forward, however, you do not have to listen to them, nor do you have to listen to me or anybody in this Chamber; you can read what the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is saying. It is clear that whoever wins the upcoming general election, if indeed anybody wins it, the future is more of the same. It will be different; the timings may be slightly different from what we were thinking they were going to be. However, I warned in the House before on earlier OBR projections that we could be facing, at a UK-wide level, as much as 13% reductions to resource expenditure over the next three years. If that was fully applied to Northern Ireland that would equate to a further £1 billion being taken out of our resource budget.

I am listening attentively, as is, I am sure, everybody in the House and further afield, to what is being said by the Conservative Party and the Labour Party, as the two parties likely to lead any new Government, about the various spending commitments that they are making. I listen to them because, as Mr McCallister pointed out in respect of the Barnett consequential, they have very serious implications for our Budget but also because what they particularly pick out as their favourite areas of expenditure have significant Barnett consequential impacts — or not — for Northern Ireland. We are hearing both parties outbidding and outgunning each other in respect of protecting health and education in real terms or cash terms, and we have had the recent commitment by the Conservative Party to put a further £8 billion a year into the NHS in England by 2019-2020, which would have significant positive Barnett consequential for Northern Ireland because of the high degree of comparability that there is through the Barnett formula for Northern Ireland in respect of health and education spending. We also recently heard the Chancellor in his Budget statement in March herald the end of austerity by 2019-2020, when he is predicting a significant increase in public spending.

The result of all those pledges, if they are taken forward and implemented — it is likely that there will be bartering between various parties as a Government is formed and things may not come out of the wash exactly as parties put them in — is that instead of there being 13% reductions to our resource budget moving forward over those three years, the reduction is likely to be significantly less. While it will be less, however, reductions in public expenditure are still looming on the horizon. The only plus point, looking at the Budget moving forward and the projections that are there, is that the capital position is likely to improve significantly over that period as well. That, obviously, will provide a boost to the economy. Mr Cree will be glad to hear that it is likely that FTC will play a large part in that, and that might pose some particular difficulties for us in Northern Ireland.

4.30 pm

I will pick up on points made by some Members, including Mrs Cochrane, on the pace of reductions. The reality is

accepted by most of us that there is a requirement to live within our means. That is accepted by most sensible people, although it appears that not everybody is sensible. In 2010, the UK Government, in my view and in the view of many, went too hard and too fast, particularly in cutting the capital budget. As I have said before, it was indicated that our capital budget reduced by some 40% over the four years. At that time, given the UK Government's interpretation of the evidence that they saw, that was their way of reducing the deficit and eliminating it in this Parliament. It has not been eliminated in this Parliament, and I believe that one reason why it has not been eliminated is the conscious decision to go after capital, because the economy reversed again. It is sometimes forgotten that, at the time of the last election, the economy was growing, but it reversed because of that very significant impact on capital spend. Capital projects that did not move forward or were stopped resulted in a lot of people becoming unemployed, and unemployment registers going up, and it had a devastating impact on the economy for a time. That is why austerity and austerity policies have continued and will continue well into the next Parliament.

I will take up a point made by Mr Allister. I think that it is perfectly reasonable for us to accept the reality that we have to live within our means and that adjustments have to be made to do that at a national government level, just as we in Northern Ireland have to make adjustments to live within our means, but to oppose a particular type of policy that is being followed by the Government in Westminster, whether that Government be of a Conservative or Labour hue. On reflection, many of us, including my party, warned that going too hard and too fast, particularly with capital, would have significant negative consequences, and so it proved to pass.

I share the sentiments of many about the motion and agree with some of its sentiments — not helped, I have to say, by some contributions from the Sinn Féin Benches — but what is significant about the motion is what it does not say. Some Members picked up on precisely the points that it does not mention. There are at least three areas in which it omits significant things that should be addressed in a debate like this.

The first — at least Mr Maskey addressed this in moving the motion — is that it omits to acknowledge the good work that has been done, even in a period of cuts to our Budget, by the Executive and by society across Northern Ireland to ensure that economic growth is underpinned and that key public services like health and education continue to be invested in.

Secondly, as some Members picked up, it also fails to acknowledge the home-grown austerity — if I can use that phrase: the Sinn Féin austerity resulting from Sinn Féin inaction, particularly on welfare reform, and how that has harmed Northern Ireland.

Thirdly, as Members pointed out, whilst the motion calls for business, trade unions, the third sector, Uncle Tom Copley and all to join with politicians to oppose austerity, it fails to mention the fact that, where it matters — at this moment in time, the new House of Commons will be where it matters — Sinn Féin is, of course, absent.

If I may, I will take each of those points in turn in the limited time available. We have done much, and much has been done by many across Northern Ireland, to ensure that our economy has been turned around and that past trends

have been overturned. Our economy is growing, albeit at 1.2%, year on year between quarter 2 of 2013 and quarter 2 of 2014. It is a private sector-driven recovery, with the private sector up in three of the last four quarters. In particular, the services and production sectors are driving that annual growth. Unemployment has fallen for 26 months in a row and is down 18,600 over the period, and, of course, in 2013-14, Invest Northern Ireland posted record results, with 11,000 jobs being promoted.

We have also continued to invest in key public services. Health is up by over 3% next year, with some £200 million additional going into the Department of Health. Since 2007, health and education have been up 33% and 23% respectively in expenditure, again showing that, even over difficult years, those key public services have been the priority of the Executive, as the motion calls for.

As bad as austerity policies emanating from London have been, they have been compounded by the self-inflicted wounds of Sinn Féin.

The austerity emanating from the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats has been exacerbated by the austerity emanating from Sinn Féin. I of course refer, as did many Members in their contributions, to the £100 million that has been lost already in welfare reform fines. We talk about these things so often in this place, at Question Time and in debates, that I think that sometimes we forget that, at a time when there have been various pressures on public spending, as the motion is right to point out, we have lost £100 million because of Sinn Féin inaction on welfare reform. That is £100 million that could have gone to health, education, the environment or wherever. It has gone not to health, education or the environment but back to the Treasury in fines paid because of non-movement on welfare reform. There have been consequences. There have been in-year cuts to services to pay for that £100 million. There have been job cuts in the public sector and outside. As a result of the handing-back of that £100 million to London, there have been contracts with the private sector and the third sector that have ceased, resulting in job losses in those sectors.

There are looming problems — I have to make this point — with the Budget for this current year, 2015-16. The Stormont House Agreement contained a significant financial package with a voluntary exit scheme, whereby I would be able to access £200 million in loans, and payroll savings of £50 million that would emanate from the scheme. I could go on and on and on. Even Mr Maskey referred to the £500 million that shared education would get as part of the financial package. The Secretary of State and others are on record as saying that, if we do not proceed with welfare reform, the whole package is at risk. That includes the financial package that underpins our Budget. That clearly will have a significant impact on our Budget and on our ability to agree a Budget in advance, and that is something that Executive colleagues and I will have to contend with in the coming weeks.

The impact of the cuts to pay for welfare reform fines and of cuts that could be required in order for us to live within our means this year because of the failure to move forward with the Stormont House Agreement and the Stormont Castle agreement will be every bit as devastating as the austerity that is emanating from London, under any UK Government, if not more devastating.

Thirdly and finally —

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Hamilton: I have very limited time. If you are very brief, I will give way quickly.

Mr Allister: If the Minister cannot bring forward the Budget Bill in June, what will happen to the finances?

Mr Hamilton: I do not think that, in one minute, I will have time to deal with that and still conclude my remarks. Suffice it to say, the Member and others are right to identify the very serious impact that not being able to move forward with that whole financial package will have on our Budget and on our ability to advance a Budget this year. Several weeks ago, I spelled out that there would be a black hole in the Budget of roughly half a billion pounds. That clearly presents problems for balancing our books and getting a viable Budget.

The motion also rightly calls for Northern Ireland politicians to fight austerity, but what it fails to point out, as I have said before, is that Sinn Féin is absent from the arena in which it is important to be to oppose austerity — the House of Commons. Members opposite laugh, and, again, I do not think that I have the time to really get into this, but a once-in-a-generation opportunity presents itself to politicians from Northern Ireland who are returned to represent the people of Northern Ireland. There is an opportunity like never before, and perhaps like never again, to exert influence on an incoming UK Government.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Minister must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Hamilton: Sinn Féin, for all its ranting and raving and opposition, will not be there. I can assure the House that MPs from my party will be there, will exert their influence and will be seeking to get the best deal that they can get for the people of Northern Ireland.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. First, I welcome the tone of the debate. I think that it has been, for the most part, a mature and informed debate. I have to say that I welcome the developing consensus around the very clear focus on the policies of austerity that are coming at us hard and fast from Westminster.

I want to refer to a number of Members' comments. In proposing the motion, Alex Maskey very clearly highlighted the £30 billion cut that is pending. It is important for us to reflect on that, and on the £12 billion welfare cut that is pending. The motion calls for all parties to assert opposition to austerity. I welcome the fact that, from the DUP Benches, Mr Girvan supported the motion, albeit reluctantly, and called on Sinn Féin to take its seats in Westminster. Thankfully, Mr Girvan does not write Sinn Féin policies or strategies. He also stated that, as a party, the DUP would do all that it could to maximise the block grant. Again, I find that welcome.

Dominic Bradley highlighted how austerity has resulted in a huge fall in standards for people in the North of Ireland and that austerity was what he called "a dead hand" on our economy.

Judith Cochrane outlined how the cuts have caused major problems for the people of the North of Ireland, and Mr McQuillan also referred to living in very difficult economic times.

Fearghal McKinney, from a position that, in my view, was very pro-UK, took great issue with the fact that the motion calls for us to note a number of things, but he missed the fact that it declares opposition to austerity policies. Yes, but also:

"calls on the British Government to pursue, in the immediate term, a policy of economic stimulus".

That is a very clear action in my view.

It was interesting that the Minister, in welcoming the opportunity to have this debate, noted that we do not often have enough debates around policy. I welcome the fact that that was a developing consensus in the Chamber. The Minister noted that a number of issues were missing. I agree with him in terms of the good work that has been done; I acknowledge that, and I will reference it. However, I suppose that I would make reference to his analogy that the motion had failed to acknowledge "Sinn Féin austerity". I suggest that the Minister's word "austerity" should be changed to "protection". And, if it is the case that money has been kept in the pockets of the most vulnerable, I and my party are very happy with that result.

In relation to the motion itself, as we have heard today from Members, there are plans for further cuts of up to £30 billion. We need to fight collectively, tooth and nail, to protect vulnerable people in our society, support our local economy and invest in public services. The Tories have promised a further £12 billion of cuts to welfare provision, and we do not even know clearly, or they do not even have the decency to tell us or outline exactly, where those cuts would come. What we know, from past experience, is that those cuts will be targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: No, I will not. Thank you. The Tories continue to offer tax breaks to the super-rich —

Mr McCarthy: Will the Member give way to me?

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: No. What is — *[Interruption.]*

I may come back to both of you in a second, after I make this point. What is very clear is that the austerity programmes have failed by any benchmark, and that is an important point to be made by this House today. Even by Westminster's own yardstick, austerity has failed. Lost growth and higher debt are just the financial costs of Westminster's failure, but the human cost has been higher still. Analysis, even by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, has found that the coalition's tax and benefit changes have indeed hit poorest households hardest. I give way, now, to Mr McCallister, if he so wishes.

Mr McCallister: Thank you. You will maybe get in now, Mr McCarthy. I just wanted to ask the Member whether she does not consider the £9.6 billion per year subvention as an investment. What about the Minister's point about £100 million effectively wasted on welfare reform or on fines? Who is paying the most for that? Is it not, surely, the most vulnerable?

4.45 pm

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I thank the Member for his intervention. Again, I go back to the point about the protection of the most vulnerable. Members from other Benches have noted the issue around the lack of clarity

regarding the money that is raised here and, indeed, the gap of the alleged £10 billion from Westminster. Let us look at it in terms of the consensus that is coming from the House. Often, we do not even know how that money is raised or how it is spent. Members on the opposite Benches and other Benches have commented on that lack of transparency. Again, there is an opportunity for consensus in the House around challenging issues of fiscal powers to the North of Ireland.

As I said, the human cost has been much higher than is stated in some of the statistical reports that we have seen. This is an important point in the debate today: we could change course. There are alternatives. There is an alternative — there is a very clear alternative. It is within the power of the British Exchequer to restore the Budget. I hope that the developing consensus in the Chamber today will encourage us to demand that that is done. It is within that power for the British Exchequer to drive forward a policy of economic stimulus. In our respective constituencies and legislative frameworks, we must demand no less for the North of Ireland.

The £1.5 billion cut to our budgets has been well documented today. It is important to reflect on the fact that we have maintained public services. We have protected our health service from privatisation; we have —

Mr McCarthy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way, and I am getting angrier as the Member talks about how well she has been doing. What can the Member say to my 10-year-old granddaughter who said to me the other morning, “Grandad, what are they doing up at Stormont? They have taken my opportunity to learn Spanish and Italian away from the classrooms. What are you doing up at Stormont?”? In view of the fact that the Minister has advised the Assembly that we have handed back millions to London, what can you say to my granddaughter and other children who have been denied education in Spanish and French in their schools?

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I thank the Member for his intervention. As the Member well knows, some of the debate within our departmental budgets is about where money goes and whether it goes in the right direction. The Member is familiar with some of those similar issues in relation to the current spend of our health budget, for example. A huge debate, which has been validated by the Finance Minister himself, needs to take place. We need to have the hard and tough conversations around where our current spend goes in relation to maximising outcomes for all of our constituents.

It is important to reflect on the fact that there has been progress: progress in opposition to privatisation; in protecting people from water and prescription charges; in ensuring that older people benefit from free transport; and in retaining the education maintenance allowance to support young people from poorer backgrounds to stay in education. We have protected people, invested in business and created jobs, and we should acknowledge that work. However, that work has not happened because of Westminster; it has happened despite Westminster.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring her remarks to a close.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I will. I welcome the growing consensus that has taken place in the debate; I welcome the mature approach that, for the most part, Members took to the debate; and I welcome the clear opposition to the Tory-led Westminster cuts and policies of austerity. I support the motion in its totality.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the estimated reduction of £1.5 billion from the block grant; further notes the declared intention by the current Tory-led Government to make further swingeing cuts of many millions over the next mandate; notes the devastating effect this has had on the funding of public services; declares its opposition to the austerity policies at the root of all of this; calls on the British Government to pursue, in the immediate term, a policy of economic stimulus; and further calls on the Executive to continue to defend the core public services of health and education and appeal to civic society, employers, trade unions and the voluntary and community sector to unite in lobbying the British Government on this basis.

Ms Ruane: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I would like to apologise for missing my question today. I meant no disrespect to the House.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: It has been noted.

Adjourned at 4.49 pm.

Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the Official Report (Hansard) process.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Update on Progress with the Investment Strategy 2011-21 and Report on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Projects

Published at 1.00 pm on Friday 17 April 2015

Mr Robinson and Mr McGuinness (The First Minister and the deputy First Minister): This statement is to update the Assembly on progress with the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21. For the first time we are also reporting on Northern Ireland PFI project information.

We launched the latest iteration of the Executive's Investment Strategy in October 2012, covering the years 2011-21. The Strategy underlines our continued determination to secure the physical infrastructure we need to deliver first-class public services, to regenerate our communities and to support economic growth. The Investment Strategy is informed by, and helps to support, our Programme for Government objectives and targets. It plays an important role too in delivering the infrastructure we need to support our Economic Strategy – building on the high quality jobs we have already attracted here by making this region a more competitive and attractive destination for inward investment.

The Investment Strategy covers a 10-year time frame, but is sufficiently flexible to respond to developments in policy and the wider economic context. This report focuses on the period to March 2015, but also looks forward to what is in delivery and planned for the future.

In the financial year 2013/14 some £1.33 billion was invested in capital infrastructure projects across the region:

- £261 million under the **Networks** pillar;
- £174 million under the **Skills** pillar;
- £252 million under the **Health** pillar;
- £278 million under the **Social** pillar;
- £179 million under the **Environment** pillar;
- £121 million under the **Productive** pillar;
- £56 million under the **Justice** pillar; and
- £11 million other capital expenditure.

This is comparable to the 2012/13 expenditure of £1.3 billion and means that the Executive spent more than £4 billion on infrastructure investment over the first three years of the current budget period.

We acknowledge the continued importance of public sector investment in supporting the construction industry and are continuing to invest in capital projects and to prioritise where appropriate those projects which provide the greatest benefits to the local economy.

Departments continue to make available up-to-date information on the delivery status of all major capital projects in the planning and procurement phases through the Executive's Information Strategy web portal at <http://www.isni.gov.uk/>. This service helps to ensure that our local construction sector, including SMEs, have the information they need to take advantage of upcoming public contract opportunities.

Some of the notable construction project developments during the period since the last report on 24 July 2013 are:

A: NETWORKS

- An innovative low carbon Antrim Integrated Bus/Railway Station was opened in September 2013.
- A new Pedestrian footbridge at Moira Railway Station was also opened.
- Work started in November 2014 on the refurbishment programme for the Enterprise rail service trains.
- The A8 Belfast to Larne Road dual carriageway scheme is over the half-way point and remains on schedule for completion by May 2015.
- Work commenced in November 2014 on the dual carriageway scheme between the A26 at Glarryford and the A44 at Ballymoney.
- Work has commenced on the Eastern and Western corridor routes for the Belfast Rapid Transit project.
- The £24 million Broadband Improvement Project got underway in early 2014.

B: SKILLS

Further and higher Education

- Construction on the South Eastern Regional College Performing Arts Centre (around £12 million) in Bangor started in January 2014.
- The University of Ulster secured a £150 million loan from the European Investment Bank and a £35 million Financial Transactions Capital loan to progress its £250 million Belfast Development project. The Minister for Finance and Personnel recently announced a further Financial Transactions Capital loan of £38.5 million for this project.

Schools

- Some £100 million was spent on school new-builds and refurbishment in 2013/14.
- In March 2014, the relocation of St Gerard's Resource Centre from West Belfast to the former Balmoral High School was completed.
- Construction was completed on the £25 million new school building for Lagan College in Belfast and the building was officially opened in February 2014.
- Work is ongoing at Victoria Park Primary School, Belfast; St Joseph's Convent Primary School, Newry; St Theresa's Primary, Lurgan; Tannaghmore Primary, Lurgan; Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain, Belfast; and Eglinton Primary.
- Schools Enhancement Programme projects at Parkhall Integrated College, Foyle College, Ebrington Primary School and St Mary's Primary School, Banbridge, recently went into procurement.
- Phase one of the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus in Omagh commenced in October 2013, including work for a new school for Arvalee Special School and a resource centre.

Libraries

- A new Kilkeel Library opened in February 2014.
- Work was completed on a new £1.2 million town-centre library in Lisnaskea in early 2015.

C: HEALTH**Hospitals**

- In May 2014 work started on a new Hospital Dentistry Department for the Northern Health Trust at the Antrim Area Hospital site.
- Construction began on a £1 million extension to the Neonatal Unit at Antrim Area Hospital.
- In September 2014 construction started on the £3.5 million replacement Cath Lab at the Royal Victoria Hospital.
- Enabling works have commenced at the £48 million Maternity Unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital, with procurement underway for the construction contract.
- A £74 million project at Omagh Local Hospital moved in to construction in July 2014.
- A £11 million project to replace theatres 1-4 at Craigavon Area Hospital was also completed during the period. Construction has commenced on an additional main theatre at the hospital.

Primary Care

- Construction started in December 2013 on the £15 million Banbridge Community Treatment and Care Centre.
- Construction has also started on the new Ballymena Health and Care Centre, the largest to date in Northern Ireland.
- The new state of the art Children's Intensive Support Unit at Ballee opened in January 2014.
- The Old See House Integrated Community Mental Health Resource Centre was delivered during this period.

- Almost £7 million was invested in an extension to the Bluestone Unit of Craigavon Area Hospital which was completed in June 2014.

Public Safety and Technology

- Construction of the new Community Fire Station in Omagh was completed at the beginning of June 2014.

D: SOCIAL

- Sixty-one Social Housing schemes in excess of £86 million were completed during the period.
- The redevelopment of Ravenhill Stadium was completed at the end of April 2014.
- Work continued on the £3 million regeneration of Bank Square in Belfast.
- Five Public Realm and Environmental Improvement (PREI) schemes, to the value of around £6 million, were completed during the period.
- Work has now started on the demolition of the current Strabane Social Security office and the building of a new office.

E: ENVIRONMENT

- More than £225 million has been invested in Water and Waste Water schemes completed during the period.
- Works were completed at the £1.5 million flood alleviation scheme for Ballygawley.
- A £1.3 million scheme for the village of Beragh, County Tyrone began in April 2014, to reduce the risk of flooding.
- Work is well underway with a £11 million flood alleviation scheme in East Belfast with another phase commencing in early 2015.

F: PRODUCTIVE

- Construction started on a new build Food Innovation Centre at the Food Technology Building at CAFRE Loughry Campus, Cookstown.
- A £3.5 million project to provide fit-for-purpose accommodation for Land and Property Services (LPS) in Belfast was completed in May 2014.

G: JUSTICE

- Work commenced in December 2013 on the new £12 million FSNI Laboratory Services Accommodation.
- Construction started on the c.£9 million PSNI Downpatrick Police Station in September 2013.
- A significant number of projects are expected to be advanced in 2015. Some of the more notable are highlighted below:

NETWORKS:

- Construction work on the A31 Magherafelt Bypass (around £30 million) has started in the past few weeks.
- Construction will start in April 2015 on the £17 million Lurgan rail track rehabilitation scheme.
- Draft Orders for the A5 roads project will be published for formal consultation in early 2015/16.

- Procurement for the A6 roads project has been progressed to a shovel ready position and should funding become available construction work could begin relatively quickly.
- The Utility Regulator has awarded gas conveyance licences to Mutual Energy and SGN for the Gas to the West project, to which the Executive is contributing £32.5 million. Initial construction work on the project to bring gas to homes and businesses in Strabane, Omagh, Enniskillen, Derrylin, Dungannon, Coalisland, Cookstown and Magherafelt will commence in mid 2015. Further work will commence in 2016, with the first gas connections occurring in that year. The main networks will be completed by the end of 2017.

SKILLS

- Design contracts for three Further Education projects (around £77 million) are currently in procurement, for new builds for the Southern Regional College at Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon.
- Procurement for the Schools Enhancement Programme project at Rossmar School, Limavady, will commence in mid-2015.
- New build projects for Foyle College and for Colaiste Feirste post-primary school, Belfast, are expected to move into construction in April/May 2015.
- Construction has commenced at Arvalee special school at the new shared campus project at Lisanelly. Phase 2 (around £64 million) is currently in the tender process.
- The Minister for Employment and Learning has announced that work will commence in 2015 on a £11 million development at the University of Ulster's Magee Campus. The development will deliver modern teaching accommodation including a 340-seat lecture theatre.

HEALTH

- Main construction work for the Royal Victoria Hospital Maternity Unit (around £48 million) is currently in procurement.
- Two contracts for Altnagelvin Phase 5.1 recently moved into construction while the third element is in the design phase.
- Enabling works are underway at Altnagelvin Hospital for the development of the new £50 million Radiotherapy Unit.
- A design contract for a new £32 million Mental Health Facility at Belfast City Hospital was awarded in September 2014. It is expected that the construction contract will go to tender in 2015.

SOCIAL

- A further phase (around £35 million) of the Belfast Streets Ahead Project is moving towards procurement.
- Further construction has started at Ebrington on buildings 57/59 and 80/81 to prepare them for use. In addition, construction is expected to start on Building 70, where a Craft Brewery will be established, subject to planning approval.

ENVIRONMENT

- Construction will start on 10 new Water and Waste Water Schemes to the value of £30 million in the next 6 months. An additional 9 schemes (around £21 million) will be procured during the period.

PRODUCTIVE

- Enabling works are currently underway on the renovation of the Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall and extension, to include the new Siege Museum (around £2.7 million).

JUSTICE

- The Outline Business Case for the new cell block at Maghaberry Prison has been approved and the project is now moving into procurement.
- Subject to business case approval, procurement of building works at Magilligan Prison may commence in 2015.

Further information on these and other projects has been placed in the Assembly Library and will be published on the OFMDFM website.

Alternative Finance, Including Private Finance Initiative

The Investment Strategy includes an assessment of the level and type of alternative funding which can be used to accelerate investment in key infrastructure projects. Such arrangements, which can be various models of Public Private Partnership (PPP), have potential to supplement conventional Capital resources but must demonstrate value for money and affordability. Over the past year the increasing pressure on Revenue budgets means that the affordability of any future PPP projects will need to be carefully examined. However, PPP remains an option to be considered where it will provide social and economic benefits.

OFMDFM annually collects data on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects - a specific type of PPP - from Departments here and their Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) as part of a wider exercise to collect PFI data across the UK. This data is published by HM Treasury and the 2014 information (for the financial year 2013/14) can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-finance-initiative-projects-2014-summary-data>. The data includes historic information on PFI projects that have been completed as well as information on active projects.

The Northern Ireland data covers PFI projects entered into by departments and their ALBs. It does not cover PFI contracts entered into by other bodies, such as District Councils, although two District Council waste management projects which were in the procurement stage at 31 March 2014 are listed on a separate spreadsheet for information. The data which is being published separately is made up of the information published by Treasury supplemented by some additional information for the sake of completeness and clarity. A copy of this data has been placed in the Assembly Library and will be published on the OFMDFM website.

The data shows that at 31 March 2014 there were 39 PFI projects listed across 9 departments (including their ALBs). Five of these projects were completed prior to 2013/14, having either reached their contract term or having been terminated early. One further PFI contract, for renal

dialysis services, reached the end of its contract during 2013/14.

The total capital value of the listed PFI contracts was £1,988 million. Unitary charges amounted to £249 million in 2013/14. Projected Revenue commitments will peak at £266 million in 2016/17 and will fall to £5 million in 2042/2043 (the last year for which payments are due on current contracts). However, future costs are subject to change in line with contractual arrangements and any reviews undertaken.

No new contracts became operational in 2013/14.

There were 2 PFI contracts in procurement at 31 March 2014. Both of these were waste management contracts being undertaken by District Councils and are noted for the sake of completeness. As they were being funded by the District Councils they would not have an impact on departmental Revenue expenditure. One of the procurements was brought to a conclusion in May 2014 without award of contract.

The DHSSPS Minister announced in April 2013 that he intended to procure two new Health and Social Care Centres in Newry and Lisburn through a PPP model known as Third Party Development (3PD). These projects entered initial procurement stages in 2014/15.

We will continue to collect and report information on PFI contracts on an annual basis.

Committee Stage

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Justice

11 March 2015

Justice Bill [NIA 37/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Sammy Douglas
Mr Tom Elliott
Mr Paul Frew
Mr Seán Lynch
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Patsy McGlone
Mr Edwin Poots

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We will now undertake the formal clause-by-clause consideration of the Justice Bill and the proposed amendments. For ease of reference, the text of the proposed amendments that have been considered by the Committee are included in Committee members' tabled pack. A further letter has been received from the Director of Public Prosecutions on Part 2 of the Bill, which covers committal for trial, and on the Attorney General's proposed legislative provision for rights of audience for staff in his office, as well as further information supporting the inclusion of Public Prosecution Service (PPS) staff in the amendment. The letter was circulated electronically to members yesterday and is included in the tabled pack. The Department has also provided additional information on exemptions to jury service, as was requested at yesterday's meeting. It is also in the tabled pack.

We will proceed through the clauses in and schedules to the Bill in order and put the Questions formally. Where there are amendments proposed, I will put the Question on the amendment first. Where no amendments have been proposed and no issues highlighted, we will seek the agreement of the Committee to group clauses when putting the Question.

We begin with Part 1, which deals with single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts and covers clauses 1 to 6. At yesterday's meeting, no issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with the clauses and the proposed amendments by the Department to schedules 1 and 6.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 1 to 6 for the purpose of putting the Question?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 1 to 6, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Part 2 deals with committal for trial and covers clauses 7 to 16. At yesterday's meeting, no issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with clauses 7 to 16, schedules 2 and 3, and the proposed amendments by the Department to enable the direct transfer of a co-defendant who has been charged with a non-specified offence.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 7 to 12 and clauses 15 and 16 for the purpose of putting the Questions?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 7 to 12, put and agreed to.

New Clause

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 12A to allow for the direct committal of any co-defendants who are charged with an offence that is not a specified offence so that all defendants can be tried at the same time.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I know that there is great enthusiasm, but can we speak a little bit louder, in aid of clarity?

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 13, put and agreed to.

Clause 14 (Specified offences: application to dismiss)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to clause 14, which are a consequence of the introduction of new clause 12A.

Question put and agreed to.

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 and 16, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to Part 3, which deals with prosecutorial fines. I remind members that, at the meeting yesterday, the Committee noted additional information provided by the Department of Justice. No issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with clauses 17 to 27.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 17 to 27 for the purpose of putting the Question?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 17 to 27, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Keep your voices up, folks.

Part 4 deals with victims and witnesses. At the meeting yesterday, the Committee noted additional information provided by the Department and the revised text of one of the two amendments that it intends to bring forward. No issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with clauses 28 to 35 and the two proposed departmental amendments to enhance victim statements and create information-sharing powers.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 28 to 32 and clauses 34 and 35 for the purpose of putting the Questions?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 28 to 32, put and agreed to.

Clause 33 (Persons to be afforded opportunity to make victim statement)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to clause 33 to allow a victim or a bereaved family member to include, in a victim statement, the impact that a crime has had on other family members.

Question put and agreed to.

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 34 and 35, put and agreed to.

New Clause

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 35A and a new schedule 3A to create information-sharing powers to provide a more effective mechanism through which victims can automatically be provided with timely information about the services available to them in the form of victim support services, witness services at court and access to post-conviction information release schemes.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to Part 5, which deals with criminal records. At yesterday's meeting, the Committee noted additional information provided by the Department of Justice. No issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content

with clauses 36 to 43, schedule 4 and the five proposed departmental amendments.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 36 to 38 and clauses 41 and 42 for the purpose of putting the Questions?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 36 to 38, put and agreed to.

Clause 39 (Enhanced criminal record certificates: additional safeguards)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to clause 39, which is being made at the suggestion of the Attorney General, to make it clear that the code of practice provided for in the clause must be published.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Can we get our voices back again, folks?

New Clause

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to introduce a new clause 39A and a new schedule 3B, at the suggestion of the Attorney General, to create a review mechanism for the scheme to filter certain old and minor convictions and other disposals, such as cautions, from standard and enhanced criminal record certificates, which came into operation in Northern Ireland in April 2014.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 40 (Up-dating certificates)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to clause 40 to prevent to prevent potential Data Protection Act breaches by excluding a small number of applicants for enhanced checks for home-based positions from the Update Service, where third-party personal information could be disclosed unintentionally.

Question put and agreed to.

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 41 and 42, put and agreed to.

New Clause

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 42A to facilitate the exchange of information between Access NI and the Disclosure and Barring Service for barring purposes.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 42B to give statutory cover for the storage of cautions and other diversionary disposals on the criminal history database.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 43, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to Part 6, which deals with live links in criminal proceedings. No issues were raised at yesterday's meeting, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with clauses 44 to 46 and the text of a proposed amendment by the Department of Justice that the same safeguard should apply as is provided for in clauses 44 and 45, which places a responsibility on the court to adjourn proceedings where it appears to it that the accused is not able to see and hear the court and to be seen and heard by it, and where that cannot be immediately corrected.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 44 and 45 and clauses 47 to 49 for the purpose of putting the Questions?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 44 and 45, put and agreed to.

Clause 46 (Live links: proceedings for failure to comply with certain orders or licence conditions)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to clause 46 to ensure a consistency of approach with respect to safeguarding arrangements provided for in other live-link provisions in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

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 47 to 49, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to Part 7, and I remind members to speak up when we are taking decisions. No issues were raised with Part 7 at the meeting yesterday, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with clauses 50 to 71 and the proposed amendments by the Department to reflect comments and improvements suggested by the Attorney General.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 50 to 64 and clauses 66 and 67 for the purpose of putting the Questions?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 50 to 64, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Stick with it, folks. We are nearly there.

Clause 65 (Method of notification and related matters)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to clause 65 relating to verification of identity and the retention of fingerprints and photographs.

Question put and agreed to.

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 66 and 67, put and agreed to.

Clause 68 (Supply of information by relevant Northern Ireland departments or Secretary of State)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to clause 68, which provide a framework restricting the retention of information of information to the duration of the violent offences prevention order.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Please speak up, folks.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 69, put and agreed to.

Clause 70 (Power of entry and search of offender's home address)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to clause 70 in relation to power of search of third-party premises.

Question put and agreed to.

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 71, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to Part 8, which deals with miscellaneous provisions. Clauses 72 to 76 deal with jury service. At yesterday's meeting, no particular issues were raised. The Committee indicated that it was generally content with clauses 72 to 76 but further information was requested on who is currently exempt from jury service. Further information on exemptions from jury service, as provided by the Department, is in the tabled pack.

Do I have the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 72 to 76 for the purpose of putting the Question?

Members indicated assent.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 72 to 76, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to clause 77 and 78, which deal with early guilty pleas. At yesterday's meeting, a number of members indicated that they had concerns over clause 78 and the duty that it places on solicitors. I presume that members still have those concerns.

The Department has previously provided the text of an amendment to clause 78, following advice from the Attorney General. Therefore, the Question on the amendment will be put before the Question on clause 78.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 77, put and agreed to.

Clause 78 (Duty of solicitor to advise client about early guilty plea)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to clause 78 to remove a regulation-making power in subsection (3), which the Attorney General has identified as being of no practical benefit.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Is the Committee content with clause 78, subject to the proposed departmental amendment?

Mr A Maginness: No.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Would you like us to take a vote, or shall I just note that you are not content?

Mr A Maginness: I just wish to express our reservations; it is not an absolute position.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We will reflect that in the Committee report.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Clauses 79 and 80 deal with avoiding delay in criminal proceedings. I remind members that, at yesterday's meeting, no particular issues were raised. The Committee indicated that it was generally content with clauses 79 and 80 and the proposed amendments by the Department to reflect comments and advice from the Assembly Examiner of Statutory Rules.

Clause 79 (General duty to progress criminal proceedings)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to clause 79.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

Clause 80 (Case management regulations)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to clause 80.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): At yesterday's meeting, no particular issues were raised, and the Committee was generally content with clause 81, which deals with a public prosecutor's summons.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 81, put and agreed to.

Clause 82 (Defence access to premises)

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Clause 82 deals with defence access to premises. At yesterday's meeting, no particular issues were raised, and the Committee was generally content with clause 82 and the proposed amendment by the Department, at the suggestion of the Attorney General, to adjust the threshold for an order.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to clause 82 to adjust the threshold for an order allowing access to property to ensure proportionality and greater clarity in the use of the power.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): At yesterday's meeting, no particular issues were raised, and the Committee was generally content with clause 83, which deals with powers of court security officers.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 83, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): At yesterday's meeting, no particular issues were raised, and the Committee was generally content with clauses 84 and 85, which deal with youth justice.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 84, put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 85, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to new provisions and issues that are not currently included in the Bill. I will put the Question on a range of new provisions from the Department that the Committee has considered that cover issues that are not currently in the Bill before putting the Questions on the schedules and Part 9, as there are some consequential amendments to the schedules and Part 9.

First, on sexual offences against children, I remind members that, at the meeting on 14 January 2015, the Committee considered proposals by the Department to bring forward two amendments at Consideration Stage to provide for a new offence of communicating with a child for sexual purposes and an amendment to make an adjustment to the existing offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming. The proposed amendments aim to close what is seen as a gap in the law relating to sexting and to reduce the evidence threshold for the existing offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming.

The Committee agreed that it was content with both proposals and subsequently noted the text of the proposed amendments at the meeting on 18 February and the

revised wording, to correct a typographical error at the meeting yesterday, of the amendment relating to the enhancement of the existing offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 78A to reduce the evidence threshold for the existing offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 78B to provide for a new offence of communicating with a child for sexual purposes.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I move on to the offence of causing or allowing serious physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult. At the meeting on 21 January 2015, the Committee considered a proposal by the Department to create a new offence of causing or allowing serious physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult. The new offence will close a loophole that prevents the PPS from being able to prosecute in circumstances in which injuries must have been sustained at the hands of a limited number of members of a household but there is insufficient evidence to point to the particular person responsible.

The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal and subsequently noted the text of a proposed amendment at the meeting on 18 February.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 83A and a new schedule 4A to create a new offence of causing or allowing serious physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I move on to Lands Tribunal salaries. At the meeting on 18 February, the Committee considered information and the text of a new provision developed by the Department, at the request of the Committee, to change the affirmative resolution procedure for the annual determination of Lands Tribunal salaries. No particular issues were raised, and the Committee was content with the proposed amendment.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 85A to change the affirmative resolution procedure for the annual determination of Lands Tribunal salaries.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I move on to new policy amendments relating to the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 — PACE — on fingerprint and DNA retention. I remind members that the Department wrote to the Committee on 11 February 2015 advising that it intended to bring forward a number of amendments

at Consideration Stage to the biometric provisions in the 1989 order. Departmental officials subsequently attended the meeting on 18 February to outline the purpose of the amendments and to answer members' questions.

Four of the five amendments are to address shortcomings identified through early experience of operating the corresponding provisions in England and Wales, while the other amendment will add a new article to PACE to reflect the introduction in Northern Ireland of prosecutorial fines by Part 3 of the Justice Bill. At yesterday's meeting, the Committee noted the text of the proposed amendments. No particular issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content to support the amendments.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 76A to allow police to retake fingerprints and a DNA sample in particular circumstances.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 76B to correct a gap identified in new article 63G of PACE to provide that a conviction in Great Britain for a recordable offence will be reckonable for the purposes of determining the period of retention of material taken in Northern Ireland.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 76C to provide for the retention of fingerprints or DNA profiles relating to persons given a prosecutorial fine, as introduced in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 76D to provide for the retention of DNA profiles or fingerprints on the basis of a conviction, irrespective of whether that conviction is linked to the offence for which the material was first obtained.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendment to introduce a new clause 76E to disapply the normal destruction rules for samples in cases in which the sample is becoming, or may become, disclosable under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We now move on to the schedules to the Bill. I will put the Questions on the schedules before Part 9, as Part 9 contains the commencement provision that relates to the schedules.

Schedule 1 (Amendments: single jurisdiction)

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I remind members that the Committee indicated that it was generally content with the consequential amendments proposed by the Department of Justice for inclusion in schedule 1, which are primarily to remove references to “petty sessions district” and “county court division” in existing legislation.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to schedule 1.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to schedule 2, which is titled “Amendments: abolition of preliminary investigations and mixed committals”. No issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with schedule 2.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 2, put and agreed to.

Schedule 3 (Amendments: direct committal for trial)

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): The Committee indicated that it was generally content with the consequential amendments proposed by the Department of Justice for inclusion in schedule 3 as a result of proposed new clause 12A.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to schedule 3.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move on to schedule 4, which is titled “Amendments: criminal records”. No issues were raised.

Question, That the Committee is content with schedule 4, put and agreed to.

Schedule 5 (Transitional provisions and savings)

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): No issues were raised, and the Committee indicated that it was generally content with the consequential amendments proposed by the Department as a result of proposed new clauses 76D, 78A and 83A, and new schedule 4A.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to schedule 5.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

Schedule 6 (Repeals)

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I remind members that the Committee indicated that it was generally content with the amendments proposed by the Department, which are consequential to the proposed amendments to schedule 1.

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental amendments to schedule 6.

Question put and agreed to.

Question, That the Committee is content with the schedule, subject to the proposed amendments, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We move to Part 9, which deals with supplementary provisions. At yesterday’s meeting, advice was provided on clause 86 — members will remember the discussion on that — its purpose and whether it was necessary or could be amended to restrict the power provided to the Department. A number of members indicated that they were of the view that the power provided by clause 86 was unnecessary and should therefore be opposed. No issues were raised with clauses 87 to 92 and the consequential amendments proposed by the Department to clause 91.

Are members still of the view that we should oppose clause 86?

Mr McGlone: I am sorry that I was not here yesterday, but maybe we can get some sort of indication as to the rationale for opposing it, please?

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Do you mean the rationale for clause 86?

Mr McGlone: Did I not say for opposing it?

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Are you asking what the rationale is for opposing it?

Mr McGlone: Yes.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Clause 86 is that sort of very broad clause stuck in at the end of Bills that pretty much allows the Department to do whatever it likes. We have discussed it for a few weeks. I do not know whether you were present.

Mr McGlone: I was, yes. OK, Chair, thank you.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I seek the agreement of the Committee to group clauses 87 to 90 for the purposes of putting the Question.

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): The first Question that I will put is on clause 86. Is the Committee content with clause 86?

Mr Frew: Sorry, is clause 86 the Henry VIII clause?

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Yes, when I put the Question, members who want to remove it should say that they are not content.

Is the Committee content with clause 86?

Some Members: Not content.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Is the general view that members are not content?

Some Members: Not content.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Would you like a vote?

Mr Dickson: No doubt the Assembly will vote on the matter — if it is still in existence. *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I noted Patsy's earlier optimism about welfare reform.

Mr Elliott: It is up to the Minister to make the point in the House if he wants to include the clause.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): It is a useful debate to have.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 87 to 90, put and agreed to.

Clause 91 (Commencement)

Question proposed:

That the Committee is content with the proposed departmental consequential amendments to clause 91 as a result of the introduction of proposed new clauses 35A, 78A and 78B, and new schedule 3A.

Question put and agreed to.

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 clause 92, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We come to the long title of the Bill, which is fairly straightforward.

Question, That the Committee is content with the long title, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): There will now be an opportunity to discuss the proposed amendment by the Attorney General and the amendment that we are referring to as the "Jim Wells amendment".

First, we will discuss the Attorney General's proposal for rights of audience for lawyers working in his office. The Committee discussed the Attorney General's proposal for legislative provision for rights of audience for the lawyers working in his office and similar requests by the PPS and the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) at the meeting on 25 February 2015. Those were discussed again at yesterday's meeting, when Members noted further information provided by the Department on the provision of a review mechanism, if the proposal was to be adopted, to enable the impact to be assessed and provision to be enacted for other organisations, such as the PPS or the DSO, if considered appropriate at that time.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has written again asking that, in the event of the Attorney General's request for rights of audience for lawyers in his office being accepted, the PPS also be included in the limited way asked for: three lawyers holding the position of higher court advocate. The Director of Public Prosecutions is of the view that it would be odd for the only public legal office where court advocacy is a core function to be excluded from any statutory change to the normal regulations on rights of audience.

At yesterday's meeting, some members indicated that they supported the request by the Attorney General on the grounds that it was a modest change and would provide rights of audience for a small, discrete number of

lawyers in his office working in a fairly restrictive area of law, primarily judicial review, which would lead to a more cost-effective system. Other members had some concerns regarding whether it would create a precedent or a situation where it would be difficult to refuse requests from other organisations, as has been the case. They felt that the best way forward was through the mechanism provided in the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, although the considerable delay in the production of the Law Society regulations was noted.

The Committee agreed to return to the issue today. Do members wish to support the proposal by the Attorney General for legislative provision to be made to provide rights of audience for lawyers in his office? Do members wish to highlight any comments for inclusion in the Committee report? Any views?

Mr A Maginness: Could we say, "Maybe"? *[Laughter.]*

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): To many of the questions we can answer "Maybe": this is not one of them.

Mr Dickson: There is a fence about somewhere.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Do members have views?

Mr A Maginness: I reiterate what I said yesterday: if the provision was simply confined to the Attorney General's office, it would be different. However, there are implications for other organisations in government and the public service that would want to avail of a similar proposition. Therefore, the amendment has a wider effect. That is the problem. If it was confined to the Attorney General's office, the answer would be yes. That is why I said, "Maybe".

Mr Dickson: On the basis of the representations that we have received, this is potentially a barn door to be opened, which is why I suggest that the answer be no.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We need a decision. I propose a show of hands. We have discussed it on a number of occasions.

Mr McCartney: Is there a way of tabling two proposals? There may be people who are against the proposal in total, but there may be some who are in favour of the power going to the Attorney General's office and others who are in favour of the power for the PPS. Going back to the last clause on which we were having a debate on the Floor for, it might be hard for the Committee to come up with an agreed amendment.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): The Committee will have to make a decision on whether that is what we want to do. If the Committee decides that that is what we want to do —

Mr A Maginness: If the Committee agrees, the clause goes forward. You can still revisit it on the Floor.

The Committee Clerk: If there are a number of options, the Committee has to decide the option it wants to go with, because that is what the Committee would table as its amendment. There is nothing to prevent any other Member from amending that amendment once it was tabled in the Bill Office or tabling a new amendment that could encompass more than the Attorney General's office. If the Committee was to go with the option of supporting the Attorney General's proposal only, the amendment would simply provide for that. However, there would be nothing to prevent another Member from submitting a different

amendment to widen things or amend the Committee's amendment.

The Committee would not be able to put in options. The Committee needs to reach one position, and it is then open for other people to either amend that position or propose an alternative position by way of other amendments.

Mr Elliott: I have a question that is relevant to the other amendment from the Attorney General. If this amendment is not accepted today, I assume that a member can bring forward whatever amendment they so wish to either add or take away from it. Is that correct?

The Committee Clerk: Yes. This amendment is not in the Bill; there is no amendment in this one. There is a draft amendment to the Coroner's Act from the Attorney General, but there is no amendment provided on this provision. We would draft one if that is what the Committee wanted.

The Committee report will reflect your discussion on the issue and any views submitted to the Committee on it. That will be available to all Members prior to the debate at Consideration Stage. Therefore if the Committee decides today that it does not wish to support the proposal from the Attorney General, the report will simply reflect the evidence that we have received, the discussions that have taken place, and the conclusion that the Committee has reached. However, that does not prevent any other Member from tabling such an amendment if they so wish, having read the information.

Mr Frew: I reiterate that we can only assess what is in front of us, which is the right of audience for the Attorney General's staff. As that looks favourable, we see others coming in, which has a bearing on our thinking. I am not content to agree to this amendment because of the potential for all and sundry to come in. My issue is as much a principle as anything: if you allow one, what reason have you deny to others? That is where I am coming from.

Mr A Maginness: Maybe the best way is to reject the amendment at this stage and allow any party that wants to table an amendment on the Floor of the Assembly to do so. That might be the best way.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Are members content with that approach?

Mr McCartney: We are in favour of it going forward, but you do not want to create a vote. It could be recorded that we did not reach consensus and that is why there is no Committee amendment. There might be reluctance on the part of the Attorney General, the PPS or the DSO to ask an individual party to table an amendment. They might come to a couple of parties and come to an agreement, which is fine, but you can understand the reluctance of one party to support an amendment in case it looked political.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): That is a fair point. So, the Committee notes that we have no agreement and therefore are not going to support the amendment.

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Moving on to the Attorney General's proposed amendment to the Coroners Act. The Committee discussed the Attorney General's proposed amendment to the Coroners Act at the meeting on 4 March and considered further information provided by the Health Minister regarding the look-back exercise on serious adverse incidents and a number of initiatives

the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is taking forward to strengthen and enhance public assurance and scrutiny of the death certification process. Some members indicated that they were inclined to support the proposed amendment, while others indicated they still had concerns. The Committee agreed to request advice on building a review mechanism or sunset clause into the amendment. The Bill Clerk attended yesterday's meeting to discuss the matter and agreed to consider several issues and to provide further advice today. If members are in agreement, we will move into closed session to receive that advice. We will then go back into public session to make our decision.

Committee suspended.

On resuming —

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): OK, members. I will seek views from members on whether they wish to support the proposed amendment by the Attorney General to the Coroners Act either as drafted or with amendments. The view previously was that some were inclined to support it and some were not. That is still the view.

Mr McCartney: Can we table a proposal to support it?

Mr Elliott: I want to put on record that I am probably inclined to support it to let it go, but it is subject to us as a party making more amendments to it. I would like it to go forward, subject to the amendment that has come forward today if that is reasonable.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Do members support the proposal as amended?

Question put.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 5.

AYES

Mr Elliott, Mr Lynch, Mr McCartney, Mr McGlone, Mr A Maginness.

NOES

Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Frew, Mr Poots, Mr Ross.

Question accordingly negatived.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): We will put it into the report that there was a difference of view on it, and it is open to other parties if they wish to bring it forward.

We move on to the proposed amendment by Mr Jim Wells. I remind members that the Committee discussed the proposed amendment by Mr Wells at the meeting on 4 March and agreed to include the written and oral evidence received on it in the Committee Bill report. Some members indicated that they viewed the proposed amendment sympathetically but had not reached a final decision on it; others expressed support for the proposed amendment, whilst others indicated that they would not support it. Can I get members' views? Do we want to note in the report that there were different views?

Mr Poots: We are in an awkward situation, in that Mr Wells is no longer on the Committee. However, the Committee took the amendment on and had a consultation on it, to which some 20,000 people responded, in one way or another. A very similar amendment came before the House previously at, I think, Further Consideration Stage. At that time, a petition of concern was lodged against it by Sinn Féin and some others. As I recall, the argument at that stage was that there had been no public consultation and, therefore, it was not appropriate to bring it forward in that way. I think that that argument has now pretty much been dealt with, in that you have had a consultation and people will find another reason to object at this point.

It does not make any significant difference to abortion laws, other than that it reduces the sentence from life imprisonment to a period of not more than 10 years, so it is softer than what currently exists in law. The only aspect that makes a significant change is that it would be carried out exclusively in public health services as opposed to private clinics. I think that members across the way would be supportive of maintaining public services in a public place as

opposed to having a private company carrying out services. I hope that the Committee can move forward in its entirety and support the amendment. Given the Committee's role, it is probably the best channel to deal with it.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I was not on the Committee at the time, so I want to clarify the point and make sure of it. I do not think that the Committee brought it forward with a mind to it being Committee amendment but because of the criticism that there had been no consultation. Is that correct?

Mr Poots: Jim has moved on and is not there to take it forward, so it will be left to another member.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I appreciate the point.

Mr McCartney: For the record, when Jim tabled it he used the same argument and one of the points that we made was about the lack of consultation. However, other points were made in the debate; it was not just a single-plank argument. When Jim tabled it recently, we laid out why we would be opposed to it, so that is why I would prefer a vote. I have no issue with people voting and it being carried by whatever the vote is; however, we would certainly oppose it going forward in our name as a Committee amendment.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): There is a difference of views. If Mr Poots wants to put it to the —

Mr Douglas: I want to ask about the procedure. Edwin mentioned that Jim Wells put it forward, but he is not here any more. Is that a problem for us?

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): The Committee could adopt it as a Committee amendment or individual members from any party could table it as an individual amendment.

Mr Lynch: If the Committee takes it on, will there be a simple vote on it?

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): The Committee will decide whether they want to take it on as a Committee. If there is a vote on it and it is tabled as a Committee amendment, it will be reflected that there was not agreement. If I am speaking in my capacity as Chairperson, I will reflect the fact that there was no agreement on it, and it will be up to individual members to vote on it in the Assembly.

Mr Frew: Chair, if I could come in on the procedure. It is very similar to the amendments from the Attorney General that we have just debated. If that vote had been 4-5 in favour of the amendment, it would still be a Committee agreement, albeit not unanimous. I would prefer the Committee to take it forward, but I am also relaxed that everybody will not agree with that. That can be relayed and reflected in the Chamber. I am happy enough with that.

Mr Elliott: In fairness, it is slightly different from the amendments from the Attorney General. If Mr Wells cannot take it forward, I am sure that one of his colleagues will. I would personally be supportive of the amendment. I do not want to reflect the party view, because we have a free vote on the issue.

I would prefer if it was taken forward by an individual member, but I am quite happy if the Committee feels that it wants to vote on it and take it forward as a Committee amendment. I am easy either way. My preference would have been for the Committee to air its views — we have had our say on it throughout the process — but that a member would introduce it on the Floor. That person can

relay the representation that was made in the consultation responses.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): I am in the hands of the Committee. Edwin, do you want to see whether the Committee will take it on, or are you happy —

Mr Poots: Test it. If the Committee does not want it, that is fine. A vote will also reflect the fact that some members were unhappy.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): Do you want to make a proposal?

Mr Poots: Yes, to that effect.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): The proposal is that we take the amendment on as a Committee.

Question put.

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 3.

AYES

*Mr Douglas, Mr Elliott, Mr Frew, Mr McGlone,
Mr A Maginness, Mr Poots, Mr Ross.*

NOES

Mr Dickson, Mr Lynch, Mr McCartney.

Question accordingly agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Ross): OK. Thank you very much for your cooperation. That ends the Committee's consideration of the Justice Bill and the proposed amendments. Thank you for getting through it relatively quickly.

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 13 March 2015

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr F McCann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the Social Investment Fund.
(AQO 7457/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): Funding of £37.2 million has been committed to 24 projects across the 9 Social Investment Zones. This is split as £12.8 million capital and £24.4 million revenue and represents 46.5% of the £80 million allocated to the Social Investment Fund.

To date two capital projects, the Coleraine Rural and Urban Network in the Northern Zone and Bryson Street Surgery in the Belfast East Zone have commenced. In addition, 5 revenue projects from across the Zones are out to tender for delivery agents. Others will follow.

As announced on 20 January 2015 Letters of Offer will issue shortly for a further 9 projects worth approximately £13 million.

Considerable effort is being invested in all remaining projects to get them through the necessary appraisal process and to Letter of Offer stage as soon as possible.

Details of all projects prioritised within the funding allocation for each of the nine social investment fund zones are available on the OFMDFM website.

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline how they are working with the Strategic Investment Board to increase the number of social clauses used by Executive Departments in their contracts.
(AQO 7461/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We have been working with the Strategic Investment Board to promote and develop social value, including social clauses. SIB has produced a social clauses toolkit which we launched on 29 January. This 'Buy Social' toolkit, is an online resource which enables public sector organisations to design social clauses and community benefits into their procurement plans for goods, services and construction.

We expect that this new resource will assist public sector bodies to be more effective in delivering social benefits from public expenditure, with particular emphasis on helping the young and the long-term unemployed to gain the skills and experience necessary for them to participate effectively in the labour market.

SIB will supplement 'Buy Social' with assistance and guidance to departments and other public sector organisations on the integration of social value into their investment and procurement processes as an integral part of project development.

Mr Easton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the implementation of the Social Investment Fund.
(AQO 7462/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: To date the Social Investment Fund has made funding commitments to 24 projects worth £37.2 million. Two capital projects, the Coleraine Rural and Urban Network in the Northern Zone and Bryson Street Surgery in the Belfast East Zone have commenced. In addition, 5 revenue projects from across the Zones are out to tender for delivery agents. Others will follow.

As announced on 20 January 2015 Letters of Offer will issue shortly for a further 9 projects worth approximately £13 million, which will bring total SIF expenditure to £50 million.

Considerable effort is being invested in all remaining projects to get them through the necessary appraisal process and to Letter of Offer as soon as possible.

Details of all projects prioritised within the funding allocation for each of the nine social investment fund zones are available on the OFMDFM website.

Mr McKinney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the proposed Bill of Rights.
(AQW 42082/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Whilst we continue to have a responsibility to implement and monitor human rights obligations, development of a Bill of Rights is an excepted matter and is, therefore, the responsibility of the UK Government.

Mr McCallister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions they have had with the Minister for Social Development and other Executive colleagues to secure the future funding of the Supporting People Programme.

(AQW 42212/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department for Social Development is responsible for the Supporting People Programme. We have not had any discussions with Executive colleagues in relation to future funding for this programme.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the consultancies used to process Social Investment Fund applications; and for a breakdown of the costs of using these consultancies.

(AQW 42249/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Initially each of the 9 Social Investment Fund Steering Groups chose a range of projects to address social deprivation and dereliction within their Zone. The Steering Groups then prioritised their projects once the Zone funding allocations were known. Consultancy services were not used to choose or prioritise the projects.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what work, either by way of scoping in respect of redress models, or otherwise, has been undertaken by their Department in preparation for the outcome of the Historical Institutional Abuse investigation.

(AQW 42297/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The HIA Inquiry's terms of reference, which were drawn up in consultation with victims and survivors, say that the Inquiry, in its report, will make recommendations and findings on four matters, including 'The requirement or desirability for redress to be provided by the institution and/or the Executive to meet the particular needs of victims'.

They go on to say 'However, the nature or level of any potential redress – financial or the provision of services – is a matter that the Executive will discuss and agree following receipt of the Inquiry and Investigation report'.

The Inquiry has yet to draw its conclusions from the evidence presented or to make recommendations, as required by its terms of reference. It would therefore be inappropriate to pre-empt the Inquiry's findings or any future Executive decision.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister in view of the protraction of the Historical Institutional Abuse inquiry and the advancing years of many victims, what consideration has been given to a parallel redress process.

(AQW 42298/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The HIA Inquiry's terms of reference, which were drawn up in consultation with victims and survivors, say that the Inquiry, in its report, will make recommendations and findings on four matters, including 'The requirement or desirability for redress to be provided by the institution and/or the Executive to meet the particular needs of victims'.

They go on to say 'However, the nature or level of any potential redress – financial or the provision of services – is a matter that the Executive will discuss and agree following receipt of the Inquiry and Investigation report'.

The Inquiry has yet to draw its conclusions from the evidence presented or to make recommendations, as required by its terms of reference. It would therefore be inappropriate to pre-empt the Inquiry's findings or any future Executive decision.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why a meeting which was cancelled in September 2014 with Amnesty International and Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse, in respect of matters relating to scoping studies and the work of the Historical Institutional Abuse inquiry, has not been rescheduled.

(AQW 42299/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The meeting between Junior Ministers, Amnesty International and victims and survivors of abuse in September 2014 took place.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much of the Victims and Survivors Service funding allocated to Wave Trauma Centre is spent on (i) staffing and operating costs; and (ii) victims services; and for their assessment of whether the balance is providing value for money.

(AQW 42326/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Victims and Survivors Service has allocated a total of £1,144,066 in funding to the WAVE Trauma Centre for 2014-15. This is broken down as follows:

	Total allocated
Salaries	733,274

	Total allocated
Running Costs	169,291
Direct Programme Costs	241,501
Total	1,144,066

The amount funded has been subject to an independent Economic Appraisal which evidenced and demonstrated value for money.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether their Department is aware that money for victims services in Wave Trauma Centre has run out for 2014/15 and for their assessment of the management of funds and the balance and priorities struck between running costs and providing services to victims; and whether it is planned to provide further funding to Wave Trauma Centre in this financial year.

(AQW 42327/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) has advised us that it is aware that there are funding pressures within WAVE and has been working proactively with WAVE management to ensure priority needs of victims can be met.

The VSS vouches and verifies the use of Victims Support Programme Funding in terms of the agreed Letter of Offer issued to the organisation and the associated terms and conditions.

The VSS opened a new call for applications on 11 February 2015. This will enable Victims' Support Programme funded organisations to safely exit or continue individuals in counselling. The assessment process of these applications has not been completed as yet but will be finalised before the end of March.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what are the arrangements in respect of an employee of Wave Trauma Centre also serving on a Quango in terms of receiving a full time salary from Wave Trauma Centre and payment for quango service.

(AQW 42328/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) are responsible for funding WAVE. WAVE has responsibility for the terms and conditions of their employees which have to comply with employment regulations. This is therefore an operational matter for the WAVE organisation.

Dr McDonnell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they plan to bring forward proposals to the Executive relating to the needs of those victims of clerical abuse that fall outside the scope of the Hart Inquiry.

(AQO 7576/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: No date has been set to bring such proposals to the Executive at this stage. However, we intend to do so in due course.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consideration has been given to the merits of a twelve per cent rate of Corporation Tax to compete with the Irish Republic.

(AQW 42464/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A wide range of evidence has shown that there will be significant economic benefits from lowering the rate of Corporation Tax.

For example, the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre has estimated that moving to a 12.5% rate of Corporation Tax from April 2017 would result in the creation of 37,500 additional net jobs by 2033, with the local economy expected to be 10% larger.

Reducing the rate further to 12% would be expected to yield a proportionate increase in the economic benefits estimated for a 12.5% rate.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why no capital projects have been supported in North Antrim under the Social Investment Fund.

(AQW 42575/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Social Investment Fund priorities were determined by the Northern Zone Steering Group, projects could have been capital if desired. The Fuel Poverty project, worth £1.8 million, has now been classified as a capital project.

Mr Easton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the implementation of the Social Investment Fund.

(AQO 7689/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Funding of approximately £50 million has been committed, or is about to be committed, to 33 projects across the 9 Social Investment Zones. This represents 63% of the £80 million allocated to the Fund.

To date two capital projects, the Coleraine Rural and Urban Network in the Northern Zone and Bryson Street Surgery in the Belfast East Zone have commenced. Six revenue projects from across the Zones are tendering for delivery agents and four capital projects from the Western and South Eastern Zones are either out to tender or due to go to tender shortly for design teams. Others will follow.

Considerable effort is being invested in all remaining projects to get them through the necessary appraisal process and to the Letter of Offer stage as soon as possible.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to update current, or introduce new, legislation on the regulation of snares.

(AQW 42352/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): My Department does not have responsibility for snares.

I understand that the Department of the Environment has prepared subordinate legislation, the Snares Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, to introduce additional restrictions and requirements on the use of snares. The Order is at the early stages in the legislative process and will be subject to the Assembly's Affirmative Resolution. Subject to Assembly approval, it is hoped that the Order would come into operation late Spring.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the functions within her Department which will transfer to the new local councils.

(AQW 42710/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is not transferring any staff, functions or budgets to local councils as part of the Review of Public Administration.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) whether the Northern Ireland Environment Agency was consulted on the impact the demolition of the former Shackleton base at Ballykelly may have on bat populations; (b) whether her Department carried out, or instructed the carrying out of, bat surveys on these buildings; (c) to outline the legislation and policy exists for bat surveys and bat protection in these circumstances.

(AQW 42715/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Visual surveys of the buildings to be demolished were carried out on 8th July and 5th Dec 2014 by CPD's Project Manager, Clerk of Works and the Main Contractor. The surveys included external and internal inspections of the buildings including within the roofing voids. There was no evidence of bat roosts and no visual signs of bat droppings and roost entrance and exit holes were not found.

Therefore, it was deemed not necessary to ask the NI Environment Agency to carry out a specialist survey on the impact the demolition of the former Shackleton base at Ballykelly may have had on bat populations.

Bats are protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (NI) 1995 (as amended) (known as the Habitats Regulations) and are listed under Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

During decision making for planning applications, the planning authority must consider whether the protection afforded to bats will be breached by a development proposal and whether tests set out in the Habitats Directive will be met. In the north of Ireland this is implemented for planning decisions by applying Planning Policy Statement 2, Policy NH2.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much European funding her Department has received in each of the last two financial years; and from which funding streams.

(AQW 42736/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below outlines the amount of EU funding over the last two financial years.

DARD EU funding by source

(£'000)

Source	2012-13	2013-14	Total
Single Farm Payment	241,176	265,190	506,366
Rural Development Programme 2007-13	41,429	49,191	90,620
European Fisheries Fund	1,459	697	2,156
Interreg	910	1,519	2,429

Source	2012-13	2013-14	Total
*Other	326	850	1,176
Total	285,302	317,447	602,748

* The other category is comprised of a range of smaller schemes that are EU funded such as School milk subsidy, Bee health measures, Biomass challenge fund and Vessel monitoring scheme.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what impact planning application E/2013/0093/F to drill a borehole at Ballinlea will have on the local agricultural economy.

(AQW 42741/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD has no legislative role in regulating the process of borehole drilling.

Therefore, my Department has made no assessment of what impact planning application E/2013/0093/F may have on the local agricultural economy.

However, as part of the planning process, DOE Planning Service is consulting with the necessary bodies, including DARD, to assess the environmental impacts of the proposed drilling.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the introduction of legislation banning the use of wild animals in circuses.

(AQW 42803/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As I advised the Assembly on 2 February 2015, during my answer to an Assembly Question on this issue, I remain open to the possibility of a ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. However, legislation can only be introduced if there is a need to do so and, if a ban is to be introduced under animal welfare legislation, welfare issues must be identified and supported by evidence. I would need to be assured of the merit of such legislation and that such a ban is justified.

My officials continue to investigate the possibility of an all-island approach to the issue of wild animals in travelling circuses and are engaging with officials from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine under the auspices of the North South Animal Welfare and Transport Working Group. Engagement has taken place with stakeholders who would be directly affected by any proposals on the use of animals in travelling circuses and my officials continue to work with DAFM officials with a view to adopting a code of practice on an all-island basis. The purpose of a code of practice would be to ensure that operators are clear about their responsibilities to ensure that the welfare of animals is protected.

It is also worth pointing out that the welfare of circus animals is protected under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 which introduced a duty of care in respect of protected animals and provides enforcement powers to allow action to be taken to prevent animals from suffering as opposed to the previous position whereby action could only be taken after suffering had occurred.

I continue to monitor the position in other jurisdictions and note that a Private Members' Bill to introduce a ban on wild animals in circuses in England still awaits its second reading in Parliament. It remains the case that the proposed ban in England is being brought forward on ethical grounds as the available scientific evidence does not support the view that the welfare of animals in circuses is sufficiently compromised to justify a ban.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of reports of commercial operators starting to use clam dredgers along the coast, how many fishermen were involved in clam dredging in each of the last five years; and to detail the amount of clams being dredged in each year.

(AQW 42820/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department records the number of vessels rather than fishermen involved in the scallop fishery. There is a long tradition of Scallop dredging here and the fishery supports a number of local vessels during the winter season.

Fishing effort in the scallop fishery by vessels over ten metres was capped in 1999 when it was restricted to those who had a track record of this activity, this persists today and is restricted to those boats which have had this scallop entitlement on their fishing licence since that date.

Scallop fishing is also subject to a five month annual seasonal closure from 1st June to 31st October in the Irish Sea extending to 55 Degrees North. This is to protect scallops whilst they are spawning. In addition, the Conservation of Scallops Regulations (NI) 2008 create a weekend curfew on scallop fishing from 6 a.m. on Saturday to 6 a.m. on Monday, and a nightly curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. within the open season. The regulations also prohibit the retention on board of scallops of a size less than 110mm, and restrict the number and size of dredges and the size of tow bars used for scallop dredges in our inshore waters.

Restrictive licensing and these stock conservation measures have helped to enhance the stock and allow harvesting to increase sustainably.

The table below gives landings data for the last five years.

Year	No of North of Ireland Vessels Landing Scallops	Total Quantity (Tonnes)
2010	32	790
2011	33	970
2012	38	1334
2013	43	1429
2014	46	1976

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration has been given to the micro-chipping of farmed animals as opposed to, or along with, tagging for identification purposes.

(AQW 42868/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Regulation (EC) 1760/2000, which requires cattle to be identified with two conventional eartags, was amended last year by Regulation (EU) 653/2014 to provide for electronic identification (EID). This allows a number of EID devices (EID tags, ruminal boluses or injectable transponders) to be used as official means of identification from 18 July 2019.

The amendment requires the European Commission to bring forward a delegated act setting out the requirements for EID devices and the transitional measures required for the introduction of a particular type of EID device; and an implementing act setting out rules on the format and design of EID devices, technical procedures for the electronic identification of cattle, and the configuration of the electronic identification code (individual animal number). We are currently awaiting the Commission's proposals on these "technical standards".

When we receive the Commission's proposals we will liaise with industry representatives here to consider the appropriate course of action for our industry as regards implementation of cattle EID. We will need to consider which EID devices to approve for use as official identifiers. For injectable transponders this will involve considering the practical aspects of their use, including the retrieval of transponders from the carcasses of animals that enter the food chain.

For sheep and goats, Council Regulation (EC) 21/2004 (the Council Regulation) established a system of EID which was implemented from 2009. The EID devices allowed here are EID eartags, boluses, and EID pastern tags. Injectable transponders are also permitted under the Council Regulation, and were considered for use here in 2009, but it was decided not to allow them because of public health concerns relating to the difficulty of removing them from carcasses. They were not allowed in Britain or the south of Ireland for the same reason.

I am aware that legislation in England was amended last year to allow goats that are not intended for the food chain to be identified with an injectable transponder alongside a conventional black eartag with an "I" printed on it. Mitigating against adoption of this here is the Council Regulation requirement that animals identified with an injectable transponder cannot be subject to intra-Union trade, which means that such goats could not be moved to the south.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what investment she has made in upgrading facilities for caravaners who wish to use the forest park caravan sites.

(AQW 42878/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is investing £1million on the development of a new high end caravan and camping facility at Glenariff Forest Park. This will provide support for forest-based tourism and build on the partnership developed between Forest Service and Moyle District Council.

Construction works have commenced on this new facility which will have capacity for 36 caravan/campervans and includes provision for nine camping pods.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made in upgrading children's play areas in forest parks.

(AQW 42879/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is committed to working in partnership with organisations and local government to secure a more diverse range of facilities and attractions in our forests in line with local and regional recreation and tourism strategies.

Partnership agreements with local councils have led to the development of children's play areas at Slieve Gullion Forest Park and Davagh forest. Working with local councils and Outdoor Recreation NI this same approach is being used to develop children's play areas at Drum Manor Forest Park and Pomeroy forest as well as unique play sculptures at Gortin Glen Forest Park, Castlewellan Forest Park and Tollymore Forest Park.

An interactive art project, entitled The Giant's Lair, is being built at Slieve Gullion forest by Sticky Fingers Arts with support from Newry and Mourne District Council.

All projects are due for completion by early summer.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has received any requests for access to departmentally managed land that are related to the Department of the Environment and Irish Government funded research into fracking impacts; and whether she intends to permit drilling on departmental managed land in Fermanagh, where that drilling is related to this funded research into fracking impacts.

(AQW 42918/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has received no requests for access to departmentally managed land relating to the Department of the Environment and Irish Government funded research into fracking impacts.

I have stated on record that I will not permit oil or gas fracking to be carried out on land owned by my Department. Furthermore, I will not permit drilling on departmental managed land in Fermanagh, where that drilling is related to the funded research into fracking impacts.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that I am both personally and politically concerned about the process of hydraulic fracturing and its potential to impact on the environment and rural economy of the island of Ireland.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 42397/11-15, what support, financial and other, her Department offers to Business Action Plans emerging from the Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Programme, to ensure that they are viable long-term initiatives.

(AQW 42923/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Youth Entrepreneurship (RYE) programme operates a referral network for participants, who have completed their Business Action Plan and who wish to develop their business idea further.

RYE has referred those with completed Business Action Plans to local enterprise agencies and support organisations as relevant to the business idea. In terms of DARD support, individuals can be referred to DARD's College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) or Local Action Groups who will deliver the Rural Business Investment measure of the new Rural Development programme.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the Single Farm Payment is to subsidise production or to act as a safety net for farmers.

(AQW 42934/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Single Farm Payment is not intended to subsidise production but to act as income support for farmers.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration she has given to the establishment of a Back to Work Programme aimed at encouraging young people into the fishing industry.

(AQW 42942/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), to be launched later this year, will provide opportunities to support the fishing sector and contribute to developing skills and knowledge of the fishing industry. A key objective of the EMFF is the 'development of professional training, new professional skills and lifelong learning' and there are specific measures in the EMFF regulations which provide for the promotion of human capital, job creation and social dialogue.

As with previous funding programmes my Department will work with the industry to help identify opportunities to utilise EMFF funds to support the needs of the industry. My department will not have a role in administering training or a back to work scheme as I would expect the industry to work with training providers and others, such as regional colleges, to develop proposals that would be eligible for funding under the appropriate EMFF measures. It is therefore critical that industry comes forward with projects and ideas to help attract young people into the fishing industry.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what funding is available through her Department to assist the fishing industry in attracting young people into the sector.

(AQW 42943/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), to be launched later this year, will provide opportunities to support the fishing sector and contribute to developing skills and knowledge of the fishing industry. A key objective of the EMFF is the 'development of professional training, new professional skills and lifelong learning' and there are specific measures in the EMFF regulations which provide for the promotion of human capital, job creation and social dialogue.

My department is currently drafting its proposed EMFF Investment Plan which will identify how the EMFF funds could be spent in order to meet the needs of the industry. It is anticipated that consultation on the investment plan will begin in the spring of 2015 when all of the stakeholders in the fishing sector will have an opportunity to comment on the department's proposals for EMFF. EMFF should open later this year at which stage the industry will have the chance to submit applications to fund projects aimed at attracting young people into the fishing industry.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what barriers would exist outside of financial implication to her Department administering a youth training or steps back to work programme aimed at the fishing sector, which would incorporate a financial incentive for participants.

(AQW 42944/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am keen to support the industry in attracting young people into the sector. The new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), to be launched later this year, will provide funding opportunities to do so. As with previous funding programmes my Department will work with the industry to help identify opportunities to utilise EMFF funds to support the needs of the industry. The Department will have to see a fully developed proposal from industry which will set out proposed financial incentives in order to be able to determine whether its falls within the scope of the rules governing the EMFF.
Fishing Sector

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department will engage with the fishing sector to look at further opportunities to get young people trained and skilled for the industry and ensure that opportunities for employment in the sector are availed off.

(AQW 42945/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department will work with the industry to help identify opportunities to utilise the financial support available from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) to support the needs of the industry. Officials from my Department have engaged with industry representatives through the Fisheries Taskforce and Inshore Management groups. I believe these forums provide the opportunities for future discussion on EMFF funding including the nature and scope of support for attracting young people into the fishing industry.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what financial opportunities exist in Europe for her Department to avail of funding to assist in the roll out of a financially incentivised steps back to work programme.

(AQW 42946/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Support for a programme which would provide financial incentives to help the unemployed back to work would not be within the remit of my Department. I am also not aware of any specific opportunities that would exist within Europe for this type of support which would be relevant to agriculture and rural development.

However, the 2014 – 2020 Rural Development Programme may offer opportunities for job creation in the agri-food and rural sectors. The 2007-13 Programme created over 700 new jobs in farm diversification and rural micro enterprise alone.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what oversight her Department has during the slaughter of animals under halal conditions.

(AQW 43044/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Regulations governing animal welfare at slaughter provide that the Business operator is responsible for protecting animal welfare and must have appropriate procedures to monitor and record welfare at slaughter. Where monitoring reveals any problem, measures must be implemented by the Business Operator to correct the deficiency.

Business Operator compliance with regulatory requirements is verified by an Official Veterinarian, assisted by Official Auxiliaries. Officials are present on site in each establishment throughout slaughter operating hours. The Officials conduct checks on Food Business Operator compliance throughout the day and periodically audit the Food Business Operator's compliance with the Regulations. The frequency of the checks and audits is dependent on the professional judgement of the Official Veterinarian who is guided by his or her findings on a daily basis, on his or her own reports or those of colleagues, and on the Food Business Operator's historic compliance.

All animals processed for the halal market here are pre-stunned before slaughter. The checks my officials carry out for these animals are, therefore, the same as those carried out for other animals.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on talks with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Invest NI, Strategic Investment Board and Moy Park, regarding alternatives to land spreading of poultry waste.

(AQW 43075/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My officials are working with DETI, InvestNI and the Strategic Investment Board on the Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter (SUPL) Project. The project aims to help the local poultry sector find long-term sustainable solutions for dealing with poultry litter.

The first stage of the SUPL project was a Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) Competition to identify sustainable ways to better utilise local poultry litter. The SBRI funded nine projects for proof of concept/feasibility stage work in 2013 and has encouraged the technical development of solutions to utilise poultry litter.

Building on the success of the SBRI process, the project team developed the SUPL Loan Scheme. The Loan Scheme was launched in July 2014 and allows for a total funding package of up to £12M from InvestNI to co-fund the capital costs of at least two 'demonstrator projects', each treating a minimum of 20,000 tonnes per annum of north of Ireland poultry litter. The loans will be at commercial rates, with the maximum loan to any project not exceeding 40% of the capital costs.

A second call opened in January 2015 and is due to close on 24 April 2015. Following consideration of the proposals and assuming that one or more of them is deemed satisfactory for a formal offer of loan from InvestNI, it is anticipated that plants could be operational in late 2016/early 2017.

The project team have been liaising regularly with Moy Park during the SUPL Project. My goal, and that of the local poultry industry, is to have long term sustainable and viable options to deal with poultry litter. I believe the SUPL project will identify sustainable solutions for the local poultry industry.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps have been taken to replace the trees that were lost as a result of Ash Dieback Disease.

(AQW 43090/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In June 2013 I announced grant support under the Rural Development Programme for woodland owners of recently planted ash trees affected by Chalara ash dieback to replant their woodland with alternative tree species. Forest Service grant aided three woodland owners to reinstate 23 hectares of Chalara affected woodland. I was pleased that some suppliers of infected plants have acknowledged their commitment to their clients by reinstating a significant area of affected plantation at their own expense.

Grant support for replanting is now closed following the end of the Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and 2014 transitional measures. Under the draft Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 a scheme has been submitted to Brussels to support prevention and restoration of damage to woodland from natural disasters and catastrophic events such as tree diseases.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many prosecutions have been secured for animal cruelty on farms, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43119/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The welfare of animals here is protected primarily by the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. It contains a range of offences including those relating to activities which may cause an animal to suffer unnecessarily. However, it does not contain an offence specifically referred to as "animal cruelty".

My Department is responsible for investigating animal welfare cases in respect of farmed animals. The figures for farmed animals provided in Table 1 below relate to cases investigated by my Department's Veterinary Service and where convictions were sustained following submission of a file to the Public Prosecution Service.

Table 1 Farmed animals cases.

Year	Number of Farmed Animal Welfare Convictions
2012	7
2013	9
2014	11
Total	27

The convictions detailed in Table 1 include animal welfare related charges under:

- The Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011
- The Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (NI) 2000
- The Welfare of Animals (Transport) Regulations (NI) 2006
- The Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the TB Strategic Partnership Group, to detail (i) the number of times the group have met; (ii) the number of occasions when she has met the group; and (iii) when, and how, she will receive their advice.

(AQW 43138/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Since its establishment on 30 September 2014, the TB Strategic Partnership Group (TBSPG) has met formally, as a group, on 8 occasions. The members of the Group (other than the DARD ex-officio members) have also met separately with the Chair on a number of occasions, both together and as individuals.

While I have not yet met with the TBSPG members, I understand that the Group plans to request a meeting with me as it develops its Interim Report. It is anticipated that the Group will issue an Interim Report for consultation in June 2015, with the aim to produce a final strategy by December 2015.

As you may know, while the TBSPG is independent of DARD, the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Director of the Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division attend the Group meetings as ex-officio members. My officials will ensure that I am kept up-to-date with any developments, as necessary. You may also be aware that my Permanent Secretary attended the Inaugural meeting of the Group on 7 November 2014.

The Group has been tasked to act in the public interest to develop a long term strategy for the eradication of TB in cattle here. It has been encouraged to fully and independently engage in strategic thinking in order to do so.

I anticipate receiving the Group's Interim Report in June and its Final Report in December.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding her Department has awarded to South Down, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 41634/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The information you requested is provided in the attached table. For the purposes of this response, funding is understood to include capital and resource funding since 2010: it is reported on a financial year basis except in the case of North/ South Bodies where expenditure is reported on a calendar year basis.

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	East Down Rural Community Network	£1,600
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£36,304
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£800
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£533
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,400
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,000
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	£3,260
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	£3,350
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Coiste Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail (Colmcille)	£610
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£4,775
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£2,047
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£5,226
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£520
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Pipe Band	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilmegan & Aughlisnafin Rural Comm Group	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilmacrew & District Rural Comm Group	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Development Association	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Annalong Single Star Flute Band	£1,680
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£2,415
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£3,612
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,680
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Grallagh Unionist Flute Band	£2,478
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Harry Ferguson Memorial Pipe Band	£3,290
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Legananny Accordion Band	£2,562
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Pipe Band	£3,640
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Loyal Sons of Benagh Flute Band	£3,255
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Star of Down Flute Band Maghera	£2,079

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne Young Defenders	£1,960
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Orangefield Flute Band	£3,549
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of the Hill Flute Band Rathfriland	£3,150
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Skeogh Flute Band	£3,640
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	South Down Defenders Flute Band	£3,402
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	St Patrick Pipe Band	£2,240
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh House School of Dance	£2,640
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£2,100
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Curley Rural Community Association	£4,165
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£2,421
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£375
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£3,247
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£2,240
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£2,520
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£2,100
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£1,400
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£611
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£1,710
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£15,711
2010/11	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£3,000
2010/11	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£3,061
2010/11	Department	Banbridge district Council	£6,037
2010/11	Department	Down Council	£17,948
2010/11	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£24,802
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Belfast Music Society	£5,000
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£30,000
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Annalong Single Star Flute Band	£2,775
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£4,950
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Brunswick Accordion Band	£3,279
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Derryogue Flute Band	£4,402
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Hunter Moore Memorial Flute Band	£4,762
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Johnston Memorial Accordion Band	£4,569
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Pride of the Hill Flute Band	£5,000
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Down District Council	£41,892
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Mourne Heritage Trust	£25,000
2010/11	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch	£241,866
2010/11	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library	£120,526
2010/11	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library	£64,021
2010/11	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library	£233,336
2010/11	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library	£123,763
2010/11	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library	£84,837

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2010/11	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library	£84,330
2010/11	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library	£49,117
2010/11	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library	£3,424
2010/11	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library	£15,862
2010/11	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library	£107,979
2010/11	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library	£53,695
2010/11	Sport NI	Shinken Shobu Ryu	£4,075
2010/11	Sport NI	Down District Council	£250,000
2010/11	Sport NI	Mayobridge Community Association	£27,797
2010/11	Sport NI	Russell Gaelic Union	£29,633
2010/11	Sport NI	Russell Gaelic Union	£29,803
2010/11	Sport NI	Atticall Community Association	£3,756
2010/11	Sport NI	Dundrum Cricket Club	£24,324
2010/11	Sport NI	Down Basketball	£23,207
2010/11	Sport NI	Newcastle Yacht Club	£15,000
2010/11	Sport NI	Down District Council	£1,000
2010/11	Sport NI	Down District Council	£192,562
2010/11	Sport NI	Down GAA County Board	£658,832
2010/11	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£15,750
2010/11	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£8,417
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£1,310
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,322
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£47,878
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	2011 Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	St Patricks Youth Club	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,250
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	St Marys Primary School	£3,211
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	St Patrick's Community Centre Mayobridge	£3,500
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£1,115
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Bunscoil na mBeann	£11,777
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail (Colmcille)	£1,308
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	South Down Defenders Flute Band	£2,150
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£5,075
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£1,763
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£250
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£250
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£4,157
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Dev Association	£215

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Dev Association	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£225
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£249
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£333
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,205
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Annalong Single Star Flute Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£998
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£165
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£1,568
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£1,050
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,238
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Crimsom Arrow Pipe Band	£659
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£1,050
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Crimsom Arrow Pipe Band	£480
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Crossgar Young Defenders	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumlough Highland Pipe Band	£1,050
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Pipe Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Moneygore Rural Development Association	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Orangefield Flute Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of the Hill Flute Band Rathfriland	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,553
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£1,647
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Curley Rural Community Association	£2,565
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£1,971
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£2,421
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£15,885
2011/12	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£7,403
2011/12	Department	Banbridge district Council	£10,000
2011/12	Department	Down district Council	£20,320
2011/12	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,807
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Belfast Music Society	£1,250
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£30,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Discovery Publications	£10,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Ballyvea Flute Band	£3,567
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Pride of Ballinran Flute Band	£4,680
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Pride of the Hill Auld Boys	£5,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Roden Accordion Band	£5,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Upper Crossgare Pipe Band	£4,890
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Newcastle Arts Festival Committee	£5,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	The Beacon Association	£5,000
2011/12	Department	River restoration at Annacloy River	£33,000

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2011/12	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch	£143,424
2011/12	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library	£117,532
2011/12	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library	£64,571
2011/12	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library	£260,714
2011/12	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library	£119,296
2011/12	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library	£88,042
2011/12	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library	£89,907
2011/12	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library	£46,006
2011/12	Sport NI	Clearsky Adventure Centre	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Life Adventure	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Outdoor Concepts	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Mourne Heritage Trust	£5,000
2011/12	Sport NI	Greenhill YMCA	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Castlewellan FC	£1,126
2011/12	Sport NI	Down Camogie Association	£3,150
2011/12	Sport NI	Friends of St Dallan's	£2,765
2011/12	Sport NI	Mayobridge Community Association	£5,130
2011/12	Sport NI	Moneyslane Football Club	£245,000
2011/12	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£16,300
2011/12	Sport NI	Down District Council	£282,651
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,497
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£45,864
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£2,690
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,400
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	St Marys Primary School	£3,245
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Scoil Samhraidh an Dúin (Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre)	£3,900
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£6,422
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilnacrew & District Rural Community Group	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£706
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Rural Association	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£706
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Rural Association	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£926
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£1,140

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	St Patrick Pipe Band	£1,650
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of the Hill Flute Band Rathfriland	£1,193
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,035
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumlough Highland Pipe Band	£1,478
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Grallagh Part Flute Band	£1,620
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Legananny Accordion Band	£1,500
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£1,350
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£1,170
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,169
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£2,361
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£1,054
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£1,984
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£1,656
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£1,338
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cloughskelt Rural & Cultural Association	£1,551
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£15,829
2012/13	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£2,964
2012/13	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£510
2012/13	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch	£99,192
2012/13	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library	£109,080
2012/13	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library	£62,224
2012/13	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library	£204,370
2012/13	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library	£106,815
2012/13	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library	£83,379
2012/13	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library	£105,693
2012/13	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library	£47,178
2012/13	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library	£30,380
2012/13	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library	£77,463
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£25,030
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Happenstance Theatre Company	£10,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Dphisound	£9,990
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Mighty Sprite Productions Ltd	£10,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Down District Council	£27,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£4,698
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Ballymageough Accordion Band	£4,500
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Castlewellan Victoria Accordion Band	£3,045
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Glenloughan Flute Band	£3,600
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Holy Cross Accordion Band Atticall	£5,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Legananny Accordion Band	£4,993
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Atticall Youth Club	£5,000
2012/13	Department	Banbridge district Council	£10,700

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2012/13	Department	Down district Council	£17,925
2012/13	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,000
2012/13	Sport NI	Clearsky Adventure Centre	£150
2012/13	Sport NI	East Coast Adventure	£750
2012/13	Sport NI	Outdoor Concepts	£150
2012/13	Sport NI	Greenhill YMCA	£150
2012/13	Sport NI	Mourne Heritage Trust	£245,000
2012/13	Sport NI	Action Outdoors	£750
2012/13	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£19,565
2012/13	Sport NI	Down District Council	£287,556
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,700
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£49,358
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£1,750
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£1,750
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£1,750
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£3,025
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,450
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,400
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór Uachtar Tíre (Colmcille)	£1,485
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail (Colmcille)	£1,000
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Scoil Samhraidh Shéamúis Uí Néill (Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre)	£2,000
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ardarragh Accordion Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£8,204
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£3,193
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Loughbrickland & District Rural Dev Association	£4,840
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£647
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,194
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	St Patrick Pipe Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Orangefield Flute Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£375
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£1,448
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£1,500
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£975
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,093
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£1,656
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£3,948
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£950
2013/14	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch	£204,455

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2013/14	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library	£103,407
2013/14	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library	£72,779
2013/14	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library	£230,218
2013/14	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library	£150,427
2013/14	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library	£106,613
2013/14	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library	£102,267
2013/14	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library	£45,085
2013/14	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library	£805,780
2013/14	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library	£109,896
2013/14	Department	Banbridge district Council	£10,000
2013/14	Department	Down district Council	£15,400
2013/14	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,000
2013/14	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£2,641
2013/14	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£4,739
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£10,250
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Digital Circle (NI) Ltd	£9,995
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Dphisound	£9,600
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Mourne Textiles Ltd	£10,000
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Dunmore Silver Band	£4,920
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Kilkeel Silver Band	£4,515
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Loyal Sons of Benagh	£5,000
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Orangefield Flute Band	£3,892
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Spa Accordion Band	£4,920
2013/14	Sport NI	Ballymartin GFC	£245,000
2013/14	Sport NI	Christ The King Primary School (Drumaness)	£5,493
2013/14	Sport NI	Castlewellan FC	£131,394
2013/14	Sport NI	Mountain Sojourns	£750
2013/14	Sport NI	Down District Council	£293,617
2013/14	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£18,833
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Annalong Cultural Education Society	£4,436
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughnavollog Ulster Scots Cultural Society	£1,950
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,700
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£49,358
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£3,500
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Ógras an Dúin	£3,500
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic An Dúin	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic An Dúin	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór Uachtar Tíre	£1,750

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór Uachtar Tíre (Colmcille)	£800
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Scoil Samhraidh Shéamuis Uí Néill (Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre)	£2,000
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballynahinch Protestant Boys Flute Band	£1,950
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£1,950
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,122
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£208
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,575
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Accordion Band	£1,950
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumlough Highland Pipe Band	£1,943
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Development Association	£2,094
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Development Association	£242
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,259
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£1,925
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Loughbrickland & District Rural Development Association	£4,125
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Moneygore Rural Development Association	£1,913
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£250
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£1,125
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£21,235
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£2,745
2014/15	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library	£81,765
2014/15	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library	£46,210
2014/15	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library	£136,994
2014/15	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library	£93,545
2014/15	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library	£81,784
2014/15	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library	£75,232
2014/15	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library	£38,296
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Happenstance Theatre Company	£2,000
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Marie-Claire Ferguson Bespoke Millinery	£9,548
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Mary Callan Knitwear	£10,000
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Mourne Textiles Ltd	£10,000
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Ballyrea Flute Band	£4,725
2014/15	Department	Down District Council	£6,001
2014/15	Department	Glór Uachtar Tíre	£1,000
2014/15	Department	Craobh an Iúir	£1,000
2014/15	Department	Banbridge district Council	£6564
2014/15	Department	Down district Council	£3850
2014/15	Sport NI	Friends of St Patricks Primary School	£2,120
2014/15	Sport NI	Newry Basketball Club	£2,520
2014/15	Sport NI	Down District Council	£293,617
2014/15	Sport NI	Atticall Youth Club	£3,988
2014/15	Sport NI	Ballela GAC	£4,625

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2014/15	Sport NI	Celtic Bhoys FC	£5,601
2014/15	Sport NI	Kilcoo GAC	£9,113
2014/15	Sport NI	Annaclone Summer Scheme	£1,434
2014/15	Sport NI	Tollymore United FC	£10,000
2014/15	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£18,000
2014/15	Sport NI	Down District Council	£262,596
2014/15	Department	Walkway at Lough Money and fishing stands at Lough Money and River Quoile.	£42,000

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support her Department can provide to local newspapers, given their importance to the local community.

(AQW 41954/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There is no funding or support available to local newspapers from my Department and its associated arm's-length bodies (ALBs).

However, my Department does regularly liaise with local papers, and indeed all aspects of the media, with regard to answering enquiries, briefing journalists, highlighting DCAL stories and other aspects of media relations.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what are the current reserves of Waterways Ireland; and how are these reserves utilised.

(AQW 42014/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Waterways Ireland reserves at the end of 2013 stood at €2.605 million. This is made up of €2.588 million from funds received from sale of property in the south, grant funding for completed projects in the south and security bonds in the south of Ireland along with €0.017 million from petty cash of €3,000 and €14,000 underspend of in year funding from Sponsor Departments for invoices incurred but not paid in year.

The €2.588 million in the south is restricted for use to fund future Southern capital projects. €653,000 was used to fund capital works in 2014, €106,000 represents bonds to be repaid to third parties, €1,374,500 is to be used for capital works in 2015 and €361,000 in 2016.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 40913/11-15, to detail the times and dates of these patrols; and whether any actions or prosecutions resulted from these patrols.

(AQW 42045/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Pursuant to AQW 40913/11-15, the table below details the times and dates of DCAL Fisheries Protection Officers patrols on the specified stretch of the Braid River:

Date	Time	No. of Fishery Protection
Officers		
28 February 2014	1330-1430	1
05 May 2014	1400-1430	1
06 May 2014	1600-1630	2
13 May 2014	1630-1700	1
26 May 2014	1400-1500	1
09 June 2014	1130-1200	1
25 July 2014	1200-1300	1
27 July 2014	1100-1130	1
15 September 2014	1800-1830	1
14 November 2014	1500-1530	1
20 November 2014	1400-1500	1
16 December 2014	1500-1530	1

Date	Time	No. of Fishery Protection
06 January 2015	0900-103	3
09 January 2015	1000-1300	1
11 January 2015	1000-1200	3
12 January 2015	1330-1430	2

There were no detections or prosecutions resulting from these patrols.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the consultancy firms that provided financial services to her Department in each of the last five years; and the amount paid to each firm for these services.

(AQW 42095/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information you have asked for is provided in the table below.

Year	Name of Consultant	Amount Paid (£)
2009-10	FPM Accountants	20,205
	KPMG	18,846
	PriceWaterhouseCoopers	9,500
	Deloitte	3,162
	ASM Howarth	2,489
	Hymans Robertson	1,132
2010-11	ASM Howarth	3,749
	Hymans Robertson	524
2011-12	PriceWaterhouseCoopers	51,791
	British Film Institute	9,995
	ASM Howarth	3,000
	Hymans Robertson	576
2012-13	PriceWaterhouseCoopers	63,570
	Cavanagh Kelly	5,400
	CIPFA	4,800
	Docklands Ltd	4,200
2013-14	McClure Watters	16,134
	NILGOSC	768
	Total	219,841

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what consideration has been given to establish a forum to discuss policy around the management of Lough Erne.

(AQW 42148/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department has been consulting with stakeholders in Co. Fermanagh and beyond regarding the development of a Fisheries Management Plan for the Lough Erne catchment. This engagement has been very beneficial and has enabled my officials to get feedback on a range of proposals that will help to shape my Department's future policies and priorities for the Lough Erne fishery.

My Department also engages with the Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum, which was established to represent salmon and inland fishery interests across the North and provides stakeholder input on policy and procedures.

Forum members are selected from a mixture of nominations from representative bodies and publicly advertised posts and provides valuable input to the decision making process with regard to salmon and inland fisheries policy and operations, which includes policy and fishery management issues relating to Lough Erne.

I am aware that the Forum held an additional meeting in January to discuss the outline proposals for the Lough Erne Fishery Management Plan and will be submitting views and comments to my Department in the near future.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how Waterways Ireland work with Rivers Agency to ensure that, during times of changing waters levels as decided by Rivers Agency, Lough Erne remains navigable for cruisers.

(AQW 42149/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Whilst Waterways Ireland has no function or authority in controlling water levels in the Erne System, they liaise with Rivers Agency on an ongoing basis and are informed whenever the navigation lock at Portora sluice barrage has to be operated by Rivers Agency to manage water levels. Waterways Ireland will regularly issue Marine Notices to waterway users when there is a need to communicate important information such as the state of water levels.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding she has awarded to darts and darts clubs, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 42263/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can advise that neither my Department nor Sport NI has awarded any funding to the sport of darts, or darts clubs in the last three years.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether her Department recognises darts as a sport.

(AQW 42264/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can advise that darts is a recognised sport. However, Sport NI has yet to receive an application from any organisation to be the recognised Governing Body in the north of Ireland.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how she is helping local mountain bikers to develop to Olympic level.

(AQW 42270/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Responsibility for the selection of local athletes to be developed to compete at Olympic level rests with the Governing Body of the sport. Cycling Ireland is the Governing Body with responsibility for a range of disciplines within cycling, including mountain biking.

It is ultimately the decision of the Governing Body for a sport to prioritise some disciplines over others when supporting athletes or making applications for funding. In making such a decision, consideration will be given to the popularity of the discipline, the ability of athletes to meet the required standards and whether it is a Commonwealth or Olympic/Paralympic Games discipline. In addition, following a strategic review of High Performance Cycling, carried out by independent consultants, Cycling Ireland now focuses its resources towards developing a track programme for men, women and paracycling.

Sport NI fund the Athlete Investment Programme which provides financial support to governing bodies of sport and other eligible organisations so that they can support identified talented able-bodied and disabled sports people to develop to their full potential and achieve international sporting success at Olympic, World, European and/or Commonwealth level. As part of this, minimum performance standards have been agreed between Sport NI and Cycling Ireland for all cycling disciplines, including mountain biking.

In order to be considered for support under the Athlete Investment Programme, athletes must meet the minimum performance criteria and demonstrate their future potential to achieve competitive sporting success. While in the past Sport NI has provided support to competitive mountain bike cyclists, there are currently no mountain bike cyclists achieving performance levels that would make them eligible to receive support from Sport NI under this programme.

To encourage increased participation in the Mountain Biking discipline, Sport NI provided £150,000 towards the development of the Mourne Mountain Bike Track in 2012/13. In the same area, Sport NI's Tollymore National Outdoor Centre (TNOC) employs Cycling Ireland tutors to train and assess leaders through the Trail Cycle Leader Award and Mountain Bike Leader Award schemes. This supports the development of recreational mountain biking throughout the north of Ireland. In addition, the Tollymore facilities have previously been made available to Cycling Ireland mountain bike youth squad for use as a training camp.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the departmental support (i) awarded to local groups to commemorate the centenary of the First World War in (a) 2014; and (b) 2015; (ii) what proposals she has for support these groups in the (a) 2015/16; (b) 2016/17; (c) 2017/18; and (d) 2018/19 financial years; and (iii) what discussions she has had with her counterpart in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 42302/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Departmental funding has been provided for the following projects over 2014/15:

Funding	Organisation/ project	Summary of Project
£127,000	National Museums NI	A new Modern History Gallery which addresses the 'Decade of Centenaries' and includes a significantly expanded section - Home Rule to Partition - which deals with the period 1912-22. The gallery was developed with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (£454,800) and DCAL (£127,000).

Funding	Organisation/ project	Summary of Project
£50,000	National Museums NI	Support from DCAL for NMNI to develop digital resources exploring the Decade of Centenaries
£15,000	Derry City Council	The Royal British Legion Waterside Branch received £15,000 from Derry City Council in 2014/15 towards their Festival of Remembrance and First World War Commemorations. 50% of this was therefore DCAL funding.
£30,000	Somme Heritage Centre	To support work aligned to its Decade of Centenaries programme.
£5,000	The Last Post	A First World War centenary project bringing diverse communities together to play the Last Post on a variety of different instruments from different traditions at commemorative musical events.
£25,000	The Nerve Centre	Creative Centenaries initiative bringing together information and digital resources about the Decade of Centenaries and the work of the creative sector in commemorating these events. The initiative is endorsed by the Community Relations Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

An extensive range of events, exhibitions and initiatives aimed at commemorating significant anniversaries during the Decade of Centenaries are being taken forward by DCAL and its Arm Length Bodies. These include activities from areas such as the arts, museums, libraries and public records. These provide opportunities and resources for local groups and individuals to engage with and inform, plan and enhance delivery of inclusive approaches and events remembering this period.

Departmental funding through the Community Festival Fund, administered and matched by local councils, has been accessed by some groups to mark anniversaries. Other funding programmes, such as through the Arts Council, could support activity linked to the First World War, or other anniversaries across the Decade of Centenaries such as the Easter Rising and provision of limited voting rights for women, if applications are in keeping with overall programme criteria.

I have had many discussions with my current and previous counterpart in the south of Ireland on the issue of inclusive and respectful commemoration and the potential of the creative and cultural base to tell the stories and different interpretations of our past.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether Libraries NI has provision for signage in a language other than English.

(AQW 42367/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The issue of signage being displayed in a language other than English within the Library Estate is an operational matter for Libraries NI.

Irene Knox, its Chief Executive, has informed me that Libraries NI has no overarching policy on bilingual signage. However, consideration is given to requests for signage other than in English on an individual basis and if it is decided to proceed, signage on or within library buildings, will be in English, Irish and Ulster-Scots. This is to ensure that libraries are inclusive and welcoming to all sections of the community.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what input her Department has had to the planning application E/2013/0093/F in relation to the protection of salmon.

(AQW 42414/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department was consulted as part of the planning process for the above application my Inland Fisheries Technical staff advised Planning Service that it must be entirely satisfied that the measures, as described in the application, are adequate and that monitoring and review of these measures is sufficiently rigorous to minimise risks before consideration of granting planning approval.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether her Department's decision to hold a consultation on an Irish language Bill was approved by the Executive; and if so, when.

(AQW 42427/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Upon taking office I gave a public commitment that I would bring forward Irish language legislation and so I was delighted to launch the consultation document on proposals for an Irish Language Bill on 10 February

Executive approval was not sought to hold the consultation.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions she had with the Minister of Finance and Personnel to try and prevent cuts to the Arts Council.

(AQW 42475/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have consistently made the case for adequate investment in the arts because of the benefits they bring to individuals, communities and wider society including budget discussions with Executive colleagues and separately with the Minister of Finance and Personnel on 1st December 2014.

My Department received an additional £2m for its resource budget in 2015-2016. Whilst this is welcome, the reality is that it will go towards meeting existing pressures, not on alleviating cuts across my Department or its ALBs.

I have met with the Chair of the Arts Council to discuss the potential impact of the reductions and to examine how best to implement them with a view to minimising the effect on frontline services. I understand final funding decisions for 2015-2016 will be made by the Arts Council at the end of February 2015.

In terms of my ongoing commitment to the arts, I am bringing forward an Arts and Culture strategy to ensure recognition is given to the value the arts have in enriching the lives of individuals, communities and wider society. The arts have much to offer and should have a central place in society given the important and transformative power they can bring to all our lives.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department will ensure that people with disabilities are given equal access to sport, given the cuts to Disability Sport NI.

(AQW 42477/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Draft 2015/16 resource budget allocations have been made across the Department and its ALBs. An equality impact assessment has been carried out and published as part of the Department's draft Savings Delivery Plans and a second consultation has been launched and is due to close on the 9 March 2015. Once all responses have been received the outcome will inform any further amendments to resource budgets. This will be done in time for the start of the 2015/2016 financial year.

My Department in conjunction with Sport NI recognises that anticipated budget cuts in the period 2015-16 will mean difficult decisions have to be taken but believes that these can be mitigated through informed planning, strategic and targeted investment and meaningful partnerships.

As such, Sport NI has been working with Disability Sport NI over the last nine months to ensure the needs of people with a disability are safeguarded and sought early engagement with Disability Sport NI in the development of Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2015-20. The draft Plan includes a Strategic Objective to increase participation in grassroots sport among disabled people. Sport NI is currently engaged in a public consultation on the draft Plan and welcomes comments from stakeholders.

Sport NI has agreed targets with the 11 new District Councils on delivering participation in sport for people with a disability through Sport NI's Active Communities programme. In addition, Sport NI's small grants programme, Active Awards for Sport, which is due to open in March 2015 identifies people with a disability as a priority group.

Sport NI has also recently confirmed investment of approximately £392,000 in Disability Sport NI, to enable the delivery of an Active Clubs project in the period 2014-2018.

Sport NI will also continue to work with, and support, a number of high performance athletes with disabilities.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the investment made by her Department, and its arm's-length bodies, in GAA (i) capital build; and (ii) other programmes since 2011, broken down by county.

(AQW 42535/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The investments made by my Department and its arm's-length bodies in GAA, by county since 2011, are listed in the annex attached.

I should make one important point about this information: it is not always possible to assign an investment to a particular county.

In some cases, grant is made available to UCGAA centrally for work across the north. This applies, for example, to Investing in Performance Sport grant and to investment in PETPSE programmes. In such cases the investment is recorded in the attached annex as "other" rather than by county.

In addition, awards made by SportNI under the Active Communities Programme are allocated between 11 groups of District Councils, representing the new District Council Areas. These awards are recorded in the annex with reference to the location of the lead District Council in each group but all 26 District Councils deliver the programme across all counties.

Annex A(i)

Organisation	Detail of Capital Project	Capital Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Ferm-anagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Na Magha Hurling and Camogie Club	Changing facilities and clubhouse					50,000			2014/15

Organisation	Detail of Capital Project	Capital Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Fermanagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Strabane Sigersons GEC	Sporting Equipment						9,500		2014/15
Lamh Dearg GAC	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme	245,000							2011/12
St Peter's GAA Club (Lurgan)	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme		245,000						2013/14
Derrynoose GAC	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme		245,000						2013/14
Crossmaglen Rangers GFC	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme		245,000						2013/14
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Stadia Development Programme	161,403							2011/12
Ballymartin GFC	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme			245,000					2013/14
St Joseph's GAC (Ederney)	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme				245,000				2013/14
St Patrick's GAC (Loup)	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme					245,000			2012/13
John Mitchel's Glenullin GAC	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme					245,000			2012/13
Doire Colmcille CLG	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme					245,000			2012/13
Ballinderry Shamrocks GFC	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme					245,000			2011/12
St Malachy's GAC (Moortown)	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme					245,000			2012/13
Garvaghey GAA	Facilities					383,323			2012/13
Garvaghey GAA	Facilities					116,750			2013/14
UCGAA	PETPSE Project (Equipment)						48,270		2012/13
UCGAA	Casement Park Stadium Project	161,403							2011/12

Organisation	Detail of Capital Project	Capital Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Ferm-anagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
UCGAA	Casement Park Stadium Project	1,656,403							2012/13
UCGAA	Casement Park Stadium Project	3,279,352							2013/14
UCGAA	Casement Park Stadium Project	1,060,164							2014/15
	Total Capital Build by County	6,563,725	735,000	245,000	245,000	1,030,000	754,573	48,720	

Overall Capital Build Total: 9,622,018

Note: Some Spend has been classified as 'Other' instead of by County. This occurs where grant has been made to UCGAA centrally for use across the North.

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Ferm-anagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Na Magha Hurling and Camogie Club	Sports Kits					1,000			2014/15
Patrick Pearses GAC (Belfast)	Awards for Sport	4,907							2014/15
All Saints GAC	Awards for Sport	6,581							2014/15
Oisins CLG	Awards for Sport	7,354							2014/15
Practitioner Development Programme	Practitioner Development Programme	3,600							2014/15
St John's GAC (Belfast)	Awards for Sport	7,452							2014/15
St Joseph's GAC (Glenavy)	Awards for Sport	4,121							2014/15
Christian Brothers Secondary School (Belfast)	Active Schools	8,170							2013/14
Colaiste Feirste (Belfast)	Active Schools	4,715							2013/14
St Patricks Primary School (New Lodge Area)	Active Schools	5,000							2013/14
Gaelscoil na bhfal (Belfast)	Active Schools	1,918							2013/14
Mercy Primary School (Belfast)	Active Schools	2,500							2013/14
Riverside Special School (Antrim)	Active Schools	2,072							2013/14

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Fermanagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
St Bernard's Primary School (Newtownabbey)	Active Schools	1,038							2013/14
St Colman's Primary School (Lisburn)	Active Schools	4,600							2013/14
St Joseph's Primary School (Dunloy)	Active Schools	4,440							2013/14
St Malachy's Primary School (Belfast)	Active Schools	2,680							2013/14
All Saints GAC	Awards for Sport	4,329							2011/12
Cairde Naomh Pól	Awards for Sport	8,100							2011/12
St James GAC	Awards for Sport	2,347							2011/12
St Patrick's GAC (Lisburn)	Awards for Sport	2,772							2011/12
Belfast City Council	Active Communities	688,305							2013/14
Belfast City Council	Active Communities	669,080							2012/13
Belfast City Council	Active Communities	650,502							2011/12
Belfast City Council	Active Communities	688,305							2014/15
Antrim Borough Council	Active Communities	200,928							2011/12
Antrim Borough Council	Active Communities	223,068							2014/15
Antrim Borough Council	Active Communities	223,068							2013/14
Antrim Borough Council	Active Communities	217,675							2012/13
Madden Raparees GAC	Awards for Sport		3,580						2014/15
St Patrick's Cullyhanna Camogie Club	Awards for Sport		7,788						2014/15
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Equality Standard							3,000	2014/15
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Active Clubs Programme							145,975	2014/15
Pearse Óg GFC	Awards for Sport		7,356						2014/15

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Fermanagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Wolfe Tone GAC (Derrymacash)	Awards for Sport		2,549						2014/15
Tullysaran O'Connells GAC	Awards for Sport		5,083						2014/15
Armagh Harps GFC	Awards for Sport		6,025						2014/15
St Patrick's GAC (Cullyhanna)	Awards for Sport		3,736						2014/15
Ulster Camogie Council	Coaching Legacy Programme							3,500	2014/15
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Transition Funding							30,000	2014/15
St Patrick's High School (Keady)	Active Schools		9,588						2013/14
St Teresa's Primary School (Lurgan)	Active Schools		7,947						2013/14
Ulster Camogie Council	Equality Standard							3,750	2013/14
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Equality Standard							3,750	2013/14
Ulster Camogie Council	Coaching Legacy Programme							4,000	2013/14
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Transition Funding							60,000	2013/14
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Overseeing Function							4,550	2012/13
Ulster Camogie Council	Performance Focus							59,000	2013/14
Ulster Camogie Council	Performance Focus							59,000	2014/15
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Performance Focus							217,000	2013/14
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Performance Focus							217,000	2014/15

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Fermanagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Overseeing Function							7,800	2012/13
Annaghmore GAC	Awards for Sport		2,890						2011/12
Armagh Harps GFC	Awards for Sport		3,133						2011/12
Clady Sean South GFC	Awards for Sport		2,630						2011/12
Collegeland O'Raghillys GAC	Awards for Sport		5,964						2011/12
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Overseeing Function							7,150	2011/12
Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities		292,963						2011/12
Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities		308,174						2012/13
Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities		324,154						2013/14
Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities		324,154						2014/15
Ulster Camogie Council	Investing in Performance Sport							24,000	2012/13
Ulster Camogie Council	Investing in Performance Sport							29,500	2011/12
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Investing in Performance Sport							233,000	2011/12
Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Investing in Performance Sport							247,000	2012/13
Atticall Youth Club	Awards for Sport			3,988					2014/15
Ballela GAC	Awards for Sport			4,625					2014/15
Ballygalget GAC	Awards for Sport			8,959					2014/15
Kilcoo GAC	Awards for Sport			9,113					2014/15
Cairnshill Primary School (Castlereagh)	Active Schools			1,670					2013/14
Holy Rosary Primary School (Belfast)	Active Schools			2,328					2012/13

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Ferm-anagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
St Brigid's Primary School (Downpatrick)	Active Schools			9,799					2013/14
Down Camogie Association	Awards for Sport			3,150					2011/12
Friends of St. Dallan's	Awards for Sport			2,765					2011/12
Down District Council	Active Communities			293,617					2013/14
Down District Council	Active Communities			293,617					2014/15
Down District Council	Active Communities			287,556					2012/13
Down District Council	Active Communities			282,651					2011/12
Castlereagh Borough Council	Active Communities			213,032					2011/12
Castlereagh Borough Council	Active Communities			226,363					2013/14
Castlereagh Borough Council	Active Communities			217,058					2012/13
Castlereagh Borough Council	Active Communities			226,363					2014/15
North Down Borough Council	Active Communities			181,422					2014/15
North Down Borough Council	Active Communities			164,310					2012/13
North Down Borough Council	Active Communities			181,422					2013/14
North Down Borough Council	Active Communities			158,690					2011/12
St Eugene's College (Roslea)	Active Schools				5,000				2013/14
St Malachy's GAC (Castledawson)	Awards for Sport					9,735			2014/15
St Marys Faughanvale GAC	Awards for Sport					7,876			2014/15
Bellaghy Camogie Club	Awards for Sport					4,500			2014/15
Na Magha Hurling and Camogie Club	Awards for Sport					5,856			2014/15
Carhill Integrated Primary School (Garvagh)	Active Schools					4,822			2013/14

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Ferm-anagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Holy Family Primary School (Magherafelt)	Active Schools					1,260			2013/14
St Cecilia's College (Derry)	Active Schools					4,180			2013/14
St John's Primary School (Coleraine)	Active Schools					9,167			2013/14
St Patrick's and St Brigid's College (Claudy)	Active Schools					3,635			2013/14
John Mitchel's Glenullin GAC	Awards for Sport					3,269			2011/12
Na Magha Hurling and Camogie Club	Awards for Sport					2,410			2011/12
Limavady Borough Council	Active Communities					214,057			2011/12
Limavady Borough Council	Active Communities					203,673			2013/14
Limavady Borough Council	Active Communities					208,230			2012/13
Aodh Ruadh Dun Geanainn Ladies GFC	Awards for Sport						1,119		2014/15
St Brigids Camogie Club (Coalisland)	Awards for Sport						1,763		2014/15
Doiretreasc Cailini an Chnoic	Awards for Sport						5,200		2014/15
Donaghmore & District Community Association	Awards for Sport						10,000		2014/15
Donaghmore Ladies GFC	Awards for Sport						1,576		2014/15
Altishane Primary School (Donemanagh)	Active Schools						1,836		2013/14
Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh (Strabane)	Active Schools						3,520		2013/14
Holy Trinity College (Cookstown)	Active Schools						2,648		2013/14
Holy Trinity Primary School (Cookstown)	Active Schools						2,628		2013/14

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Ferm-anagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School (Omagh)	Active Schools						3,667		2013/14
St John's Primary School (Coalisland)	Active Schools						3,149		2013/14
St Oliver Plunkett Primary School (Omagh)	Active Schools						2,169		2013/14
St Mary's Primary School (Lisbuoy)	Active Schools						2,794		2013/14
St Teresa's Primary School (Loughmacrory)	Active Schools						3,790		2013/14
Naomh Colm Cille Hurling Club	Awards for Sport						6,795		2011/12
St Joseph's Ladies GFC (Glenelly)	Awards for Sport						3,525		2011/12
St Malachy's GAC (Moortown)	Awards for Sport						7,044		2011/12
Omagh District Council	Active Communities						218,519		2011/12
Omagh District Council	Active Communities						214,567		2014/15
Omagh District Council	Active Communities						209,497		2012/13
Omagh District Council	Active Communities						214,567		2013/14
Cookstown District Council	Active Communities						210,065		2013/14
Cookstown District Council	Active Communities						210,065		2014/15
Cookstown District Council	Active Communities						191,466		2012/13
Cookstown District Council	Active Communities						174,774		2011/12
Strabane District Council	Active Communities						354,267		2012/13
Strabane District Council	Active Communities						366,165		2014/15
Strabane District Council	Active Communities						366,165		2013/14
Strabane District Council	Active Communities						342,813		2011/12

Organisation	Detail of Programme Project	Programme Investment in GAA by County						Other (See Note)	Year
		Antrim £	Armagh £	Down £	Ferm-anagh £	Derry £	Tyrone £		
Ulster Council of GAA	Cultural Awareness Strategy							37,471	2012/13
Ulster Council of GAA	Cultural Awareness Strategy							37,500	2013/14
Ulster Council of GAA	Cultural Awareness Strategy							37,500	2014/15
UCGAA	PETPSE Programme – Year 1							192,897	2012/13
UCGAA	PETPSE Programme – Year 2							98,749	2013/14
UCGAA	PETPSE Programme – Year 3							70,000	2014/15
Roger Casements GAC	STart UP / Drama Programme via ACNI	5,000							2013/14
	Total Other Programmes by County	3,654,627	1,317,714	2,772,498	5,000	683,670	3,136,153	1,833,092	

Overall Programmes Total: 13,402,754

Note 1: Some Spend has been classified as 'Other' instead of by County. This occurs where grant has been made to UCGAA centrally for use across the North, (for example in PETPSE programmes and in Investing in Performance Sport).

Note 2: Awards under the Active Communities Programme are allocated to 11 groups of District Councils, representing the new District Council Areas. Spend is allocated in the table above according to the lead partner in each group, (Antrim, Belfast, Ballymena, Craigavon, Down, Omagh, Strabane, Limavady, Castlereagh, North Down and Cookstown), but all 26 District Councils deliver the Programme.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the provision for low cost or free leisure and social activities which meet the needs of disabled children from low income families.

(AQW 42623/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are a wide range of leisure and social activities supported by my Department that are available to disabled children from low income families.

The Libraries NI network provides accessible buildings with lifts, disabled toilets etc and provides a range of activities which are open to all children, regardless of disability including Rhythm and Rhyme for pre-school children/ families, Storytime, Craft sessions and special events such as author readings.

Library membership is free and provides all children with access to a wide range of age appropriate books and other material. Libraries provide material from Clear Vision and Access to Books, specifically aimed at children with a visual impairment and material from Barrington Stoke which is specifically aimed at children with dyslexia. Audio book and eBooks are also widely used by children with disabilities.

National Museums provides free entry for people with disabilities and their carers to the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum and the Ulster American Folk Park. During April 2014-January 2015, over 4,500 people with disabilities and carers visited the two museums. Admission to the Ulster Museum is free for all.

Arts Council supports the core costs for several Arts & Disability organisations which provide activities for young people with disabilities. These include;

- Drake Music - provides access to music for people with disabilities using state of the art instruments. The organisation aims to provide free music programmes for children and young adults with disabilities as part of its 15/16 programme.
- Open Arts – provides arts activities for disabled people, including young people, in music, visual arts, drama and creative writing. The organisation is working on a 'Youth Development' programme and has a partnership with disability organisations such as Angel Eyes and Autism NI.
- Replay Theatre Company - provides children an opportunity to experience live theatre and the arts. Replay's 'Up' production focuses on young audiences with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).
- Streetwise Community Circus – aims to make circus skills accessible to all communities and individuals. Streetwise has a focus on working with young people with disabilities and has established an annual 'Circus Summer School'.
- Kids in Control - this theatre company 'values children and young people of all backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination'. The organisation runs inclusive theatre projects and has an established apprenticeship programme for young adults with disabilities.

Under the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986, the provision of leisure services, including facilities for people with disabilities, rests in the first instance, with District Councils. However, Sport NI supports a range of interventions for people with a disability to participate in sport. These include:

- Provision of a range of pan-disability activities and opportunities through Sport NI's Disability Mainstreaming Policy delivered by Disability Sport NI;
- An annual programme of activities delivered by Special Olympics Ireland for athletes with learning/intellectual disabilities benefitting approximately 1,700 individuals;
- Delivery of the Active Communities programme in partnership with 11 District Council consortia (benefitting approximately 12,000 people with a disability);
- In 2014/15, Sport NI invested with a variety of groups to provide free/low-cost opportunities for people with a disability to participate in sport through its small grants programme. These included groups such as Ulster Deaf Sports Council, NI Blindsport Network, Autism Initiative NI and the Coleraine & District Riding for the Disabled Association, amongst others.

Foras na Gaeilge runs a range of funding schemes which are openly advertised and available to all. When funding Campaí Samhraidh (Summer Camps) and Imeachtaí Óige (Youth Events) fees charged are monitored to ensure that these are not a barrier to participation.

The Ulster Scots Agency provides summer schemes in special schools which provide insight into Ulster Scots language, music and dance. These have taken place in Strabane, Fermanagh and Derry. Ulster Scots Music and dance schemes are also open to everyone including disabled children.

Waterways Ireland provides opportunities for children with disabilities and those from low income families to access and use outdoor recreational facilities. All mooring facilities and amenity areas are designed in accordance with both universal design standards and its Access for Disabled Persons Policy and Procedures.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of quangos linked to her Department on (i) 8 May 2007; and (ii) 20 February 2015; and how many people served on the quangos on these respective dates.

(AQW 42643/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) There were 10 QUANGOs attached to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure as at 8 May 2007. 139 people served on the QUANGOs on this date.
- (ii) There were 9 QUANGOs attached to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure as at 20 February 2015. 133 people served on the QUANGOs on this date.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what level of assistance will be offered to the organisers of the Walled City Tattoo in Londonderry in 2015.

(AQW 42657/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department provided £100k funding to the 2014 Walled City Tattoo and a further £20k as a contribution to cover the deficit following the 2014 event.

Whilst I recognise the importance of the Walled City Tattoo as a platform for young people to perform in front of a large audience and to address continued divisions across communities, due to budgetary constraints my Department is not in a position to provide any financial support for the 2015 Walled City Tattoo at this time.

However, my North West Office is actively assisting the continuation of partnerships forged as part of the City of Culture 2013 across the Londonderry Bands Forum, Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin, Comhaltas and others to develop collaborative future events in the North West. For example, Marching Bands will perform as part of the Pan Celtic Festival in April and feature as part of Music City in June 2015.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much European funding her Department has received in each of the last two financial years; and from which funding streams.

(AQW 42799/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: A table is attached to this response which details funding received. I should point out that funding received by third parties (beyond the Department and its ALBs) has also been included where financial assistance has been provided by the Department or its ALBs to the third party to secure funding. This is consistent with the way in which departments report EU drawdown to the Executive.

EU Funding

Claiming Body	EU Funding Stream	Amount Received £	Amount Received €	Financial Year
Armagh Observatory	Framework Programme 7 (Research and Innovation)	198,109		2012/13
Third Party	Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)	17,038		2012/13
Third Party	Culture	147,130		2012/13
Waterways Ireland	Waterways Forward - Interreg 4C		31,089	2013
Arts Council NI	Peace III	161,000		2013/14
Third Party	Culture	182,847		2013/14
Third Party	Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)	21,478		2013/14
Third Party	MEDIA	104,890		2013/14
Total		832,492	31,089	

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the North South co-operation and coordination involved in the recently announced Ulster Canal restoration project.

(AQW 42836/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Arising from the Agreement establishing the North South Implementation Bodies Waterways Ireland was tasked with progressing the possible restoration and development of the Ulster Canal. Waterways Ireland, in conjunction with my Department and The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as sponsor Departments north and south, identified the progression of the project in a phased approach as the preferred option. The recent announcement refers to phase 1 of the restoration, which will be capital works along the River Erne from Quivvy Lough to Castlesaunders. Waterways Ireland intends to commence the works in April 2015.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether any public funding was afforded by her Department to the Red Bull Crashed Ice event at Stormont; and if so, to specify this funding.

(AQW 42880/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can advise that no Exchequer or Lottery funding was provided either by my Department or Sport NI, to the Red Bull Crashed Ice event which took place in the grounds of Stormont on the 20th and 21st February 2015.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQO 7672/11-15, (i) on what date did she write to the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries; and (ii) whether she has full Executive agreement on increasing responsibilities for broadcasting.

(AQW 42924/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I wrote to Ed Vaizey MP, Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy on 6th February 2015. I requested accountability powers for the North of Ireland similar to those proposed for Scotland in the recent Smith Commission report. Ultimately my aim is that, in the North of Ireland, broadcasting will be fully devolved. I spoke on 25 November 2013 in support of the Private Member's motion on transferring broadcasting powers but this was not supported by the majority of members.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) what events were held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in 2014/15 in relation to the Irish language; (ii) who organised the events; (iii) the cost of the events, including advertising; and (iv) how many people attended each of the talks held on (a) 7 May 2014; (b) 11 June 2014; and (c) 14 January 2015.

(AQW 42987/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The following Irish language events were held in PRONI:

- 12 March 2014: Ghaelphobal Feirste, Belfast's Irish Speaking Community by Brighid Mhic Sheáin, in conjunction with Fobairt Feirste;
- 7 May 2014: Na Blianta Luatha: the early years of the language movement in Northern Ireland by Aodán Mac Póilín, organised by PRONI, 38 attendees;
- 11 June 2014: The Hidden History of Protestants and the Irish Language by Linda Ervine, organised by PRONI, 34 attendees;
- 15 October 2014: Ulster Protestant Gaelic Tradition by Diarmaid Ó Doibhlin, organised by Foras na Gaeilge;
- 22 October 2014: The Influence of Irish on English as we speak it, by Joe Ó Labhraí, organised by Foras na Gaeilge;
- 5 November 2014: History of the Irish Language by Mícheál Ó Máirtín organised by Foras na Gaeilge;
- 12 November 2014: Our Shared Musical Heritage, by Brian Mullen, organised by Foras na Gaeilge;
- 14 January 2015: The Irish Language and the Foundation of the Northern Ireland State by Dr Liam Andrews, organised by PRONI, 60 attendees;
- 11 February 2015: Linguistic Connections between Ireland and Scotland by Professor Micheal O'Mainnín, organised by PRONI.

The cost to PRONI was £790 and the cost to Foras na Gaeilge was £450.

There was no paid advertising for any of the events.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail all the talks that have been held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland since January 2014.

(AQW 42988/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Please find enclosed a list in Annex A of all talks held by PRONI since January 2014.

Annex A

Title

- Exploring Your Archives in depth: The 1641 Depositions- an early source for local history (and beyond)
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: Using church records for family and local history- first steps
- Parallax
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: Family Trees - How GRONI can help them grow
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: "Maps from Snaps" - archive mapping and aerial photography for local and family history
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: Understanding an ancestor's neighbourhood - The Griffith's Valuation Books, Maps and Revision Books
- Digital Circle PRONI Showcase
- Ghaelphobal Feirste, Belfast's Irish Speaking Community
- Launch of Wills III
- Kidnapped, transported, forgotten
- Digital Circle. PRONI First World War Sources
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: Irish Voices from the American Civil War
- Improving Belfast? A glimpse of Belfast in 1911
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: Hungry for change: the effect of the Famine on Irish migration Hungry for change: the effect of the Famine on Irish migration
- Archive Development and Civic Engagement at Sites of Conscience
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: Experiences of the Poor and Excluded
- Exploring Your Archives in depth: The River Bann: a view from the archives
- Belfast Past, Present, Future - Rise of the Big Smoke
- Na Blianta Luatha: the early years of the language movement in Northern Ireland
- Plantation - Aspects of Seventeenth-Century Ulster Society
- Belfast, Past, Present, Future: Shaping Belfast: from early beginnings to Victorian expansion
- Belfast, Past Present Future: Post war Northern Ireland
- Belfast, Past Present Future: The contemporary City: Current Developments, visions for the future
- The Hidden History of Protestants and the Irish Language
- Aces Poets on Tour
- The Great Belfast Tea Fraud
- Launch of John Hewitt: Home Words
- Reading Belfast - Book Borrowing in the Nineteenth Century

- War Words: poetry inspired by the First and Second World Wars
- Launch of PRONI First World War Guide
- Open University Exploring Family History: Industrialists & Workers
- How to undertake War Grave Research
- Open University Exploring Family History: Crime & Police History
- The Road to War lecture series: Militarism in Ireland, 1912–18
- Researching War Fatalities & War Graves In Craigavon Borough Council
- Belfast Corporation Lecture Series: 'Serving Belfast, municipal services since 1613'
- Open University Exploring Family History: Churches and Churchgoers
- An Unrepentant Romantic – Remembering Richard Hayward
- Belfast Corporation Lecture Series: Building the City Hall
- Open University Exploring Family History: Shops & Shoppers
- 'If the nation is to be saved women must help in the saving': Women and War in Ireland, 1914-18
- Signature Events at Belfast City Hall,
- Open University Exploring Family History: Doctors & Patients
- Councils and Corporations
- Research Methods and Opportunities
- Migration and Mobility from Past to Present, University of Ulster Conference
- Women and the First World War Conference
- Ulster and the First World War
- The Irish Language and the Foundation of the Northern Ireland State
- Seeking Refuge: Germany and Ireland in the 1930's conference
- Linguistic Connections between Ireland and Scotland

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what efforts her Department has made to encourage and fund co-operation between Ulster Council GAA and shinty in Scotland, to improve relations and historic links between hurling and shinty. (AQW 43140/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am aware that cross code games involving the sports of Hurling, Camogie and Shinty take place annually. The games are organised by the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Camanachd Association at a national level.

I can advise that no funding has been sought by either organisation from Sport NI, an arm's-length body of my Department, for the promotion of the games or maintenance of the links between the two distinct sports.

I understand that Shinty is recognised as a sport in Scotland however, Sport NI has advised that there is no recognised Governing Body for Shinty in the north of Ireland.

Department of Education

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail the budget for each school in Upper Bann in 2015/16; and what percentage of a cut this represents in comparison to the budget of 2014/15; and when school principals and Board of Governors will be informed of new budgets. (AQW 41760/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): All grant-aided schools, funding under the Common Funding Scheme, were notified of their overall budget shares on 25 February 2015 and details are available on the Department's website:

Details of the budget shares will be provided to school by their Funding Authority.

Overall, the Aggregated Schools' Budget available for distribution to all schools in 2015/16 was marginally higher (+0.2%) than in 2014/15. Across all schools in the Upper Bann constituency, delegated budgets for schools are +0.4% higher in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15. However, the level of funding for individual schools will reflect overall funding available for distribution and any changes in the profile of the school for 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 – for example, pupil numbers and year-groups, numbers of pupils identified as socially deprived using the measures of JSA/IS or FSME, pupils identified as Newcomers, of the Travelling Community, etc. or changes in other identified needs such as compensation for above average salary costs.

The requested details of budgets for each school in 2015/16 and the percentage change in overall budget for these schools compared to 2014/15 funding, are shown in the table below:

DE Ref	School Name	Total formula Funding for 2015/16 *	% change compared to 2014/15*
511-0021	Edenderry Nursery, Portadown	£174,285	0.2%
511-6189	Millington Nursery	£284,463	-2.9%
511-6190	Harrison Nursery	£169,024	1.0%
511-6238	Banbridge Nursery	£166,895	-2.4%
511-6256	Downshire Nursery	£172,067	-6.2%
513-6217	St John the Baptist Nursery	£185,743	1.9%
513-6631	Drumnamoe Nursery	£288,594	-2.4%
501-0992	Lurgan Model Primary	£671,977	6.4%
501-1124	Kings Park Primary, Lurgan	£1,969,391	5.8%
501-1127	Carrick Primary, Lurgan	£1,198,918	3.2%
501-1129	Hart Memorial Primary	£1,145,103	7.9%
501-1165	Richmount Primary	£376,181	6.6%
501-1174	Birches Primary	£440,722	0.1%
501-1189	Edenderry Primary, Portadown	£996,541	-3.3%
501-1190	Tullygally Primary	£616,824	1.8%
501-1594	Abercorn Primary	£950,605	3.0%
501-1596	Craigavon Primary	£331,147	0.9%
501-1598	Waringstown Primary	£1,059,849	0.5%
501-1602	Bleary Primary	£338,163	3.8%
501-1617	Ballydown Primary	£865,715	-0.8%
501-1651	Milltown Primary	£205,931	7.9%
501-1664	Scarva Primary	£242,316	-5.9%
501-1687	Maralin Village Primary	£791,452	0.9%
501-3019	Edenderry Primary, Banbridge	£1,078,817	-1.8%
501-6007	Millington Primary	£1,839,462	0.1%
501-6065	Dickson Primary	£669,818	11.5%
501-6080	Drumgor Primary	£877,739	9.0%
501-6117	Ballyoran Primary	£898,346	8.9%
501-6138	Bocombra Primary	£880,116	1.2%
501-6178	Donacloney Primary	£680,806	0.0%
501-6543	Moyallon Primary	£541,050	-1.8%
503-1103	Tannaghmore Primary	£1,650,473	1.8%
503-1160	St Teresa's Primary, Lurgan	£522,359	4.1%
503-1164	St Mary's Primary, Maghery	£265,950	-1.2%
503-1168	St Patrick's Primary, Aghacommon	£658,649	-2.9%
503-1184	St Anthony's Primary, Craigavon	£1,893,928	2.6%
503-1667	St Patrick's Primary, Maralin	£415,308	-1.2%
503-1669	St John's Primary, Gilford	£391,500	0.4%
503-3324	St Patrick's Primary, Derrynaseer	£284,571	1.9%
503-6006	St Mary's Primary, Derrymore	£424,630	0.0%

DE Ref	School Name	Total formula Funding for 2015/16 *	% change compared to 2014/15*
503-6009	St Mary's Primary, Derrytrasna	£342,593	-1.0%
503-6043	St Mary's Primary, Banbridge	£1,309,210	-0.2%
503-6101	St Brendan's Primary	£1,409,752	3.7%
503-6173	St John the Baptist Primary, Portadown	£1,281,713	6.6%
503-6400	St Colman's Primary, Bann	£358,965	-0.1%
503-6457	St Francis' Primary, Aghaderg	£480,406	6.4%
503-6586	Presentation Primary	£880,353	2.2%
503-6633	St Francis' Primary, Lurgan	£2,338,973	-3.6%
504-6137	Seagoe Primary	£873,780	0.9%
521-0043	Clounagh Junior High	£2,376,558	3.4%
521-0047	Banbridge High	£2,249,885	-6.5%
521-0054	Killicomaine Junior High	£1,782,913	1.6%
521-0143	Tandragee Junior High	£1,221,312	-1.0%
521-0271	Lurgan Junior High	£2,345,777	4.3%
521-0282	Craigavon Senior High	£2,668,367	-6.6%
525-0216	Brownlow Integrated College	£1,483,829	-5.4%
523-0070	St Mary's Girls' High, Lurgan	£1,839,899	-5.4%
523-0076	St Patrick's College, Banbridge	£1,344,991	4.1%
523-0088	St Paul's Junior High, Lurgan	£1,388,889	-12.2%
523-0213	Lismore Comprehensive	£4,752,345	-1.0%
523-0256	Drumcree College	£1,052,525	1.5%
541-0013	Banbridge Academy	£5,265,806	-0.9%
541-0057	Lurgan College	£2,039,356	0.1%
541-0067	Portadown College	£3,461,512	-1.4%
542-0056	St Michael's Grammar, Lurgan	£2,875,611	4.9%
506-6540	Bridge Integrated Primary	£1,174,337	0.2%
506-6553	Portadown Integrated Primary	£798,621	5.7%
526-0285	New-Bridge Integrated College	£2,490,126	2.6%
	All schools in Upper Bann	£79,503,836	0.4%

* Includes Transitional Funding

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what schemes or funding streams are available through his Department to assist with early years educational intervention.

(AQW 42809/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following schemes or funding streams are currently available through the Department of Education to assist with early years educational intervention:

- Pre-School Education Programme
- Sure Start Programme
- Early Years Fund
- Toybox
- Extended Services for non statutory pre-school providers
- Support Services for Irish-medium Pre-School Education providers
- SEN Early Years Interim Capacity Building.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for an update on progress towards achieving Centres of Procurement Expertise status within education.

(AQW 42826/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority (EA) construction works & services Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) function will undergo a CoPE assessment in year one of the EA, in line with the original timeframes previously established in the context of the Education and Skills Authority. The Department intends to use the same team that undertook the 2013 NICS CoPE accreditation exercises to undertake the EA CoPE assessment. The head of this team met with the Education and Library Boards Procurement Oversight Board on 13 October 2014 to provide an overview of the current assessment process.

Additionally, the Department and the EA will engage with Central Procurement Directorate to further develop the existing relationships to consolidate CoPE status for the procurement of goods and services.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what arrangements will be in place for banking services for the Education Authority post 1 April 2015.

(AQW 42827/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In order to ensure continued service provision the Education Authority has awarded a contract for banking services for a period of two years from the 1 April 2015.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how much funding was allocated to Education and Library Board Youth services in each of the last five years; and what these figures represent as a percentage of the total education budget.

(AQW 42904/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Table 1 provides details of the total funding allocated to Education and Library Board Youth services including Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) in each of the last five years. These figures include allocations for capital works in the controlled sector.

Table 1 **(£000s)**

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (final allocations)
BELB	7,231	8,166	7,204	8,710	8,112
NEELB	5,714	5,721	5,739	6,510	6,703
SEELB	5,282	5,118	5,508	6,685	6,948
SELB	6,380	5,272	6,437	7,562	7,302
WELB	5,255	4,450	5,212	6,217	6,109
Total	29,862	28,727	30,100	35,684	35,174

Table 2 provides details of the funding allocated to support Youth services for each Education and Library Board in each of the last five years as a percentage of the total education budget.

Table 2 **(%)**

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (final allocations)
BELB	0.34%	0.40%	0.36%	0.43%	0.38%
NEELB	0.27%	0.28%	0.29%	0.32%	0.31%
SEELB	0.25%	0.25%	0.27%	0.33%	0.32%
SELB	0.30%	0.26%	0.32%	0.38%	0.34%
WELB	0.25%	0.22%	0.26%	0.31%	0.29%
Total	1.41%	1.41%	1.50%	1.77%	1.64%

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what budget has been directly allocated to supporting youth work, outside the funding allocated to the Education and Library Boards, in each of the last five financial years.

(AQW 42905/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below provides details of the funding, allocated outside of the Education and Library Boards, directly allocated to the Youth Council in each of the last five financial years.

(£000s)

YCNi	2010-11 £'000	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000	2014-15 (final allocation) £'000
Total	4,511*	4,770	4,685	5,003	5,122

* The 2010-11 allocation includes capital funding totalling £5k.

Details of funding for capital works for the voluntary youth sector are not kept by the Department according to Board area. A breakdown of these by year is provided below:

Year	Final Capital Budget £000's
2010/11	2,050
2011/12	1,045
2012/13	1,500
2013/14	809
2014/15	1,869

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, in light of his statement of 19 January 2015 on the restoration of £2 million to Education and Library Board youth services for the 2015/16 budget, what impact is anticipated on the voluntary youth sector. **(AQW 42906/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: Decisions on the allocation of the Education Authority's youth service budget, including provision of funding to voluntary youth sector groups and organisations, is an operational matter for the Education Authority.

Future funding of youth services by the Education Authority and the Youth Council will be in line with the Regional Youth Development Plan and Priorities for Youth, and, within the resources available.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of teachers with a teaching certificate that have transferred from England, Scotland or Wales, who have been refused registration with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland. **(AQW 42990/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The General Teaching Council (GTC) has been responsible for the assessment of qualifications for the purposes of registration since October 2007.

Since then the GTC has assessed 3,290 applications from individuals from England, Scotland or Wales. Of these applications 13 have been declined and 3,277 approved.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education what measures are taken by Education and Library Boards to ensure that vehicles found by a Driver and Vehicle Agency inspection to have serious mechanical and/or vehicular defects of a hazardous nature are not used for school transport services until such defects have been rectified. **(AQW 43001/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have informed me that operators are contractually required to comply with the PSV Construction & Use Regulations. The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) is responsible for ensuring operators comply with these regulations and the Boards rely on the powers of the DVA to ensure and enforce vehicle roadworthiness through its programme of roadside and business inspections. Where vehicles are subject to prohibition from use, it is a legal requirement that operators of these vehicles ensure that they are not used until the prohibition has been lifted by DVA.

DVA and the Boards meet on a scheduled basis and are in regular contact through DVAs programme of inspections of school transport. Where persistent and/or serious non-compliance by contracted operators is brought to the Boards attention a range of sanctions can be applied, including termination of their current contract.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 38044/11-15, to detail (i) the rate per thousand of post-primary school pupils who had less than 85 per cent attendance in 2013/14, broken down by (a) council area; and (b) electoral ward; and (ii) what further action is being taken to reduce levels of absenteeism. **(AQW 43024/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 38042/11-15, to detail (i) the rate per thousand of primary school pupils who had less than 85 per cent attendance in 2013/14, broken down by (a) council area; and (b) electoral ward; and (ii) what further action is being taken to reduce levels of absenteeism. **(AQW 43025/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 38040/11-15, to detail (i) the rate per thousand of fifteen to seventeen year old pupils who had less than 85 per cent attendance in 2013/14, broken down by (a) council area; and (b) electoral ward; and (ii) what further action is being taken to reduce levels of absenteeism.

(AQW 43027/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how enrolment figures are weighted for the shared campus project; and what measures are in place to ensure schools with low enrolment figures don't use this project to save their schools.

(AQW 43071/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: School enrolment figures are not weighted for Shared Education Campus projects.

The protocol document for the Shared Education Campuses Programme, as published on the Department's website, lists all the criteria against which projects applying to the Programme are assessed.

One of these criterion is 'Planning Authority endorsement'. The relevant Planning Authority, i.e. an Education & Library Board and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, must provide assurance that applicant schools meets the criteria in my Department's Sustainable Schools policy or, where this is not the case, provide a rationale for their endorsement, including an explanation as to how the proposal will contribute to the delivery of sustainable provision in the area going forward.

One of the six sustainability criteria in the Sustainable Schools' policy relates to stable enrolment trends.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether the introduction of a shared education policy and a legal definition is his starting point for a single education system.

(AQW 43072/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The introduction of a shared education policy and legal definition is in line with the Executive's commitment to advance shared education. It will ensure a more integrated approach to educating children and young people from different communities together and build on the rich diversity which is a strength of our education system.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education for the departmental definition of 'shared campus integrated projects'.

(AQW 43073/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department does not use this term, they therefore have no definition for it.

'Shared Education Campuses' are a headline action in the Executive's Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy and form part of the Executive's commitment to the expansion of shared educational opportunities for our children and young people.

Work to deliver on the headline action is being taken forward by my Department under the Shared Education Campuses Programme. The Programme is seen as complementing the work already underway in schools and is targeted towards infrastructure projects aimed at improving or facilitating educational sharing initiatives within local schools.

Further information on the Programme can be found in the protocol document on the Department's website via the following link www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/shared_education/shared-education-campuses-programme

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in considering the development proposal for a nursery unit at Randalstown Central Primary School, how it was concluded that there was already sufficient pre-school places since the level of coverage in the immediate area is below his Department's target.

(AQW 43091/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Development Proposal submission is available on the Department's website via the following link: http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp_281_submission.pdf

You will note from Paragraph 10 of the submission that Commitment 43 of the Programme for Government (PFG) aims to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available for every family that wants it. The Department and Boards work to ensure that there is sufficient pre-school provision in local areas to meet demand for pre-school places.

As outlined in paragraph 11 of the submission, to deliver this commitment the Department and Boards plan for the provision of pre-school places for 95% of target age children. However, as detailed at paragraph 23 it was concluded that the level of provision was sufficient to meet the PFG target as all children who applied for a place (and stayed with the admissions process to the end) received the offer of a place.

As illustrated on the map at Appendix G of the submission, Steeple Nursery Unit is located on the periphery of the five mile radius - indicated by the yellow circle. This was included in the figures of available statutory places.

Taylorstown and Round Tower Playgroups and Steeple Nursery are all within a five mile radius of Randalstown Central Primary School. The information and data in the Development Proposal submission presents the overall position in an area.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in considering the development proposal for a nursery unit at Randalstown Central Primary School, whether the provision at Steeple Nursery was included in the figures of available statutory places; and if so, why, given that it is outside the five mile radius.

(AQW 43094/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Development Proposal submission is available on the Department's website via the following link: http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp_281_submission.pdf

You will note from Paragraph 10 of the submission that Commitment 43 of the Programme for Government (PfG) aims to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available for every family that wants it. The Department and Boards work to ensure that there is sufficient pre-school provision in local areas to meet demand for pre-school places.

As outlined in paragraph 11 of the submission, to deliver this commitment the Department and Boards plan for the provision of pre-school places for 95% of target age children. However, as detailed at paragraph 23 it was concluded that the level of provision was sufficient to meet the PfG target as all children who applied for a place (and stayed with the admissions process to the end) received the offer of a place.

As illustrated on the map at Appendix G of the submission, Steeple Nursery Unit is located on the periphery of the five mile radius - indicated by the yellow circle. This was included in the figures of available statutory places.

Taylorstown and Round Tower Playgroups and Steeple Nursery are all within a five mile radius of Randalstown Central Primary School. The information and data in the Development Proposal submission presents the overall position in an area.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in considering the development proposal for a nursery unit at Randalstown Central Primary School, why Taylorstown and Round Tower Playgroups and the enrolment of Round Tower Primary School and Steeple Nursery were included in the data relied on, since each of these fall outside the five mile radius.

(AQW 43095/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Development Proposal submission is available on the Department's website via the following link: http://www.deni.gov.uk/dp_281_submission.pdf

You will note from Paragraph 10 of the submission that Commitment 43 of the Programme for Government (PfG) aims to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available for every family that wants it. The Department and Boards work to ensure that there is sufficient pre-school provision in local areas to meet demand for pre-school places.

As outlined in paragraph 11 of the submission, to deliver this commitment the Department and Boards plan for the provision of pre-school places for 95% of target age children. However, as detailed at paragraph 23 it was concluded that the level of provision was sufficient to meet the PfG target as all children who applied for a place (and stayed with the admissions process to the end) received the offer of a place.

As illustrated on the map at Appendix G of the submission, Steeple Nursery Unit is located on the periphery of the five mile radius - indicated by the yellow circle. This was included in the figures of available statutory places.

Taylorstown and Round Tower Playgroups and Steeple Nursery are all within a five mile radius of Randalstown Central Primary School. The information and data in the Development Proposal submission presents the overall position in an area.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether families living in the Coolnagard area of Omagh will benefit from Sure Start places in Omagh; and to outline the eligibility criteria for parents/children who wish to avail of Sure Start programmes.

(AQW 43099/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Sure Start services are delivered in at least the top 20% most disadvantaged wards in the north of Ireland, as defined by the Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010 (NIMDM 2010) and are being expanded to the top 25%, by April 2015.

All children under four and their families living within the catchment area of each Sure Start can access services, as provision is universal within the targeted areas.

The Coolnagard ward has an overall ranking of 178 (per NIMDM¹ 2010), placing it in the top 31% most disadvantaged wards, which is outside the geographical remit for Sure Start Services.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Education when he is planning to reinstate Local Management of Schools contingency funding in support of the management of local schools in the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 43113/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While I appreciate all ELBs have had to make difficult decisions in order to live within their budget allocation in 2014-15, as outlined in the Common Funding Scheme (Part 6 Resources held at Centre), each Funding Authority must establish a Contingency Fund to meet certain unexpected costs. The existence of the contingency fund for exceptional cost demands does not absolve schools from their obligation to meet less severe eventualities by prudent management of their delegated budgets.

1 Northern Ireland Multi Deprivation Measure

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to remove the small schools premia.
(AQW 43152/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Delegated funds for schools are distributed under the Common Funding Scheme; and the formula distributions are based on a number of factors, including the Small Schools' Support funding factor.

I have no plans to remove this funding element for schools in the 2015/16 financial year, and formula budgets notified to schools on 25 February 2015 included Small Schools' Support funding as appropriate.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education what steps he is taking to strengthen the focus on science in the primary school curriculum.
(AQW 43228/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department provides annual core funding to Sentinus; in 2014/15 Sentinus will have provided a portfolio of STEM programmes to more than 57,000 primary and post-primary pupils.

In addition the STEM Module offers a 'STEM in the World Around Us' session to engage with the primary sector, and has over the last two years seen an uptake in the number of primary schools availing of the resource.

My Department asked the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to conduct a review of the implementation of the World Around Us (WAU) Area of Learning in 2013/14. The purpose of this review was to find out how primary schools are implementing and developing this Area of Learning, including science.

The report contains recommendations for my Department as well as for schools and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. I am content to accept ETI's recommendations in principle. I have asked my officials to bring forward advice as to how the recommendations can be advanced.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the level of school surpluses and deficits in each of the last four years, broken down by school sector and management type.
(AQW 43231/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The latest Financial Year for which this data is available from the Education and Library Boards is 2013/14. The information requested has been provided for the four Financial Years from 2010/11 to 2013/14 and is contained in the tables below:

2010/11 Financial Year

Sector	Management Type	Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2011		Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2011	
		No. of Schools	Amount £	No. of Schools	Amount £
Nursery	Controlled	58	£1,627,972	7	-£37,251
	Maintained	21	£547,157	12	-£104,112
Primary	Controlled	308	£16,517,488	77	-£3,268,861
	Maintained (1)	340	£17,590,675	61	-£1,729,957
	Irish Medium (2)	18	£1,237,726	5	-£108,420
	Controlled Integrated	14	£946,573	4	-£190,308
Post- Primary	Controlled	40	£6,326,913	18	-£1,954,856
	Maintained	47	£6,415,107	24	-£3,199,366
	Irish Medium	0	£0	1	-£8,974
	Controlled Integrated	3	£802,315	1	-£201,411
	Controlled Grammar	12	£1,293,809	5	-£508,366

2011/12 Financial Year

Sector	Management Type	Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2012		Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2012	
		No. of Schools	Amount £	No. of Schools	Amount £
Nursery	Controlled	61	£1,673,843	4	-£41,743
	Maintained	28	£606,433	5	-£84,144

Sector	Management Type	Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2012		Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2012	
		No. of Schools	Amount £	No. of Schools	Amount £
Primary	Controlled	299	£15,992,499	79	-£3,704,790
	Maintained (1)	323	£17,095,834	74	-£1,894,562
	Irish Medium (2)	20	£1,174,040	5	-£108,097
	Controlled Integrated	14	£1,057,756	5	-£250,344
Post- Primary	Controlled	36	£6,246,072	21	-£2,690,420
	Maintained	43	£6,435,823	28	-£4,154,055
	Irish Medium	0	£0	1	-£70,770
	Controlled Integrated	4	£786,292	1	-£191,632
	Controlled Grammar	13	£1,187,883	5	-£724,932

2012/13 Financial Year

Sector	Management Type	Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2013		Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2013	
		No. of Schools	Amount £	No. of Schools	Amount £
Nursery	Controlled	61	£1,714,518	4	-£33,931
	Maintained	29	£731,717	3	-£55,643
Primary	Controlled	307	£16,573,616	67	-£3,026,631
	Maintained (1)	335	£18,086,052	63	-£1,370,271
	Irish Medium (2)	22	£1,153,963	6	-£83,282
	Controlled Integrated	16	£1,105,556	3	-£197,214
Post- Primary	Controlled	37	£6,603,388	18	-£3,663,441
	Maintained	43	£7,070,200	28	-£5,192,997
	Irish Medium	0	£0	1	-£120,649
	Controlled Integrated	3	£1,161,196	2	-£270,710
	Controlled Grammar	11	£1,695,829	6	-£868,352

2013/14 Financial Year

Sector	Management Type	Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2014		Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2014	
		No. of Schools	Amount £	No. of Schools	Amount £
Nursery	Controlled	57	£1,473,664	8	-£68,163
	Maintained	25	£619,555	7	-£74,877
Primary	Controlled	300	£14,584,141	72	-£2,804,297
	Maintained (1)	328	£15,755,741	64	-£1,606,012
	Irish Medium (2)	19	£1,087,003	9	-£257,653
	Controlled Integrated	15	£970,482	4	-£187,573

Sector	Management Type	Schools in Surplus at 31 March 2014		Schools in Deficit at 31 March 2014	
		No. of Schools	Amount £	No. of Schools	Amount £
Post- Primary	Controlled	37	£6,772,604	19	£4,927,929
	Maintained	42	£6,205,543	29	£6,142,198
	Irish Medium	0	£0	1	£60,816
	Controlled Integrated	2	£847,808	3	£659,016
	Controlled Grammar	11	£1,790,871	6	£1,156,121

Notes:

- (1) Includes 'Other Maintained' schools
(2) Includes Controlled and Maintained Irish Medium schools

Similar data is not available for Voluntary Grammar (VG) and Grant-Maintained Integrated (GMI) schools, for which my Department is the Funding Authority. This is because VG and GMI schools are not reported on in the same way as each other (the same accounting policies are not used by all VG & GMI schools) or in the same way as schools for which Education and Library Boards are Funding Authority (the cumulative surplus/deficit figures of VG & GMI schools can reflect non-public funds). This means that the cumulative surplus/deficit figure of a VG/GMI school cannot be compared on a like-for-like basis with that of another VG/GMI school or a school which has an ELB as its Funding Authority.

My Department can however confirm that no VG or GMI school had a deficit of public funds at 31 March 2011, 31 March 2012, 31 March 2013 or 31 March 2014.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to list the projects that will be delayed as a result of a reduction in his Department's capital budget.

(AQW 43233/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Currently 9 School Enhancement Programme (SEP) projects have had their final designs approved and would be considered to be "Shovel Ready". The move to construction of works procurement for these schemes has been delayed, however they are in a position to quickly move to construction should additional capital funding become available.

"Shovel Ready" projects ready to be released for construction procurement but held due to lack of capital budget;

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Millington PS | 6 | Ceara Special School |
| 2 | Dalriada VGS, Ballymoney | 7 | St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt |
| 3 | Donard Special School | 8 | Victoria College, Belfast |
| 4 | Rainey Endowed (Phase II) | 9 | Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry |
| 5 | The Armstrong PS | | |

The move to construction procurement for the remaining 22 SEP projects will also be delayed when their final designs are approved if additional capital funds are not forthcoming. Work is continuing on these 22 projects and funding is in place to ensure they can all complete their final designs.

Projects where design work has yet to be completed and approval received

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ■ St Columb's College, L'Derry | ■ De La Salle College, Belfast |
| ■ St Louis' VGS, Ballymena | ■ Strandtown PS, Belfast |
| ■ Integrated College, Dungannon | ■ Slemish IC, Ballymena |
| ■ Killeen PS | ■ New-Bridge IC, Loughbrickland |
| ■ Sullivan Upper, Hollywood | ■ Our Lady's VGS, Newry |
| ■ Broadbridge PS, Derry | ■ Malone IC, Belfast |
| ■ Anahorish PS, Toomebridge | ■ St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase II) |
| ■ John Paul II, Belfast | ■ Erne IC (Phase II) |
| ■ St Bernard's PS, Glengormley | |
| ■ St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn | |
| ■ Wallace HS, Lisburn | |
| ■ St Michael's College, Enniskillen | |
| ■ Methodist College, Belfast | |
| ■ Mount Lourdes GS, Enniskillen | |

Major New Builds

At present it is not anticipated that any of the planned major capital works projects will be delayed as a result of the reduction in the Departments capital budget for 2015/16. In relation to major works projects currently underway, many of the projects are either at business case or design stage. Funding for the construction works will be allocated on completion of all design stages in line with the available capital budget at that time.

There are currently sixteen Major Capital Works projects that are anticipated to move to construction in the next year.

Projects anticipated to move to construction in 2015/16

- Arvalee Special School, Omagh
- St Mary's PS, Banbridge
- Foyle College/Ebrington PS, Derry
- Castletower Special School, Ballymena
- Rossmar Special School, Limavady
- Colaiste Fierste, Belfast
- Enniskillen Model PS
- Ardnashee School and College, Derry
- Edenderry Nursery School, Belfast
- Omagh Integrated PS
- St Joseph's and St James' Primary School, Poyntzpass
- St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon
- Parkhall Integrated College, Antrim
- Devenish College (enabling works)
- St Bronaghs PS, Rostrevor
- St Mary's PS/ Glenravel PS

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the capital projects which are currently considered by his Department to be shovel ready.

(AQW 43234/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Currently 9 School Enhancement Programme (SEP) projects have had their final designs approved and would be considered to be "Shovel Ready". The move to construction of works procurement for these schemes has been delayed, however they are in a position to quickly move to construction should additional capital funding become available.

"Shovel Ready" projects ready to be released for construction procurement but held due to lack of capital budget;

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 10. Millington PS | 15. Ceara Special School |
| 11. Dalriada VGS, Ballymoney | 16. St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt |
| 12. Donard Special School | 17. Victoria College, Belfast |
| 13. Rainey Endowed (Phase II) | 18. Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry |
| 14. The Armstrong PS | |

The move to construction procurement for the remaining 22 SEP projects will also be delayed when their final designs are approved if additional capital funds are not forthcoming. Work is continuing on these 22 projects and funding is in place to ensure they can all complete their final designs.

Projects where design work has yet to be completed and approval received

- St Columb's College, L'Derry
- St Michael's College, Enniskillen
- St Louis' VGS, Ballymena
- Methodist College, Belfast
- Integrated College, Dungannon
- Mount Lourdes GS, Enniskillen
- Killeen PS
- De La Salle College, Belfast
- Sullivan Upper, Holywood
- Strandtown PS, Belfast
- Broadbridge PS, Derry
- Slemish IC, Ballymena
- Anahorish PS, Toomebridge
- New-Bridge IC, Loughbrickland
- John Paul II, Belfast
- Our Lady's VGS, Newry
- St Bernard's PS, Glengormley
- Malone IC, Belfast
- St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn
- St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase II)
- Wallace HS, Lisburn
- Erne IC (Phase II)

Major New Builds

At present it is not anticipated that any of the planned major capital works projects will be delayed as a result of the reduction in the Departments capital budget for 2015/16. In relation to major works projects currently underway, many of the projects are either at business case or design stage. Funding for the construction works will be allocated on completion of all design stages in line with the available capital budget at that time.

There are currently sixteen Major Capital Works projects that are anticipated to move to construction in the next year.

Projects anticipated to move to construction in 2015/16

- Arvalee Special School, Omagh
- St Mary's PS, Banbridge
- Foyle College/Ebrington PS, Derry
- Castletower Special School, Ballymena
- Rossmar Special School, Limavady
- Colaiste Fierste, Belfast
- Enniskillen Model PS
- Ardnashee School and College, Derry
- Edenderry Nursery School, Belfast
- Omagh Integrated PS
- St Joseph's and St James' Primary School, Poyntzpass
- St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon
- Parkhall Integrated College, Antrim
- Devenish College (enabling works)
- St Bronaghs PS, Rostrevor
- St Mary's PS/ Glenravel PS

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education for an update on the St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena School Enhancement Programme application.

(AQW 43242/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The SEP project at St Louis Ballymena, with total project costs valued at £4m, is for the refurbishment and extension of the existing Convent Building to provide a Creative and Expressive Arts facility. The scheme will include facilities for Music, Drama, Art, Moving Image & Media Studies with additional space for an ICT Suite and Sixth Form Centre.

The school's Professional Design Team has undertaken extensive liaison with Planning and NIEA Historic Buildings regarding the scheme as the Convent Building has Grade B1 listed status. This has impacted on the timeline for the design stage of the project.

The department is currently awaiting the Stage 3 final designs from the Design Team.

The SEP scheme at St Louis will continue to be advanced to approval of the Stage 3 (final detailed) Design, but due to the forecast budget position for 2015/16 it will not move to construction unless in-year bids for additional funding are successful.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to list the School Enhancement Programmes that will begin in 2015/16; and the applications yet to be decided.

(AQW 43243/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: SEP Projects that will be on site 2015/16

- Acorn IPS
- Millennium IPS
- Rainey Endowed (Phase I)
- Maine IPS
- Saintfield HS
- Knockevin Special School
- Loreto VGS
- Erne IC (Phase I)
- St Joseph's PS, Carnacaville
- Ballyclare HS
- Ballymoney HS
- St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase I)
- Rathore Special School
- Willowbridge Special School
- Coleraine Academical Inst.
- Belfast Royal Academy
- Friends' School, Lisburn
- Newbuildings PS
- St Joseph's VGS, Donaghmore
- Belfast HS
- St Mark's, Warrenpoint
- St. Patrick's GS, Armagh
- SEP Projects to be parked pending availability of Capital Funds
- Dalriada VGS, Ballymoney
- St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt
- Millington PS
- Ceara Special School
- Donard Special School
- The Armstrong PS
- St Columb's College, Derry
- Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry
- St Louis' VGS, Ballymena
- Victoria College, Belfast
- Integrated College, Dungannon
- Killeen PS
- Sullivan Upper, Holywood
- Broadbridge PS, Derry
- Anahorish PS, Toomebridge
- John Paul II, Belfast
- St Bernard's PS, Glengormley
- St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn
- Wallace HS, Lisburn
- St Michael's College, Enniskillen
- Methodist College, Belfast
- Mount Lourdes GS, Enniskillen
- De La Salle College, Belfast
- Strandtown PS, Belfast
- Slemish IC, Ballymena
- New-Bridge IC, Loughbrickland
- Our Lady's VGS, Newry
- Malone IC, Belfast
- Rainey Endowed (Phase II)
- St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase II)
- Erne IC (Phase II)

As a result of the restricted budget position the ability of the Department to fund all of the planned SEP projects in 2015/16 will be constrained. The budget available to the SEP Programme next year is approximately half of the estimated cost of advancing all of the projects.

The current position is that 22 SEP projects are either on-site or it has been agreed can proceed to tender for appointment of contractor. The progression of these 22 is expected to substantially utilise the budget allocation for FY 15/16.

All remaining SEP schemes will continue to be advanced to allow completion of the design stages, at which point they will be prioritised on the basis of the date the design is approved and signed off by my Department.

This is a disappointing position, and I can only reiterate I am committed to delivering all SEP schemes.

As a result of the restricted budget it has been necessary to delay 9 School Enhancement Programme (SEP) projects that have had their final designs approved and would be considered "Shovel Ready".

School	Final Design Approved
1 Millington PS	4 February 2015
2 Dalriada VGS, Ballymoney	9 February 2015
3 Donard Special School	10 February 2015
4 Rainey Endowed (Phase II)	11 February 2015
5 The Armstrong PS	11 February 2015
6 Ceara Special School	13 February 2015
7 St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt	13 February 2015
8 Victoria College, Belfast	17 February 2015
9 Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry	2 March 2015

Value of Projects

Value	Number of Projects	Bracket
£500,000 – £1,000,000	6	A
£1,000,001 - £2,000,000	11	B
£2,000,001 - £3,000,000	10	C
£3,000,001 - £4,000,000	26	D

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase I)	Replacement of mobiles and off site accommodation (phase 1)	A	On Site 2014
Maine IPS Randalstown	Enhancement and replacement of current poor/ very poor buildings and a new multi-purpose hall.	A	On Site 2014
St Joseph's Primary Carnacaville	Extension and refurbishment	B	On Site 2014
Saintfield High	Sports Hall	B	On Site 2014
Knockevin Special Downpatrick	Extension, refurbishment and new accommodation block	C	On Site 2014
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase I)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	On Site Spring 2014
Belfast Royal Academy Belfast	Music, Home Economics Suite and Dining Hall Development	D	On Site Spring 2014
Friends' School Lisburn	Demolition of Harding House and construction of new building for music and maths department.	D	On Site Spring 2014

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Acorn IPS Carrickfergus	Replacement and refurbishment of Temporary accommodation with new build structure linked to main building and associated site improvements.	B	On Site 2014
Belfast High School Newtownabbey	Sports Accommodation.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Erne IC Enniskillen (Phase 1)	Replacement of deteriorating temporary accommodation with permanent or semi-permanent building, refurbishment of existing building and construction of standalone sports hall.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Millennium Saintfield	Refurbishment of Existing School Site	A	On Site Spring 2014
Ballyclare Secondary	Modular building extension to address shortfall and refurbishment of toilet facilities and changing rooms	D	On Site Spring 2014
Ballymoney High	Refurbishment and extension.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Rathore Special Newry	Classroom extension and to replace current modular accommodation.	B	On Site Spring 2014
Willowbridge Special Enniskillen	Proposed extension and associated works.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Coleraine Academical	Refurbishment of existing building.	C	On Site Spring 2014
New Buildings Primary Derry	Refurbishment and roof repair/ replacement.	B	On Site Spring 2014
St Joseph's Grammar Donaghmore	Extension and expansion of sports and classroom facilities.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Loreto Grammar Omagh	Replacement of mobiles.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Mark's High Warrenpoint	Refurbishment and addition of new block.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Patrick's Grammar Armagh	Extension to accommodate pupils from St Brigid's.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase II)	Refurbishment of existing classrooms and new PE facilities (phase 2).	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
St Mary's Grammar Magherafelt	Extension and refurbishment.	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Dalriada Ballymoney	New multi-purpose hall and multi-purpose hall and stage.	C	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Donard Special Banbridge	Classroom extension and to replace current temporary accommodation.	B	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Millington Primary Craigavon	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Victoria College Belfast	New permanent Sports facility, Art & Science Accommodation, Pitch	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Ceara Special Lurgan	Extension to provide additional classroom and replace current temporary accommodation with permanent building.	C	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Sacred Heart Grammar Newry	Refurbishment of nine science classrooms.	B	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
The Armstrong Primary Armagh	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	C	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Sullivan Upper Holywood	Sports Accommodation and Astro turf Hockey Pitch.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
IC Dungannon	Sports Hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Bernard's Primary Newtownabbey	Refurbishment and two new blocks.	A	Stage 3 awaited
Broadbridge Primary Eglinton	Replace mobiles with new block.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Louis Grammar Ballymena	Refurbishment of an extension of existing Convent building to provide Creative and Expression Arts Facility.	D	Stage 3 awaited
Anahorish Primary Antrim	Replace mobiles/ canteen and multi-purpose hall.	B	Stage 3 awaited
Killeen Primary Newry	New build accommodation and refurbishment work to main building and site works.	B	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
John Paul II Belfast	Rationalisation through extension and refurbishment.	A	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
Wallace High Lisburn	Extension and refurbishment.	D	Stage 3 awaited
Mount Lourdes Grammar Enniskillen	Extension and upgrading of school canteen facilities and site works.	B	Stage 3 awaited
St Columb's College Derry	Refurbishment and extension for PE and Drama.	C	Stage 3 awaited
St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn	New-build standalone extension to address physical education, music, art and home economics deficiency	D	Stage 3 awaited
St Michael's College Enniskillen	New Sports Facilities to include all weather flood-lit sports playing field and athletics facility.	B	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
Methodist College Belfast	Refurbishment of McArthur Hall.	D	Stage 3 awaited
De La Salle College Belfast	Outdoor Pitch	A	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
Strandtown Primary Belfast	Accommodation extension.	D	Board continuing to progress the detailed design
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase II)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
New Bridge IC Banbridge	Replacement of 8 temporary classrooms with new permanent building and new Sports Hall and Sports Pitches	D	Stage 2 awaited
Our Lady's Grammar Newry	Technology block extension and re development of current technology block into ICT block and 6th form	D	Awaiting Stage 1
Malone IC Belfast	New sports facilities to include 3G pitch	C	Awaiting Stage 2

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Erne IC Enniskillen (Phase II)	Replacement of deteriorating temporary accommodation with permanent or semi-permanent building, refurbishment of existing building and construction of standalone sports hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
Slemish College Ballymena	Expansion and new sports hall.	D	Awaiting Stage 1

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to outline the reasons for the delay to a number of School Enhancement Programme projects.

(AQW 43244/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: SEP Projects that will be on site 2015/16

- Acorn IPS
- Millennium IPS
- Rainey Endowed (Phase I)
- Maine IPS
- Saintfield HS
- Knockevin Special School
- Loreto VGS
- Erne IC (Phase I)
- St Joseph's PS, Carnacaville
- Ballyclare HS
- Ballymoney HS
- St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase I)
- Rathore Special School
- Willowbridge Special School
- Coleraine Academical Inst.
- Belfast Royal Academy
- Friends' School, Lisburn
- Newbuildings PS
- St Joseph's VGS, Donaghmore
- Belfast HS
- St Mark's, Warrenpoint
- St. Patrick's GS, Armagh
- SEP Projects to be parked pending availability of Capital Funds
- Dalriada VGS, Ballymoney
- St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt
- Millington PS
- Ceara Special School
- Donard Special School
- The Armstrong PS
- St Columb's College, Derry
- Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry
- St Louis' VGS, Ballymena
- Victoria College, Belfast
- Integrated College, Dungannon
- Killean PS
- Sullivan Upper, Holywood
- Broadbridge PS, Derry
- Anahorish PS, Toomebridge
- John Paul II, Belfast
- St Bernard's PS, Glengormley
- St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn
- Wallace HS, Lisburn
- St Michael's College, Enniskillen
- Methodist College, Belfast
- Mount Lourdes GS, Enniskillen
- De La Salle College, Belfast
- Strandtown PS, Belfast
- Slemish IC, Ballymena
- New-Bridge IC, Loughbrickland
- Our Lady's VGS, Newry
- Malone IC, Belfast
- Rainey Endowed (Phase II)
- St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase II)
- Erne IC (Phase II)

As a result of the restricted budget position the ability of the Department to fund all of the planned SEP projects in 2015/16 will be constrained. The budget available to the SEP Programme next year is approximately half of the estimated cost of advancing all of the projects.

The current position is that 22 SEP projects are either on-site or it has been agreed can proceed to tender for appointment of contractor. The progression of these 22 is expected to substantially utilise the budget allocation for FY 15/16.

All remaining SEP schemes will continue to be advanced to allow completion of the design stages, at which point they will be prioritised on the basis of the date the design is approved and signed off by my Department.

This is a disappointing position, and I can only reiterate I am committed to delivering all SEP schemes.

As a result of the restricted budget it has been necessary to delay 9 School Enhancement Programme (SEP) projects that have had their final designs approved and would be considered "Shovel Ready".

School	Final Design Approved
10. Millington PS	4 February 2015
11. Dalriada VGS, Ballymoney	9 February 2015
12. Donard Special School	10 February 2015
13. Rainey Endowed (Phase II)	11 February 2015
14. The Armstrong PS	11 February 2015
15. Ceara Special School	13 February 2015
16. St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt	13 February 2015
17. Victoria College, Belfast	17 February 2015
18. Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry	2 March 2015

Value of Projects

Value	Number of Projects	Bracket
£500,000 – £1,000,000	6	A
£1,000,001 - £2,000,000	11	B
£2,000,001 - £3,000,000	10	C
£3,000,001 - £4,000,000	26	D

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase I)	Replacement of mobiles and off site accommodation (phase 1)	A	On Site 2014
Maine IPS Randalstown	Enhancement and replacement of current poor/ very poor buildings and a new multi-purpose hall.	A	On Site 2014
St Joseph's Primary Carnacaville	Extension and refurbishment	B	On Site 2014
Saintfield High	Sports Hall	B	On Site 2014
Knockevin Special Downpatrick	Extension, refurbishment and new accommodation block	C	On Site 2014
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase I)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	On Site Spring 2014
Belfast Royal Academy Belfast	Music, Home Economics Suite and Dining Hall Development	D	On Site Spring 2014
Friends' School Lisburn	Demolition of Harding House and construction of new building for music and maths department.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Acorn IPS Carrickfergus	Replacement and refurbishment of Temporary accommodation with new build structure linked to main building and associated site improvements.	B	On Site 2014
Belfast High School Newtownabbey	Sports Accommodation.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Erne IC Enniskillen (Phase 1)	Replacement of deteriorating temporary accommodation with permanent or semi-permanent building, refurbishment of existing building and construction of standalone sports hall.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Millennium Saintfield	Refurbishment of Existing School Site	A	On Site Spring 2014

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Ballyclare Secondary	Modular building extension to address shortfall and refurbishment of toilet facilities and changing rooms	D	On Site Spring 2014
Ballymoney High	Refurbishment and extension.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Rathore Special Newry	Classroom extension and to replace current modular accommodation.	B	On Site Spring 2014
Willowbridge Special Enniskillen	Proposed extension and associated works.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Coleraine Academical	Refurbishment of existing building.	C	On Site Spring 2014
New Buildings Primary Derry	Refurbishment and roof repair/ replacement.	B	On Site Spring 2014
St Joseph's Grammar Donaghmore	Extension and expansion of sports and classroom facilities.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Loreto Grammar Omagh	Replacement of mobiles.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Mark's High Warrenpoint	Refurbishment and addition of new block.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Patrick's Grammar Armagh	Extension to accommodate pupils from St Brigid's.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase II)	Refurbishment of existing classrooms and new PE facilities (phase 2).	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
St Mary's Grammar Magherafelt	Extension and refurbishment.	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Dalriada Ballymoney	New multi-purpose hall and multi-purpose hall and stage.	C	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Donard Special Banbridge	Classroom extension and to replace current temporary accommodation.	B	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Millington Primary Craigavon	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Victoria College Belfast	New permanent Sports facility, Art & Science Accommodation, Pitch	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Ceara Special Lurgan	Extension to provide additional classroom and replace current temporary accommodation with permanent building.	C	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Sacred Heart Grammar Newry	Refurbishment of nine science classrooms.	B	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
The Armstrong Primary Armagh	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	C	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Sullivan Upper Holywood	Sports Accommodation and Astro turf Hockey Pitch.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
IC Dungannon	Sports Hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Bernard's Primary Newtownabbey	Refurbishment and two new blocks.	A	Stage 3 awaited

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Broadbridge Primary Eglinton	Replace mobiles with new block.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Louis Grammar Ballymena	Refurbishment of an extension of existing Convent building to provide Creative and Expression Arts Facility.	D	Stage 3 awaited
Anahorish Primary Antrim	Replace mobiles/ canteen and multi-purpose hall.	B	Stage 3 awaited
Killeen Primary Newry	New build accommodation and refurbishment work to main building and site works.	B	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
John Paul II Belfast	Rationalisation through extension and refurbishment.	A	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
Wallace High Lisburn	Extension and refurbishment.	D	Stage 3 awaited
Mount Lourdes Grammar Enniskillen	Extension and upgrading of school canteen facilities and site works.	B	Stage 3 awaited
St Columb's College Derry	Refurbishment and extension for PE and Drama.	C	Stage 3 awaited
St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn	New-build standalone extension to address physical education, music, art and home economics deficiency	D	Stage 3 awaited
St Michael's College Enniskillen	New Sports Facilities to include all weather flood-lit sports playing field and athletics facility.	B	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
Methodist College Belfast	Refurbishment of McArthur Hall.	D	Stage 3 awaited
De La Salle College Belfast	Outdoor Pitch	A	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
Strandtown Primary Belfast	Accommodation extension.	D	Board continuing to progress the detailed design
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase II)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
New Bridge IC Banbridge	Replacement of 8 temporary classrooms with new permanent building and new Sports Hall and Sports Pitches	D	Stage 2 awaited
Our Lady's Grammar Newry	Technology block extension and re development of current technology block into ICT block and 6th form	D	Awaiting Stage 1
Malone IC Belfast	New sports facilities to include 3G pitch	C	Awaiting Stage 2
Erne IC Enniskillen (Phase II)	Replacement of deteriorating temporary accommodation with permanent or semi-permanent building, refurbishment of existing building and construction of standalone sports hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
Slemish College Ballymena	Expansion and new sports hall.	D	Awaiting Stage 1

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education for how long has each School Enhancement Programme application been awaiting approval following submission from the design team.

(AQW 43245/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: SEP Projects that will be on site 2015/16

■ Acorn IPS

■ Millennium IPS

- Rainey Endowed (Phase I)
- Maine IPS
- Saintfield HS
- Knockevin Special School
- Loreto VGS
- Erne IC (Phase I)
- St Joseph's PS, Carnacaville
- Ballyclare HS
- Ballymoney HS
- St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase I)
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- Coleraine Academical Inst.
- Belfast Royal Academy
- Friends' School, Lisburn
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- St. Patrick's GS, Armagh
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- Donard Special School
- The Armstrong PS
- St Columb's College, Derry
- Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry
- St Louis' VGS, Ballymena
- Victoria College, Belfast
- Integrated College, Dungannon
- Killean PS
- Sullivan Upper, Holywood
- Broadbridge PS, Derry
- Anahorish PS, Toomebridge
- John Paul II, Belfast
- St Bernard's PS, Glengormley
- St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn
- Wallace HS, Lisburn
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- Methodist College, Belfast
- Mount Lourdes GS, Enniskillen
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- Strandtown PS, Belfast
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- Our Lady's VGS, Newry
- Malone IC, Belfast
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- St Malachy's College, Belfast (Phase II)
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As a result of the restricted budget position the ability of the Department to fund all of the planned SEP projects in 2015/16 will be constrained. The budget available to the SEP Programme next year is approximately half of the estimated cost of advancing all of the projects.

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As a result of the restricted budget it has been necessary to delay 9 School Enhancement Programme (SEP) projects that have had their final designs approved and would be considered "Shovel Ready".

School	Final Design Approved
19. Millington PS	4 February 2015
20. Dalriada VGS, Ballymoney	9 February 2015
21. Donard Special School	10 February 2015
22. Rainey Endowed (Phase II)	11 February 2015
23. The Armstrong PS	11 February 2015
24. Ceara Special School	13 February 2015
25. St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt	13 February 2015
26. Victoria College, Belfast	17 February 2015
27. Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry	2 March 2015

Value of Projects

Value	Number of Projects	Bracket
£500,000 – £1,000,000	6	A
£1,000,001 - £2,000,000	11	B
£2,000,001 - £3,000,000	10	C
£3,000,001 - £4,000,000	26	D

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase I)	Replacement of mobiles and off site accommodation (phase 1)	A	On Site 2014
Maine IPS Randalstown	Enhancement and replacement of current poor/ very poor buildings and a new multi-purpose hall.	A	On Site 2014
St Joseph's Primary Carnacaville	Extension and refurbishment	B	On Site 2014
Saintfield High	Sports Hall	B	On Site 2014
Knockevin Special Downpatrick	Extension, refurbishment and new accommodation block	C	On Site 2014
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase I)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	On Site Spring 2014
Belfast Royal Academy Belfast	Music, Home Economics Suite and Dining Hall Development	D	On Site Spring 2014
Friends' School Lisburn	Demolition of Harding House and construction of new building for music and maths department.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Acorn IPS Carrickfergus	Replacement and refurbishment of Temporary accommodation with new build structure linked to main building and associated site improvements.	B	On Site 2014
Belfast High School Newtownabbey	Sports Accommodation.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Erne IC Enniskillen (Phase 1)	Replacement of deteriorating temporary accommodation with permanent or semi-permanent building, refurbishment of existing building and construction of standalone sports hall.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Millennium Saintfield	Refurbishment of Existing School Site	A	On Site Spring 2014
Ballyclare Secondary	Modular building extension to address shortfall and refurbishment of toilet facilities and changing rooms	D	On Site Spring 2014
Ballymoney High	Refurbishment and extension.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Rathore Special Newry	Classroom extension and to replace current modular accommodation.	B	On Site Spring 2014
Willowbridge Special Enniskillen	Proposed extension and associated works.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Coleraine Academical	Refurbishment of existing building.	C	On Site Spring 2014
New Buildings Primary Derry	Refurbishment and roof repair/ replacement.	B	On Site Spring 2014
St Joseph's Grammar Donaghmore	Extension and expansion of sports and classroom facilities.	D	On Site Spring 2014

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Loreto Grammar Omagh	Replacement of mobiles.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Mark's High Warrenpoint	Refurbishment and addition of new block.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Patrick's Grammar Armagh	Extension to accommodate pupils from St Brigid's.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase II)	Refurbishment of existing classrooms and new PE facilities (phase 2).	D	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
St Mary's Grammar Magherafelt	Extension and refurbishment.	D	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Dalriada Ballymoney	New multi-purpose hall and multi-purpose hall and stage.	C	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Donard Special Banbridge	Classroom extension and to replace current temporary accommodation.	B	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Millington Primary Craigavon	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	D	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Victoria College Belfast	New permanent Sports facility, Art & Science Accommodation, Pitch	D	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Ceara Special Lurgan	Extension to provide additional classroom and replace current temporary accommodation with permanent building.	C	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Sacred Heart Grammar Newry	Refurbishment of nine science classrooms.	B	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
The Armstrong Primary Armagh	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	C	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Sullivan Upper Holywood	Sports Accommodation and Astro turf Hockey Pitch.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
IC Dungannon	Sports Hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Bernard's Primary Newtownabbey	Refurbishment and two new blocks.	A	Stage 3 awaited
Broadbridge Primary Eglinton	Replace mobiles with new block.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Louis Grammar Ballymena	Refurbishment of an extension of existing Convent building to provide Creative and Expression Arts Facility.	D	Stage 3 awaited
Anahorish Primary Antrim	Replace mobiles/ canteen and multi-purpose hall.	B	Stage 3 awaited
Killeen Primary Newry	New build accommodation and refurbishment work to main building and site works.	B	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
John Paul II Belfast	Rationalisation through extension and refurbishment.	A	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
Wallace High Lisburn	Extension and refurbishment.	D	Stage 3 awaited

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Mount Lourdes Grammar Enniskillen	Extension and upgrading of school canteen facilities and site works.	B	Stage 3 awaited
St Columb's College Derry	Refurbishment and extension for PE and Drama.	C	Stage 3 awaited
St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn	New-build standalone extension to address physical education, music, art and home economics deficiency	D	Stage 3 awaited
St Michael's College Enniskillen	New Sports Facilities to include all weather flood-lit sports playing field and athletics facility.	B	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
Methodist College Belfast	Refurbishment of McArthur Hall.	D	Stage 3 awaited
De La Salle College Belfast	Outdoor Pitch	A	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
Strandtown Primary Belfast	Accommodation extension.	D	Board continuing to progress the detailed design
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase II)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
New Bridge IC Banbridge	Replacement of 8 temporary classrooms with new permanent building and new Sports Hall and Sports Pitches	D	Stage 2 awaited
Our Lady's Grammar Newry	Technology block extension and re development of current technology block into ICT block and 6th form	D	Awaiting Stage 1
Malone IC Belfast	New sports facilities to include 3G pitch	C	Awaiting Stage 2
Erne IC Enniskillen (Phase II)	Replacement of deteriorating temporary accommodation with permanent or semi-permanent building, refurbishment of existing building and construction of standalone sports hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
Slemish College Ballymena	Expansion and new sports hall.	D	Awaiting Stage 1

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to list the value of each School Enhancement Programme project; and the current stage of each project.

(AQW 43246/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: SEP Projects that will be on site 2015/16

- Acorn IPS
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- Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry
- St Louis' VGS, Ballymena
- Victoria College, Belfast
- Integrated College, Dungannon
- Killean PS
- Sullivan Upper, Holywood
- Broadbridge PS, Derry
- Anahorish PS, Toomebridge
- John Paul II, Belfast
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- Strandtown PS, Belfast
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- Malone IC, Belfast
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Value of Projects

Value	Number of Projects	Bracket
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Maine IPS Randalstown	Enhancement and replacement of current poor/ very poor buildings and a new multi-purpose hall.	A	On Site 2014

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
St Joseph's Primary Carnacaville	Extension and refurbishment	B	On Site 2014
Saintfield High	Sports Hall	B	On Site 2014
Knockevin Special Downpatrick	Extension, refurbishment and new accommodation block	C	On Site 2014
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase I)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	On Site Spring 2014
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St Joseph's Grammar Donaghmore	Extension and expansion of sports and classroom facilities.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Loreto Grammar Omagh	Replacement of mobiles.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Mark's High Warrenpoint	Refurbishment and addition of new block.	C	On Site Spring 2014
St Patrick's Grammar Armagh	Extension to accommodate pupils from St Brigid's.	D	On Site Spring 2014
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase II)	Refurbishment of existing classrooms and new PE facilities (phase 2).	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
St Mary's Grammar Magherafelt	Extension and refurbishment.	D	Final Design Approved- Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints

Project	Description	Estimated Value of Projects	Comments
Dalriada Ballymoney	New multi-purpose hall and multi-purpose hall and stage.	C	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Donard Special Banbridge	Classroom extension and to replace current temporary accommodation.	B	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Millington Primary Craigavon	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	D	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
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Sacred Heart Grammar Newry	Refurbishment of nine science classrooms.	B	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
The Armstrong Primary Armagh	Extension and Refurbishment of Existing School Building.	C	Final Design Approved-Construction Delayed due to Budget Constraints
Sullivan Upper Holywood	Sports Accommodation and Astro turf Hockey Pitch.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
IC Dungannon	Sports Hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Bernard's Primary Newtownabbey	Refurbishment and two new blocks.	A	Stage 3 awaited
Broadbridge Primary Eglinton	Replace mobiles with new block.	C	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
St Louis Grammar Ballymena	Refurbishment of an extension of existing Convent building to provide Creative and Expression Arts Facility.	D	Stage 3 awaited
Anahorish Primary Antrim	Replace mobiles/ canteen and multi-purpose hall.	B	Stage 3 awaited
Killean Primary Newry	New build accommodation and refurbishment work to main building and site works.	B	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
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Methodist College Belfast	Refurbishment of McArthur Hall.	D	Stage 3 awaited
De La Salle College Belfast	Outdoor Pitch	A	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
Strandtown Primary Belfast	Accommodation extension.	D	Board continuing to progress the detailed design
St Malachy's College Belfast (Phase II)	Enhancement works to existing building and urgent Health and Safety issues	D	Stage 2 Design Submitted Under Review
New Bridge IC Banbridge	Replacement of 8 temporary classrooms with new permanent building and new Sports Hall and Sports Pitches	D	Stage 2 awaited
Our Lady's Grammar Newry	Technology block extension and re development of current technology block into ICT block and 6th form	D	Awaiting Stage 1
Malone IC Belfast	New sports facilities to include 3G pitch	C	Awaiting Stage 2
Erne IC Enniskillen (Phase II)	Replacement of deteriorating temporary accommodation with permanent or semi-permanent building, refurbishment of existing building and construction of standalone sports hall.	D	Stage 3 Design Submitted Under Review
Slemish College Ballymena	Expansion and new sports hall.	D	Awaiting Stage 1

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Education whether any bodies within the education sector have registered an interest in acquiring the site of the former Lisnaskea High School.

(AQW 43249/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Western Education and Library Board (WELB) has advised that, to date, two bodies within the education sector have expressed interest in acquiring the site of the former Lisnaskea High School.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how he intends to achieve savings of £1.4m in the Safeguarding and Behaviour Support budget.

(AQW 43253/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I will be making £12m of earmarked funding available to the Education Authority (EA) for Safeguarding and Behaviour Support in the 2015/16 financial year. This is a very sizeable budget over and above the Authority's core budget.

It is not planned that any services in this area will be removed, however, the Department has identified areas where new work will be deferred and others where we believe there is scope for administrative savings to be made.

Ultimately it will be a decision for the EA where the savings are made or whether additional resources for safeguarding and behaviour support can be found elsewhere in its budget.

As with all other aspects of the education budget, we must consider how we effectively meet these needs with less money.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education he intends to achieve a 9 per cent reduction to his departmental administration costs.

(AQW 43255/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is looking at ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs in non-staffing areas of the administration budget. However, it will not be possible to make the level of savings required without effecting a reduction in the staff complement. It is anticipated that this will be achieved through the release of staff under the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the ability of schools to be fully compliant with the Entitlement Framework targets in light of the £2m reduction in funding to the programme.

(AQW 43256/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The additional Entitlement Framework funding that I have provided was never intended as a permanent funding stream, but as a contribution to the costs associated with developing a broad and balanced curricular offer at Key Stage 4 and post-16. To further support schools I phased in the requirements of the Entitlement Framework over three years.

Schools have been aware for some time that this funding would reduce; indeed it was due to finish by April 2014. However I extended it and, despite the pressures on my education budget, I have allocated a sizeable element of funding – £4.9m - in the 2015/16 financial year to continue to support schools in delivering the Entitlement Framework requirements. Schools receive a core budget to pay for a range of matters including the curriculum, of which the Entitlement Framework is part.

All pupils, no matter what school they attend or where they live, are entitled to receive a high quality education with access to a broad and balanced curriculum to enable them to reach their full potential.

Compliance with the Entitlement Framework is not optional for schools it is a statutory duty to which all schools must comply.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to give the rationale for the £800,000 increase in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment budget.

(AQW 43257/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As part of the 2015-16 Final Budget outcome for Education, CCEA's non ring-fenced core Resource budget will reduce from £22.1million in 2014-15 to £19.7million in 2015-16, a reduction of approximately 11%.

In addition, I have agreed to allocate £3.2m in 2015-16 to address a specific and inescapable pressure, namely the Revision of GCSE and A/AS Level specifications. These are key qualifications for our pupils and it is important that, in line with other awarding organisations, CCEA specifications are revised to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of learners and have currency with other users, particularly further and higher education and employers.

I have no doubt that the budget represents a significant challenge to CCEA in terms of its structure and services.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 42292/11-15, to provide the figures for Notice in Lieu post primary pupils, as compiled by the NI Schools Census for the corresponding timeframe.

(AQW 43259/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Numbers of Notes in Lieu issued are not collected as part of the Annual School Census. The Education and Library Boards have, however, advised that the number of post primary pupils issued with Notes in Lieu during the period 1 September 2014 to 28 February 2015 was as follows:

BELB	6
NEELB	11
SEELB	0
SELB	0
WELB	*

* denotes fewer than 5 pupils suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to list the locations of the school crossing patrols, in the South Eastern Education and Library Board, that have been withdrawn since 2006.

(AQW 43266/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board have provided the following list which shows the location of school crossing patrols that have been withdrawn since 2006:

- Academy Primary School, Saintfield
- Alexander Dickson Primary School, Ballygowan
- Ballymacash Primary School, Lisburn
- Bangor Central Primary School, Bangor
- Braniel Primary School, Belfast
- Brooklands Primary School, Dundonald
- Brownlee Primary School, Lisburn
- Carr Primary School, Lisburn
- Carryduff Primary School, Belfast
- Convent of Mercy Primary School, Downpatrick
- Dundonald Primary School, Belfast
- Forthill Primary School, Lisburn
- Gilnahirk Primary School, Belfast
- Groomsport Primary School
- Harmony Hill Primary School, Lisburn
- Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor
- Leadhill Primary School, Belfast
- Londonderry Primary School, Newtownards
- Millisle Primary School
- Moneyrea Primary School
- Movilla High School, Newtownards
- Newtownards Model Primary School, Newtownards
- Old Warren Primary School, Lisburn
- Pond Park Primary School, Lisburn
- Rathmore Primary School, Bangor
- Spa Primary School, Ballynahinch

- St Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick
- St Josephs Primary School, Strangford
- St Malachy's Primary School, Castlewellan
- St Patrick's Boys Primary School, Downpatrick
- Tullycarnet Primary School, Belfast

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how often Special Educational Needs inspections are carried out in mainstream (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 43268/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Training Inspectorate inspect special education needs as part of all mainstream primary and post-primary inspections in the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB). By the end of the current academic year all post-primary schools (100%) and almost all primary schools (93%) in the SEELB will have been inspected within seven years of their last inspection (or follow-up inspection).

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Education whether administrative staff in schools who will be offered voluntary redundancy under the forthcoming Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) will have the same monetary value as the VES being applied to Civil Servants.

(AQW 43287/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The scheme for managing school based non-teaching redundancies in 2015/16 issued on 25 February 2015.

Under the current scheme, the contractual position of non-teaching staff is an entitlement to receive redundancy compensation of one month's pay for every full year of continuous service up to a maximum of two years (i.e. a maximum of 24 months' pay or 104 weeks pay).

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education when recipients of the Early Years Fund will be notified of funding allocation for 2015/16.[R]

(AQW 43347/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My officials have met with the Fund Administrator, Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO), and asked them to contact groups with urgency to advise them of the position for 2015/16.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education how many employees are likely to be impacted by changes to Early Years funded projects in East Londonderry.[R]

(AQW 43348/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Early Years – the Organisation for Young People (which administers the Fund on DE's behalf) advises that 19 posts have been funded and a further six posts part funded by the DE Early Years Fund, within groups in East Derry in 2014/15.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education what communication his Department have had with Early Years funded projects, in respect of changes to the fund, including when this communication took place.[R]

(AQW 43349/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) administers the DE Early Years Fund on DE's behalf under an annual Service Level Agreement. Following the final decisions on the DE budget, the Department is advised that EYO contacted the recipients of the Fund on 4th March to notify them of changes to the Fund.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education how a reduction of the Early Years Fund would impact upon the most disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland.[R]

(AQW 43350/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: During 2014/15 there were 153 recipients of the DE Early Years Fund. The Fund was established to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended; and to support of a number of Capacity and Development posts aimed at enhancing quality and good governance within the early childhood sector.

The Fund is effectively "closed" as applications are generally only accepted from previous recipients to the Fund.

Following a reduction of £2m the residual Fund will have a value of £941k in 2015/16. This will enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the outcomes of Early Years funded projects in East Londonderry.[R]

(AQW 43351/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund is effectively "closed" as applications are generally only accepted from previous recipients to the Fund.

To continue to receive funding, groups must demonstrate that they:

- Provide direct early years care and education to children.
- Provide a service in areas of low provision, disadvantaged areas or where the service is considered critical for children
- Ensure inclusion and diversity
- Ensure a standard of excellence in relation to quality.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of staff involved in the delivery of the Primary Languages Programme and the nature of their employment.

(AQW 43364/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 86 tutors working in schools. These members of staff are peripatetic language tutors who are employed from a register as and when schools and the programme require them. They are employed on an hourly basis working up to two hours per week in schools (or up to three hours if the school has more than 600 pupils) for not more than 10 weeks per term. There are a further 21 tutors who are on the register but have either never been used or have not been used this year for a variety of reasons.

There are also Education & Library Board members of staff who work on the day-to-day running of the programme.

The table below shows the breakdown of schools by sector/management type (as of March 2015, there were 419 schools with a tutor. The remaining schools have either temporarily withdrawn; the school has since closed; or there is no tutor available):

Sector/Management Type	Number of Schools
Controlled	196
Controlled Integrated	6
Grant Maintained Integrated	15
Irish-medium	11
Other Maintained	2
Roman Catholic Maintained	248
Voluntary	2
Total	480

The languages offered by the programme are Spanish, Irish and Polish.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of schools, by sector and management type, involved in the delivery of the Primary Languages Programme.

(AQW 43365/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 86 tutors working in schools. These members of staff are peripatetic language tutors who are employed from a register as and when schools and the programme require them. They are employed on an hourly basis working up to two hours per week in schools (or up to three hours if the school has more than 600 pupils) for not more than 10 weeks per term. There are a further 21 tutors who are on the register but have either never been used or have not been used this year for a variety of reasons.

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Roman Catholic Maintained	248
Voluntary	2

Sector/Management Type	Number of Schools
Total	480

The languages offered by the programme are Spanish, Irish and Polish.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to list the languages offered by the Primary Languages Programme.
(AQW 43366/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 86 tutors working in schools. These members of staff are peripatetic language tutors who are employed from a register as and when schools and the programme require them. They are employed on an hourly basis working up to two hours per week in schools (or up to three hours if the school has more than 600 pupils) for not more than 10 weeks per term. There are a further 21 tutors who are on the register but have either never been used or have not been used this year for a variety of reasons.

There are also Education & Library Board members of staff who work on the day-to-day running of the programme.

The table below shows the breakdown of schools by sector/management type (as of March 2015, there were 419 schools with a tutor. The remaining schools have either temporarily withdrawn; the school has since closed; or there is no tutor available):

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Irish-medium	11
Other Maintained	2
Roman Catholic Maintained	248
Voluntary	2
Total	480

The languages offered by the programme are Spanish, Irish and Polish.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of administrative staff in the Youth Council who will be affected by the £800k reduction in the budget.
(AQW 43367/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Decisions on the allocation of the Youth Council's budget, including provision for administrative staff, are an operational matter for the Youth Council.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to estimate the numbers and category of non-teaching staff who will be made redundant as a result of his budget announcement.
(AQW 43368/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is estimated that 1,000 non-teaching staff will be made redundant. However it is for individual employers to determine their staffing requirements for the academic year 2015/16 and it is not possible at this stage to determine the category of staff that will be made redundant.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education to detail the planned expenditure on school capital projects in Mid Ulster for the 2015/16 financial year.
(AQW 43412/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 4 SEP projects in Mid Ulster. Phase 1 of the scheme for Rainey Endowed and the scheme for St Joseph's Grammar School, Donnaghmore, have been approved to move to construction. The Scheme for St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt is ready to move to tender for construction but the scheme has been delayed due to the reduced capital budget for FY 2015/16. Work will continue to complete the final designs for Anahorish Primary School at which point it will be prioritised on the basis of the date the design is approved and signed off by the Department.

Project	Estimated Expenditure 2015/16
Rainey Endowed Cookstown (Phase I)	£994k
St Joseph's Grammar School Donnaghmore	£2.36m

Project	Estimated Expenditure 2015/16
St Mary's Grammar School Magherafelt	£22k
Anahorish Primary School Antrim	£20k

There are currently 3 major works capital school projects in Mid Ulster, all these schools are in the early stages of planning and it is anticipated there will be no significant expenditure in 2015/16.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Education how many Early Years Projects will have their funding stopped from 31 March 2015. (AQW 43444/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: None of the recipient groups of the DE Early Years Fund will have funding cut from 31 March 2015.

The budget for the Fund, which is administered by Early Years the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) has been reduced by £2m in 2015/16. The residual 2015/16 Fund will enable all (153) recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

The current recipients of the DE Early Years Fund are:

Group Name	Location
174 Trust Pre-School	Belfast
Acorn Women's Group	Augher
Aghadowey Pre-School Playgroup	Coleraine
An Droichead	Belfast
Appletree Childcare	Coleraine
Ardstraw Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Armoy Cross Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Ashgrove Pre - School Playgroup	Portadown
Ashton Childcare	Belfast
Atlas Creche	Lisburn
Atticall Playgroup	Kilkeel
Ballinascreen Early Years Pre-Sch Education Centre	Draperstown
Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup	Derry
Ballykinlar Cross Community Pre School Ltd	Downpatrick
Ballymacarrett Youth and Community Project	Belfast
Banagher Community Playgroup	Derry
Barnardos BME	Belfast
Barnardos Forward Steps	Belfast
Barnardos Travellers Pre-School	Belfast
BCDA	Belfast
Beacon Playgroup	Cookstown
Bees Nees Early Years Centre	Newtownards
Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid	Belfast
Benburb Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Blackie Creche	Belfast
Bloomfield Playgroup	Belfast
Bunnahone Bunnies Playgroup	Derrygonnelly

Group Name	Location
Buttonmoon Playgroup	Tandragee
Carebears Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Carryduff Pre School Playgroup	Belfast
Castlerock Community Playgroup	Castlerock
Caw Community Playgroup	Derry
Chirpy Chicks Playgroup	Greyabbey
Chrysalis Women's Centre	Craigavon
Clady Tiny Tots	Clady
Clough & District Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Cloughmills Early Years	Cloughmills
Crows Nest Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Dara Playgroup	Armagh
Derry Well Woman Creche	Derry
Derrytrasna Playgroup	Craigavon
Dervock Playgroup	Ballymoney
Drumellan Community Association	Craigavon
Drumsum Parent and Toddler	Limavady
Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup	Dundrum
Dunloy Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Dunnaman Childrens Centre	Kilkeel
Earlybird Playgroup	Armagh
Falls Women's Centre	Belfast
First Steps Community Playgroup (PM Session)	Castlederg
First Steps Day Care Project	Castlederg
First Steps Playgroup	Belfast
Forthspring Afterschools	Belfast
Foyle Downs Syndrome Trust	Derry
Gingerbread Lone Parent Services	Derry
Glenarm Community Pre School	Glenarm
Greengables Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Grove Community Playgroup	Lisburn
Hansel and Gretal Pre School	Glynn
Happy Days Playgroup	Newry
Harbour Bears Pre-School Playgroup	Larne
Harpurs Hill Community Early Years	Coleraine
Hillside Pre School Playgroup	Newtownabbey
Hobby Horse Playgroup	Belfast
Holy Cross Pre School	Belfast
Holy Trinity Centre	Belfast
Ionad Uibh Eachach	Belfast
Kiddies Castle Early Years	Castledawson

Group Name	Location
Kids Korner	Larne
Kids R Us Cross Community	Fivemiletown
Kidzone Playgroup (Newry)	Newry
Kilkeel Community Association	Kilkeel
Killean Playgroup	Newry
Killen Parent and Toddler	Castlederg
Killyleagh Early Years P & T	Killyleagh
Killyman Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Kingdom Playgroup	Kilkeel
Krafty Kids (Ogras)	Coalisland
Ladybird Playgroup	Omagh
Laurencetown Playgroup	Laurencetown
Leitrim Community Playgroup	Castlewellan
Lifestart Limavady	Limavady
Ligoniel Family Centre	Belfast
Little Acorns Playgroup Derrynoose	Derrynoose
Little Amps Playgroup	Maghera
Little Castles Playgroup	Lisnaskea
Little Diamonds Community Playgroup	Claudy
Little Doves Childcare Centre	Newtownards
Little Folk Playgroup	Rostrevor
Little Oaks Pre-School Playgroup	Craigavon
Little People Playgroup	Newry
Little Rainbows PG	Maghera
Little Rascals Community Playgroup	Limavady
Little Villagers Playgroup	Loughilly
Loughgiel Community PG	Loughgiel
Lower Oldpark Community Association	Belfast
Macosquin Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Magherafelt Womens Group (Kidz Lodge)	Magherafelt
Magic Roundabout Playgroup	Omagh
Magilligan Community Playgroup	Limavady
Monkstown Community School Playgroup	Monkstown
Mother Goose Community Playgroup	Ballycastle
Naiscoil an Chreagain	Silverbridge
Naiscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	Belfast
Naiscoil Ard Eoin	Belfast
Naiscoil Charn Tochair	Maghera
Naiscoil Dhun Padraig	Downpatrick
Naiscoil Mhachaire Ratha	Maghera
Newhill First Steps Childcare Centre	Belfast

Group Name	Location
NICMA	Newtownards
O'Fiaich Playgroup	Armagh
Old Warren Community Association	Lisburn
Omagh Early Years Centre	Omagh
Orana Nursery	Newry
Orchard Community Playgroup	Limavady
Parish of Nativity Playgroup, Poleglass	Belfast
Pomeroy Pre School Playgroup	Dungannon
Portaferry Playgroup	Newtownards
Portrush Community Pre-School Playgroup	Portrush
Poyntzpass Community Playgroup	Poyntzpass
Rainbow Child and Family Centre (WHSSB)	Derry
Rainbow Community Playgroup	Omagh
Rainbow Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Rasharkin Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Roden Street Development Group	Belfast
Scoil na Fuisseoige	Dunmurray
Shalom House Creche	Belfast
Shankill Women's Centre	Belfast
Slievegallion Community Playgroup	Magherafelt
Smart Attack Childcare Services	Omagh
St Teresa's Youth Centre	Belfast
Stepping Stones Playgroup	Maghera
Stepping Stones Pre School Nursery	Newtownabbey
Stewartstown Tiny Tots	Stewartstown
Straidarran Community Playgroup	Claudy
Strangford Parent and Toddler	Strangford
Sugar and Spice Playgroup	Drumquin
Sunflower Early Years Group	Fintona
Taghnevan Pre School Playgroup	Lurgan
Taylorstown Cross Community Complex	Toomebridge
The Cedar Foundation	Derry
The Firs Playgroup	Armagh
The Orchard Playgroup	Loughgall
Tiny Steps Creche	Cookstown
Tiny Toons Playgroup	Ballyhoran
Tiny Tots Community Playgroup	Strathfoyle
Tiny Tots Corner Playgroup	Killylea
Tober Tinys Playgroup	Tobermore
Upper Andersonstown Comm. Forums Daycare Facility	Belfast
West Bann Development (Dev Worker)	Coleraine

Group Name	Location
Whiterock Creche Centre	Belfast
Windsor Women's Centre	Belfast
Zero-8-Teen	Brownlow

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Education how much will be saved by the cuts in Early Years funding in the financial year 2015/16.

(AQW 43445/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: None of the recipient groups of the DE Early Years Fund will have funding cut from 31 March 2015.

The budget for the Fund, which is administered by Early Years the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) has been reduced by £2m in 2015/16. The residual 2015/16 Fund will enable all (153) recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

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Armoy Cross Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Ashgrove Pre - School Playgroup	Portadown
Ashton Childcare	Belfast
Atlas Creche	Lisburn
Atticall Playgroup	Kilkeel
Ballinascreen Early Years Pre-Sch Education Centre	Draperstown
Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup	Derry
Ballykinlar Cross Community Pre School Ltd	Downpatrick
Ballymacarrett Youth and Community Project	Belfast
Banagher Community Playgroup	Derry
Barnardos BME	Belfast
Barnardos Forward Steps	Belfast
Barnardos Travellers Pre-School	Belfast
BCDA	Belfast
Beacon Playgroup	Cookstown
Bees Nees Early Years Centre	Newtownards
Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid	Belfast
Benburb Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Blackie Creche	Belfast
Bloomfield Playgroup	Belfast
Bunnahone Bunnies Playgroup	Derrygonnelly
Buttonmoon Playgroup	Tandragee

Group Name	Location
Carebears Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Carryduff Pre School Playgroup	Belfast
Castlerock Community Playgroup	Castlerock
Caw Community Playgroup	Derry
Chirpy Chicks Playgroup	Greyabbey
Chrysalis Women's Centre	Craigavon
Clady Tiny Tots	Clady
Clough & District Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Cloughmills Early Years	Cloughmills
Crows Nest Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Dara Playgroup	Armagh
Derry Well Woman Creche	Derry
Derrytrasna Playgroup	Craigavon
Dervock Playgroup	Ballymoney
Drumellan Community Association	Craigavon
Drumsurn Parent and Toddler	Limavady
Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup	Dundrum
Dunloy Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Dunnaman Childrens Centre	Kilkeel
Earlybird Playgroup	Armagh
Falls Women's Centre	Belfast
First Steps Community Playgroup (PM Session)	Castlederg
First Steps Day Care Project	Castlederg
First Steps Playgroup	Belfast
Forthspring Afterschools	Belfast
Foyle Downs Syndrome Trust	Derry
Gingerbread Lone Parent Services	Derry
Glenarm Community Pre School	Glenarm
Greengables Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Grove Community Playgroup	Lisburn
Hansel and Gretal Pre School	Glynn
Happy Days Playgroup	Newry
Harbour Bears Pre-School Playgroup	Larne
Harpurs Hill Community Early Years	Coleraine
Hillside Pre School Playgroup	Newtownabbey
Hobby Horse Playgroup	Belfast
Holy Cross Pre School	Belfast
Holy Trinity Centre	Belfast
Ionad Uibh Eachach	Belfast
Kiddies Castle Early Years	Castledawson
Kids Korner	Larne

Group Name	Location
Kids R Us Cross Community	Fivemiletown
Kidzone Playgroup (Newry)	Newry
Kilkeel Community Association	Kilkeel
Killean Playgroup	Newry
Killen Parent and Toddler	Castlederg
Killyleagh Early Years P & T	Killyleagh
Killyman Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Kingdom Playgroup	Kilkeel
Krafty Kids (Ogras)	Coalisland
Ladybird Playgroup	Omagh
Laurencetown Playgroup	Laurencetown
Leitrim Community Playgroup	Castlewellan
Lifestart Limavady	Limavady
Ligoniel Family Centre	Belfast
Little Acorns Playgroup Derrynoose	Derrynoose
Little Amps Playgroup	Maghera
Little Castles Playgroup	Lisnaskea
Little Diamonds Community Playgroup	Claudy
Little Doves Childcare Centre	Newtownards
Little Folk Playgroup	Rostrevor
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Little People Playgroup	Newry
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Little Villagers Playgroup	Loughilly
Loughgiel Community PG	Loughgiel
Lower Oldpark Community Association	Belfast
Macosquin Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Magherafelt Womens Group (Kidz Lodge)	Magherafelt
Magic Roundabout Playgroup	Omagh
Magilligan Community Playgroup	Limavady
Monkstown Community School Playgroup	Monkstown
Mother Goose Community Playgroup	Ballycastle
Naiscoil an Chreagain	Silverbridge
Naiscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	Belfast
Naiscoil Ard Eoin	Belfast
Naiscoil Charn Tochair	Maghera
Naiscoil Dhun Padraig	Downpatrick
Naiscoil Mhachaire Ratha	Maghera
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Orana Nursery	Newry
Orchard Community Playgroup	Limavady
Parish of Nativity Playgroup, Poleglass	Belfast
Pomeroy Pre School Playgroup	Dungannon
Portaferry Playgroup	Newtownards
Portrush Community Pre-School Playgroup	Portrush
Poyntzpass Community Playgroup	Poyntzpass
Rainbow Child and Family Centre (WHSSB)	Derry
Rainbow Community Playgroup	Omagh
Rainbow Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Rasharkin Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Roden Street Development Group	Belfast
Scoil na Fuisseoige	Dunmurray
Shalom House Creche	Belfast
Shankill Women's Centre	Belfast
Slievegallion Community Playgroup	Magherafelt
Smart Attack Childcare Services	Omagh
St Teresa's Youth Centre	Belfast
Stepping Stones Playgroup	Maghera
Stepping Stones Pre School Nursery	Newtownabbey
Stewartstown Tiny Tots	Stewartstown
Straidarran Community Playgroup	Claudy
Strangford Parent and Toddler	Strangford
Sugar and Spice Playgroup	Drumquin
Sunflower Early Years Group	Fintona
Taghnevan Pre School Playgroup	Lurgan
Taylorstown Cross Community Complex	Toomebridge
The Cedar Foundation	Derry
The Firs Playgroup	Armagh
The Orchard Playgroup	Loughgall
Tiny Steps Creche	Cookstown
Tiny Toons Playgroup	Ballyhoran
Tiny Tots Community Playgroup	Strathfoyle
Tiny Tots Corner Playgroup	Killylea
Tober Tinys Playgroup	Tobermore
Upper Andersonstown Comm. Forums Daycare Facility	Belfast
West Bann Development (Dev Worker)	Coleraine
Whiterock Creche Centre	Belfast

Group Name	Location
Windsor Women's Centre	Belfast
Zero-8-Teen	Brownlow

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Education how many Early Years Projects will continue to be funded in 2015/16. (AQW 43446/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: None of the recipient groups of the DE Early Years Fund will have funding cut from 31 March 2015.

The budget for the Fund, which is administered by Early Years the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) has been reduced by £2m in 2015/16. The residual 2015/16 Fund will enable all (153) recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

The current recipients of the DE Early Years Fund are:

Group Name	Location
174 Trust Pre-School	Belfast
Acorn Women's Group	Augher
Aghadowey Pre-School Playgroup	Coleraine
An Droichead	Belfast
Appletree Childcare	Coleraine
Ardstraw Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Armoy Cross Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Ashgrove Pre - School Playgroup	Portadown
Ashton Childcare	Belfast
Atlas Creche	Lisburn
Atticall Playgroup	Kilkeel
Ballinascreen Early Years Pre-Sch Education Centre	Draperstown
Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup	Derry
Ballykinlar Cross Community Pre School Ltd	Downpatrick
Ballymacarrett Youth and Community Project	Belfast
Banagher Community Playgroup	Derry
Barnardos BME	Belfast
Barnardos Forward Steps	Belfast
Barnardos Travellers Pre-School	Belfast
BCDA	Belfast
Beacon Playgroup	Cookstown
Bees Nees Early Years Centre	Newtownards
Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid	Belfast
Benburb Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Blackie Creche	Belfast
Bloomfield Playgroup	Belfast
Bunnahone Bunnies Playgroup	Derrygonnelly
Buttonmoon Playgroup	Tandragee
Carebears Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Carryduff Pre School Playgroup	Belfast

Group Name	Location
Castlerock Community Playgroup	Castlerock
Caw Community Playgroup	Derry
Chirpy Chicks Playgroup	Greyabbey
Chrysalis Women's Centre	Craigavon
Clady Tiny Tots	Clady
Clough & District Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Cloughmills Early Years	Cloughmills
Crows Nest Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Dara Playgroup	Armagh
Derry Well Woman Creche	Derry
Derrytrasna Playgroup	Craigavon
Dervock Playgroup	Ballymoney
Drumellan Community Association	Craigavon
Drumsurn Parent and Toddler	Limavady
Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup	Dundrum
Dunloy Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Dunnaman Childrens Centre	Kilkeel
Earlybird Playgroup	Armagh
Falls Women's Centre	Belfast
First Steps Community Playgroup (PM Session)	Castlederg
First Steps Day Care Project	Castlederg
First Steps Playgroup	Belfast
Forthspring Afterschools	Belfast
Foyle Downs Syndrome Trust	Derry
Gingerbread Lone Parent Services	Derry
Glenarm Community Pre School	Glenarm
Greengables Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Grove Community Playgroup	Lisburn
Hansel and Gretal Pre School	Glynn
Happy Days Playgroup	Newry
Harbour Bears Pre-School Playgroup	Larne
Harpurs Hill Community Early Years	Coleraine
Hillside Pre School Playgroup	Newtownabbey
Hobby Horse Playgroup	Belfast
Holy Cross Pre School	Belfast
Holy Trinity Centre	Belfast
Ionad Uibh Eachach	Belfast
Kiddies Castle Early Years	Castledawson
Kids Korner	Larne
Kids R Us Cross Community	Fivemiletown
Kidzone Playgroup (Newry)	Newry

Group Name	Location
Kilkeel Community Association	Kilkeel
Killean Playgroup	Newry
Killen Parent and Toddler	Castlederg
Killyleagh Early Years P & T	Killyleagh
Killyman Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Kingdom Playgroup	Kilkeel
Krafty Kids (Ogras)	Coalisland
Ladybird Playgroup	Omagh
Laurencetown Playgroup	Laurencetown
Leitrim Community Playgroup	Castlewellan
Lifestart Limavady	Limavady
Ligoniel Family Centre	Belfast
Little Acorns Playgroup Derrynoose	Derrynoose
Little Amps Playgroup	Maghera
Little Castles Playgroup	Lisnaskea
Little Diamonds Community Playgroup	Claudy
Little Doves Childcare Centre	Newtownards
Little Folk Playgroup	Rostrevor
Little Oaks Pre-School Playgroup	Craigavon
Little People Playgroup	Newry
Little Rainbows PG	Maghera
Little Rascals Community Playgroup	Limavady
Little Villagers Playgroup	Loughilly
Loughgiel Community PG	Loughgiel
Lower Oldpark Community Association	Belfast
Macosquin Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Magherafelt Womens Group (Kidz Lodge)	Magherafelt
Magic Roundabout Playgroup	Omagh
Magilligan Community Playgroup	Limavady
Monkstown Community School Playgroup	Monkstown
Mother Goose Community Playgroup	Ballycastle
Naiscoil an Chreagain	Silverbridge
Naiscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	Belfast
Naiscoil Ard Eoin	Belfast
Naiscoil Charn Tochair	Maghera
Naiscoil Dhun Padraig	Downpatrick
Naiscoil Mhachaire Ratha	Maghera
Newhill First Steps Childcare Centre	Belfast
NICMA	Newtownards
O'Fiaich Playgroup	Armagh
Old Warren Community Association	Lisburn

Group Name	Location
Omagh Early Years Centre	Omagh
Orana Nursery	Newry
Orchard Community Playgroup	Limavady
Parish of Nativity Playgroup, Poleglass	Belfast
Pomeroy Pre School Playgroup	Dungannon
Portaferry Playgroup	Newtownards
Portrush Community Pre-School Playgroup	Portrush
Poyntzpass Community Playgroup	Poyntzpass
Rainbow Child and Family Centre (WHSSB)	Derry
Rainbow Community Playgroup	Omagh
Rainbow Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Rasharkin Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Roden Street Development Group	Belfast
Scoil na Fuiseoige	Dunmurray
Shalom House Creche	Belfast
Shankill Women's Centre	Belfast
Slievegallion Community Playgroup	Magherafelt
Smart Attack Childcare Services	Omagh
St Teresa's Youth Centre	Belfast
Stepping Stones Playgroup	Maghera
Stepping Stones Pre School Nursery	Newtownabbey
Stewartstown Tiny Tots	Stewartstown
Straidarran Community Playgroup	Claudy
Strangford Parent and Toddler	Strangford
Sugar and Spice Playgroup	Drumquin
Sunflower Early Years Group	Fintona
Taghnevan Pre School Playgroup	Lurgan
Taylorstown Cross Community Complex	Toomebridge
The Cedar Foundation	Derry
The Firs Playgroup	Armagh
The Orchard Playgroup	Loughgall
Tiny Steps Creche	Cookstown
Tiny Toons Playgroup	Ballyhoran
Tiny Tots Community Playgroup	Strathfoyle
Tiny Tots Corner Playgroup	Killylea
Tober Tinys Playgroup	Tobermore
Upper Andersonstown Comm. Forums Daycare Facility	Belfast
West Bann Development (Dev Worker)	Coleraine
Whiterock Creche Centre	Belfast
Windsor Women's Centre	Belfast
Zero-8-Teen	Brownlow

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Education to list all of the Early Years funding projects, and their location, that will have their funding cut from 31 March 2015.

(AQW 43447/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: None of the recipient groups of the DE Early Years Fund will have funding cut from 31 March 2015.

The budget for the Fund, which is administered by Early Years the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) has been reduced by £2m in 2015/16. The residual 2015/16 Fund will enable all (153) recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

The current recipients of the DE Early Years Fund are:

Group Name	Location
174 Trust Pre-School	Belfast
Acorn Women's Group	Augher
Aghadowey Pre-School Playgroup	Coleraine
An Droichead	Belfast
Appletree Childcare	Coleraine
Ardstraw Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Armoy Cross Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Ashgrove Pre - School Playgroup	Portadown
Ashton Childcare	Belfast
Atlas Creche	Lisburn
Atticall Playgroup	Kilkeel
Ballinascreen Early Years Pre-Sch Education Centre	Draperstown
Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup	Derry
Ballykinlar Cross Community Pre School Ltd	Downpatrick
Ballymacarrett Youth and Community Project	Belfast
Banagher Community Playgroup	Derry
Barnardos BME	Belfast
Barnardos Forward Steps	Belfast
Barnardos Travellers Pre-School	Belfast
BCDA	Belfast
Beacon Playgroup	Cookstown
Bees Nees Early Years Centre	Newtownards
Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid	Belfast
Benburb Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Blackie Creche	Belfast
Bloomfield Playgroup	Belfast
Bunnahone Bunnies Playgroup	Derrygonnelly
Buttonmoon Playgroup	Tandragee
Carebears Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Carryduff Pre School Playgroup	Belfast
Castlerock Community Playgroup	Castlerock
Caw Community Playgroup	Derry
Chirpy Chicks Playgroup	Greyabbey

Group Name	Location
Chrysalis Women's Centre	Craigavon
Clady Tiny Tots	Clady
Clough & District Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Cloughmills Early Years	Cloughmills
Crows Nest Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Dara Playgroup	Armagh
Derry Well Woman Creche	Derry
Derrytrasna Playgroup	Craigavon
Dervock Playgroup	Ballymoney
Drumellan Community Association	Craigavon
Drumsurn Parent and Toddler	Limavady
Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup	Dundrum
Dunloy Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Dunnaman Childrens Centre	Kilkeel
Earlybird Playgroup	Armagh
Falls Women's Centre	Belfast
First Steps Community Playgroup (PM Session)	Castledearg
First Steps Day Care Project	Castledearg
First Steps Playgroup	Belfast
Forthspring Afterschools	Belfast
Foyle Downs Syndrome Trust	Derry
Gingerbread Lone Parent Services	Derry
Glenarm Community Pre School	Glenarm
Greengables Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Grove Community Playgroup	Lisburn
Hansel and Gretal Pre School	Glynn
Happy Days Playgroup	Newry
Harbour Bears Pre-School Playgroup	Larne
Harpurs Hill Community Early Years	Coleraine
Hillside Pre School Playgroup	Newtownabbey
Hobby Horse Playgroup	Belfast
Holy Cross Pre School	Belfast
Holy Trinity Centre	Belfast
Ionad Uibh Eachach	Belfast
Kiddies Castle Early Years	Castledawson
Kids Korner	Larne
Kids R Us Cross Community	Fivemiletown
Kidzone Playgroup (Newry)	Newry
Kilkeel Community Association	Kilkeel
Killeen Playgroup	Newry
Killen Parent and Toddler	Castledearg

Group Name	Location
Killyleagh Early Years P & T	Killyleagh
Killyman Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Kingdom Playgroup	Kilkeel
Krafty Kids (Ogras)	Coalisland
Ladybird Playgroup	Omagh
Laurencetown Playgroup	Laurencetown
Leitrim Community Playgroup	Castlewellan
Lifestart Limavady	Limavady
Ligoniel Family Centre	Belfast
Little Acorns Playgroup Derrynoose	Derrynoose
Little Amps Playgroup	Maghera
Little Castles Playgroup	Lisnaskea
Little Diamonds Community Playgroup	Claudy
Little Doves Childcare Centre	Newtownards
Little Folk Playgroup	Rostrevor
Little Oaks Pre-School Playgroup	Craigavon
Little People Playgroup	Newry
Little Rainbows PG	Maghera
Little Rascals Community Playgroup	Limavady
Little Villagers Playgroup	Loughilly
Loughgiel Community PG	Loughgiel
Lower Oldpark Community Association	Belfast
Macosquin Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Magherafelt Womens Group (Kidz Lodge)	Magherafelt
Magic Roundabout Playgroup	Omagh
Magilligan Community Playgroup	Limavady
Monkstown Community School Playgroup	Monkstown
Mother Goose Community Playgroup	Ballycastle
Naiscoil an Chreagain	Silverbridge
Naiscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	Belfast
Naiscoil Ard Eoin	Belfast
Naiscoil Charn Tochair	Maghera
Naiscoil Dhun Padraig	Downpatrick
Naiscoil Mhachaire Ratha	Maghera
Newhill First Steps Childcare Centre	Belfast
NICMA	Newtownards
O'Fiaich Playgroup	Armagh
Old Warren Community Association	Lisburn
Omagh Early Years Centre	Omagh
Orana Nursery	Newry
Orchard Community Playgroup	Limavady

Group Name	Location
Parish of Nativity Playgroup, Poleglass	Belfast
Pomeroy Pre School Playgroup	Dungannon
Portaferry Playgroup	Newtownards
Portrush Community Pre-School Playgroup	Portrush
Poyntzpass Community Playgroup	Poyntzpass
Rainbow Child and Family Centre (WHSSB)	Derry
Rainbow Community Playgroup	Omagh
Rainbow Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Rasharkin Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Roden Street Development Group	Belfast
Scoil na Fuisseoige	Dunmurray
Shalom House Creche	Belfast
Shankill Women's Centre	Belfast
Slievegallion Community Playgroup	Magherafelt
Smart Attack Childcare Services	Omagh
St Teresa's Youth Centre	Belfast
Stepping Stones Playgroup	Maghera
Stepping Stones Pre School Nursery	Newtownabbey
Stewartstown Tiny Tots	Stewartstown
Straidarran Community Playgroup	Claudy
Strangford Parent and Toddler	Strangford
Sugar and Spice Playgroup	Drumquin
Sunflower Early Years Group	Fintona
Taghnevan Pre School Playgroup	Lurgan
Taylorstown Cross Community Complex	Toomebridge
The Cedar Foundation	Derry
The Firs Playgroup	Armagh
The Orchard Playgroup	Loughgall
Tiny Steps Creche	Cookstown
Tiny Toons Playgroup	Ballyhoran
Tiny Tots Community Playgroup	Strathfoyle
Tiny Tots Corner Playgroup	Killylea
Tober Tinys Playgroup	Tobermore
Upper Andersonstown Comm. Forums Daycare Facility	Belfast
West Bann Development (Dev Worker)	Coleraine
Whiterock Creche Centre	Belfast
Windsor Women's Centre	Belfast
Zero-8-Teen	Brownlow

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Education to list the Early Years Projects that will be funded in 2015/16, including their locations.

(AQW 43448/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: None of the recipient groups of the DE Early Years Fund will have funding cut from 31 March 2015.

The budget for the Fund, which is administered by Early Years the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) has been reduced by £2m in 2015/16. The residual 2015/16 Fund will enable all (153) recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

The current recipients of the DE Early Years Fund are:

Group Name	Location
174 Trust Pre-School	Belfast
Acorn Women's Group	Augher
Aghadowey Pre-School Playgroup	Coleraine
An Droichead	Belfast
Appletree Childcare	Coleraine
Ardstraw Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Armoy Cross Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Ashgrove Pre - School Playgroup	Portadown
Ashton Childcare	Belfast
Atlas Creche	Lisburn
Atticall Playgroup	Kilkeel
Ballinascreen Early Years Pre-Sch Education Centre	Draperstown
Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup	Derry
Ballykinlar Cross Community Pre School Ltd	Downpatrick
Ballymacarrett Youth and Community Project	Belfast
Banagher Community Playgroup	Derry
Barnardos BME	Belfast
Barnardos Forward Steps	Belfast
Barnardos Travellers Pre-School	Belfast
BCDA	Belfast
Beacon Playgroup	Cookstown
Bees Nees Early Years Centre	Newtownards
Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid	Belfast
Benburb Community Playgroup	Dungannon
Blackie Creche	Belfast
Bloomfield Playgroup	Belfast
Bunnahone Bunnies Playgroup	Derrygonnelly
Buttonmoon Playgroup	Tandragee
Carebears Community Playgroup	Newtownstewart
Carryduff Pre School Playgroup	Belfast
Castlerock Community Playgroup	Castlerock
Caw Community Playgroup	Derry
Chirpy Chicks Playgroup	Greyabbey
Chrysalis Women's Centre	Craigavon
Clady Tiny Tots	Clady

Group Name	Location
Clough & District Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Cloughmills Early Years	Cloughmills
Crows Nest Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Dara Playgroup	Armagh
Derry Well Woman Creche	Derry
Derrytrasna Playgroup	Craigavon
Dervock Playgroup	Ballymoney
Drumellan Community Association	Craigavon
Drumsurn Parent and Toddler	Limavady
Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup	Dundrum
Dunloy Community Playgroup	Ballymoney
Dunnaman Childrens Centre	Kilkeel
Earlybird Playgroup	Armagh
Falls Women's Centre	Belfast
First Steps Community Playgroup (PM Session)	Castlederg
First Steps Day Care Project	Castlederg
First Steps Playgroup	Belfast
Forthspring Afterschools	Belfast
Foyle Downs Syndrome Trust	Derry
Gingerbread Lone Parent Services	Derry
Glenarm Community Pre School	Glenarm
Greengables Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Grove Community Playgroup	Lisburn
Hansel and Gretal Pre School	Glynn
Happy Days Playgroup	Newry
Harbour Bears Pre-School Playgroup	Larne
Harpurs Hill Community Early Years	Coleraine
Hillside Pre School Playgroup	Newtownabbey
Hobby Horse Playgroup	Belfast
Holy Cross Pre School	Belfast
Holy Trinity Centre	Belfast
Ionad Uibh Eachach	Belfast
Kiddies Castle Early Years	Castledawson
Kids Korner	Larne
Kids R Us Cross Community	Fivemiletown
Kidzone Playgroup (Newry)	Newry
Kilkeel Community Association	Kilkeel
Killeen Playgroup	Newry
Killen Parent and Toddler	Castlederg
Killyleagh Early Years P & T	Killyleagh
Killyman Community Playgroup	Dungannon

Group Name	Location
Kingdom Playgroup	Kilkeel
Krafty Kids (Ogras)	Coalisland
Ladybird Playgroup	Omagh
Laurencetown Playgroup	Laurencetown
Leitrim Community Playgroup	Castlewellan
Lifestart Limavady	Limavady
Ligoniel Family Centre	Belfast
Little Acorns Playgroup Derrynoose	Derrynoose
Little Amps Playgroup	Maghera
Little Castles Playgroup	Lisnaskea
Little Diamonds Community Playgroup	Claudy
Little Doves Childcare Centre	Newtownards
Little Folk Playgroup	Rostrevor
Little Oaks Pre-School Playgroup	Craigavon
Little People Playgroup	Newry
Little Rainbows PG	Maghera
Little Rascals Community Playgroup	Limavady
Little Villagers Playgroup	Loughilly
Loughgiel Community PG	Loughgiel
Lower Oldpark Community Association	Belfast
Macosquin Community Playgroup	Coleraine
Magherafelt Womens Group (Kidz Lodge)	Magherafelt
Magic Roundabout Playgroup	Omagh
Magilligan Community Playgroup	Limavady
Monkstown Community School Playgroup	Monkstown
Mother Goose Community Playgroup	Ballycastle
Naiscoil an Chreagain	Silverbridge
Naiscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	Belfast
Naiscoil Ard Eoin	Belfast
Naiscoil Charn Tochair	Maghera
Naiscoil Dhun Padraig	Downpatrick
Naiscoil Mhachaire Ratha	Maghera
Newhill First Steps Childcare Centre	Belfast
NICMA	Newtownards
O'Fiaich Playgroup	Armagh
Old Warren Community Association	Lisburn
Omagh Early Years Centre	Omagh
Orana Nursery	Newry
Orchard Community Playgroup	Limavady
Parish of Nativity Playgroup, Poleglass	Belfast
Pomeroy Pre School Playgroup	Dungannon

Group Name	Location
Portaferry Playgroup	Newtownards
Portrush Community Pre-School Playgroup	Portrush
Poyntzpass Community Playgroup	Poyntzpass
Rainbow Child and Family Centre (WHSSB)	Derry
Rainbow Community Playgroup	Omagh
Rainbow Playgroup	Carrickfergus
Rasharkin Community Playgroup	Ballymena
Roden Street Development Group	Belfast
Scoil na Fuiseoige	Dunmurray
Shalom House Creche	Belfast
Shankill Women's Centre	Belfast
Slievegallion Community Playgroup	Magherafelt
Smart Attack Childcare Services	Omagh
St Teresa's Youth Centre	Belfast
Stepping Stones Playgroup	Maghera
Stepping Stones Pre School Nursery	Newtownabbey
Stewartstown Tiny Tots	Stewartstown
Straidarran Community Playgroup	Claudy
Strangford Parent and Toddler	Strangford
Sugar and Spice Playgroup	Drumquin
Sunflower Early Years Group	Fintona
Taghnevan Pre School Playgroup	Lurgan
Taylorstown Cross Community Complex	Toomebridge
The Cedar Foundation	Derry
The Firs Playgroup	Armagh
The Orchard Playgroup	Loughgall
Tiny Steps Creche	Cookstown
Tiny Toons Playgroup	Ballyhoran
Tiny Tots Community Playgroup	Strathfoyle
Tiny Tots Corner Playgroup	Killylea
Tober Tinys Playgroup	Tobermore
Upper Andersonstown Comm. Forums Daycare Facility	Belfast
West Bann Development (Dev Worker)	Coleraine
Whiterock Creche Centre	Belfast
Windsor Women's Centre	Belfast
Zero-8-Teen	Brownlow

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to outline the immediate impact on the most vulnerable in society of the announcement that the Early Years Fund is to be reduced by over two thirds in the financial year 2015/16. (AQW 43474/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015. There will therefore be no immediate impact on the recipients of

the DE Early Years Fund which is administered by Early Years – the Organisation for young people (EYO) on behalf of the Department.

The Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a “closed” Fund since then to applicants that were in areas of greatest need at that time.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list the organisations who failed to pass European Social Fund selection on the basis of not providing management accounts.
(AQW 41916/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The information requested is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. In applying this exemption, my Department has had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosing the information.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the (i) number; and (ii) value of outstanding claims for payment on the current European Social Fund programme.
(AQW 42638/11-15)

Dr Farry: Given the timeframe within which I am obliged to answer it would be highly unlikely that my officials could provide such detail without incurring disproportionate costs in endeavouring to do so. However, in an attempt to be helpful and to assist the member I can confirm that under the current European Social Fund Programme, the Department routinely processes claims for 95 projects, mainly from the Voluntary and Community sectors. The projects are required to submit claims for payment mainly on a monthly or quarterly basis, although a significant number of projects have delayed the submission of their claims.

Upon receipt of the claims, Departmental officials are required to undertake a thorough check of the claims and supporting documentation in order to verify the regulatory compliance and eligibility of expenditure. This requires an initial desk check of the claim and on-site verification visit by staff.

In the event that the verification process raises queries or identifies irregular expenditure, further time is then required to address the irregularities and agree a revised claim with the project claimant. The duration of this process may be further extended, as is often the case, in the event that further queries or irregularities are raised through audit inspections by the ESF Audit Authority.

Given the complexity of this process, there is a constant stream of claims at different stages of progression, with some part way through the process for payment and others requiring follow-up or amendment by the projects.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why the departmental email account hadn't a large enough capacity to cope with applications to the European Social Fund; and why this was not anticipated.
(AQW 42639/11-15)

Dr Farry: As part of the RecordsNI Reform Project, it is Northern Ireland Civil Service Policy that mailboxes are limited to 100Mb. This is to encourage good records management practice and use of the NICS Electronic Document Records Management System known as TRIM which was introduced in my Department in 2007.

Applicants to the European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020 were required to submit a paper copy of an application form and several key supporting documents. An electronic copy of the application form was also required, although a number of applicants also sent electronic copies of all supporting documents. This resulted in the receiving mailbox account reaching full capacity before all applications had been received.

No applications were rejected on the grounds of failure to email an application form if a signed paper copy and supporting documents were submitted on time.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the process that followed the submission of hard copy applications to the European Social Fund; and why there was no check list performed alongside the issuing of receipts.
(AQW 42640/11-15)

Dr Farry: Applicants to the European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020 were required to submit a signed application form and several key supporting documents in hard copy by the closing date for applications of noon on 9 January 2015. The application form included a checklist outlining the documents that applicants were required to submit.

The Department issued applicants with a receipt when receiving envelopes or packages containing their documents, but did not examine applications and associated documents until after the closing date for submission of applications.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why more departmental support was not available to groups applying to the European Social Fund; and why answers to applicants queries were not made available to all applicants.
(AQW 42641/11-15)

Dr Farry: The call for applications from the European Social Programme 2014-2020 is a competitive process, and my officials have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that there has not been inappropriate support from me or my Department for any group at the expense of others. For example, I have declined a number of invitations to events from organisations likely to be applying for funding in the run-up to and during the application process.

Applicants were provided with information and guidance through several different means. The Department publicly promoted the ESF Programme Call for Applications at roadshows where officials clearly outlined the assessment process and key requirements for applicants. Roadshows were held in each of the 11 new council areas, and were attended by a total of 580 people overall from approximately 290 organisations.

In addition, detailed Guidance Notes for Applicants accompanied the application forms which were all available on the Department's website. The guidance notes comprised a 33 page document which sought to address all the issues relating to the application form and specific criteria. It was very clear on issues such as the need to include all supporting documentation with applications.

Finally, an e-mail address was provided for organisations to submit any queries on the application process, and responses to any such queries were published on the "Frequently Asked Questions" section of the website, as well as being sent to those who asked them.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in light of the departmental letters on management accounts, whether the current European Social Fund appeals process is now defunct; and if so, with what will it be replaced.
(AQW 42642/11-15)

Dr Farry: As a result of addressing the issue of management accounts for applicants to the European Social Fund Programme, the timeframe for the completion of appeals has had to be revised. It is anticipated that the appeals process for Phase I of the assessment process, which examines eligibility, will now be concluded by 16 March 2015.

All applicants passing Phase I will then be examined by an assessment panel at Phase II. It is anticipated that the appeals process for Phase II will be concluded by 25 March 2015.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail childcare provision in the Southern Regional College.
(AQW 42705/11-15)

Dr Farry: Southern Regional College has advised that it does not currently offer childcare facilities in any of its campuses. Prior to 2011 the college had childcare facilities in both its Lurgan and Newry campuses, however both were closed due to lack of use by both students and staff and were operating at a financial loss.

However, my Department places a high priority on providing assistance to removing barriers to participation in education for students who are parents and as such has a range of financial support available to assist with childcare costs, through several funding schemes such as FE Awards, Care to Learn and Hardship Funds.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration has been given to introducing a ring fenced number of apprenticeship places for people with special educational needs.
(AQW 42750/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme is an employer-led training provision, with employers creating apprenticeship positions in line with their future business needs. It is therefore employers who determine the number of apprenticeships available.

Where required, a 'disability supplement' of up to £1,560 is available to enable training suppliers to provide individual apprentices with support in relation to the off-the-job training element of an apprenticeship, for example, to provide additional training or specialist equipment.

Specialist Disability Support Suppliers are contracted to work with training suppliers to ensure that apprentices with disabilities are given every opportunity to overcome their difficulties and develop using appropriate support mechanisms.

In relation to employing an apprentice, the Department can also provide specialist disability support to employers and apprentices through the Workable (NI) and Access to Work (NI) programmes.

Extensive information on relevant services is available through the Skills to Succeed website <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/skills-to-succeed>.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what process his Department used to assess the financial capability of European Social Fund applications during the extended assessment process.

(AQW 42755/11-15)

Dr Farry: The financial capability assessment remains the same throughout the European Social Fund (ESF) assessment process.

For the purpose of the financial capability assessment to be undertaken as part of the ESF application process, the most recent management accounts should consist of a balance sheet and a year to date income and expenditure statement. In addition annual accounts are examined.

The ESF guidance notes stipulated that the Net Cash Assets needed to be 10% of the annual cost of the project. The accounts were reviewed to see if an applicant met the criteria.

A review of the annual accounts, including the notes to the accounts, the directors' report and the auditors' report was undertaken to see if there was anything identified in these that would need to be considered in the financial capability assessment. For example, a "Going Concern" note.

The current ratio (Current Assets/Current Liabilities) was calculated for both years in the annual accounts and the management accounts to assess the ability of the organisation to pay their current liabilities with their current assets.

For each project a cash flow was prepared to ascertain whether the applicant organisation would be likely to run into any cash flow difficulties.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 42237/11-15, whether St Mary's Teacher Training College accepts external students to complete the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education if a request is made; and if so, why his Department does not direct students to St Mary's rather than paying for them to travel to Scotland.

(AQW 42760/11-15)

Dr Farry: There is currently no facility for external students to access the Certificate of Religious Education at St Mary's University College. You may also wish to note that students at Stranmillis University College wishing to obtain the Certificate do so via distance learning at the University of Glasgow and are not required to travel.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the reasoning behind the decision to increase contact with unemployed claimants in the North Belfast area.

(AQW 42788/11-15)

Dr Farry: As the Minister with responsibility for the Employment Service I have been asked to respond to both of your questions.

There are 27 Jobs & Benefits Offices (JBOs) in Northern Ireland, which have Social Security Agency and Department for Employment and Learning Employment Service staff co-located in one building. In addition, there are eight JobCentres which have not been co-located with their SSA counterparts.

The JobCentres in Northern Ireland are in the following locations:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| ■ Ballynahinch | ■ Newcastle |
| ■ Bangor | ■ Newtownards |
| ■ Cookstown | ■ North Belfast |
| ■ Downpatrick | ■ Strabane |

Currently, all unemployed Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) claimants attending a JBO are required to attend work focused interviews conducted by DEL staff. Through these work focused interviews, Employment Service Advisers tailor the support provided to an individual's needs, based on their distance from the labour market. It was recognised that there was no equivalent requirement for JSA claimants attending a Social Security Office (SSO) for benefits –related activity to attend their local JobCentre, and therefore these claimants were missing the opportunity to engage with Employment Service staff and fully explore the range of employment support services available to help them move towards, and into, sustained employment.

To provide parity of service, it was decided to use existing legislation to enable JSA claimants to attend work focused interviews in JobCentres throughout Northern Ireland, commencing with this trial in North Belfast JobCentre. North Belfast JobCentre was chosen as the trial office for this approach for a number of reasons. In comparison with the other seven JobCentres, North Belfast has the highest register of JSA claimants and it was important for the Employment Service to start engaging closely with these claimants to help them into work. North Belfast JobCentre also has a well established, close working relationship with Corporation Street SSO and their existing processes and procedures required minimal amendment to facilitate implementation. This was coupled with on hand support from District and Regional Management, based in the same building as the JobCentre.

Subject to a full evaluation of the trial, it is intended that this new improved service will be implemented in the remainder of the JobCentres to ensure parity of service throughout Northern Ireland, thereby enabling more clients to access a full range of employment services to help them back into employment.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the geographic areas that will see increased contact with unemployed claimants; and why these areas have been targeted.

(AQW 42789/11-15)

Dr Farry: As the Minister with responsibility for the Employment Service I have been asked to respond to both of your questions.

There are 27 Jobs & Benefits Offices (JBOs) in Northern Ireland, which have Social Security Agency and Department for Employment and Learning Employment Service staff co-located in one building. In addition, there are eight JobCentres which have not been co-located with their SSA counterparts.

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Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration his Department has given to amending the way in which maintenance grants, maintenance loans, special support grants and Disabled Students' Allowances are paid to students, to include annual increments based on inflation.

(AQW 42935/11-15)

Dr Farry: The full-time maintenance package, comprising means tested maintenance / special support grants and maintenance loans, had been considered as part of my Department's review of higher education funding. As you know, prior to the budget settlement I had intended to issue a public consultation on the funding review, outlining a wide range of policy options and proposals. An option to raise the maintenance package, including the special support grant, in line with inflation to reflect rising living costs was included in the consultation, reflecting the concerns put to me by a variety of stakeholders including the National Union of Students – Union of Students in Ireland.

However, as a result of my Department's budget settlement for 2015-16 I decided the funding review in its existing form was no longer appropriate or sufficient. The higher education budget, excluding student support, is facing a reduction of 8.4% in 2015-16 and further reductions are expected within the next Comprehensive Spending Review period. This raises serious questions over the future financial sustainability of higher education in Northern Ireland.

I therefore believe we need to have a much wider discussion about the future funding of higher education in Northern Ireland, which I will be encouraging over the coming weeks and months, with all stakeholders. As part of this discussion, I intend to further consider all elements of the existing student finance package.

Despite the significant budget reductions facing my Department this year, I have committed to protecting the existing student finance package. I have also committed to protecting the Disabled Students' Allowance in Northern Ireland and have taken the decision not to introduce similar changes to those in England, where the Allowance will no longer include non-medical help.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he will commit to protecting and improving the Disabled Students' Allowance.

(AQW 42959/11-15)

Dr Farry: The full-time maintenance package, comprising means tested maintenance / special support grants and maintenance loans, had been considered as part of my Department's review of higher education funding. As you know, prior to the budget settlement I had intended to issue a public consultation on the funding review, outlining a wide range of policy

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Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration he has given to the introduction of a Sharia compliant student finance scheme.

(AQW 42960/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in England has been exploring the need for a Sharia compliant alternative to conventional student loans for some time now. A possible model, conceived by experts in Sharia-compliant finance and preliminarily approved by the Islamic Bank of Britain's Sharia supervisory committee, was developed and put out to consultation in April last year.

The responses to the consultation showed that the lack of an alternative finance product was a matter of major concern for many Muslims, and that the proposed alternative model was deemed largely acceptable. In light of the consultation, BIS has committed to work on the further development of the alternative finance product. This will require new primary legislation and a full feasibility study of the capacity of the Student Loans Company to provide the product.

Student finance is a devolved matter and once a Sharia-compliant product has been developed in England I will assess the appropriateness of, and need for, a similar product for students from Northern Ireland.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what efforts his Department has taken to tackle hidden course costs for students.

(AQW 42961/11-15)

Dr Farry: I recognise that the cost of higher education is a key consideration for prospective and current students. In making choices about higher and further education, it is important that students have access to as much relevant information as possible, including full costs. This issue was highlighted in the NUS USI Pound in Your Pocket report in 2014.

As part of the work coming from the Higher Education Strategy 'Graduating to Success' my Department has been working with the higher education institutions (HEIs) to improve the quality of information, advice and guidance available to students.

A variety of information is available from a wide range of sources, such as the National Student Survey, Unistats, the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education Survey and individual institution websites. One of the aims, of 'Graduating to Success,' has been to ensure that this information is accessible via a single web-based portal. Officials from my Department have therefore been working with the HEIs to ensure that information on higher education including course content, fees, financial support, learning and teaching assessment methods, the cost of living, student satisfaction, future career prospects and other relevant information is accessible via the NIDirect Website.

I understand that the Competition and Markets Authority is soon to issue

higher education providers with advice on consumer protection law which will include guidance on the provision of material information prior to decision making, at offer stage and at enrolment.

My Department will continue to work with the sector to ensure that all relevant information is available to assist prospective students to make informed decisions regarding their participation in higher education.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much capital investment has been made by his Department to the Coleraine campus of Ulster University in the last ten years.

(AQW 42983/11-15)

Dr Farry: The capital funding provided by my Department specifically for the Coleraine campus of Ulster University in the last ten years is £17.7m. In addition £14m of funding was provided for the School of Hospitality and Tourism and the refurbishment of the Ulster University estate. The University has estimated that £5.1m of this has been deployed on the Coleraine campus. This brings the total investment to £22.8m in the last ten years.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students have graduated from the Coleraine campus of Ulster University in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary teaching in each of the last five years.

(AQW 42984/11-15)

Dr Farry: The number of primary and post-primary teaching graduates from the Coleraine campus of Ulster University in the last five years is as follows:

Academic year	(i) Primary	(ii) Post- primary	Total
2009/10	40	90	130
2010/11	37	104	141
2011/12	38	103	141
2012/13	28	81	109
2013/14	32	78	110
Total	175	456	631

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department intends to increase support for student carers and students who are parents.

(AQW 43015/11-15)

Dr Farry: Despite the significant budget reductions facing my Department this year, I have committed to protecting the existing student finance package including that for student carers and students who are parents.

A higher education student can apply for a Special Support Grant of up to £3,475 a year, payable to students who are eligible to claim means-tested benefits such as Income Support and Housing Benefit. This grant specifically targets parents, including lone parents, with caring responsibilities.

Supplementary grants for students, in addition to the usual maintenance loans and grants, can be applied for including the Childcare Grant which is available for full-time higher education students who have dependent children and a low household income. Students could receive up to £148.75 per week for one child and up to £255 a week for two or more children. Eligible students with dependent children can also apply for the Parents' Learning Allowance for help with course related costs of up to £1,538 a year. The Adult Dependants' Grant of up to £2,695 a year is available for eligible students who have a partner or another adult who depends on them financially.

The amounts of the allowances available and arrangements in place to deliver this support here are almost identical to those in England and Wales.

In addition, my Department's regional strategy for widening participation in higher education has identified adult learners as a group which faces barriers to their participation in higher education. In some cases this will include adult learners who find it difficult to engage in education because of caring and/or parental responsibilities. Access to Success aims to give groups such as adult learners the encouragement and support they need to achieve the necessary qualifications to apply to, and to benefit from, the higher education that is right for them, irrespective of their personal or social background.

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

(AQW 43080/11-15)

Dr Farry: Assured Skills is a Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) programme which operates in close tandem with Invest NI to support business growth. The ultimate aim of the project is to attract high value, highly paid jobs to Northern Ireland and help to achieve the Executive's targets for economic growth. The programme is open to client companies in Northern Ireland who have committed to expand, as well as new inward investors who have committed to establishing a facility in Northern Ireland. The programme has been in operation since 2010/11.

Foreign Direct Investment

Since the start of the programme, there are 18 live Foreign Direct Investment Assured Skills projects, with signed letters of offer, supporting the potential creation of 4,255 jobs, with a total DEL commitment of £6.53m. When all of the jobs are created they will be worth an additional £113m per annum to the NI economy.

Of the 4,255 potential Foreign Direct Investment jobs created since the start of the programme, 2,073 were announced during this current year (2014/15).

Capacity Building

Assured Skills support is also available to encourage existing companies who are considering expansion. Assured Skills supports the company's business plan by adding value to their training and development activity. This could be through facilitation of links with further education and university sectors to design bespoke training solutions, or support for recruitment and other pre-employment activities. Assured Skills also enhances the capability of Northern Ireland to respond to the needs of potential investors by creating pools of talent with skills of interest to potential investors through the 'Academy' model.

Academy Model

The Academy model is a short term intervention to help companies meet specific needs. To date, we have up-skilled unemployed graduates in software testing, cloud computing, data analytics, sales and marketing, manufacturing and professional software skills to name but a few. The Academy has proven hugely successful with 80% of students obtaining employment following completion of the Academy.

Due to the success of the Assured Skills pilot, the programme will be mainstreamed into DEL provision with effect from 1 April 2015.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether the milestones in the Programme for Government 2011/15 to increase uptake in economically relevant Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects have been achieved.

(AQW 43126/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Programme for Government commits my Department to delivering an additional 700 undergraduate places in economically relevant Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. The table below shows the target milestones and the achievement to date.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total
Target	233	234	233	700
Achieved	353	267	n/a	620

The milestones for the first two years have been surpassed. We will not have the data for the 2014-15 academic year until February 2016, but I am confident that the 700 target will be achieved and exceeded.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is his assessment of the Step Ahead 50+ Initiative; and whether it will be extended beyond March 2015.

(AQW 43148/11-15)

Dr Farry: Step Ahead 50+ was introduced in January 2013 after funding was secured through the Executives Economy and Jobs Initiative, announced on 7 November 2012. Step Ahead 50+ was designed to improve job outcomes for participants from this age group by providing them with work experience and a recent job history thereby enabling them to compete more effectively for jobs in the current economic climate.

Given that this Initiative has already exceeded its target of 1,100 temporary job opportunities within the Community/Voluntary sector by March 2015, for this traditionally harder to help section of our community, I would consider the Initiative to have been a success.

Step Ahead 50+ was a time bound initiative funded by the Executive to March 2015 at which time funding for the programme ended. With the withdrawal of this funding it is not possible to continue with the programme beyond March 2015. To do so would create additional financial pressures at a time when, as I am sure you are aware, resources are not available.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the number of jobs created through the Step Ahead 50+ Initiative, broken down by Constituency, and (ii) whether the Initiative is on track to meet its original target beyond March 2015.

(AQW 43149/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Step Ahead 50+ Initiative was initially delivered as a strand of the Steps to Work programme and latterly as a strand of Employment Service Support.

Referrals to the Steps to Work programme ended on 30th May 2014 and

Employment Service Support (ESS) was introduced on 2 June 2014, to support the continued delivery of Executive funded initiatives, including Step Ahead 50+, and as part of the wider transition arrangements that facilitated the continuity of provision in the run up to the introduction of the new adult employment programme Steps2Success.

The following table sets out those participants finding a temporary employment opportunity through the Step Ahead 50+ strand of the Steps to Work programme between January 2013 and June 2014.

Participants starting the the Step Ahead 50+ strand of Steps to Work (January 2013 to June 2014) (1) (2)

Westminster Parliamentary Constituency	2012/13	2013/14	Apr-Jun 14	Total
Belfast East	5	30	5	35
Belfast North	25	70	5	105
Belfast South	10	20	-	30

Westminster Parliamentary Constituency	2012/13	2013/14	Apr-Jun 14	Total
Belfast West	25	70	-	95
East Antrim	15	35	5	50
East Londonderry	10	25	-	35
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	10	15	-	25
Foyle	20	80	5	105
Lagan Valley	5	20	-	30
Mid Ulster	5	40	5	50
Newry and Armagh	5	20	-	25
North Antrim	15	30	-	45
North Down	-	35	5	40
South Antrim	5	25	-	25
South Down	5	25	5	35
Strangford	10	35	-	45
Upper Bann	5	50	-	60
West Tyrone	5	35	-	45
Not Known	0	15	-	15
Total	180	680	45	905

Notes:

- (1) Figures are rounded to the nearest 5, due to rounding figures may not sum to totals.
- (2) Cases where a participant started and finished an activity on the same day have been removed.
- (3) Step Ahead 50+ was introduced in January 2013 - figures are from this date.

In addition to the above, validated statistical information is not yet available on ESS that would allow me to report on starts by constituency; management information collected on the Step Ahead 50+ strand of ESS indicates that by 28 February 2015 over 280 clients have found temporary employment opportunities through this initiative.

As the original target for Step Ahead 50+ was to deliver 1,100 temporary job opportunities within the Community/Voluntary sector by March 2015, with over 1,185 temporary job opportunities already delivered the Initiative is on track to exceed its original target.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she will take when issuing a licence for fracking or conventional drilling, that would ensure that farmers and landowners are aware of the process being undertaken under their ground.

(AQW 42661/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): My Department does not issue licences for fracking or conventional drilling.

My Department grants petroleum licences that allow companies to 'search for, bore for and get petroleum' in specified areas of Northern Ireland. However, this does not give the Licensee carte blanche to carry out any particular activities and the Licensee is required to obtain permits or consents from several regulatory bodies in order to carry out specific drilling and associated operations on their licence. If planning permission is required the planning application documents are made available to the public.

Licensees are required to obtain the permission of landowners to enter their land and carry out exploration activities, or to drill under their land. The company will usually describe the proposed operations in detail to the landowners, who can contact my Department if they wish to get further information.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to detail the current status of petroleum licence PL1/10; (ii) whether Infrastrata PLC has complied with all sections of Part I of the Work Programme; (iii) whether Infrastrata

PLC has advanced to Part II of their licence PL1/10; (iv) whether Infrastrata PLC has made a 'drill or drop' decision as required by the end of Year 3 at 31 March 2014; and (v) whether any changes were made by the appropriate deadline.

(AQW 42680/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The Petroleum Licence is currently in Year 4 of the initial five year term.
- (ii) Yes.
- (iii) Yes.
- (iv) InfraStrata plc confirmed their intention to drill an exploration well in the Initial Term of PL1/10, as required by the due date of 4 March 2015, by way of a letter to DETI dated 10 February 2015.
- (v) My Department exercised its discretion under paragraph (2) of Clause 2 of the Petroleum Production (Amendment) regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 to grant the Licensees a 12 month extension to the deadline of 4 March 2014 for formally informing the Department whether they wished to drill an exploration well or relinquish the licence, by way of a letter dated 25 November 2013.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department has received a more detailed work programme from Infrastrata PLC than the one included within PL1/10; and if so, whether she will publish this work programme.

(AQW 42751/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has not received a more detailed work programme from InfraStrata plc than the one included as a Schedule to the PL1/10 Licence document.

InfraStrata plc has provided the Department with further details of the geological rationale behind the exploration programme and the methodologies to be used but these do not form part of the formal licence work programme. The company has also kept my Department regularly informed about the progress of the exploration programme being carried out on PL1/10 and this has included details about proposed exploration activities and the results from these activities after they have been completed. Such information is kept confidential by the Department in accordance with the provisions of Clause 24 of the Petroleum Production Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987 as amended by the Petroleum Production (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010. However, InfraStrata has published some of these results on the company's website.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether any companies have approached her Department with regards to taking over the licence formerly held by CHx Capital LLCs (PL1/13).

(AQW 42752/11-15)

Mrs Foster: CHx Capital LLC has never held a petroleum licence in Northern Ireland.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much European funding her Department has received in each of the last two financial years; and from which funding streams.

(AQW 42802/11-15)

Mrs Foster: During the last two financial years (2012/13 & 2013/14) over £88million of European funding has been drawn down through the work of DETI. £61million of this has been from the ERDF Sustainable Competitiveness Programme, £18million from the Framework 7 programme, £9million from the Interreg Iva Programme and £0.2million from the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme to run the Enterprise Europe Network.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has had discussions with P&O and Larne Port on making pricing more competitive to facilitate a greater flow of trade and tourists across the North Channel and through Larne Port.

(AQW 42840/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Northern Ireland's ferry links with Great Britain are essential to the growth of the local economy. However, the development and operation of ferry links, and the fares the operators charge, are commercial matters for individual sea carriers and the Northern Ireland and GB ports.

Our ferry links are particularly important to the tourism industry and Tourism Ireland works closely with all the major ferry operators to highlight value fares, inclusive packages and ease of access to Northern Ireland.

Tourism Ireland engages in co-operative marketing with both sea and air carriers in major markets and invests in co-operative marketing activity with ferry operators such as Stena Line and P&O Lines. For example, in 2014 a spring digital marketing campaign in partnership with P&O and Causeway Coast and Glens targeted potential visitors from Scotland and the North of England, highlighting good value fares from Cairnryan and Troon to Larne and themes such as the Causeway Coastal Route, Game of Thrones, the Grande Partenza of the Giro d'Italia and the Dalriada Festival.

Similarly, an autumn print and digital marketing campaign in partnership with P&O highlighted good value fares and Londonderry as a festival and city break destination. Further co-operative marketing campaigns with sea carriers serving routes to Northern Ireland are at planning stage for 2015.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she plans to market forest parks as a visitor attraction for tourists and local people.

(AQW 42877/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Tourism NI & Tourism Ireland undertake marketing activity throughout the year, showcasing the many, varied experiences available here in Northern Ireland.

Research shows that many of our visitors want to be active in nature while on holiday.

Exploring our forest parks and related activities such as mountain biking, walking and outdoor pursuits are popular activities all promoted through Tourism Northern Ireland's marketing channels such as its consumer website www.discovernorthernireland.com, its Facebook and Twitter channels and through PR /Media activity.

The website consistently receives high volumes of traffic seeking information on the Forest Parks in Northern Ireland such as Tollymore Forest Park, Castlewellan Forest Park and Glenariff Forest Park. To facilitate consumer demand, www.discovernorthernireland.com often feature Forest Parks within articles focusing on seasonal activities e.g. Budget Family Fun or Fantastic Forest Park Walks.

Similarly, Tourism Ireland showcases forest parks and walking trails of Northern Ireland as part of its promotional activity overseas.

For example, Tourism Ireland recently launched an online film highlighting the section of the International Appalachian Trail which spans Northern Ireland. The film showcases some of the spectacular scenery along this newly-signposted walking trail, such as Glenariff Forest Park, the Sperrin Mountains, the Ulster American Folk Park, the Glens of Antrim and the Causeway Coastal Route.

Northern Ireland and its close associations with the hit series Game of Thrones has been a major focus of Tourism Ireland's recent and ongoing overseas promotions. In this context, Tollymore Forest Park, one of the locations used in Game of Thrones, features in Tourism Ireland's overseas Game of Thrones campaign and has been included in itineraries for visiting international TV crews and journalists.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether any public funding was afforded by her Department to the Red Bull Crashed Ice event at Stormont; and if so, to specify this funding.

(AQW 42881/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department including Tourism NI did not provide any funding towards the Red Bull Crashed Ice event at Stormont.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what is the agreed policy at Executive level on unconventional oil and gas exploration, appraisal, development and extraction programmes.

(AQW 42917/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I have stated on several occasions that I consider the future use of High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing (HVHF) in Northern Ireland to be a matter for the Executive to decide on. There are currently no applications to carry out HVHF in Northern Ireland.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 41872/11-15, to detail the timescale for new mast sites under the Mobile Infrastructure project.

(AQW 43066/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department does not hold this information.

The Mobile Infrastructure project is being run directly from the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

Further information can be obtained at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mobile-coverage-in-rural-areas-set-to-improve>

My Department maintains a watching brief on these initiatives and will assess the need for further Government intervention once they are complete.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps her Department is taking to improve internet access availability in the Loughbrickland and Ballyward areas.

(AQW 43092/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Building on previous interventions, my Department is currently implementing the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project which seeks to provide fixed line broadband services of at least 2 Megabits per second in areas that previously had no service and improve the availability of fixed-line broadband services of 24 Megabits per second or higher in areas where choice is poor or broadband speeds are low.

The project is progressing according to schedule and by 31 December 2014 almost 17,500 premises across Northern Ireland had benefited from the improvements being delivered, including 1,237 in the Upper Bann Constituency. By project completion in December 2015, it is anticipated that improvements will have been delivered to at least 45,000 premises across Northern Ireland.

In addition, my Department has just signed a contract with BT for the Superfast Roll-out Programme Phase 2 (SRP2) project, which seeks to further increase the coverage of superfast broadband services to over 38,000 premises across Northern Ireland by 2017.

The Super Connected Cities Programme is being extended to include other council areas across Northern Ireland. This presents an opportunity for our new Super-Councils to apply for a voucher scheme, similar to that which currently exists in the Belfast and Londonderry City Council areas. My Department facilitated an information event on 23 February 2015 to provide council representatives with further details.

Once this extension is rolled out to other councils, businesses, which meet the eligibility criteria at <https://www.connectionvouchers.co.uk/superconnected-cities/>,

will be able to apply for vouchers up to the value £3,000, to cover the cost of high speed broadband installation.

Department of the Environment

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what plans are in place to review the law and regulations governing the uses of snares.

(AQW 41142/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The Department has prepared subordinate legislation, the Snares Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, to introduce additional restrictions and requirements on the use of snares. The Order is at the early stages in the legislative process and will be subject to the Assembly's Affirmative Resolution. Subject to Assembly approval, it is hoped that the Order would come into operation in late spring.

The Snares Order will place the following requirements on anyone using snares:

- it will be a requirement that all snares must be fitted with permanent safety stops which prevents the noose closing too far and inflicting injury to the caught animal;
- all snares will be required to be fitted with 'swivels' to facilitate twisting action by the animal caught by the snare;
- it will be a requirement that snares should not be set in a place or in a manner where an animal is likely to become fully or partially suspended or of risk of drowning e.g. over water courses;
- snares' users will be required, when conducting their daily checks, to ensure that a snare remains 'free-running' and to remove or repair the snare if it is not in such a state; and
- the use of 'drag' snares will be prohibited i.e. it will be a requirement that snares must be firmly staked into the ground or firmly anchored to an object in an appropriate manner, so that the snare cannot be dragged away by an animal caught by it.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the setting up of a public inquiry into waste crime in Northern Ireland.
(AQW 42307/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I wrote to my Executive Colleagues in April last year asking them to agree to establishing a full independent public inquiry into waste management and disposal arrangements in Northern Ireland and to commit to funding the costs associated with such an inquiry. The topic has yet to be discussed by the Executive.

However, as I said in my answer to Steven Agnew MLA (AQW 36321/11-15), I am continuing to implement actions in response to the Mills Report and focusing my Department's efforts on making progress in improving waste management in Northern Ireland.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to site Z/2014/1226/F, whether his Department (i) will now issue an immediate notice to stop; and (ii) has now initiated legal proceedings against the operator of the business, given that they have not complied within the 14 and 21 day stipulation on the enforcement notice enacted by his Department on 31 January 2015.
(AQW 42687/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can assure the member that my Department is fully aware of the situation and has carefully followed its enforcement policy and procedures as set out in Planning Policy Statement 9 – The Enforcement of Planning Control. As the case is live and potentially subject to judicial process I will not comment further.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how his Department has ensured that the health of the residents living in the vicinity of the site Z/2014/1226/F has not been put at risk by the operation of an unauthorised car wash on this site, given the

identification of contaminants which pose a risk to human health and the recommendation to Planning Service by Belfast City Council Environmental Health that development on this site should be accompanied with a Contaminated Land Risk Assessment. **(AQW 42689/11-15)**

Mr Durkan: During the processing of the initial planning application (Z/2010/1629/F), the Department undertook extensive consultation with relevant bodies including NI Water, Water Management Unit, Environmental Health and Roads Service to ensure that the operation of the car wash over would not cause detriment to public health or safety. Regarding contamination on the site, Environmental Health noted that the site was known to formerly house a petrol station which has the potential to cause contaminated land and pose a risk to human health. They also noted however that the car wash is being operated on an area of hard standing and there were no proposed alterations or excavations to this hard standing and as such requested a relevant condition and informative be attached to the approval.

Following the expiry of the approval, the Department has continued to liaise with Environmental Health during its enforcement investigations and confirmed most recently that as far as Environmental Health is aware there has been no evidence gathered to suggest that the continued unauthorised operation of the car wash presents a risk to human health.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the risk that unconventional drilling in the shale layer at Ballinlea poses to the environment.

(AQW 42694/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Application E/2013/0093/F- Ballinlea constitutes a conventional borehole.

Planning officials have rigorously examined the application and the proposed processes involved. Based on discussions and advice from other statutory bodies, they are content that the application is classified as conventional exploration.

The primary objective of the proposed Ballinlea No. 2 well is to test the Carboniferous conventional sandstone reservoir sequence at the new well location.

Environmental impacts such as noise, air pollution, light pollution, impact to the surrounding hydrology etc and any other identified environmental risks will be assessed in processing this application.

An Environmental Statement has been submitted and officials are currently consulting with the relevant bodies that have the remit and expertise to advise the Department on the issues raised.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment for their assessment whether the well drilled at Ballinlea should be considered an unconventional well.

(AQW 42696/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Ballinlea No. 2 well is planned to test whether the oil found in a sandstone unit in the 2008 Ballinlea No. 1 well is an indication that there is a significant oil / gas accumulation nearby (at a geologically structurally higher level).

The exploration operations proposed by Rathlin will examine the Carboniferous shale, because these would be the source rocks for any oil discovered in the overlying sandstones.

Application E/2013/0093/F is an application for an exploratory borehole. Planning officials have rigorously examined the application and the proposed processes involved. Based on discussions and advice from statutory bodies, they are content that the application is classified as conventional exploration.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration will be given to the impact that application E/2013/0093/F will have on local residents in regard to noise, air pollution, light pollution and environmental risks.

(AQW 42698/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Noise, air pollution, light pollution and any environmental risks will be assessed in processing this application. The Department will consult with the relevant bodies such as Environmental Health, NIEA and the Public Health agency who have the remit and expertise to advise the Department on these issues.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what regulations he plans to introduce to prevent unconventional drilling for shale.

(AQW 42699/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am assuming the Member is referring to unconventional drilling for shale gas. That being the case, at this present time no planning applications for unconventional exploration or extraction of shale gas by means of hydraulic fracturing have been received by the DOE.

I am well aware of the issues and concerns throughout the island of Ireland about this technique. In response to these concerns, my Department's Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is supplementing its knowledge of this process through reviewing and engaging with emerging research, studying case studies from other parts of the world and liaising with counterparts in other Environmental Agencies in Britain and Ireland, and other countries where unconventional exploration and extraction is currently proposed or taking place.

NIEA is currently co-funding and co-leading a major two year research programme with the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with a view to ensuring that there is a whole island approach to hydraulic fracturing, as far as possible, as the environment knows no borders. This research will be completed in 2016.

My Department's Single Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) reaffirms my position that there should be a presumption against the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until the Department is satisfied that there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 41513/11-15, to detail (i) whether the subsequent investigation uncovered any evidence of illegal dumping on land owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency; and (ii) whether the investigation identified the source of that dumping; and if so, what action was taken.
(AQW 42708/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The small scale deposit of inert material was located on lands owned by the NIEA. The source of the deposit was confirmed and agreement was made to remove the wastes within one week.

As the waste deposit was small scale, inert in nature and promptly removed from the site, no further action was taken.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how; and (ii) where the residue ash that will be produced by the Bombardier incinerator will be treated and disposed.
(AQW 42739/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Pursuant to AQW 42654/11-15 the treatment and disposal methods for the residue ash have not been finalised.

My officials will ensure all regulatory requirements for the residue ash are met.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has been made aware of the disturbance and destruction of bats during the demolition of buildings at the former army barracks at Ballykelly; and if so, what action he has initiated.
(AQW 42774/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I have only recently been advised about this issue.

Officials have advised that they have not been provided with any evidence that bats were disturbed, killed or that any roosts were destroyed during the demolition works.

My officials have contacted their counterparts in DARD and OFMDFM and offered to provide general advice in relation to bats if required.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the operational effectiveness of his Department's hydroelectric scheme at the Roe Valley Country Park, including (i) the projected costs of construction; (ii) the actual costs of construction; (iii) the projected amount of electricity it would produce; (iv) the actual amount of electricity being produced; and (v) whether the approved design specification met with his Department's initial expectations.
(AQW 42775/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

(i) The projected costs of construction;

The Roe Valley Hydroelectric scheme to restore industrial heritage and generate renewable power was proposed with two construction phases. The total estimated capital cost of the project was £2.7m.

(ii) The actual costs of construction;

The first phase of the project was completed in September 2012. This involved the restoration of a 1.7km mill race including the use of traditional clay lining in keeping with the original scheme to demonstrate and protect the industrial heritage on site. The mill race restoration was essential for local landowners as this action will prevent water leakage onto their land reducing the risk of compensation from flooding events.

Phase 2 of the project which commenced in August 2013 consists of reconstructing the existing river inlet structure and spillway, laying the penstock, constructing a penstock intake, purchase and installation of a turbine and generating set, mechanical & electrical and civil engineering works within the existing turbine house and restoration of the tailrace. This phase of the work was due to be completed by November 2014 but due to unforeseen delays in connection to the grid the project is currently on-hold. The majority of the work has been completed and the total actual cost of the project to date is £2.8 million. The increase in costs was due to essential changes in design and construction due to unforeseen issues arising on the ground. This is normal practice in any construction project.

(iii) the projected amount of electricity it would produce;

The total installed generating capacity of the generating station will be 185kw. The projected amount of electricity to be produced per year is 630,000kWh.

(iv) the actual amount of electricity being produced;

The scheme is currently not operational as the power lines in the area are supersaturated and there is now the requirement to upgrade a significant amount of overhead lines as well as the upgrade of the generator on site which was expected. Unfortunately, NIE requires in the range of 6 to 9 months to complete this work, so the turbine will not be installed until later this year when all upgrades are complete and the turbine can be commissioned.

(v) whether the approved design specification met with his Department's initial expectations.

The project exemplifies the concept of ecosystem services and by making this investment Government is not only creating a long term asset with an ongoing revenue stream but also allowing future generations to appreciate a complete interpretation of the site by integrating the strands of environment, heritage and economy.

Whilst the scheme will produce a significant amount of electricity which will off-set 50% of NIEA's electricity needs and reduce dependence on non renewable fossil fuels, the aim of the scheme is also to promote NI's Built Heritage, add intrinsic heritage conservation value and add educational and tourism value. The scheme's approach in terms of consultation, design and future operation demonstrates to existing operators and developers a benchmark approach to small scale hydro.

Whilst the capital costs of the scheme have been high, the proposal, which is intended as a benchmark in terms of design and operation, will generate revenue at £110,000 p.a. The restoration will pay for itself in 26 years based on today's unit price levels and projects of this type have long lifetimes of over 50 years, (the original scheme ran for over 70 years), so payback will be 50% of the asset lifetime. If electricity prices continue to rise overall the scheme payback period will be even shorter.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the proportion of dioxins that remain in fly ash after incineration as compared to that which is emitted into the air.

(AQW 42776/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The control of dioxins from energy from waste plants (EfW) has its emphasis firstly on prevention, and then abatement. The air abatement plant ensures compliance with the emission limit values stated in the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED). The IED requires an air emission limit of 0.0000001 mg/m³ for dioxins and is included in all EfW permits.

The IED does not require analysis on the proportion of dioxins that remain in the fly ash and to do so would be beyond the IED requirements. The fly ash is considered a hazardous waste and my officials will ensure the disposal meets the regulatory requirements.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration he has given to introducing a moratorium on unconventional gas exploration or extraction (UGEE) until the findings of the NIEA/EPA report on UGEE are published.

(AQW 42801/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can advise my Department is not in receipt of any application for unconventional hydraulic fracturing or unconventional oil and gas exploration and extraction. In the event of any applications being submitted my Department has a statutory duty to determine such applications and under planning legislation I do not have the legal power to introduce a moratorium for any category of development.

The research programme funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), is designed to produce outputs that will assist regulators in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in fulfilling their statutory roles regarding any potential hydraulic fracturing activity.

The research commenced in August 2014 and is expected to report in the latter part of 2016.

My Department's Single Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) reaffirms my position that there should be a presumption against the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until the Department is satisfied that there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how much European funding his Department has received in each of the last two financial years; and from which funding streams.

(AQW 42817/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department received European funding in the last two years in regard to the Interreg IVA EU structural programme. The figures are shown below.

	2012/13 (000's)	2013/14 (000's)
Interreg IVA	2,518	2618

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 40494/11-15 and AQW 39802/11-15, of the 223 staff who submitted a formal application to exit, to detail (i) how many of these applications are expected to be successful; and (ii) how many jobs are likely to be allocated from these vacancies.

(AQW 42846/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A total of 114 applications were successful including 38 from DVA surplus staff, and 76 from non-surplus staff thereby creating suitable vacancies into which surplus staff could be redeployed. As a result, 110 DVA surpluses (headcount) within the designated area were released or redeployed.

The Scheme has now closed.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to ensure that Northern Ireland has the same skills and powers to check the pollutants in dead fish when they are the consequence of a fresh water pollution incident, as is the case in the rest of the UK.

(AQW 42850/11-15)

Mr Durkan: NIEA has wide ranging legal powers under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 to investigate the circumstances and cause of pollution incidents, including powers to enter any premises (including under warrant where necessary), to gather any relevant evidence, to interview any suspect or witnesses, and to take away any samples or any items which may assist with the investigation. Likewise, I understand DCAL Inland Fisheries, with whom NIEA invariably cooperates closely in any incident involving a fish kill, has similar and complementary legal powers under fisheries legislation. I am not aware of the powers available to NIEA staff, which are established in law, being in any way inferior to the equivalent legal powers in the rest of the UK.

All of NIEA's sampling is carried out in accordance with UK and internationally recognised standards. NIEA also has its own in-house laboratory which similarly carries out all of its analyses to UK and internationally recognised standards. The laboratory's performance against these standards is regularly audited, including by regular external audits by UK-based auditors. Key NIEA laboratory scientists sit on UK-wide working groups on laboratory and environmental methodology, which further ensures consistency with UK and international standards.

I consider that all fish kill investigations carried out in Northern Ireland are completed to the highest standards, and that the methods and skills employed are in every way the equal of those in the rest of the UK.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment whether the Northern Ireland Environment Agency are now regularly monitoring the industrial estates that may have been involved in the pollution incidents at (i) Ballymartin River; and (ii) Six Mile River.

(AQW 42851/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In the aftermath of a serious fish kill on the Ballymartin River in 2008, NIEA redoubled its proactive pollution prevention work in and around Mallusk Industrial Estate, where it appeared the incident had originated. This involved NIEA staff visiting every premises on and around the estate, closely inspecting each site for pollutants and pollution risk, and driving improvements on any site where a significant pollution risk was identified. This totalled multiple visits to literally hundreds of separate premises over a period of many months, which resulted in a very significant reduction in the overall pollution risk.

Most recently in the late autumn of 2014, NIEA carried out a further programme of inspections of approximately 150 premises on Mallusk Industrial Estate.

Likewise for the main industrial estates around Ballyclare on the Six Mile Water River, several years ago NIEA carried out an intensive programme of inspections similar to that previously carried out at Mallusk. Remedial and other actions resulting from this inspection programme again significantly reduced the overall pollution risk in the area.

NIEA staff also regularly carry out investigations of premises and inspections of the waterways in both these industrial estates, and it would be rare for more than a few days to pass without such an investigation or inspection.

NIEA have also issued 113 consents under the terms of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 for discharges of trade and sewage effluent from commercial, industrial and residential properties in the Sixmilewater and Ballymartin catchments, 45 of which are regularly monitored for compliance.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment when the Northern Ireland Environment Agency will be releasing the sample information relating to the recent pollution incident on the Six Mile River to the local interested parties such as the Six Mile River Trust and angling clubs.

(AQW 42852/11-15)

Mr Durkan: During the recent fish kill on the Six Mile Water River at Ballyclare NIEA collected statutory samples from four separate premises. For the three remaining premises it is likely that prosecution of at least one of these sites will result. As the sample results for each of these sites may well be required as evidence in future legal proceedings it would not be appropriate at this stage to release these to the public.

Separate from this specific investigation NIEA has a long-established programme of routine monitoring of chemical and biological river water quality, and of sites consented under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, throughout the Six Mile Water River catchment. Data from these monitoring programmes is held by NIEA on a public register. Data held on this

register can be viewed by the public during working hours; alternatively members of the public can request written copies of the data via e-mail at 'waterinfo@doeni.gov.uk'.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his plans for including local sampling volunteers into work carried out on rivers such as Six Mile River, particularly when pollution incidents occur.

(AQW 42854/11-15)

Mr Durkan: NIEA has previously discussed with anglers whether they could take statutory samples which could be used in legal proceedings. I am advised that this is not legally permissible under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

However, NIEA is committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in catchments and has developed a number of initiatives to encourage partnership working. For example NIEA supports the Anglers Riverfly Monitoring Initiative which involves volunteers sampling the biological quality of their local rivers; including the Ballinderry, Six Mile Water, Lagan, Enler and Faughan rivers. Results are reported to NIEA for further investigation. The programme has been supported through partial funding from NIEA and through support in kind from staff in assisting training events, providing technical support and setting trigger levels based on historic data as part of the assessment procedures. This programme has been well received on the Six Mile Water River, with several local anglers taking a very active role.

NIEA has also signed a partnership agreement with The Rivers Trust. Rivers Trusts deliver practical improvements within river catchments and help raise awareness on river issues. NIEA currently funds a Development Officer to build capacity in new or emerging Rivers Trusts across Northern Ireland; including Ballinderry, Lagan, Maine, River Blackwater, Six Mile Water, Strule and Erne.

Both I and my Departmental officials greatly value the enthusiasm and practical input of anglers and other volunteers and would actively encourage and support their direct participation in environmental monitoring programmes.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment, given the controversial and novel nature of planning application E/2013/0093/F, and given that the matter is outside the scope of the Programme for Government, whether he will guarantee to bring this matter to the Executive for approval rather than keeping it within his Department.

(AQW 42855/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This application is for an exploratory borehole. Planning officials have rigorously examined the application and the proposed processes involved. Based on discussions and advice from other statutory bodies, they are content that the application is classified as conventional exploration.

I am satisfied that taking account of Programme of Government priorities, it would fall to my department to consider this application.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what was the cost of the advertising campaign to highlight the change to eleven councils.

(AQW 42887/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The advertising campaign aims to increase awareness of and promote the benefits of local government reform. It is costing £100,000.

The campaign includes TV advertising, 48 sheet billboards, bus side panels, print and online advertising.

As well as media buying, the budget also covers development of the advertising creative, market research, testing of creative options and campaign evaluation.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of single taxi operators inspected since the introduction of the taxi operator licence in 2012.

(AQW 42893/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) does not capture the necessary details during roadside compliance checks to report the number of single taxi operators inspected and therefore the information requested cannot be provided.

However, since the introduction of taxi operator licensing on 1 September 2012, DVA has completed roadside compliance checks on 3,690 taxis. These figures cover the period from 1 September 2012 to 30 September 2014.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment how he will work to ensure that there will be stronger enforcement action across all sections of the taxi industry.

(AQW 42894/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) has primary responsibility for taxi licensing and enforcement and has been proactive in targeting a wide range of illegal activity often in response to complaints from the taxi industry.

Since the introduction of taxi operator licensing in September 2012, the Agency's focus has been placed on ensuring full compliance so that all taxis and drivers are affiliated to licensed operators.

The DVA is developing a new compliance strategy to ensure that taxi operators, drivers and their vehicles are effectively regulated through a programme of compliance checks conducted at the roadside and at operator premises. The strategy will be supported by new operational policy and procedures, particularly in respect of the seizure of unlicensed taxis at the roadside, extending the range of offences that can be dealt with by way of Fixed Penalties as an alternative to prosecution, and enhancing the use of licensing suspension and revocation powers.

In the interim the Agency will continue to adopt a risk based approach to enforcement by developing its operational programmes based on information received from a variety of sources in respect of non-compliant operators and drivers. This intelligence led enforcement approach, together with operator and driver profiles, based on enforcement history, will ensure that enforcement resources continue to be deployed to address those issues of greatest concern.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning permissions for larger housing developments of market housing have been granted in each of the last five years, with a condition that some social housing is included in line with PPS12; and how much additional social housing was secured as a result in each year.

(AQW 42900/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department does not hold this information in such a manner where it can be easily or accurately identified. As such, it is not possible to provide accurate or robust information on this issue.

My Department is working closely with the Department for Social Development (DSD) to bring forward proposals for securing developer contributions towards affordable housing in Northern Ireland. DOE has published for public consultation draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22: 'Affordable Housing' which sets out planning policy for securing developer contributions towards affordable housing. This draft policy document should be considered alongside DSD's draft Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing consultation which sets out the housing policy governing the introduction of developer contributions for affordable housing.

Following completion of an extensive consultation exercise further research is required to explore the likely economic impact, both positive and negative, of the various options for developer contributions schemes that could be implemented. It is vital to get the detail and the timing of the proposals right if they are to deliver affordable homes by way of developer contributions through the planning system. The further research will assist in informing the delivery of a viable scheme of developer contributions.

In the meantime the Department continues to support the delivery of affordable housing through the planning system by ensuring that new council development plans help to facilitate the supply of social and affordable housing by zoning land or by indicating, through key site requirements, where a proportion of a site may be required for social housing to be delivered. I am satisfied that planning also continues to expedite the delivery of much needed social housing sites through the development management process.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of the Environment how many times has PPS12 Policy HS 2 been applied through the development control process in planning permissions granted, in each of the last five years; and how much land, or units, has been set aside for social housing as a result.

(AQW 42901/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department does not hold this information in such a manner where it can be easily or accurately identified. As such, it is not possible to provide accurate or robust information on this issue.

My Department is working closely with the Department for Social Development (DSD) to bring forward proposals for securing developer contributions towards affordable housing in Northern Ireland. DOE has published for public consultation draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22: 'Affordable Housing' which sets out planning policy for securing developer contributions towards affordable housing. This draft policy document should be considered alongside DSD's draft Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing consultation which sets out the housing policy governing the introduction of developer contributions for affordable housing.

Following completion of an extensive consultation exercise further research is required to explore the likely economic impact, both positive and negative, of the various options for developer contributions schemes that could be implemented. It is vital to get the detail and the timing of the proposals right if they are to deliver affordable homes by way of developer contributions through the planning system. The further research will assist in informing the delivery of a viable scheme of developer contributions.

In the meantime the Department continues to support the delivery of affordable housing through the planning system by ensuring that new council development plans help to facilitate the supply of social and affordable housing by zoning land or by indicating, through key site requirements, where a proportion of a site may be required for social housing to be delivered. I am satisfied that planning also continues to expedite the delivery of much needed social housing sites through the development management process.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to PPS12, which adopted development plans currently zone land for social housing or indicate, through key site requirements, where a proportion of a site may be required for social housing; and how many new social homes have been delivered through these mechanisms in each of the last five years.

(AQW 42902/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are two adopted area plans which currently zone land for social housing, or indicate through key site requirements where a proportion of a site may be required for social housing. These are the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan (BNMAP).

The Department does not routinely monitor how much social housing has been delivered through these mechanisms.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the effectiveness of PPS12, and broader planning policy, in supporting the delivery of social housing; and how he can ensure that social housing delivery is effectively supported through the new planning system.

(AQW 42903/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Member will be aware that the delivery of social housing is largely a matter for DSD, NIHE, Housing Associations and others. The planning system supports the delivery of social housing by allocating land for social housing in development plans and by taking decisions on planning applications, having regard to existing planning policies such as those in PPS12 'Housing in Settlements'.

I launched draft PPS22 'Affordable Housing' for public consultation on the 3 June 2014. Draft PPS22 seeks to secure developer contributions for affordable housing through the development management process. The Minister for Social Development issued his Department's consultation on 'Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing' at the same time and the public consultation on both documents ran until 23 September 2014.

Following consideration of the responses received to both consultations, I along with the Minister for Social Development, have agreed that it is vital to get the detail and the timing of our proposals right if they are to actually deliver the affordable homes that are so needed. Another outcome from the consultations was that further up-to-date and Northern Ireland specific research should be commissioned to measure the economic and social impacts of the various scheme for developer contributions models that could be implemented. DSD published the tender opportunity for the research in February and it is anticipated that the research project will be completed by August 2015. Upon completion of the research I will further consider my Department's policy approach for affordable housing.

I also issued the draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for public consultation in February 2014. The SPPS is a strategic document which consolidates and updates where necessary the existing suite of Planning Policy Statements. The SPPS will assist councils in their new 'decision-taking' and 'plan-making' roles in the new two-tier planning system, from 1 April 2015 when the majority of planning functions transfer from DoE to councils. The SPPS consolidates the policy provisions of PPS12 and seeks to ensure there will be an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone.

I am content that my Department does and will continue to support the delivery of affordable housing through the planning system, and councils, through their Local Development Plans will help to facilitate the supply of social and affordable housing by zoning land or by indicating, through key site requirements, where a proportion of a site may be required for social housing to be delivered. A key element of this will be the Housing Needs Assessment / Housing Market Analysis undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, or the relevant housing authority, which will identify the range of specific housing needs, including social and affordable housing requirements.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 42175/11-15, how many public bodies have been consulted on, or received a copy of, the report.

(AQW 42930/11-15)

Mr Durkan: When conducting the Environmental Impact Assessment Determination, officials consulted with NIEA: Natural Heritage.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment how he will work in conjunction with the Minister for Regional Development to ensure that there will be stronger enforcement action across all sections of the taxi industry.

(AQW 42981/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I will continue to work closely with the Minister for Regional Development, who has responsibility for street parking enforcement that includes the regulation of taxis at ranks and the use of bus lanes, to ensure that common taxi compliance and enforcement matters are given proper consideration in line with legislative provisions.

The Driver & Vehicle Agency is developing a new Compliance Strategy which will take into consideration the remaining strands of the draft taxi legislation once they are affirmed, to ensure that taxi operators, drivers and their vehicles are effectively regulated through a programme of compliance checks conducted at the roadside and at operator premises. This will include a review of working arrangements with other enforcement bodies including PSNI, HMRC and DRD to ensure that taxi enforcement is strengthened across all sections of the taxi industry.

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the number of planning applications in Newry and Armagh lodged by non-profit making organisations in 2014; and (ii) the name of each organisation.

(AQW 42989/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) There were eight applications lodged in Newry & Mourne and Armagh District Councils by non-profit making organisations in 2014.
- (ii) Table 1 provides the name of each organisation and the associated planning application reference number.

Table 1 Name of Organisation

Ref: Number	Name of Organisation
P/2014/0515/F	BCM NI
P/2014/0659/F	Northern Ireland Target Sports Association
P/2014/0916/F	Thomas Davis GFC
P/2014/0941/F	Ballinran Community Association Valley Rangers FC
P/2014/0966/F	Thomas Davis GFC
P/2014/1045/F	Warrenpoint Town FC
O/2014/0615/F	Armagh Harps GFC
O/2015/0007/F	Loughgall Youth FC

It should be noted that this information is provided from planning administrative systems and does not form part of published and validated DOE Official Statistics.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail all the activities planned in relation to Unconventional Gas/Oil Exploration and Extraction in Northern Ireland, as referred to on his Department's website.

(AQW 42995/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The reference on the Departmental website was drafted in February 2013 as part of the consultation process on the draft terms of reference for the all-island unconventional gas exploration and extraction research programme.

At the time of drafting, a company in Northern Ireland had indicated its intention to use hydraulic fracturing to explore for shale gas. The company also held a petroleum licence issued by the Department of Enterprise and Investment. I understand that this licence has since lapsed and my Department has no knowledge of the company's future intentions in Northern Ireland.

I can confirm that there are currently no applications for unconventional oil/gas exploration or extraction in Northern Ireland.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment how many buses/mini-buses have been found by Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) inspections to have had serious mechanical and/or vehicular defects of a hazardous nature; and what measures are taken by DVA to ensure that those vehicles are not used in a commercial capacity until such defects have been rectified.

(AQW 42999/11-15)

Mr Durkan: During the period 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2014, the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) imposed 172 Prohibition Notices on buses/mini-buses detected with serious mechanical and/or vehicular defect(s) of a hazardous nature.

Whenever a vehicle is found to have serious mechanical and/or vehicular defect(s), an Immediate Prohibition will be imposed restricting continued use of the vehicle on a road until the relevant defects have been repaired and the notice has been acquitted by a DVA Vehicle Examiner.

It is an offence to drive a vehicle in contravention of a Prohibition Notice which carries a maximum penalty of £5,000 upon conviction. Regular checks are carried out by enforcement officers to ensure that vehicles are not used in a commercial capacity until the defects have been rectified and any failure to adhere to the conditions listed on the notice will result in a breach of the prohibition which may lead to prosecution action.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment where the Driver and Vehicle Agency has found buses/mini-buses to have had serious mechanical and/or vehicular defects of a hazardous nature, what actions are taken to notify Education and Library Boards of these hazardous defects in the specified vehicles.

(AQW 43000/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) works closely with Education and Library Board (ELB) officials and will, when possible, involve officials during compliance spot checks at schools or where home to school transport is disrupted due to a vehicle being deemed unfit for continued service.

However, in circumstances where ELB officials are not present, DVA do not notify ELBs of vehicular defects due to constraints imposed by the Data Protection Act. All vehicle defects are brought to the attention of the driver and/or operator of the vehicle.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the new Omagh Hospital site, to detail (i) the methods of disposal of earth and excavation works materials from the site; and (ii) the location to which the material is taken.

(AQW 43002/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) was submitted by the developer on 11 Nov 2013 which states that a significant quantity of excavation materials, including topsoil and sub soil will be generated by the construction of the new Hospital.

The CEMP advises that the contractors will test the soils to determine the appropriate waste code and classify the material as inert, non-hazardous or hazardous. The material will then be dealt with appropriately through reuse or disposal to a landfill depending on the nature of the material. Any hazardous material will be dealt with under the Waste Regulations.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the introduction of new guidelines and regulations for solar farms.

(AQW 43120/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department determines planning applications for Renewable Energy developments, including solar energy, on a case by case basis, against planning policy such as that contained within Planning Policy Statement 18: Renewable Energy (PPS 18), its supplementary Best Practice Guidance and all other material considerations.

I issued the draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) for public consultation in February 2014, which includes a subject policy for renewable energy development. The draft SPPS is a strategic document which consolidates and updates an existing suite of Planning Policy Statements and is intended to assist councils in their new role as decision-taker and plan-maker from April 2015.

I will ensure that the final SPPS provides an appropriate level of strategic direction in relation to solar energy development. It remains my intention to publish the final SPPS prior to the transfer of the majority of planning powers to councils in April 2015, subject to Executive agreement.

Guidance notes will also be prepared in relation to the processing of renewable energy applications (including solar farms) to assist officers in the determination of such proposals.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of wind turbines being located in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

(AQO 7740/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am aware that renewable energy development brings many important environmental benefits and I believe that these benefits can be realised while still protecting our natural heritage. The aim of my Department's planning policy 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.

My Department determines planning applications for renewable energy development, including wind energy, on a case by case basis, against planning policy contained within Planning Policy Statement 18: Renewable Energy (PPS 18) along with its supplementary Best Practice Guidance, supplementary planning guidance 'Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes' and all other material considerations.

The current policy framework set out in RE1 of PPS18 'Renewable Energy' provides that development will be permitted where it does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts on a range of material planning considerations, including biodiversity, nature conservation or built heritage interests and visual amenity and landscape character. Whilst planning policy does not preclude wind energy development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) there is need for sensitive design and layout to mitigate visual impact and this is reinforced in the guidance associated with PPS18. This guidance promotes a cautious approach in relation to those designated landscapes which are of significant value, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site, and their wider settings..

The Renewable Energy subject policy contained within the draft SPPS reinforces this cautious approach and I believe that it is important we maintain this approach going forward. In such sensitive landscapes, it may be difficult to accommodate wind turbines without detriment to the Region's cultural and natural heritage assets.

I am aware of the strong and contrasting views in regards to renewable energy development which were reflected through the responses received following public consultation on the draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement.

I recognise going forward that it is important that the right balance is struck between facilitating development in appropriate locations in order to meet renewable energy targets whilst also protecting the exceptional quality of our natural environment. These are matters and issues that I have considered in finalising the SPPS.

As members will be aware the SPPS is a radical new approach to preparing regional planning policy which will result in a shorter, simpler, and more strategic policy framework for all users of the planning system.

I will shortly be bringing the final SPPS before the Executive Committee in time for the transfer of planning to councils next month.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his Department's plan for delisting buildings in Belfast.
(AQO 7741/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has been undertaking a review of the historic buildings of Northern Ireland since 1997. This 'Second Survey' provides detailed information and records. Its aim is to help to improve the protection of our historic listed buildings and, over the last three years, this work has been underway in Belfast.

An important part of the Survey is that all records are compared to the Department's published listing criteria to explain why a building is considered important. The ultimate test for listing is Article 42 of the Planning Order (1991). This says that a listed building must be of 'special architectural or historic interest'. If, on review, a building does not meet this test, then it should not be a listed building.

Thus my Department is not setting out to delist buildings in Belfast, indeed, since the start of its work in the city, the number of its listed buildings has risen from 998 to 1119 buildings - an increase of 120 - but, where a building no longer meets the test for such protection, it is not appropriate that it is retained on the list.

In regard to future plans, the current survey work in Belfast is nearing completion. As these records are evaluated, it is likely that there will be more proposals for the listing and delisting of historic buildings over coming months.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the proposed social housing at Brookfield Avenue, North Belfast, for people with mental health conditions.
(AQO 7743/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Planning application Z/2014/0293/F seeks to replace existing specialist supported housing at Brookhill Avenue with new facilities and involves the demolition of three detached buildings which are unlisted but which are located within an Area of Townscape Character (ATC).

The proposal has been assessed against PPS 6, Policy ATC 1 – Demolition Control in an Area of Townscape Character, which states that there is a presumption in favour of retaining any buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of an ATC, as they do in this case.

In order to progress the application I met with the applicants, their advisors and supporters of the proposal on 11 September 2014. At the meeting it was agreed that evidence would be submitted to support demolition of the buildings and a redevelopment scheme to meet the needs of the applicant. The submission will include the examination of alternative locations and solutions. It was agreed that in parallel, officials would engage with the applicant's architect in relation to design.

My officials have positively engaged with the applicants and their representatives and held meetings with them on 23/9/2014 and 9/1/2015. This has resulted in a number of amendments to the proposal. The most recent amended plans (received informally on 29/1/2015) are considered acceptable in terms of the proposed elevations onto Brookhill Avenue and the proposed facade retention of No. 3 Brookhill Avenue.

Concerns remain, however, with regard to the proposed changes to the rear of the building and the subsequent impact on the amenity of adjoining residential properties, namely No 58 Eia Street. The agent has been advised that a proposed three storey rear return, which includes 3 kitchen/ living areas, will have an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of No. 58 Eia Street in terms of overlooking and overbearing /dominance.

The applicant has agreed to submit further amended plans to address the impact on the amenity of No. 58 Eia Street and additional information to clarify how the existing buildings fail to meet the needs of the residents and thus justify the proposed demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the ATC.

I am confident these outstanding matters can be resolved in the near future to allow planning permission to be granted.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his Department's position and responsibility in relation to the cultivation of Genetically Modified Organisms.
(AQO 7744/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department is responsible for all matters relating to the deliberate release of GMOs into the environment, including the growing of GM crops, and it is our policy to oppose the growing of such crops. It is recognised that there are currently no GM crops approved for growing in Europe that would be attractive to growers here.

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the proposed development of Killeavy Castle.
(AQO 7745/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The planning application for the proposed development of Killeavy Castle was presented to the Planning Development Committee of the Newry & Mourne district Council on 5th February 2015 as an approval and this was agreed by the Council Committee. The planning approval decision notice is currently being drafted by the Department and will issue shortly.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of Newry and Mourne District Council's decision to name a children's play park in memory of a convicted terrorist.
(AQO 7746/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The naming of a facility by a district council is a matter for that council, as an independent legal entity. However, in the exercise of its functions, a district council must have regard to the provisions of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in relation to equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations.

In taking decisions councillors should also bear in mind their responsibilities when acting as a district council to represent the interests of all the residents of the local government district.

The provisions that I brought before the House on 24 February 2015 in the draft Local Government (Standing Orders) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 were designed to copper-fasten the provisions, for the protection of the interests of minority communities in council decision-making, contained in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. The absence of the approval of the draft Regulations, as a result of the tabling of a Petition of Concern, means that the protections that this House approved when it passed the 2014 Act will not be delivered, and a means for addressing issues similar to that which the member highlights, through the combination of call-in as provided for in the 2014 Act and qualified majority voting, is no longer available.

The Standing Orders Regulations, had they been approved, would provide the mechanism to require a decision called in by councillors on disproportionate adverse impact grounds to be taken by a qualified majority. This would mean that such decisions would require the support of 80 per cent of the members who are present and voting on the decision for it to be approved, and become council policy.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the effectiveness of the Voluntary Exit Scheme in the current economic circumstances.

(AQO 7752/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The closing date for applications to the Scheme is 27 March, therefore it is too early to assess its effectiveness at this stage and until all applications have been considered against the Scheme selection criteria. At the deadline for applications, all those who have applied will then go forward to be considered for selection.

I can confirm that the Scheme was successfully launched on 2 March 2015. Applications are invited until 5 pm on 27 March 2015. My officials will then work closely with Departments to manage the process of selection, in line with the published selection criteria. It is important to emphasise that this Scheme is entirely voluntary and not part of a process that will lead to compulsory redundancy.

All staff who apply will receive notification of the outcome of the selection process. Acceptance to leave will commit those staff to leave on the exit date notified. All staff selected to leave will be given three months' notice.

The Scheme has been developed to operate within the 2015/16 financial year only, subject to available resources and we anticipate those selected to leave under the Scheme will do so in tranches between 30 September 2015 and 31 March 2016. Trade Union Side has been consulted throughout the development of the Scheme, both at Departmental level and centrally through the Whitley Executive machinery. We will continue this consultation.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action Land and Property Services is taking to collect unpaid rates.

(AQO 7753/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: LPS takes a serious view of non-payment of rates and rigorously pursues all debt. LPS uses a number of information sources including Credit Reference Agencies to help identify the most appropriate means of collecting unpaid rates. However this must be balanced against assisting ratepayers who are genuinely struggling during this difficult period.

There has been an increase in the amount of relief paid both to domestic and non-domestic ratepayers. In addition, LPS will allow ratepayers to pay smaller amounts over a longer period of time. However this inevitably increases the level of rating debt at the end of the rating year.

While LPS will make efforts to support those who are struggling to pay, they must, and will, rigorously pursue those who don't pay. Where ratepayers fail to pay or do not enter into payment arrangements or break those arrangements, LPS will take Court action and seek to recover the debt through the Enforcement of Judgements Office or will instigate bankruptcy proceedings.

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline his priorities for the devolution of fiscal powers.

(AQO 7754/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive's top priority remains the transfer of corporation tax rate setting powers. This is potentially our most important economic lever that has the potential to bring about a step change in economic performance.

However, the Executive is also actively considering the case for devolving additional fiscal powers. My officials are examining a range of taxes to consider whether devolution could result in any clear economic or social benefit for Northern Ireland.

Following completion of these assessments, which are currently being updated to reflect recent developments with the Smith Commission Agreement, Autumn Statement 2014 and the St. David's Day Agreement, I will be putting recommendations to my Executive colleagues.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the revaluation of commercial premises for rating purposes.

(AQO 7755/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Firstly, I welcome the timely official publication last week on 5th March by Land & Property Services of the valuations of all 73,000 non domestic rateable properties in Northern Ireland. This follows the earlier release of draft valuations on 13 November last year that gave early access to the individual valuations on-line. So the new values are now in place for rate bills on 1 April.

Secondly, in order to assist ratepayers, the revaluation website now not only allows comparison between the new and current rateable valuations, but it now also provides a guide to the actual 2015/16 rate bill using the new rate poundages. Of course it is only when reliefs such as Small Business Rate Relief, and, where appropriate, District Rate Convergence is calculated on each individual rate bill, that the exact outcome will be known for each business ratepayer.

Thirdly, one of the important aspects of the revaluation that I must stress is that the revaluation itself will not cause an overall increase in rate bills – a revaluation is always a revenue neutral exercise. The real impact of the revaluation is that the amount of District Rates that the eleven new District Councils have decided to raise and the 1.4% additional Regional Rate revenue required for the Executive Budget, will now be shared out between non-domestic ratepayers on a fairer basis, using these new up to date rental values. And, as always anticipated, some will pay less and some will pay more.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQO 7756/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The closing date for applications to the Scheme is 27 March, therefore it is too early to assess its effectiveness at this stage and until all applications have been considered against the Scheme selection criteria. At the deadline for applications, all those who have applied will then go forward to be considered for selection.

I can confirm that the Scheme was successfully launched on 2 March 2015. Applications are invited until 5 pm on 27 March 2015. My officials will then work closely with Departments to manage the process of selection, in line with the published selection criteria. It is important to emphasise that this Scheme is entirely voluntary and not part of a process that will lead to compulsory redundancy.

All staff who apply will receive notification of the outcome of the selection process. Acceptance to leave will commit those staff to leave on the exit date notified. All staff selected to leave will be given three months notice.

The Scheme has been developed to operate within the 2015/16 financial year only, subject to available resources and we anticipate those selected to leave under the Scheme will do so in tranches between 30 September 2015 and 31 March 2016. Trade Union Side has been consulted throughout the development of the Scheme, both at Departmental level and centrally through the Whitley Executive machinery. We will continue this consultation.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions he has held with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment with regard to establishing whether the private sector can absorb the 20,000 jobs set to be reduced through the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQO 7757/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I have not met with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment specifically to discuss the absorption of jobs into the private sector as a result of the voluntary exit schemes across the public sector, although this issue is of interest to the Executive as a whole.

As this is a voluntary scheme, any impact, either internal to the public sector or within the private sector, can only be analysed once the schemes have closed and numbers and profiles of applicants is known.

Strengthening the private sector continues to be a long term objective of the Executive, and latest data suggests we are making good progress.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what impact the findings of the Smith Commission will have on the devolution of corporation tax.

(AQO 7758/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The recommendation of the Smith Commission not to devolve Corporation Tax to Scotland has very little relevance to Northern Ireland. The UK Government has accepted that the case for the transfer of Corporation Tax rate setting powers to Northern Ireland is much stronger given the land border with the Republic of Ireland.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the Department for Regional Development has requested priority funding for the upgrade of the Belfast – Derry/Londonderry railway line.

(AQO 7759/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: No priority funding request for the upgrade of the Belfast – Londonderry railway line has been requested by the Department for Regional Development.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the savings his Department will make as a result of the significantly reduced price of oil and gas.

(AQO 7760/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Within my Department, Properties Division is responsible for managing the Northern Ireland Civil Service Office Estate. Buildings in the estate are occupied on either a single or multiple occupancy basis. Single occupiers are responsible for paying the utility costs whereas Properties Division pays for the utilities in multiple occupancy buildings and distributes the costs among the occupiers.

There is a reduction of 31% in the unit cost of the heating oil invoices which DFP Properties Division paid in Jan/Feb 2015 compared with Jan/Feb 2014. As a result of this reduction in unit cost, there has been a saving of £15,643 for deliveries in Jan/Feb 2015.

The contract for the supply of natural gas is currently being retendered with the new contract commencing on the 1 April 2015. Any reduction in prices will be reflected in the successful tendered rates. At this stage those rates are not available.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the small business rate relief scheme will be affected by Reval 2015 NI.

(AQO 7761/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The rules for Small Business Rate Relief Scheme will be unaffected by the Revaluation and the same valuation (NAV) thresholds will apply for the 2015/2016 year.

The cost of the scheme is estimated to rise from £18m this financial year to £20m next year due to the growth in the NAVs of qualifying properties, which increases the average award. Current estimates suggest that Revaluation will result in approximately 1,338 properties (under 3% of those currently eligible) no longer qualifying due to an increase in NAV. However, other properties will come within the scope of the scheme for the first time.

The numbers are not known yet because other rules apply. For instance, Land and Property Services (LPS) has to exclude ratepayers who are 'multiples' or those in receipt of other relief.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on 'reviews' since May 2011.

(AQW 41380/11-15)

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The total expenditure incurred directly by my Department on 16 reviews since May 2011 amounts to £444,876 and includes the following:

- Child Sexual Exploitation Thematic Review;
- Cherry Tree House Nursing Home Review;
- Sir Liam Donaldson Report;
- Transforming Your Care;
- Maternity Review;
- Paediatric Review;
- Imaging Review ;
- Review of the Public Health Act (1967);
- Five year review of smoke free legislation;
- A review of the NIFRS 2011 firefighter recruitment campaign;
- Review of NISCC;
- Review of Medical Workforce;
- Overview Report on Case Management Reviews;
- Landscape Review of RQIA;
- Review of Agenda for Change posts;
- Review of JNF TOR; NIAST Partnerships Forum TOR;

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what funding has been provided to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender groups by each Health and Social Care Trust since 2011.

(AQW 42634/11-15)

Mr Wells: Details of funding provided directly by HSC Trusts is set out below. No direct funding has been provided by Northern, South East or Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust since 2011.

	2014/15 £	2013/14 £	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	Total £
Belfast	-	778	10,891	10,500	22,169
Western	21,947	21,947	21,947	21,730	87,571
Southern	-	-	-	8,500	8,500
	21,947	22,725	32,838	40,730	118,240

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41703/11-15, to detail the number of patients treated in the last three years, broken down by (i) cancer type; and (ii) advanced radiation treatment type. **(AQW 42683/11-15)**

Mr Wells: The number of patients treated with advance radiotherapy treatment at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in the last three years (2011/12 to 2014/15), broken down by the type of advanced radiation treatment is provided in Tables 1& 2. Information on the types of cancer treated using intensity modulated radiotherapy (IMRT) has been included in Table 1 however a numerical breakdown is not readily available. All patients treated in the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre using Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy (SABR) were treated for lung cancer.

As I referred to in my response to AQW 41703/11-15, Extra Contractual Referrals (ECRs) are considered on the clinical rationale for treatment and the applications submitted do not always include a definitive cancer diagnosis. In addition, detailed information on the final treatment provided for each ECR approved is not held centrally as due to the nature of specialist treatment, this is normally a clinical choice based on the specialist skill set of the consultant to whom the patient is being referred. However, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has, since 2012/13, maintained a record of proposed assessment/treatment modalities where these are contained in the ECR. The HSCB have advised that all consultant requests for treatment outside Northern Ireland are dealt with through the ECR process rather than an Individual Funding Request, which is aimed mostly at drug treatments.

The number of patients who have been referred for Stereotactic radiotherapy or Proton Beam Radiotherapy outside Northern Ireland via an approved ECR has been provided in Table 3 below.

The Northern Ireland Cancer Centre refers patients with a range of brain conditions to England for SABR in England via the Extra Contractual Referral (ECR) process. While currently all patients in Northern Ireland for whom proton therapy is indicated, are referred to centres outside the UK under the arrangements established by the National Specialist Commissioning Team, Proton Clinical Reference Panel. This mechanism applies to all UK countries.

The HSCB has advised that they are not aware of any requests for IMRT.

Table 1: Number of patients treated for cancer at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre using intensity modulated radiotherapy (IMRT)

Year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (Apr–Dec 14 inc)
Inverse planned IMRT	107 Prostate	143 Prostate Prostate+pelvic node Head & Neck	439 Prostate Prostate+pelvic node Head & Neck Gynaecological Misc.	479 Prostate Prostate+pelvic node Head & Neck Gynaecological Misc.
Forward Planned IMRT	444 Breast	825 Breast	927 Breast	754 Breast
Total IMRT	551	968	1366	1233

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Table 2: Number of patients treated for cancer at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre using stereotactic ablative body radiotherapy (SABR)

Year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (Apr – Feb 15 inc)
SABR Lung	0	0	10	19

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Table 3: Number of patients who have been referred for Stereotactic radiotherapy or Proton Beam Radiotherapy outside Northern Ireland via ECRs.

	2012/13		2013/14		2014/15 (April - Jan inc)	
	UK	Outside UK	UK	Outside UK	UK	Outside UK
Stereotactic Radiotherapy	66	-	75	-	64	-
Proton Beam Radiotherapy	-	-	-	4	-	2

Source: HSCB

Figures only include those ECRs where the HSCB can identify the proposed assessment/treatment modalities.

A breakdown of the type of cancers treated is not available.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41703/11-15, to detail the number of patients who have been referred for treatment outside Northern Ireland by an Extra Contractual Referral or an Individual Funding Request, broken down by (i) cancer type; and (ii) advanced radiation treatment type.

(AQW 42692/11-15)

Mr Wells: The number of patients treated with advanced radiotherapy treatment at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in the last three years (2011/12 to 2014/15), broken down by the type of advanced radiation treatment is provided in Tables 1 & 2. Information on the types of cancer treated using intensity modulated radiotherapy (IMRT) has been included in Table 1 however a numerical breakdown is not readily available. All patients treated in the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre using Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy (SABR) were treated for lung cancer.

As I referred to in my response to AQW 41703/11-15, Extra Contractual Referrals (ECRs) are considered on the clinical rationale for treatment and the applications submitted do not always include a definitive cancer diagnosis. In addition, detailed information on the final treatment provided for each ECR approved is not held centrally as due to the nature of specialist treatment, this is normally a clinical choice based on the specialist skill set of the consultant to whom the patient is being referred. However, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has, since 2012/13, maintained a record of proposed assessment/treatment modalities where these are contained in the ECR. The HSCB have advised that all consultant requests for treatment outside Northern Ireland are dealt with through the ECR process rather than an Individual Funding Request, which is aimed mostly at drug treatments.

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Forward Planned IMRT	444 Breast	825 Breast	927 Breast	754 Breast
Total IMRT	551	968	1366	1233

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Table 2: Number of patients treated for cancer at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre using stereotactic ablative body radiotherapy (SABR)

Year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (Apr – Feb 15 inc)
SABR Lung	0	0	10	19

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Table 3: Number of patients who have been referred for Stereotactic radiotherapy or Proton Beam Radiotherapy outside Northern Ireland via ECRs.

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	UK	Outside UK	UK	Outside UK	UK	Outside UK
Stereotactic Radiotherapy	66	-	75	-	64	-
Proton Beam Radiotherapy	-	-	-	4	-	2

Source: HSCB

- Figures only include those ECRs were the HSCB can identify the proposed assessment/treatment modalities.
- A breakdown of the type of cancers treated is not available.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has plans to extend a pilot scheme by his Department whereby extra funding was supplied for rural community pharmacies in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 42718/11-15)

Mr Wells: The pilot scheme was established and evaluated by the HSC Board and provided funding to support patient access to pharmacy services in predominantly rural areas.

I have been advised by the Board that they have notified the pharmacies involved that the pilot has reached a conclusion and that the Board is now considering next steps in conjunction with Community Pharmacy NI (CPNI). The Board expects that there will now be a transitional phase and a move to a longer-term arrangement to support the delivery of pharmaceutical services in rural areas.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount spent on prescription medicines in each Health and Social Care Trust in (i) 2013; and (ii) 2014.

(AQW 42729/11-15)

Mr Wells: The amount spent on medicines for secondary care in each Health and Social Care Trust in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014 is shown in the following table.

	2013 (Millions)	2014 (Millions)
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	£86.9	£92.2
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	£17.1	£19.5
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	£16.6	£18.4
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	£14.6	£15.8
Western Health & Social Care Trust	£15.2	£16.0

Data supplied by HSC Trusts.

The information supplied excludes medical gases, dressings and vaccines.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41982/11-15, to provide an answer to part (ii) and (iii) of the original question.

(AQW 42740/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Western HSC Trust has confirmed that the investigation of this incident highlighted the use of abbreviations on order forms and the failure to perform the correct checks before administration of the vaccine as contributing factors in this incident.

In response to the incident the Trust has initiated a series of recommendations within the Pharmacy and School Nursing Services. A vaccine order form which specifies the generic and brand name of the product has been introduced with immediate effect; coloured posters are now displayed in the Pharmacy showing the differences between vaccines and the age group/population they should be administered to; visual reference guides that clearly identify vaccine packaging have been

inserted into the reference documentation for the school health team; the importance of accurate supply and administration of vaccines has been re-emphasised to all staff; and hand held reference checklists for each school health vaccine have been implemented across the school nursing team.

In addition, the Trust has confirmed the outcomes of the investigation into this incident have been shared with colleagues across the Region.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the discussions he, or his departmental officials, have had with relevant authorities over the amount of rebate his Department would receive through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme in 2015/16.

(AQW 42780/11-15)

Mr Wells: Officials in my Department continue to have regular discussions with colleagues in the Department of Health, London, the other Devolved Administrations and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry over the funding the Department will receive from the rebate paid by individual pharmacy companies to the Department of Health in London under the provisions of the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the ME and Fibromyalgia pilot being undertaken by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust; and what plans he has to roll out services for patients across all Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 42819/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)/ Myalgic encephalopathy (ME) pilot focussed on these conditions and did not manage patients with fibromyalgia.

The pilot CFS/ME condition management service has been assessed as successful in terms of patient outcomes and satisfaction. A regional specification for the CFS/ME service in Northern Ireland has now been approved by the Health and Social Care Board as a basis for future commissioning. Recurrent funding will be allocated by the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust's Local Commissioning Group (LCG) for the continuation of the service in the Northern Trust and by the Belfast Trust's LCG to put the service in Belfast on a sustainable footing.

Expansion of the model to other HSC Trusts will be subject to affordability within the challenging financial position for Health and Social Care in 2015/16.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the proposed new Paediatric Centre at Craigavon Area Hospital in terms of (a) capacity; (b) staffing; and (c) when the first patient will be admitted.

(AQW 42849/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (a) The new Paediatric Centre at Craigavon Area Hospital will accommodate a 19 bed inpatient ward, ambulatory care unit and outpatients department.
- (b) The Southern Health and Social Trust identified an inpatient nurse staffing requirement of 36 in its business case.
- (c) The planned completion date for the centre is May 2017 however budget constraints in 2015-16 may impact on achieving this date.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41518/11-15, to detail the economic benefit of utilising the RM1599 Procurement Framework within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 42858/11-15)

Mr Wells: The economic benefit or value for money of any procurement mechanism, such as a framework arrangement, is context-specific and can only be tested through the cycle of business case preparation (in accordance with the principles of the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Assessment and Evaluation) and formal procurement. As this process of assessment is still ongoing in the Belfast trust, it is not possible at this stage to detail the benefits, or otherwise, of the trust using such an approach.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42360/11-15, whether he can guarantee that funding for voluntary and community organisations will be ring fenced for 2015/16.

(AQW 42859/11-15)

Mr Wells: Voluntary and Community organisations were made aware of the likelihood of changes to the existing core grant funding arrangements in the letter of offer issued to them by my Department in 2014/15. It should be noted that core grant relates to the £4.7m received by 67 voluntary and community sector organisations from my department to cover core costs. That is in addition to the £26m received from the wider HSC. Officials have been drafting an options paper and until I have the opportunity to consider the paper I am unable to confirm core grant funding arrangements for organisations in 2015/16.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether funding for the implementation of the recommendations in the Marshall Report has been budgeted for in 2015/16.

(AQW 42861/11-15)

Mr Wells: I fully recognise that implementation of some of the recommendations contained within the Marshall Report will generate costs, particularly those which are related to either service development or service enhancement. My Department is actively seeking to accommodate the costs in the 15/16 financial year. Also, I have asked for a costed implementation plan to be produced and submitted to me by end March 2015.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether direct payments are treated as taxable income.

(AQW 42866/11-15)

Mr Wells: HM Revenue & Customs does not regard Direct Payments as part of taxable income.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the criteria utilised by General Practice surgeries for the provision of home visits to patients.

(AQW 42867/11-15)

Mr Wells: The decision as to whether a home visit is required is made by GPs on the basis of the clinical need of each individual patient. This involves consideration of the nature of the illness, whether an examination is required and how urgently, in each individual case.

Consideration is given to the patient's ability to get to the surgery and while there are no hard and fast rules in this regard, usually someone who is housebound with illness or disability, whether acute or chronic, would be visited whereas those who are able to come to the surgery would be asked to do so.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in light of the outcome in the judicial review over Bangor Community Hospital, whether he acknowledges that any proposed closure, even temporary, requires consultation; and whether his Department is now committed to respecting this practice.

(AQW 42882/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has fully accepted the Court's ruling in respect of the judicial review of the decision to temporarily close the GP Ward in Bangor Community Hospital. These were exceptional circumstances given the need to make immediate savings in order to ensure patient safety due to the scale of the in-year 2014-15 financial challenge facing my Department.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the emergency ambulance provision in North Down.

(AQW 42886/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service provides emergency ambulance provision across Northern Ireland on a 24/7 basis, 365 days a year. At all times, the nearest available resource will be dispatched to attend a call and this may come from an area outside North Down.

The shift profile for emergency ambulance resources stationed within the North Down area is detailed below.

Bangor Ambulance Station

Monday	1 x A&E ambulance 08:00 to 20:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 19:30 to 07:30 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 20:00 to 08:00 hours
Tuesday	1 x A&E ambulance 08:00 to 20:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 19:30 to 07:30 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 20:00 to 08:00 hours
Wednesday	1 x A&E ambulance 08:00 to 20:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 09:30 to 21:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 20:00 to 08:00 hours
Thursday	1 x A&E ambulance 08:00 to 20:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 10:30 to 22:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 20:00 to 08:00 hours
Friday	1 x A&E ambulance 07:30 to 19:30 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 08:00 to 20:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 19:30 to 07:30 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 20:00 to 08:00 hours

Saturday	1 x A&E ambulance 07:30 to 19:30 hours 1 X A&E ambulance 08:00 to 20:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 19:30 to 07:30 hours x A&E ambulance 20:00 to 08:00 hours
Sunday	1 X A&E ambulance 08:00 to 19:30 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 08:00 to 20:00 hours 1 x A&E ambulance 20:00 to 08:00 hours

Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs)

Monday to Friday daily, 2 RRVs: 16 hours of cover distributed between the hours of 08:00 to 12:00midnight.

Saturday and Sunday daily, 2 RRVs: 15 hours of cover distributed between the hours of 09:00 to 12:00midnight.

Unused Prescriptions

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the annual value and amount of prescriptions that go unused.

(AQW 42889/11-15)

Mr Wells: No record is kept of the number of prescriptions that have been issued by prescribers and not presented to pharmacists for dispensing. Furthermore, not all unused medicines are returned to pharmacies. Therefore the exact value of total medicines that go unused cannot be measured. However, evidence from research undertaken by the University of York suggests that the estimated costs of medicines waste in Northern Ireland could be around £18m a year.

I have been advised by each of the HSC Trusts that they are fully aware of the need to minimise medicines wastage and a range of systems and initiatives are in place to keep wastage to a minimum.

My Department is also currently developing a Medicines Optimisation Quality Framework. One of the key challenges which the framework will seek to address is medicines wastage and the need for monitoring and reducing waste across various care environments.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the staffing levels of the Ambulance Service, and Ambulance coverage, within the (i) Cookstown; and (ii) Magherafelt districts, in each of the last six months.

(AQW 42908/11-15)

Mr Wells: In the tables below, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) have provided information on the number of staff, the number of shifts per month and the ambulance cover for the Cookstown and Magherafelt ambulance stations for each of the last six months

It should be noted that this information is based on ambulance stations that are located within the Cookstown and Magherafelt areas, however, NIAS have indicated that at all times the nearest available ambulance will be dispatched to attend a call within these districts and this may not be from either the Cookstown or Magherafelt stations.

Staffing levels**Cookstown Ambulance Station – 4 Paramedics, 3 Emergency Medical Technicians**

	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-14
Paramedic Shifts Planned per Month	62	60	62	60	62	62
Actual No. of Paramedic Shifts per Month	57	71	68	66	65	65
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Shifts Planned per Month	62	60	62	60	62	62
Actual No. of EMT Shifts per Month	41	49	50	53	57	52
Total Staff Shifts Planned per Month	124	120	124	120	124	124
Actual No. of Staff Shifts per Month	98	120	118	119	122	117

Magherafelt Ambulance Station – 19 Paramedics, 5 Emergency Medical Technicians

	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-14
Paramedic Shifts Planned per Month	155	150	155	150	155	155
Actual No. of Paramedic Shifts per Month	165	178	196	169	163	200
EMT Shifts Planned per Month	155	150	155	150	155	155

	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-14
Actual No. of EMT Shifts per Month	85	78	92	103	103	93
Total Staff Shifts Planned per Month	310	300	310	300	310	310
Actual No. of Staff Shifts per Month	250	256	288	272	266	293

Ambulance Cover**Cookstown Ambulance Station**

Ambulance Cover	Aug 2014	Sep 2014	Oct 2014	Nov 2014	Dec 2014	Jan 2015
Day Shift Vehicles per Day 1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Night Shift Vehicles per Day 2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Planned Day Shift Vehicles per Month	31	30	31	30	31	31
Actual Day Shift Vehicles per Month	28.5	31	29	30.5	31	29.5
Planned Night Shift Vehicles per Month	31	30	31	30	31	31
Actual Night Shift Vehicles per Month	26.5	29	30	31	30	29

Source: NIAS

- 1 Day Shift: 08:00 to 20:00 hours
- 2 Night Shift: 20:00 to 08:00 hours

Magherafelt Ambulance Station

Ambulance Cover	Aug 2014	Sep 2014	Oct 2014	Nov 2014	Dec 2014	Jan 2015
Planned RRV per Month 1	31	30	31	30	31	31
Actual RRV per Month	31	30	28	27	27	27
Day Shift Vehicles per Day	3	3	3	3	3	3
Night Shift Vehicles per Day	2	2	2	2	2	2
Planned Day Shift Vehicles per Month 2	93	90	93	90	93	93
Actual Day Shift Vehicles per Month	74.5	83.5	86.5	80	79.5	89
Planned Night Shift Vehicles per Month 3	62	60	62	60	62	62
Actual Night Shift Vehicles per Month	44.5	49	57	56	52.5	57.5

Source: NIAS

- 1 Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV) Shift Patterns: 08:00 to 20:00 hours or 14:00 to 24:00 hours; 09:00 to 20:00 hours or 15:00 to 24:00 depending on the day of the week.
- 2 Daily Day Shift Patterns: Monday to Saturday 07:30 to 19:30 hours; 08:00 to 20:00 hours and 09:00 to 20:00 hours; Sunday 07:30 to 19:30 hours, 08:00 to 18:30 hours and 08:00 and 20:00 hours.
- 3 Night Shift Patterns: Monday to Sunday 19:30 to 07:30 hours and 20:00 to 08:00 hours.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact of the proposed cut to the funding of the Public Health Agency on preventative health measures; and how this decision aligns with the need to invest to save.

(AQW 42914/11-15)

Mr Wells: It is not possible to be definitive at this time. The PHA is currently developing specific proposals for the Department's consideration to address its savings target. Where possible, these will be focused on non-public facing areas and will seek to minimise the impact on front line service delivery. It is also anticipated that savings can be identified through the Permanent Secretary-led Review of Administration.

Both Transforming Your Care and Making Life Better: A Whole System Public Health Framework for Northern Ireland acknowledge the need for preventative measures and early intervention in the treatment of illness to ensure better outcomes for patients and a more efficient use of resources. My Department and the HSC remain committed to these aims.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the cost to each Health and Social Care Trust of (a) heating; and (b) electricity in 2014; and (ii) for the capital costs and details of the five most cost effective projects which his Department could undertake to generate its own energy or reduce energy costs.

(AQW 42915/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- i Details of the costs of heating and electricity for each Health and Social Care Trust for the financial year 2013/14 are set out in the table below;

	2013/14 £m	
	Heating	Electricity
Belfast	8.1	9.1
Western	4.3	3.5
Southern	4.0	2.9
Northern	2.7	3.0
South Eastern	3.1	2.9
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	0.08	0.06
	22.28	18.56

- ii. As stated in my response to AQW 40559/11-15, this Department occupies a building that is part of the Northern Ireland Civil Service estate to which the Department of Finance and Personnel is responsible for the identification and implementation of energy projects.

In relation to Health and Social Care Trusts, in recent years, Trusts have successfully identified and implemented a number of energy projects including Combined Heat and Power, Photovoltaic panels, heat recovery systems and lighting upgrades that either generate energy or utilise energy in a more efficient manner.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was spent on invest to save measures in each of the last three years; and how much is projected to be spent in 2015/16.

(AQW 42916/11-15)

Mr Wells: Efforts are continuously being made right across health and social care to invest wisely and deliver efficiencies.

Expenditure specifically on Executive approved Invest to Save schemes in each of the last three years and projected expenditure for 2015/16 is set out below:

Invest to Save Scheme	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15* £'000	2015/16 £'000
Reform and Modernisation	5,808	2,441	1,086	-
Transforming Your Care	18,990	-	-	-

*Estimated for 2014/15

During the period in question there were also a number of Pharmacy Invest to Save schemes, which were funded from the Department's programme budgets, amounting to just over £1 Million during the two years from 2012-13 to 2013-2014.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to reduce waiting times for Occupational Therapist referrals within the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 42951/11-15)

Mr Wells: I have been advised by the Western Health and Social Care Trust that it has 1,487 clients waiting in excess of 9 weeks for Occupational Therapy services as at 2 March 2015. The majority of clients are waiting on Community Occupational Therapy, Children's Occupational Therapy and Out-Patient Rheumatology.

The Trust is working hard to deliver the shortest waiting time achievable, which includes the following range of on-going activities:

- A prioritisation system to ensure those assessed at highest clinical risk receive priority treatment as staff levels permit;
- Staff activity and performance is monitored to ensure optimum utilisation of available resources;
- Waiting lists are validated on a regular basis to ensure appropriateness and also to monitor clients' changing needs;
- An additional range of clinics have been put in place such as wheelchair and seating assessment clinics;

- The Trust is making best use of available technology to support efficient and more responsive decision-making around adaptations and equipment provision processes; and
- The Trust has increased its partnership working with statutory and community & voluntary providers, who may also be in a position to offer support to clients in their community.

An Allied Health Professionals demand and capacity exercise has also been conducted by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and the Health & Social Care Board and PHA are meeting with each of the Trusts to share the findings from this exercise and to agree the steps to be taken to address the waiting time position going forward.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Southern Health and Social Care Trust will consider increasing the number of community equipment items which can be medically cleaned and reissued, rather than being disposed.

(AQW 42968/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Southern Health & Social Care Trust has undertaken a detailed review of its community equipment service with the aim of improving access to equipment it provides to individuals, compliance with legislative guidelines and value for money. It was found that over 80% of items issued by the Trust in a typical year are categorised as low cost items, with many costing less than £20, where the cost of decontamination, transportation and re-issue of such items can be up to 3 times the cost of purchasing the items new. For higher cost items such as electric beds, hoists etc... the equipment is collected from clients, decontaminated and re-issued again. The Trust will continue to keep under review, the items of equipment which can be decontaminated and re issued and those which can be used and then disposed.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of (i) the prevalence and cost of fraud across the Health Service; and (ii) the activities of Counter Fraud Services.

(AQW 42969/11-15)

Mr Wells: There has been no statistical analysis carried out specifically in relation to healthcare fraud/loss in Northern Ireland and as such, it is not possible to quantify its prevalence and cost to the HSC.

The Counter Fraud and Probity Services (CFPS) team within the Business Services Organisation provides a comprehensive range of specialist services to HSC bodies and on behalf of DHSSPS, including:

- Probity/verification activities (delivering assurances in relation to Primary Care expenditure);
- Counter fraud criminal investigations on behalf of all HSC bodies and DHSSPS;
- Verification of patient exemptions claimed from statutory dental and ophthalmic charges;
- Fraud prevention (including HSC lead on raising fraud awareness);
- Fraud detection, including the newly established forensic data analytics service; and
- A new Access to Health and Social Care team, which provides advice and guidance to HSC staff in respect of patients' entitlement to accessing free healthcare.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration he has given to enable Nursing and Midwifery Students to access loans from the Student Loan Companies.

(AQW 43014/11-15)

Mr Wells: There is no reason to provide access to student loan arrangements for nursing and midwifery students given that my Department pays tuition fees in full and provides non-means tested bursaries to all undergraduates on a commissioned university place. In addition, a range of means tested allowances are available depending on individual circumstances.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the safeguarding mechanisms in place to ensure the proper categorisation of patients responded to by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

(AQW 43047/11-15)

Mr Wells: The triaging of emergency 999 calls includes safeguarding mechanisms to ensure the proper categorisation of patients responded to by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). Ambulances are dispatched based on the clinical need of the patient. Emergency calls are prioritised according to the seriousness of the patient's condition as follows:

Category A	Potentially immediately life-threatening
Category B	Serious but not immediately life-threatening
Category C	Non-life threatening/serious

The call categorisation is based on a formal system called Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS). This employs a set of questions which guide the ambulance call-taker to obtain information from a caller in order to allow the urgency of any call to be determined in a standardised way. Based on this triage process, the call will be prioritised and categorised using the categorisation standards which are set nationally every year by the Emergency Care Prioritisation Group. AMPDS protocols are continually developing in line with clinical research and new clinical guidelines.

NIAS also responds to requests from GPs and other healthcare professionals for emergency ambulance transport, which can be classified as Category A, B or C as outlined above, and 'urgent' requests where there is no immediate threat to life or limb. Calls can also be classified as 'routine', which relate mainly to inter-hospital transfers. The categorisation of these calls is based on the healthcare professional answering a specific and shorter series of questions.

NIAS call handlers receive comprehensive training on all aspects of AMPDS including triage of 999 calls and call handling, and must achieve Emergency Medical Dispatcher certification from the International Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch prior to handling any 999 calls, with re-certification taking place every two years and subject to regular review of calls to quality assure responses. NIAS has in place a programme of ongoing quality assurance whereby calls handled by control room staff are regularly reviewed for performance against the standards laid down by the academy, with feedback being given and any extra training needs addressed.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact the proposed Goods, Facilities and Services legislation will have on the provision of health and social care services.

(AQW 43048/11-15)

Mr Wells: I understand that the main aim of the proposed Goods, Facilities and Services legislation is to outlaw unjustifiable age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services and exercising public functions. However, it is not possible to offer an assessment of the impact of the proposed legislation on the provision of health and social care services until a final version of the Bill has been prepared and available for scrutiny.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he or his departmental officials have had with the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and their respective departmental officials, on the impact of the proposed Goods, Facilities and Services legislation on the provision of health and social care services.

(AQW 43049/11-15)

Mr Wells: OFMdFM officials commenced pre-consultation engagement with DHSSPS in April 2012 since when there has been regular contact between the departments.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made, under Transforming Your Care, to introduce innovative ways to tackle the growing problem of diabetes.

(AQW 43102/11-15)

Mr Wells: The increasing number of people with diabetes in Northern Ireland presents a challenge in terms of ensuring continued high quality treatment and care for those living with the condition – and the need for a greater focus on helping prevent people developing Type 2 diabetes.

My Department has recently completed a review of the 2003 CREST/Diabetes UK Joint Framework report on Diabetes Care in Northern Ireland in the 21st Century.

The review which, was led by the Chief Medical Officer, published its report in June 2014. The report highlighted that there had been broad progress in the treatment and care of people living with diabetes since the 2003 Joint Framework. A key recommendation of the review was that a Strategic Direction and associated Action Plan for diabetes should be developed which would encompass the findings and recommendations identified by the review team, including a recommendation that a managed approach be taken to the introduction of new innovations. A Steering Group has been established to take forward the development of the Strategic Direction and Action Plan.

Work to improve treatment and care for people with diabetes is also being taken forward by the 17 Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) working across Northern Ireland. Integrated Care Partnerships are a key part of the service integration agenda outlined in Transforming Your Care. The initial focus of ICPs is on the frail elderly and long term conditions, namely diabetes, stroke care and respiratory conditions.

ICPs have been reviewing diabetes care pathways in their respective areas to identify opportunities to enhance service provision and improve outcomes for people with diabetes. ICPs are focussing on risk stratification, information sharing, care planning and evaluation, supported by action plans to deliver more integrated care.

A number of ICP diabetes service improvements have been funded to date and work is underway to implement further initiatives including:

- Diabetes and pre-diabetes case finding and management in primary care and enhanced community specialist nursing teams to manage and deliver care for patients with complex needs (Southern area);
- Structured education programmes for those at risk, and GPs and practice nurses and an Integrated Diabetes Foot Care pathway to provide early identification and multi-disciplinary assessment for all diabetic patients at risk of developing foot conditions (Western area);
- An enhanced Diabetic Foot Care pathway, including a multi-disciplinary team to manage foot disease and cardiovascular risk integrated with regional vascular services to help reduce amputation risk (Northern area).

ICP proposals for improved diabetes care within the Belfast and South Eastern areas are awaiting final approval by Local Commissioning Groups.

Progress has also been made in the application of innovative technology, including insulin pumps and the use of remote telemonitoring. In 2011/2012 funding was identified to procure additional insulin pumps for adults and children, to be phased in over a four year period to 2015/2016. The most recent figures available show that 327 children and 450 adults are using insulin pumps. A further expansion in the number of patients using insulin pumps will continue for the next 2 years when the situation will be reviewed.

The Remote Telemonitoring Northern Ireland contract has been accessed by a wide range of patients with various conditions, including diabetes, who use monitoring devices at home to send results via telephone to their nurse/doctor. This empowers people to take better control of their diabetes, reducing the risk of serious complications or avoidable hospital admission. Almost 1,000 people with diabetes have used the telemonitoring service between its introduction in December 2011 and the end of January 2015.

Through Transforming Your Care, the Health and Social Care Board is supporting a pilot project in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust using an innovative Diabetes Insulin Guidance Service. The device, which is provided alongside nursing support, uses a simple finger print blood test combined with smart technology to help people regulate their own insulin dosage. Over 270 Type 2 diabetes patients in the South Eastern Trust Area are currently benefitting from this innovative project.

Preventing weight gain and achieving weight loss where necessary are important in helping to prevent the development of obesity-related conditions such as diabetes.

The regional obesity framework, A Fitter Future for All, 2012-2022, aims to tackle the issue of overweight and obesity through multi-sectoral engagement including environment, education, food production and advertising, as well as through inspiring personal responsibility. A key outcome is increased public awareness and knowledge in relation to healthy lifestyle messages.

The Framework is currently undergoing a 3 year review and it is expected that a set of updated outcomes to tackle the issue of overweight and obesity to cover the period 2015-2019 will be published online in the next few months.

The Public Health Agency, working in partnership with community and voluntary sector organisations, is directly involved in driving action across a range of settings to tackle obesity. This includes innovative initiatives to prevent and/or reduce obesity, to increase rates of breastfeeding and to increase physical activity and encourage dietary changes to meet Government recommendations for both physical activity and healthy eating.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to make changes to allow couples with fertility problems to access three cycles of fertility treatment under the Health Service.

(AQW 43122/11-15)

Mr Wells: In February 2013 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) published a Clinical Guideline (CG156) on Fertility which recommends that women should be offered three full cycles of IVF. The Guideline was considered and endorsed by my Department in November 2013. It is now the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Board, as commissioner of services, to implement the guidance. The Board is currently considering how best to implement CG156 within the context of the very challenging 2015/16 financial position and competing health and social care priorities. While the Board is committed to achieving the full implementation of CG156 as soon as possible, the financial situation is likely to impact on its ability to increase the number of publicly funded IVF cycles in the short term.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on any progress or consultation regarding a new Lurgan Medical Centre.

(AQW 43147/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Lurgan Community Treatment & Care Centre remains one of three priority hubs within the Strategic Investment Plan for the Southern Trust area. Decisions on the roll out of the Strategic Investment Plan will not be taken until the Pilot Projects at Lisburn and Newry have been evaluated this summer. After that the completion of these treatment and care centres is dependent upon both consideration of their relative priority against other projects and future availability of capital funding.

As I am sure you will understand, the current financial position for the Northern Ireland Executive and my Department are very challenging. This has resulted in restrictions on both my Department's capital spending programme and as such there is no capital funding available for projects other than those which are currently in progress.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41383/11-15, what action his Department will take to support the Action on Hearing Loss Hear to Help service to ensure that it continues to provide support to hearing aid users.

(AQW 43160/11-15)

Mr Wells: In view of the current financial challenges, my Department and the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) are jointly reviewing all non-recurrent funding including pilot funding provided by the HSCB to Action On Hearing Loss' Hear to Help Service.

Once funding for the 2015/16 financial year is confirmed, I understand that the HSCB will actively consider continuation funding for existing projects including "Hear to Help" to enable appropriate evaluation to take place of the particular service provided.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 40395/11-15, to detail (i) when he expects the options paper presented by the Western Health and Social Care Trust to the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board in January 2014, and the follow-up paper submitted in July 2014, to be considered. (AQW 43167/11-15)

Mr Wells: I have been advised that the Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency have considered the Trust options paper and have asked the Western Trust to put in place the consultant led model supported by middle grade medical cover in line with Trust proposals. It may take some time to recruit substantively to these posts and Trust will maintain locum arrangements in the meantime.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made in relation to the provision of additional car parking facilities for patients and staff at the Ulster Hospital. (AQW 43168/11-15)

Mr Wells: An additional 250 car parking spaces were provided for staff at the Ulster Hospital site from 1 September 2014 when the South Eastern HSC Trust opened a staff car park on the old Tor Bank School site.

As a result of transferring staff car parking to the Tor Bank site, this has created additional spaces for visitors and patients within the Terraced Car Park. The Trust has advised that car parking spaces for visitors and patients are now almost always available within the Terraced Car Park.

A Working Group located within the Trust is continuing to develop a car parking master plan and are specifically developing plans to potentially provide car parking to the west of the site. Any proposals for further public parking on the site would be subject to the normal processes involving planning permission.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41597/11-15, how much of the operative costs are for providing care for the permanent residents at Northfield House. (AQW 43172/11-15)

Mr Wells: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has provided the information set out in the table below on the care costs for the permanent residents at Northfield House for each of the last five financial years:

Year:	Care Costs
2009/2010	£886,625
2010/2011	£623,755
2011/2012	£499,263
2012/2013	£348,174
2013/2014	£263,896

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what drug rehabilitation facilities are available for children in Northern Ireland; (ii) where facilities are located; (iii) the number of spaces currently available in these facilities; (iv) the criteria which must be met before a child is referred into these facilities; and (v) how a child can be referred to these facilities. (AQW 43210/11-15)

Mr Wells: Drug and alcohol misuse services for young people cover a wide range of areas from education, information and awareness raising, through to early intervention and harm reduction, community-based counselling and mentoring services right up to treatment and support. Where appropriate, these services work in partnership with other Health and Social Care teams to respond to the complex needs of clients, including Children and Family Services, Mental Health teams, Probation and Criminal Justice teams. The full range of alcohol and drug services available across Northern Ireland, and their locations and contact details, can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/drug-and-alcohol-directories-services>. It should be noted that work is underway to commission a range of updated services in light of new guidelines and evidence, and it is anticipated these will be in place from July 2015.

Given the nature of these services, it is not possible to say how many spaces are available as they cover a variety of different approaches and treatment models. The criteria for accessing these services or being referred differs between the service types – but the initial approach should be through the young person's GP, who can refer them to the appropriate care pathway. In addition, some of the services accept self-referrals (such as the young people's counselling services in each Trust area).

In a majority of cases, children and young people with the most complex substance misuse problems also have co-occurring issues such as mental health, trauma, criminal justice involvement, relationship problems, etc. This means that it is therefore important that such young people can access holistic services which should be supported by in-reach from alcohol and drug misuse specialist input. The Child & Adolescent Inpatient Unit at Beechcroft, which has 33 beds and is based at the Forster Green Hospital, is the dedicated regional mental health inpatient facility for children and young people under the age of 18 in Northern Ireland. If a young person is admitted to Beechcroft, and as well as mental health problems they also have

substance misuse problems, they are supported on an in-reach basis by the Drugs and Alcohol Misuse Mental Health Service (DAMMHS) team.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the evidence in relation to best practice in drug rehabilitation for young people; and for his assessment of whether the current provision of services in Northern Ireland can be defined as best practice.

(AQW 43211/11-15)

Mr Wells: Young people will require a range of services – from information, education and awareness raising through to treatment and support. Evidence shows that very few young people actually develop physical dependency.

The research shows limited evidence for the effectiveness of residential treatment services for young people – with community-based services being deemed as effective as or more effective than residential treatment for the majority of young people. Guidance from the former National Treatment Agency in the UK states that those young people who do use drugs or alcohol problematically are likely to be vulnerable and experiencing a range of problems, including mental health issues, trauma, and relationship issues. It is therefore important that such young people can access holistic services – including child and adolescent mental health services – which should be supported by in-reach specialist input and support to address the substance misuse element of their issues. This is the approach currently undertaken in Northern Ireland. For the very small number of young people who may need residential treatment just for alcohol and drug misuse, an Extra Contractual Referral to a service outside Northern Ireland may be appropriate – there were no such referrals in 2013/14 (the last year figures are currently available for).

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of children referred for drug rehabilitation treatment in each of the last three years; and (ii) the percentage of children referred who have not relapsed into drug use.

(AQW 43213/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- i Information on the number of children referred for drug rehabilitation treatment is not available. However, the number of young people aged under eighteen who presented for treatment for drug misuse to Addiction Treatment Service providers is collected through the Drugs Misuse Database (DMD). The latest publication is available at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dmd-2013-14.pdf>.

The number of young people aged under eighteen who presented for treatment for drug misuse in each of the last three years is given in the table below.

Year	Under 18s who presented for treatment for drug misuse
2011/12	217
2012/13	198
2013/14	174

Source: Drugs Misuse Database

- ii. Information on the percentage of children referred who have not relapsed into drug use is not available.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many people have been diagnosed as HIV positive; and (ii) how much has been spent treating HIV, in each of the last five years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 43229/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (i) Information on the number of people in Northern Ireland who have been diagnosed as HIV positive in the last five years is detailed in the below table. Information is not available broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

Year	Number of new HIV diagnoses
2009	67
2010	84
2011	81
2012	95
2013	94

- (ii) Information on how much has been spent treating HIV in each of the last five years is not available.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with dementia in each of the last 5 years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 43230/11-15)

Mr Wells: Dementia is one of the disease registers in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), the purpose of which is to reward contractors for the provision of quality care. Further information on the QOF can be found at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/qof.htm>, whilst all available QOF data can be accessed on the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's website at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/qof/qof-achievement.htm>.

In relation to dementia, the contractor establishes and maintains a register of patients diagnosed with dementia. The total number of people on the dementia register in Northern Ireland, at 31 March in each of the last 5 years, is shown in Table 1 below. QOF data is not broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, but can be broken down by Local Commissioning Group (LCG); this information is also in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of people on the dementia register, at 31st March, in each of the last five years

LCG	Number of people on the QOF dementia register at 31st March:				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Belfast	2,596	2,667	2,905	2,925	2,975
South Eastern	2,112	2,325	2,431	2,513	2,658
Northern	2,410	2,494	2,582	2,728	2,932
Southern	1,880	1,988	2,134	2,215	2,301
Western	1,639	1,772	1,830	1,897	1,945
Northern Ireland	10,637	11,246	11,882	12,278	12,811

Source: Quality & Outcomes Framework (QOF)

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provisions he has made in terms of ambulance cover, specifically for the constituency of Foyle, ahead of the planned industrial action of 13 March 2015.

(AQW 43272/11-15)

Mr Wells: I am advised by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust that it is currently engaged in proactive talks with Trade Unions to agree protocols and protect essential and emergency services.

It is anticipated these discussions will be finalised on Monday, 9 March 2015 and will cover the whole of Northern Ireland including Foyle.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether Health Service administrative staff offered voluntary redundancy under the forthcoming Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) will have the same monetary value as the VES being applied to Civil Servants.

(AQW 43286/11-15)

Mr Wells: As proposals for a Voluntary Exit Scheme are still under development I cannot advise at this stage on the monetary value under the Voluntary Exit Scheme for health and social care staff.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional risk to health and dignity his Department has considered in regards to patients in beds in hospital corridors.

(AQW 43295/11-15)

Mr Wells: During periods of escalation, Health and Social Care Trusts will expand their capacity by increasing the number of beds available. I expect Trusts to ensure that any additional beds have the appropriate staffing levels and are in clinical areas that do not compromise the safety and/or dignity of patients. It is not appropriate for patients to be placed in beds situated in corridors.

Unfortunately, situations may arise where patients who require an inpatient bed are unable to access that bed immediately. In such cases, a bed is placed in the next most suitable environment until the right bed is available. Any areas where there are additional beds will have nursing and medical input, and a risk assessment is carried out to ensure patients' needs are responded to. Nurses and medical staff, as well as managers, will continually assess the situation.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42685/11-15, whether such increases in demand will be accommodated within his budget for 2015/16.

(AQW 43306/11-15)

Mr Wells: As far as possible such increases in demand will be accommodated within my budget for 2015/16. However, the budget planning process for 2015/16 is still ongoing and the extent or type of services that will be funded is not yet known.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42685/11-15, to detail the data sources from which his Department and the Health and Social Care Board draw on to assess future needs of recipients of domiciliary care packages.

(AQW 43307/11-15)

Mr Wells: A range of data sources are used to determine the likely future pattern of need for domiciliary care, including the Northern Ireland Census 2011, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 2012 Population Projections, the DHSSPS Health Survey Northern Ireland 2013/14, HSC Trust "Community Care" data returns and the DHSSPS Annual "Domiciliary Care Services for Adults" report.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he became aware that his Department would receive £30 million in rebate from the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme in 2015/16.

(AQW 43308/11-15)

Mr Wells: Payments made under the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) are based on sales of the majority of licensed branded medicines. The amount that will be received in 2015/16 will depend on the level of UK sales of relevant licensed branded medicines in that period. The Department of Health published revised estimates for PPRS 2015/16 payments in December 2014. Payments will be apportioned to each of the devolved administrations on the basis of the available prescribing data for that country for the same period as the income relates.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many young people have been treated in Beechcroft for drug and alcohol addiction, since the facility opened.

(AQW 43311/11-15)

Mr Wells: No young people have been treated solely for drug or alcohol addiction in Beechcroft since the facility opened. Young people being treated in Beechcroft are likely to have a range of social and emotional problems, including substance misuse, for which they need specialist support.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the HC3 Certificate, whether the certificate excludes any dental treatment; and if so, to list the exclusions.

(AQW 43352/11-15)

Mr Wells: The HC3 certificate is a partial help to health costs certificate issued to patients under the Departments Low Income Scheme. This Scheme provides income related help to people who are not automatically exempt from certain health charges but who may be entitled to full or partial help if they have a low income.

A patient may qualify for a full help with health costs HC2 certificate, if their income is less than or equal to their requirements or alternatively they may qualify for a limited help with health costs HC3 certificate if their income is greater than their requirements. Entitlement to any income related assistance under the scheme broadly follows Income Support rules in deciding how much, if anything, a patient has to pay towards their health costs.

The HC3 certificate will set out how much a patient has to pay towards their health costs. The HC3 certificate does not exclude any dental treatments that are available under the health service.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Extra Contractual Reviews have been requested and granted for young people with drug and alcohol addictions in the last five years.

(AQW 43358/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) operates a process which allows local Health & Social Care Trusts, in exceptional circumstances, to refer patients outside NI by means of an Extra Contractual Referral (ECR). ECRs must be based on clinical recommendations for specific treatment needs that cannot be met in NI. Such a referral must outline all of the resources that have been considered locally, and why these are felt to be inappropriate.

The HSCB does not hold ECR records for the full timescale specified and does not routinely collect the information requested. However, in 2013/14:

- The HSCB did not support any inpatient treatment outside Northern Ireland for patients (adults or children) with a primary diagnosis of addiction.
- The HSCB received 24 ECR requests for mental health and addiction services, approving 21 of them. These referrals were for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Eating Disorder, Obsessive-compulsive Disorder (OCD), Mental Health Assessment, Acquired Brain Injury, Personality Disorder, Eating Disorder and Alcohol Dependency (some of the referrals were for a combination of these issues). In analysing these referrals, we can confirm 11 of the 24 requests related to children i.e. referrals within the CAMHS and Family and Child Care programmes of care. The HSCB has stated that given the low number of Extra Contractual Referrals (ECRs) made for mental health or addiction services, to ensure anonymity it is not possible to provide further breakdown on these figures.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on a pay increase for nursing staff.

(AQW 43405/11-15)

Mr Wells: A copy of the Agenda for Change 2014/15 Pay Award is available on my Department's website at: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc__afc__1__2015_-_pay_circular_2015.pdf

Agenda for Change staff are expected to receive their arrears in their March 2015 pay.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage increase, through incremental progression, individuals are receiving this year at each agenda for change spine point; and to detail the number of employees within each spine point category.

(AQW 43415/11-15)

Mr Wells: Table 1 (below) presents the Agenda for Change spine points and pay values as set out in the 2014/15 Pay Award available on my Department's website at: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc__afc__1__2015_-_pay_circular_2015.pdf.

Where staff are eligible for incremental pay progression, the percentage increase in pay that would apply is also presented in the table. For staff at the top spine point for their band, the 2014/15 pay award gave a non-consolidated increase of 1%.

Table 2 (below) presents the number of employees within each spine point as of 31 March 2014.

Table 1: Agenda for Change (AfC) Spine Point and Pay Values 2014/15

AfC spine point	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8A	Band 8B	Band 8C	Band 8D	Band 9	% increase from previous spine point
1	14,294	14,294											-
2	14,653	14,653											2.5%
3	15,013	15,013											2.5%
4		15,432											2.8%
5		15,851											2.7%
6		16,271	16,271										2.6%
7		16,811	16,811										3.3%
8		17,425	17,425										3.7%
9			17,794										2.1%
10			18,285										2.8%
11			18,838	18,838									3.0%
12			19,268	19,268									2.3%
13				19,947									3.5%
14				20,638									3.5%
15				21,265									3.0%
16				21,478	21,478								1.0%
17				22,016	22,016								2.5%
18					22,903								4.0%
19					23,825								4.0%
20					24,799								4.1%
21					25,783	25,783							4.0%
22					26,822	26,822							4.0%
23					27,901	27,901							4.0%
24						28,755							3.1%

AfC spine point	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8A	Band 8B	Band 8C	Band 8D	Band 9	% increase from previous spine point
25						29,759							3.5%
26						30,764	30,764						3.4%
27						31,768	31,768						3.3%
28						32,898	32,898						3.6%
29						34,530	34,530						5.0%
30							35,536						2.9%
31							36,666						3.2%
32							37,921						3.4%
33							39,239	39,239					3.5%
34							40,558	40,558					3.4%
35								42,190					4.0%
36								43,822					3.9%
37								45,707	45,707				4.3%
38								47,088	47,088				3.0%
39									49,473				5.1%
40									52,235				5.6%
41									54,998	54,998			5.3%
42									56,504	56,504			2.7%
43										59,016			4.4%
44										61,779			4.7%
45										65,922	65,922		6.7%
46										67,805	67,805		2.9%
47											70,631		4.2%
48											74,084		4.9%
49											77,850	77,850	5.1%
50											81,618	81,618	4.8%
51												85,535	4.8%
52												89,640	4.8%
53												93,944	4.8%
54												98,453	4.8%

Table 2: Number of HSC Agenda for Change staff * as at 31st March 2014 by spine point

*Figures exclude home helps, bank staff, staff with a whole-time equivalent (WTE) less than or equal to 0.03 and staff on career breaks. Source: Human Resources, Payroll, Travel & Subsistence system.

AfC spine point	Headcount*	WTE*
1	736	556.3
2	731	576.5
3	3673	2614.2

AfC spine point	Headcount*	WTE*
4	200	167.4
5	329	273.4
6	1047	897.5
7	1123	954.4
8	5071	4001.8
9	502	440.8
10	650	562.8
11	1173	1024.6
12	6347	5372.6
13	246	233.0
14	163	152.0
15	213	197.7
16	1075	1013.9
17	3778	3367.3
18	1010	967.4
19	746	720.7
20	537	502.4
21	1175	1104.0
22	1396	1282.2
23	9069	7564.5
24	779	715.9
25	716	655.4
26	793	718.6
27	994	901.1
28	821	734.2
29	5096	4193.0
30	384	361.2
31	459	424.7
32	438	400.8
33	510	471.4
34	3633	3294.4
35	133	128.7
36	139	131.4
37	126	119.7
38	1038	962.0
39	49	47.7
40	54	52.0
41	56	55.6
42	469	449.8
43	24	23.7
44	19	18.2

AfC spine point	Headcount*	WTE*
45	26	24.3
46	216	204.2
47/48/49	23	22.8
50/51/52/53/54	56	54.5
Total	58041	49712.4

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 41876/11-15, what is the estimated total cost to the public purse of this case, broken down by separate trial stage.

(AQW 42686/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The trial has only recently ended and consequently final costs in the case are not yet known; a breakdown of the estimated costs of this case received to date, broken down by separate trial stage is given in the table below.

Cost Type	Pre-Trial Stages	1st Trial	2nd Trial	3rd Trial	4th Trial	Total
a) Legal Aid 1	£1,855	£21,750	£25,858	-	£44,234	£93,697
b) PPS 2	-	-	£14,811	£14,245	£29,087	£58,142
c) Court Costs 3	£6,794	£5,526	£5,727	£7,707	£15,740	£41,493
Total 4	£8,649	£27,276	£46,396	£21,952	£89,061	£193,334

Figures are given to the nearest £1 and consequently the totals may not tally due to rounding

- 1 Separate costs for the 2nd Trial can be identified until 27 May 2014. It is not possible to separately estimate costs for trials 2, 3 and 4 following a change of legal team on 27 May 2014.

The estimate of fees is for court attendances only. The estimates do not include subsidiary fees such as travel time, mileage or consultations by Senior and/or Junior Counsel. There may also be a claim for additional disbursement costs by Solicitor.

Fees in relation to the Magistrates' Courts proceedings are assessed in accordance with The Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009.

Fees in relation to the Crown Court proceedings are assessed in accordance with The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2005 as amended by the 2011 Rules.

- 2 In the absence of detailed records of time spent on individual cases it is not possible to produce precise or even average costs for a particular case. Some costs are identifiable however, for example the fees paid to prosecuting counsel and expenses paid to witnesses and expert witnesses.
- 3 The estimated court cost include judicial and staff salaries, facilities and juror costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 41875/11-15, which agency under his departmental remit would have input in this case and be in a position to verbally state mistaken identity.

(AQW 42764/11-15)

Mr Ford: Individuals subject to post release supervision have their risk managed appropriately in the community through the relevant agency and/or through the multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland.

As outlined in my answers to all the previous questions on this matter Probation Board for Northern Ireland does not comment or issue statements in respect of specific cases.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42076/11-15, (i) what actions were taken by the Prison Service to return Samuel McKinley to custody on the occasion in question; (ii) how many staff were involved; (iii) what were the travel arrangements; and (iv) how long the transfer took.

(AQW 42804/11-15)

Mr Ford: To release the information requested at (i) and (iv) would be a breach of the person's right under the Data Protection Act.

Record accounting must be retained for seven years. Given that this incident occurred in 2005 it falls outside the retention period and therefore details are unknown regarding the number of staff involved in returning Mr McKinley to custody or the travel arrangements.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the courthouse closure proposals, what consideration has been given to existing custody capacity; and how this will be impacted upon if court listings are longer, or more courts are required to sit, in order to accommodate the transfer of cases from other areas.

(AQW 42805/11-15)

Mr Ford: Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and Northern Ireland Prison Service officials are satisfied that there is sufficient cell capacity with appropriate prisoner access to courtrooms for those courthouses receiving transferred business from a closing courthouse as set out in the illustrative court calendar in the consultation paper.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42287/11-15, (i) who funded the prisoner's air fare to Belfast City Airport; (ii) which agency escorted the prisoner; and (iii) what was the cost, or estimated cost, for all involved.

(AQW 42869/11-15)

Mr Ford: The provision of costs is a matter for National Offender Management Service. They also arranged for the escort of the prisoner to Belfast City Airport.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42481/11-15, given this is a direct breach of a court order, what is the role of PPANI, or any other agency under his departmental remit in this matter, particularly in respect of public safety.

(AQW 42870/11-15)

Mr Ford: The PSNI is statutorily responsible for bringing to the attention of the court alleged breaches of the notification requirements and it is for the court to make a determination in relation to that matter. The individual continues to be risk managed under the public protection arrangements in accordance with a risk management plan which takes account of the current assessed risk in regard to public safety.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42370/11-15, what past experience the change managers have in their previous roles in relation to situations such as Roe House; and given the length of time in post and the expenditure involved, why the situation on compact arrangements for separated prisoners and prisoner stand-offs is not abating.

(AQW 42872/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the response I gave to AQW/42370/11-15 and do not wish to add anything further in respect of individual experience.

Last year, following a recommendation from the Prisoner Ombudsman, I asked the Independent Assessment Team to undertake a stocktake of the implementation of the 2010 Roe House Agreement.

That Report has provided recommendations to address ongoing issues in respect of Roe House and the Northern Ireland Prison Service is fully committed to implementing reasonable and pragmatic change.

However, change cannot solely be the responsibility of the Prison Service and without prisoner engagement progress to fully implement the recommendations from the Stocktake will be difficult.

The Organisational Change Manager for the Northern Ireland Prison Service has not met with, nor directed anyone else to meet with, republican separated prisoners held in Roe House.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how much European funding his Department has received in each of the last two financial years; and from which funding streams.

(AQW 42896/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department received European funding from the PEACE III funding stream in the sum of £342,980.19 in 2012/2013. This funding was received by the Northern Ireland Prison Service to fund a Challenge Hate Crime project, led by NIACRO. It received no European funding in the financial year 2013/2014 and no funding has been received in this financial year.

My Department also assisted in the delivery of the drawdown of structural and non-structural European funds by some of its arms length bodies and third parties. The following table sets out the amount of this funding and the relevant funding streams.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (year-to-date)
Framework Programme 7	£288,825	-	-
Daphne III	£28,050	-	-
European Social Fund	£854,195	£941,977	£1,048,900

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the publication of the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland report, An Unannounced Inspection of Magilligan Prison 27 May to 5 June 2014, and the section therein on concerns over prison drugs, specifically supervised swallowed medication, is regurgitated by prisoners, why liquid medication is not being used combined with supervised swallow.

(AQW 42970/11-15)

Mr Ford: The management of supervised swallowing of prescribed medication by prisoners is a matter for the South Eastern Trust.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the publication of the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland report, An Unannounced Inspection of Magilligan Prison 27 May to 5 June 2014, why, despite numerous recommendations and representations, prisoners subject to Supporting Prisoner at Risk (SPAR) procedures are still not being appropriately managed, and concerns continue to be raised on the handling of the SPAR process, rather than the individual's needs and their care.

(AQW 42971/11-15)

Mr Ford: Every effort is being made to build an effective SPAR process to ensure the safety of all prisoners throughout Northern Ireland. A review of the SPAR processes by Prison Service Headquarters has been ongoing prior to the publication of the CJINI Report.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what suggestions or recommendations have Northern Ireland Prison Service change managers made in relation to the ongoing situation of republican separated prisoners in Roe House, HMP Maghaberry; and of these, how many have been implemented.

(AQW 42972/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the response I gave to AQW/42370/11-15 and do not wish to add anything further in respect of individual experience.

Last year, following a recommendation from the Prisoner Ombudsman, I asked the Independent Assessment Team to undertake a stocktake of the implementation of the 2010 Roe House Agreement.

That Report has provided recommendations to address ongoing issues in respect of Roe House and the Northern Ireland Prison Service is fully committed to implementing reasonable and pragmatic change.

However, change cannot solely be the responsibility of the Prison Service and without prisoner engagement progress to fully implement the recommendations from the Stocktake will be difficult.

The Organisational Change Manager for the Northern Ireland Prison Service has not met with, nor directed anyone else to meet with, republican separated prisoners held in Roe House.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether Northern Ireland Prison Service change managers, or officials acting on their behalf, met with republican separated prisoners from Roe House, HMP Maghaberry, or their representatives; and if so, to detail the dates of same.

(AQW 42973/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the response I gave to AQW/42370/11-15 and do not wish to add anything further in respect of individual experience.

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However, change cannot solely be the responsibility of the Prison Service and without prisoner engagement progress to fully implement the recommendations from the Stocktake will be difficult.

The Organisational Change Manager for the Northern Ireland Prison Service has not met with, nor directed anyone else to meet with, republican separated prisoners held in Roe House.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42287/11-15, to justify the cost of transporting the prisoner from Belfast City Airport to Maghaberry Prison in a Prisoner Escorting and Court Custody Service (PECCS) vehicle.

(AQW 42974/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service is responsible for transportation costs associated with returning unlawfully at large prisoners to custody. The Prisoner Escorting and Court Custody Service (PECCS) carry out this task.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Justice when will his Department be in a position to bring forward a planning application for the new prison at Magilligan.

(AQW 42991/11-15)

Mr Ford: My officials are working towards submitting a planning application for the redevelopment of Magilligan.

However, this will be dependent on the availability of capital funding to progress the overall redevelopment. I am currently engaging with Finance colleagues on this matter.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what organisations he has (i) met with; and (ii) received representations from, in relation to his proposals to change the criminal damage compensation scheme.

(AQW 43054/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department's consultation document on the proposals to reform the Criminal Damage and Criminal Injuries Compensation Schemes was published on 8 December 2014 for a 14 week consultation period. The consultation period closes on 16 March 2015 and stakeholder engagement is ongoing. A full list of organisations we have engaged with, as well as those who respond to the consultation, will be included as an annex to the post consultation report which will be published.

The proposal to increase the eligibility criteria from three or more people to twelve or more is informed by the approach taken in Great Britain (through the Public Order Act 1986 which amended the Riot (Damages) Act 1886).

In developing the proposals, my Department met representatives from the Association of British Insurers, both in Belfast and London, the British Insurance Brokers Association and the National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society. During the consultation period my Department has engaged again with representatives from these organisations.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice why his Department plans to increase the eligibility criteria for the criminal damage compensation scheme from three or more people to twelve or more people.

(AQW 43055/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department's consultation document on the proposals to reform the Criminal Damage and Criminal Injuries Compensation Schemes was published on 8 December 2014 for a 14 week consultation period. The consultation period closes on 16 March 2015 and stakeholder engagement is ongoing. A full list of organisations we have engaged with, as well as those who respond to the consultation, will be included as an annex to the post consultation report which will be published.

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In developing the proposals, my Department met representatives from the Association of British Insurers, both in Belfast and London, the British Insurance Brokers Association and the National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society. During the consultation period my Department has engaged again with representatives from these organisations.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he has had with the insurance industry on the impact of the proposed changes to the criminal damage compensation scheme.

(AQW 43056/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department's consultation document on the proposals to reform the Criminal Damage and Criminal Injuries Compensation Schemes was published on 8 December 2014 for a 14 week consultation period. The consultation period closes on 16 March 2015 and stakeholder engagement is ongoing. A full list of organisations we have engaged with, as well as those who respond to the consultation, will be included as an annex to the post consultation report which will be published.

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In developing the proposals, my Department met representatives from the Association of British Insurers, both in Belfast and London, the British Insurance Brokers Association and the National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society. During the consultation period my Department has engaged again with representatives from these organisations.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what is the legal aid rate for representation at fine default hearings.

(AQW 43060/11-15)

Mr Ford: The fee for representation at Fine Default Hearings in the magistrates' court is £75.

The fee for representation in the Crown Court depends on the length of the hearing and the level of representative involved.

The following table sets out the fee structure.

	Queen's Counsel	Leading Junior	Led Junior Counsel	Sole Junior Counsel	Solicitor
Hearing not exceeding 1.5 hours	£125	£94	£63	£82	£113
Hearing exceeding 1.5 hours but not exceeding 3 hours	£250	£188	£125	£163	£188
Hearing exceeding 3 hours	£500	£375	£250	£325	£375

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, given the frequency of, and increase in, prisoners absconding whilst on temporary release, whether he will introduce additional release terms to include measures such as electronic tagging.
(AQW 43061/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service will take forward a periodic review of the approach to temporary release, including the conditions placed upon prisoners, later this year.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42487/11-15 and in respect of the higher category offenders being managed in the community, whether these offenders are subject to multi-agency input with equal or shared responsibilities, or is a designated agency appointed as the sole monitoring body.
(AQW 43063/11-15)

Mr Ford: Category 3 offenders are jointly risk managed by a dedicated co-located multi-agency team comprising police, probation and social services staff. Category 2 offenders are subject to multi-agency risk assessment and review with a lead agency identified as designated risk manager (DRM). The DRM maintains close contact with partner agencies responsible for specific actions in the risk management plan devised for that individual.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42096/11-15, why the names of the consultancy firms have been withheld when disclosing the amount of money paid for financial services to these consultancy firms.
(AQW 43107/11-15)

Mr Ford: In the answer to AQW/42096/11-15 the names of consultancy firms were withheld in line with standard Department of Justice practice of not placing supplier names into the public domain for security reasons.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether the proposed closure of courthouses will lead to a reduction in staff numbers.
(AQW 43127/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to my answers to AQW/42128/11-15 and AQW/41540/11-15 in which I indicated that as a result of the Public Sector Voluntary Exit it is anticipated that staff numbers as a whole within the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) will reduce significantly.

The rationalisation proposals would allow NICTS to manage some of the consequent pressures through a reduction in the number of locations at which it operates and the implementation of more streamlined management structures.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 14204/11-15, for an update following his considerations of research commissioned by the Ministry of Justice on the pilot projects on mandatory polygraph tests of sex offenders being managed in the community.
(AQW 43131/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have no current plans to introduce legislation to provide for polygraph tests for sex offenders who are managed in the community.

My Department continues to keep arrangements to manage the risk posed by sex offenders in the community under review.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to provide, or place in the Assembly Library, a copy of the report on Inspection of the Adequacy of the Courts Estate.
(AQW 43132/11-15)

Mr Ford: The report 'Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service: An Inspection of the Adequacy of the Courts Estate' was published in May 2012 by the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) and is available on the CJINI website. The link to the report is: <http://www.cjinrg/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/Latest-Publications.aspi.ox?did=771>

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of cases involving alleged sexual offences prevention order breaches within the court system, broken down by court division.
(AQW 43173/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below sets out the number of case of alleged breach of sexual offences prevention orders by county court division as at 6 March 2015.

Court Division	Number of Cases
Antrim	3
Ards	1
Armagh and South Down	1
Belfast	7

Court Division	Number of Cases
Craigavon	2
Fermanagh and Tyrone	1
Total	15

Source: Integrated Court Operating System (ICOS).

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice on what model or scheme is the current separated prisoner system in HMP Maghaberry based.

(AQW 43174/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current model of separation at Maghaberry is based upon 'The Review of Safety at HMP Maghaberry' (commonly referred to as the Steele Report), submitted to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in August 2003.

That report concluded that separation of paramilitary prisoners is necessary in the interest of safety.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 14204/11-15, to place a copy in the Assembly library of the report into the research commissioned by the Ministry of Justice on the pilot projects conducting mandatory polygraphs for sex offenders being managed in the community.

(AQW 43176/11-15)

Mr Ford: This document belongs to the Ministry of Justice and is available on its web site at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/compulsary-lie-detector-tests-for-serious-sex-offenders>

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the frequency of faults with drop-down security bollards at Dungannon Court House, whether he will order a review of the supplier and installer terms.

(AQW 43258/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have no plans to order a review of the supplier or installer terms.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Justice whether he has any plans to introduce cost recovery of the Court Funds Office.

(AQW 43288/11-15)

Mr Ford: A statutory cost recovery mechanism for the Court Funds Office (CFO) already exists. CFO can recover its running costs from interest earned on funds held with the Debt Management Office of HM Treasury. Currently, due to the very low interest rates prevailing, the CFO costs are instead being met by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

CFO is currently considering potential alternative options for cost recovery with a view to issuing a public consultation in the autumn.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Justice whether any progress has been made on increasing the age of criminal responsibility.

(AQW 43300/11-15)

Mr Ford: To date, there has been no progress on raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility in line with the recommendation in the Youth Justice Review. The absence of cross-party support for an increase has meant that my Department cannot implement any such change.

Whilst this remains the case, criminal justice agencies will continue to work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary organisations to divert children from crime and the criminal justice system and support them to make positive life choices.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Justice what protection is available for people who become victims as a result of neighbours being subject to hate crimes.

(AQO 7780/11-15)

Mr Ford: The new Victim Charter launched in January, defines a victim as an individual who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm, or economic loss which was directly caused by the crime.

Protection is available for all victims of crime, whether they are the direct or indirect target of an incident motivated by prejudice or hate or for any other reason.

In the case of mistaken identity, or where the person has been presumed to be a member, for example of their neighbour's racial, religious or sexual orientation group, that person will be eligible for practical and legal protections provided to hate crime victims.

Where the perpetrator targeted a neighbour and unintentionally caused damage or injured the person next door, practical and legal protections for all relevant criminal offences would apply.

I would encourage anyone who believes they have been a victim of a crime, to report the matter to the police which triggers the protections available via the Criminal Justice System.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the level of reported crime against older people, including convictions, since 2012.

(AQO 7778/11-15)

Mr Ford: PSNI figures show that the level of recorded crime, where a victim was aged 60+, has shown a 2.6% increase from 7188 offences in 2012/13 to 7375 offences in 2013/14.

When further broken down, the figures for offences with a victim aged 60+ show an increase in violence against the person from 923 in 2012/13 to 1134 in 2013/14. Burglary has shown an increase from 1608 to 1633 and Criminal Damage a decrease from 2112 to 1961 offences.

Neither the Public Prosecution Service nor the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Services hold information on convictions for crimes where the victim is aged 60 and over.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Justice what assessment has been made of the impact of the proposed cuts in legal aid on family law cases.

(AQO 7777/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have recently consulted upon various options for the reduction in the Scope of Civil Legal Aid. One of the proposals contained in that consultation related to the removal of private law Children Order cases from the scope of legal aid. Having carefully considered the responses to the consultation, and taking account of the outworking of cuts in provision in England and Wales, including the comments made by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, I have decided not to remove private law Children Order cases from scope at this time.

I do intend to ensure that scarce resources are put to the best use and am proposing to limit the circumstances where multiple applications are made to pursue cases. The aim is to prevent repeat court attendances involving matters that could and should be resolved outside the adversarial setting of the court, for example timing and/or place of contact. Repeat appearances for relatively minor issues are both a significant cost driver and a cause of frustration. I intend to issue Guidance which would tighten up the eligibility test and introduce the presumption that legal aid would normally be available for limited contact hearings only.

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Justice what actions are being taken to address cross border crime.

(AQO 7781/11-15)

Mr Ford: Cross border crime can, of course, cover a wide range of issues, including terrorism, human trafficking, smuggling and plant theft.

As Chair of the Organised Crime Task Force, I am aware that significant operational work is conducted to disrupt and dismantle organised crime groups which are engaged in, or seeking to engage in, human trafficking, fuel laundering, and smuggling of goods such as fuel, tobacco, alcohol, drugs and counterfeit goods.

That work involves law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border including PSNI, An Garda Síochána, NCA, HMRC, the Revenue Commissioners and Border Force working closely together, sharing intelligence and seeking to disrupt and bring those who perpetrate these crimes before the courts.

At Departmental level, I meet my counterpart in the Department of Justice and Equality to discuss ways in which we can improve what is being done through joint working. For example, we met at the cross border organised crime conference last October, the IGA meeting on 21 November and Ministerial Trilateral on 27 February.

Clearly there is more to be done and that is especially challenging in the current financial environment and when we know that organised crime groups will change their methods.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Justice what recommendations from the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report, Implementing reforms to civil legal aid, have been taken into consideration as part of the reform of legal aid.

(AQO 7784/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have recently consulted upon various options for the reduction in the Scope of Civil Legal Aid. One of the proposals contained in that consultation related to the removal of private law Children Order cases from the scope of legal aid. Having carefully considered the responses to the consultation, and taking account of the outworking of cuts in provision in England and Wales, including the comments made by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, I have decided not to remove private law Children Order cases from scope at this time.

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and should be resolved outside the adversarial setting of the court, for example timing and/or place of contact. Repeat appearances for relatively minor issues are both a significant cost driver and a cause of frustration. I intend to issue Guidance which would tighten up the eligibility test and introduce the presumption that legal aid would normally be available for limited contact hearings only.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Justice for an update on his efforts to improve resettlement prospects, to reduce the likelihood of reoffending by prisoners who are leaving custody.

(AQO 7789/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service has recently introduced a new Prisoner Development Model, designed to put the individual at the centre of a process of change. A Personal Development Plan is drawn up for each prisoner which recognises his or her needs, strengths, weaknesses and risks. This plan may include education, vocational training and work experience, help with addictions and with attitudes and thinking and behaviours and other activities in preparation for release. The model currently operates in all three prisons for new committals and it is envisioned that the process of moving existing prisoners to the new model will be complete in around nine months.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Justice what discussions he has held with the Chief Constable to ensure that sufficient resources are available to provide additional frontline officers.

(AQO 7791/11-15)

Mr Ford: I hold regular discussions with the Chief Constable, including on the question of resources. Following the agreement by the Executive of the final budget, an additional £20m is to be made available to the PSNI in 2015/16. I understand recruitment campaigns are to be held during that year, although numbers will remain below those specified in the PSNI's resilience review.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Justice what action will be taken to implement the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Inspection Report, An Unannounced Inspection of Magilligan Prison 27 May to 5 June 2014.

(AQO 7783/11-15)

Mr Ford: Criminal Justice Inspection Reports are based against four healthy prison tests - Safety, Respect, Purposeful activity and Resettlement.

I am pleased that Magilligan Prison was assessed positively in three out of the four tests. In the area of Resettlement Magilligan was assessed as providing good outcomes for prisoners – this is the first time this has ever been achieved by the prison service and they must be commended for that.

However, I do accept that the prison was also criticised in a number of areas specifically the nature of its accommodation and the level of purposeful activity for prisoners. I can confirm that a number of recommendations have already been actioned and implemented and that the management team are developing an action plan to address the remaining recommendations which I will publish in due course.

The NIPS have produced the outline business case for the development of a new Prison on the existing site and this has been accepted subject to finances being made available. It is important to recognise that the planned rebuild of Magilligan will address a number of criticisms within the report most especially the provision of in-cell sanitation for all prisoners.

There are plans in place, from April 2015, to outsource the Learning & Skills function forming a partnership with North West Regional College and it is expected that this will improve the learning opportunities available to prisoners in Magilligan.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Translink has spent on (i) diaries; (ii) calendars; (iii) advertising; and (iv) other merchandising items, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 40557/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): The costs as requested are recorded below:

Cost of Diaries / (Safety) Calendars / Merchandising

Items	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £	2013/14 £
Diaries	35,135.52	34,665.10	24,125.33	30,731.40	30,891.60
(Safety) Calendars	N/A	N/A	1,256.00	1,140.00	1,200.00
Advertising	555,268.27	687,840.03	684,501.67	445,608.43	640,245.10
Merchandising /Promotional items	15,184.00	13,164.50	31,815.28	13,349.72	11,105.00

Promotional items are used in connection with Translink visits to Schools and Colleges during safety visits or in relation to school transport. They can also be provided to customers during direct sales events and at public safety engagements at Agricultural shows. Items distributed include pencils, rulers and memory sticks.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development how much revenue Translink received from advertising in each of the last five years.

(AQW 40792/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The amount of revenue that Translink has received from advertising in each of the last five years is outlined in the table below:

	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k	2011/12 £k	2012/13 £k	2013/14 £k
Total	1,286	1,165	1,138	1,037	648

Translink have indicated that there has been an increase in advertising income of c. £770k in 2014/15 reflecting an upturn in the market.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development how many incidents or complaints about surface defects in roads have been reported or recorded since 1 January 2013.

(AQW 41868/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During the period 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2014, my Department instructed for repair, some 351,000 carriageway, hard shoulder and lay-by surface defects. The majority of these defects were recorded by my officials during routine maintenance inspections but the figure above also includes those defects reported by the public which were deemed as needing action.

The same figure for the period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012, that is, the preceding two years was some 437,000.

The main factors affecting the number of defects requiring repair during a specific time period are:

- (i) the weather, in particular repeated freeze thaw cycles; and
- (ii) the amount of money available over a sustained period for more cost effective resurfacing and surface dressing.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the ratio of spending on roads compared to public transport in each year of the 2011-15 Budget; and that which is planned for the 2015-16 Budget.

(AQW 42373/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The ratio of spending on roads compared to public transport in each year of the 2011-15 Budget and that for 2015-16 is shown in the table below. The 2014-15 ratio is based on projected spend to the end of the financial year and the 2015-16 ratio is based on the Final Budget.

Ratio	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Roads	64	68	76	77	65
Transport	36	32	24	23	35

The above exclude non cash spend.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) whether the Environmental Statement prepared for the Derry to Dungiven A6 duelling proposal, considered or assessed the likely environmental effects of the strategic roads project on the illegal waste at Mobuoy Road; and whether this renders the ES inadequate in terms of Article 2(1) of the European Directive 2011/92/EU and calls into doubt any findings of the public inquiry.

(AQW 42655/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The first European Union Directive to initiate a formal approach to environmental assessment came into effect in July 1988. This Directive and three subsequent amendments were codified in Directive 2011/92/EU in 2011, without making changes to existing provisions.

The Environmental Statement for the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme was prepared in accordance with the 1985 EIA Directive and its subsequent amendments. It is therefore fully compliant with the requirements of Directive 2011/92/EU.

The Environmental Statement, which is still appropriate, recorded what was known about potentially contaminated land up to publication in December 2011. The known major potentially contaminated sites, which are likely to be directly affected by construction of the scheme, were examined and consideration was given to the potential to disturb unrecorded contaminated land during the construction phase.

The Environmental Statement notes that where potentially contaminated land is encountered during construction, further investigation would be necessary, including a Contaminated Land Risk Assessment to assess the appropriate remediation/mitigation measures (i.e. the Quantitative Risk Assessment currently being carried out by NIEA).

The Environmental Statement further requires the Contractor to produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan, which would provide details of environmental control measures to deal with any contaminated land encountered during the site operation.

As the Environmental Statement is still appropriate, and will be revisited as required, there is currently no requirement to hold a new Public Inquiry into the scheme.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development whether Penalty Charge Notices which impose a higher penalty for delayed payment are compatible with EU consumer legislation outlawing price escalation clauses.
(AQW 42662/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There is no provision in legislation in Northern Ireland which imposes a higher penalty for delayed payment. The following statutory provisions afford an opportunity to pay a lower charge and reduce administrative costs.

Parking penalty charges are payable under Article 4 of the Traffic Management (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (TMO). This Article enables my Department by regulations to specify the percentages by which any penalty charges may be reduced or increased. Under Article 5(3)(d) of the TMO, a Penalty Charge Notice must state 'that if the penalty charge is paid within 14 days, the amount of the penalty charge will be reduced by a specified percentage'. The percentage reduction for the purposes of Articles 5(3)(d) is 50% (regulation 3(1) of the Penalty Charges (Prescribed Amounts) Regulations (NI) 2006).

As the above-noted charges are imposed and recovered under statute, rather than on foot of contracts, there is nothing at present to suggest that EU consumer legislation is applicable to such charges.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development how many consultants have been engaged by NI Water through change request orders under the call centre and billing contract held by Echo Managed Services; and how much has been spent on such consultants in the last year.
(AQW 42663/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water has not issued any change request orders under the call centre and billing contract held by Echo Managed Services that would have specifically requested the engagement of consultants; therefore there has been no expenditure in the last year.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development whether Grafton Recruitment holds a contract with NI Water to supply non-full time staff, including consultants; and whether NI Water has only employed consultants through this process during the currency of the said contract.
(AQW 42664/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Grafton Recruitment holds a contract with NI Water to supply temporary workers (both full and part-time) for the purposes of staff substitution. The current contract has been in place from 21 July 2014 and is entitled C720 - Provision of Temporary Resource. The contract has been used to provide temporary staff across a range of NI Water business areas. During the implementation process for the new Customer Billing Contract, a need for a small number of specialist staff was identified. Attempts to recruit such staff internally were unsuccessful and accordingly Grafton was approached with details of NI Water's needs.

Contract C720 sets out the requirement to provide, where possible, temporary staff at the same grade as NI Water staff, i.e. Administrative, Professional, Technical and Managerial roles such as Customer Service Agents, Vehicle and Plant Mechanics, GIS Technicians, and Management Accountants. Where it is not possible to obtain the appropriate substitute staff at an equivalent NI Water grade, the Company is obliged to pay the prevailing market rate for such expertise. NI Water has not appointed any consultants through the C720 contract and there is no provision set out in the contract for the employment of consultants.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any commission is, or has been paid, to NI Water staff for recommending engagement of any particular consultants.
(AQW 42666/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Employees of NI Water are not entitled to receive commission payments under any circumstances.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans there are to replace the rotten fencing along the Belfast Road at Kilcooley Estate.
(AQW 42668/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The fencing around Kilcooley Estate, Bangor, was erected, in 1973, by the roads authority at the time of the construction of the Belfast Road/West Circular Road, Bangor. It is believed the fence was erected to provide accommodation works, delineation of the road boundary and to afford protection to footway users, where there is a difference in level between the footway and the adjoining property.

In a response provided to you in AQW 8644/08 on 9 July 2008, by the Minister of Regional Development at that time, Mr Conor Murphy MLA, the Department agreed in the interest of road safety and on a without prejudice basis, that it would maintain the fence, where there is a perceived risk to road users.

As there are no locations which meet this criteria, my Department considers that no maintenance work is currently required to the boundary fence.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the usual precautionary measures regarding road gritting were taken on the Glenshane Pass on the morning of 23 February 2015; and if so, what caused the delays motorists faced on that morning.

(AQW 42723/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Glenshane Pass was salted on the morning of 23 February 2015, with the first action commencing at 3:00am. Due to heavy snowfall, which began at 6:30am, the affected area received further continuous treatments with up to three salting vehicles deployed during this period, until the snow threat had passed.

While at all times the road was passable with care, gritter drivers reported that many drivers were understandably driving very cautiously which resulted in delays of over 30 minutes during morning peak hour traffic.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the next Chief Executive Officer of Translink will be employed on a similar salary scale as the current CEO.

(AQW 42724/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The new Translink Group Chief Executive will be employed on a similar salary scale to that of the current CEO.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development to clarify the legal position in relation to offering a 50 per cent discount on parking penalty charge notices if paid within 14 days of issue.

(AQW 42731/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The following statutory provisions afford an opportunity to pay a lower charge and reduce administrative costs. The 50 per cent lower charge on parking penalty charges is legislated for by Article 4 of the Traffic Management (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (TMO). This Article enables my Department by regulations, to specify the percentages by which any penalty charges may be reduced or increased.

Under Article 5(3)(d) of the TMO, a Penalty Charge Notice must state 'that if the penalty charge is paid within 14 days, the amount of the penalty charge will be reduced by a specified percentage'. The percentage reduction for the purposes of Articles 5(3)(d) is 50% (regulation 3(1) of the Penalty Charges (Prescribed Amounts) Regulations (NI) 2006).

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline any potential new road calming measures planned for the Millisle area.

(AQW 42732/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to the answer provided in response to AQW 42669/11-15.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline any potential new road calming measures planned for the Donaghadee area.

(AQW 42733/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to the answer provided in response to AQW 42669/11-15.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed new road and pedestrian safety measures for the Gransha Roundabout, Bangor.

(AQW 42734/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is acknowledged that this location would benefit from enhanced pedestrian measures and extensive studies have now been completed, including a topographical survey and updated pedestrian and traffic counts.

Various options are being considered, including a fully signalised roundabout, providing fully controlled pedestrian facilities on each approach. The detailed work necessary to ensure the best option is taken forward is continuing and I have asked Mr Simon Richardson, Divisional Manager for the area, to keep you apprised of progress on this matter.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much European funding his Department has received in each of the last two financial years; and from which funding streams.

(AQW 42735/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has successfully secured a total of £16,992,469 from European funding sources during the financial years 2012/13 and 2013/14 and this consisted of:

- £7,200,452 of Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) funding;
- £5,691,490 through the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme 2007-2013;
- £4,061,830 of funding from the INTERREG IVA for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland; and
- £38,697 through the FP7 Research and Development – People Programme.

TEN-T monies are, because of the existing central budgetary management process, not retained by my Department and are returned to the centre for non-specific reallocation. This process neither provides genuinely additional spending power for my Department nor directly incentivises the pursuit of EU funding for NICS departments in general.

A further £13.1m has been drawn down across the identified funding streams in the current financial year. This figure is expected to rise further as additional payments are received.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development the circumstances and recruitment process by which Person A came to work for NI Water.

(AQW 42754/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Person A commenced employment in the Company as a result of a relevant TUPE transfer pursuant to the Service Provision Change (Protection of Employment) Regulations (NI) 2006 when some activities were insourced from a third party supplier.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development what work has been done to explore the possibility of creating a free-flowing junction between the M2 and A8 at Sandyknowes to facilitate more efficient traffic flows on the Belfast to Larne route.

(AQW 42772/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has a proposal to improve the strategic link between the M2 at Sandyknowes and the A8(M) which is included in our Strategic Road Improvement Programme.

Officials have undertaken a preliminary assessment of the M2 Sandyknowes Junction to consider options for linking the M2 and A8(M), however, further work will be required to identify feasible and economically viable solutions. Progression of this work will be dependent upon future budget allocations and the prioritisation of scheme proposals within the Strategic Road Improvement Programme.

The completion of the M2 Widening scheme in 2009 did provide some much needed relief to the M2 Sandyknowes Junction.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development what work is being undertaken to implement a long-term solution to the maintenance and refurbishment of the Castle Car Park Subway in Carrickfergus.

(AQW 42773/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: This subway is part of our structures inventory. It undergoes regular inspections and is currently assessed to be structurally sound. Maintenance work is carried out on the structure on a routine and as-required basis.

Given the current budget settlement, my Department is not in a position to undertake any long term refurbishment work at this time.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether a conflict of interest exists for NI Water in leasing ground at Woodburn Forest to Infrastrata PLC for oil and gas exploration, given that it is responsible for compliance with the standards in water quality regulations.

(AQW 42792/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water does not consider that there is a conflict of interest involved in leasing a small area within Woodburn Forest for the drilling of an exploratory oil well. NI Water is satisfied that the proposed work will have no detrimental impact upon the catchment, the impounding reservoir or the public water supply.

The safeguarding of water quality is of primary importance to NI Water and the well site has been designed to ensure that all potential discharges from the site are contained and no discharges, either controlled or uncontrolled, will occur from the site into the catchment.

The Drinking Water Inspectorate regulates public drinking water quality in line with the Drinking Water Directive and domestic legislation, which requires risk assessments to be undertaken in accordance with the World Health Organisation's risk management approach. In particular, NI Water must assess all potential risks within the catchments to its drinking water sources and put in place appropriate sampling and where required, any possible measures to mitigate risk. In its latest revision of the risk assessment for the nearby Dorisland Water Treatment Works dated March 2014, NI Water noted the potential for gas/oil exploration within the catchment and although it has not currently highlighted any risks from these proposals has confirmed that this will be kept under review, if or when the proposals for such exploration move forward.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development what commitments have been given by Infrastrata PLC of the fracking on the Woodburn Forest site; and whether these commitments exist in other areas or are site specific.

(AQW 42796/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Infrastrata has confirmed to NI Water that there are no plans for hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) at Woodburn Forest. The exploration will be conventional and will not at any time involve fracking. InfraStrata has confirmed this in the form of a legal undertaking given to NI Water.

Woodburn is the only NI Water site at which Infrastrata is proposing to drill.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for details on the water catchment area of the Woodburn reservoirs; and whether any drilling will take place in this catchment area.

(AQW 42798/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Woodburn catchment is an extensive area of more than 1,000 hectares, comprising Woodburn Forest and four Impounding Reservoirs. The proposed drilling of the exploratory oil well is within this catchment area.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the community background breakdown of senior staff in NI Water at Level 3 and above.

(AQW 42812/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The community breakdown of staff in Northern Ireland Water at Level 3 and above is:

- 30 Roman Catholic
- 31 Protestant
- 6 Non-Determined

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what are the levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction expressed by staff in staff opinion surveys conducted within NI Water over the last three years, in particular on aspects of (i) equality of opportunity; and (ii) internal vacancies filled exclusively on ability and qualification.

(AQW 42814/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Over the last 3 years NI Water engaged two separate companies to conduct their employee survey and, as the questions asked were different in nature, the following responses are derived from the most recent survey.

In response to point (i), the last survey indicated that:

- 69% of NI Water staff agreed that overall they were satisfied with the Learning & Development opportunities that they were given.
- 50% of staff agreed that they were encouraged to develop their skills on a regular basis.
- 44% of staff agreed that ‘if I wanted to, I feel that I could progress my career within NI Water’
- 33% of staff agreed that the systems for promotion and development are fair to all employees.

In response to point (ii), during engagement sessions that have been undertaken since the survey has been completed, information indicates that NI Water has promoted, on average, 1 employee per week across the company through internal opportunities and these would have been appointed on merit:

- In 2013/14 there were 107 recruitment competitions. 63% of these internal appointments, which resulted in 77 internal staff promotions.
- In the first 6 months of 2014/15, there were 51 recruitment competitions which resulted in 67% internal appointments and 31 staff being promoted.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development for a timeline on the development of improvements to the A6 at Moneynick, including when construction will begin.

(AQW 42835/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Consultants were commissioned in July 2003 to examine the route between Randalstown and Castledawson and develop a preferred line for a new dual carriageway. Following extensive public consultations, Public Inquiries into the published draft Direction Order, Vesting Order and Environmental Statement for the scheme were held in 2007.

While the Inspector agreed with the need to progress with a new dual carriageway, he asked my Department to reconsider the layout for the Annaghmore Road/Bellshill Road junction on the Toome to Castledawson stretch. Following further public consultation, a planning application was submitted in December 2010, and a Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order (NIMVO) relating to the junction was subsequently published in January 2011. In his report on a Public Inquiry into the NIMVO held in February 2012, the Inspector recommended that a junction located east of Bellshill Road would be a more acceptable alternative, which my officials subsequently developed.

A planning application supported by an Environmental Statement was submitted to DOE Planning in June 2013, seeking permission to construct this east of Bellshill Road junction proposal. I am pleased to be able to confirm that planning permission was granted on 3 December 2014.

A NIMVO for the east of Bellshill Road junction proposal was published 9 February 2015 and the closing date for objections is 20 March 2015.

The Notice of intention to Proceed and Direction Order for the scheme as a whole was published in March 2011. Vesting Orders, to compulsorily acquire the land required to build the full dual carriageway scheme, will continue to remain in draft and will only be made when funding for the scheme has been confirmed.

I am also pleased to be able to confirm that the Randalstown to Castledawson scheme is currently being advanced to a “shovel ready” stage to facilitate commencement of construction at short notice should the necessary funding become available.

The tender process is underway and I expect a contractor to be appointed by the end of March 2015. Actual construction of the scheme will not commence until further funding is confirmed by the Executive.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development what assurances he can give to community transport providers that, during the next Programme for Government period and any programmes created through the Integrated Transport pilot, his Department will employ a grants programme and not just commercial tendering for these services.

(AQW 42837/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I fully acknowledge the valuable services provided currently by the community transport providers. In providing grant to these organisations we will have to take into account future budgets and EU rules.

My Department is currently considering all the viable options for the integration of publicly funded passenger transport services in Northern Ireland. At this stage it is too early to give any commitment on how such changes might be implemented.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any investigations into the possible electrification of the Larne Railway line, which would provide for faster, cleaner and more efficient rail journeys for the people of East Antrim.

(AQW 42839/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The question of electrification is linked to rolling stock usage and procurement. Electrification will therefore always be most cost effective when it coincides with a natural requirement for fleet replacement. Translink's current inter urban fleet is relatively new, with the first C3K train sets coming into service in 2005/06. These train sets have an expected operating life of approximately 30 years.

The Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy which I published last year setting out the strategic direction for future railways investment over the next 20 years does not envisage electrification of any part of the Northern Ireland network within its timeframe.

However I recognise the efficiency and environmental benefits which a move to electrification could bring and the strategy expects that investment in priority projects will make provision for eventual electrification in the longer term.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Claim for Vehicle Damage Compensation Forms for damage caused by potholes have been submitted in the last twelve months.

(AQW 42842/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During the period 1 March 2014 to 28 February 2015, my Department received 556 vehicle damage compensation claim forms which cited potholes as the cause of the damage.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how much waste water has been treated at Donaghadee Road Water Treatment facility in each of the last three years; (ii) what proportion of the waste has come from the Republic of Ireland; and (iii) what is the total capacity of the waste water plant.

(AQW 42853/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water does not have a water treatment works on the Donaghadee Road. The North Down Ards Wastewater Treatment Works is situated on the High Bangor Road, which runs parallel to the Donaghadee Road.

The information provided is collated for NI Water's Annual Information Returns to the Utility Regulator and therefore covers financial years (April to March inclusive) for each year requested. The year 2014-15 has not yet been collated.

Treated wastewater is measured by Flow (measured in m³) and sewage load strength, which is measured in tonnes of Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD). The Information for BOD and Flow (Flow to Full Treatment) is set out in the table below.

The North Down Ards Wastewater Treatment Works serves only the Bangor, Donaghadee, and Millisle catchments. It does not import wastewater from any other parts of Northern Ireland or from the Republic of Ireland.

The treatment capacity is typically stated in terms of the sewage loading strength (BOD). This is also set out in the table below.

Item		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
(i)	BOD (Tonnes per year)	1428.1	1564.4	1729.7

Item		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
(i)	Flows to Full Treatment (Cubic metres per year)	10,446,237	12,124,857	11,390,413
(iii)	Treatment Capacity (Tonnes BOD/day)	6.7	6.7	6.7
(iii)	Equivalent Treatment Capacity (Tonnes BOD per Year.)	2452*	2445	2445

Notes:

* 2012 was a Leap Year hence the increase in annual treatment capacity.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42371/11-15, whether exclusive use of this rank is part of the tendered contract which is due to open for re-tender later this year.

(AQW 42871/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that it intends to include an exclusive access clause as part of the tendering exercise later in the year.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many claims have been taken against his Department over the last three financial years, by pedestrians who have tripped over defects on footpaths.

(AQW 42898/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's claims database records the number of claims received for personal injury on footpaths, but does not specify the number of claims by pedestrians who are alleged to have tripped over defects on footpaths.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration NI Water has given to the possibility of harnessing the energy generated through water moving through pipes to generate electricity, similar to the scheme currently under consideration in Oregon, Portland.

(AQW 42932/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water has a small number of hydro generation plants that either produce electricity for onsite use or to sell to the grid. In preparation for PC15, the company considered the possibility of further harnessing energy generated by water moving through pipes and provided information to the Utility Regulator on the investment planned. This includes further potential hydro turbines linked to raw water intakes and generation within the potable water network where the control of water might be used to generate electricity. The Utility Regulator has supported NI Water in this form of investment.

NI Water has met with a number of providers of this type of technology and has met with local representatives from the manufacturers of the Portland, Oregon scheme.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy for the installation of pedestrian crossings.

(AQW 42953/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Pedestrian crossings are provided to facilitate access and easier movement for pedestrians and cyclists. They also have an important role in contributing to pedestrian safety and convenience.

My Department has developed a policy and assessment procedure guide for the identification and provision of pedestrian crossings where there is a need and where the conditions encountered at the site make it difficult to cross. This document is publicly available on the internet and can be accessed at www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=9074.

The main purpose of this detailed policy document is to provide guidance on how my Department prioritises the provision of a crossing facility. Upon receipt of a request for a crossing, the site will be surveyed to assess the level of crossing demand and traffic movements. Other information, including the position of local amenities that generate pedestrian movements, such as schools, shops, churches and businesses, is also collected. Details are collated and analysed on a need analysis scorecard to aid the prioritisation of potential crossings and identification of the type of facility that would be most appropriate.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy for the installation of traffic lights.

(AQW 42954/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department generally introduces traffic signals at a junction where there is regular evidence of traffic progression or road safety issues.

When considering the most appropriate layout and form of control for a junction, a number of factors are taken into account including:

- volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
- delays incurred by side roads;
- effects on main line traffic;

- collision history;
- land available; and
- cost.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy for the installation of traffic islands. (AQW 42955/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Traffic islands, along with pedestrian refuges and kerb build-outs are all features that can be used to direct traffic flows, segregate traffic flows, protect vulnerable road users, protect traffic management equipment, and calm traffic. Whilst my Department does not have a specific policy for the provision of traffic islands, guidance on their use is available from a number of publications from organisations including the Department for Transport and the Institution for Highways and Transportation, and TransportNI utilises this guidance on a site by site basis.

Traffic islands are used in a number of ways, for example, to channel flows at junctions, narrow the carriageway and discourage overtaking.

Pedestrian refuges, which can also perform some of the functions of a traffic island, are primarily aimed at improving conditions for pedestrians by allowing people to cross in two separate, shorter movements. Refuges also provide a degree of protection, comfort and convenience for pedestrians making crossing movements.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy for the painting of double yellow lines. (AQW 42956/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department generally introduces waiting restrictions for traffic progression or road safety reasons. Double yellow lines are installed to indicate a restriction that applies at all times, with single yellow lines installed when the restriction is to cover a limited period.

These restrictions may be introduced where parking has caused an obstruction to other traffic, resulting in traffic progression difficulties. This may be evident through regular queues forming or from drivers experiencing difficulties in making turning movements. Waiting restrictions may also be introduced where there is a measurable road safety issue caused by parked vehicles, this could be at junctions, brows of hills, or locations with restricted forward sight distances.

There is also a general restriction on parking within 15 metres of any junction which applies whether the corner is marked or not. My officials will mark these with double yellow lines where there is sufficient evidence of traffic progression or road safety issues.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development, following his visit to the Shore Road Project on 25 February 2015, for his assessment of the progress made and the expected completion date. (AQW 42992/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I visited the A2 Shore Road, Greenisland scheme on 25 February 2015 to view progress on this major scheme and mark the milestone of 500,000 working hours on the project.

Between Jordanstown Road and Station Road, one carriageway has been constructed and is open to contra-flow traffic, while the other carriageway is being constructed. Accommodation works for adjacent properties, retaining walls, utility diversions, culvert construction and construction of the carriageway are ongoing. On the off-line section of the scheme, between Station Road and Seapark, the road pavement and construction of Whinfield Lane bridge is substantially complete.

I congratulate everyone who is helping to successfully deliver this project and would like to thank local residents and property owners, business owners, drivers and other road users for their patience and co-operation while work is progressing.

The scheme is due for completion this summer and will significantly ease the long-standing traffic congestion on this busy route, which carries some 35,000 vehicles each day.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development, following his recent visit to Dorisland, for an update on progress, including whether Dorisland now meets European regulatory standards; and if so, how long this will be the case. (AQW 42993/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The £5 million upgrade of the Dorisland Water Treatment Works aims to ensure that the drinking water provided to Carrickfergus and the surrounding area is of the highest standard and will continue to comply with EU drinking water quality standards.

The contract to install Granular Activated Carbon filters at Dorisland will be operational at the end of March 2015. These filters are designed to remove pesticides in raw water. The Works will be fully compliant with all EU Drinking Water Directives from the end of April 2015 until any future changes in EU legislation.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the implications of the reclassification of Northern Ireland Water as a Non-Departmental Public Body for his budget in each financial year since the reclassification; (ii) the depreciation

and capital non-cash costs and what pressures this has placed on his departmental budget in each financial year; and (iii) whether the non-cash costs impacted on the Department's cash provision; and if so, how much in each financial year.

(AQW 42996/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In response to (i) and (ii) the table below shows the DEL budget costs recorded in the Departmental budget as a result of the reclassification of Northern Ireland Water in 2008/09 as a Non-Departmental Public Body.

Depreciation and capital non-cash figures shown in italics for 2008/09 and 2009/10 were treated in line with Public Expenditure budgetary guidance at that time as AME budget, not DEL, and are included for comparison purposes only. From 2010/11 Departments were no longer required to calculate and report capital non-cash costs in budgets.

In relation to (iii) there was no non-cash impact on the Department's cash provision during the financial years reported.

	2008/09 £'000 Actual	2009/10 £'000 Actual	2010/11 £'000 Actual	2011/12 £'000 Actual	2012/13 £'000 Actual	2013/14 £'000 Actual	2014/15 £'000 Estimated
DEL Cash Resource	145,537	131,990	123,776	96,733	108,780	99,220	99,049
DEL Cash Capital	388,905	253,840	158,462	188,440	160,211	164,651	154,437
Total DEL Cash	534,442	385,830	282,238	285,173	268,991	263,871	253,486
DEL Non-Cash (depreciation)	51,649	61,517	42,696	50,332	59,561	62,105	62,166
DEL Non-Cash (Cost of Capital)	38,321	44,338	0	0	0	0	0
Total DEL Non-Cash	89,970	105,855	42,696	50,332	59,561	62,105	62,166
	624,412	491,685	324,934	335,505	328,552	325,976	315,652

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how his budget will effect NI Water's ability to build the proposed new Millisle Village Pumping Station.

(AQW 43019/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Funding continues to be available for this project which will be brought to construction as soon as possible following completion of the necessary land acquisitions. The site required for the new wastewater pumping station in Millisle is presently split between two owners – Ards Borough Council and the Crown Estate. Before NI Water can acquire the entire site, Ards Borough Council must first acquire a strip of land from the Crown Estate. Matters in relation to this initial acquisition are still ongoing and are outside NI Water's direct control. NI Water has sought regular updates from the external parties and understands that the legal processes are nearing completion. The contract to construct the new pumping station is nearing award stage.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place to alleviate the shortfall in NI Waters budget for 2015/16.

(AQW 43029/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Through its work on the Price Control process, the Utility Regulator assesses the revenue requirements of NI Water. The Draft Budget allocation for NI Water Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) was £99.2 million. As a result of the consultation process I have moved to alleviate the consequential shortfall of close to £15 million by allocating an additional £10 million to NI Water's Resource DEL allocation. Whilst this does not provide the full Public Expenditure (PE) funding which my Department has assessed as necessary to support the Regulator's Final Determination, it has significantly narrowed the funding gap. However, as a result I have had to reduce PE allocation from other Departmental Business Areas.

Work will still be needed to assess changes to outputs required of NI Water because funding is not at the level required by the Regulator. My Department will work closely with NI Water and the Utility Regulator to ensure the regulatory environment which provides sustainable high quality water and sewerage services to the public is maintained.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A7 Dorans Rock road widening scheme.
(AQW 43041/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My officials are continuing to progress the detailed design for the A7 Rowallane to Doran's Rock road widening scheme.

To help inform the design, environmental assessment work is ongoing and a geotechnical investigation is programmed to commence in the coming weeks.

Land, much of which is agricultural but includes some that is residential, will be required from adjacent land owners. My officials have contacted affected landowners and met with some on site to advise them of the scheme proposals. Experience

would suggest that it is unlikely all of the land required for the scheme will be able to be acquired by agreement and therefore vesting will be required.

Delivery of this scheme will be dependent upon it clearing the necessary statutory procedures and, given other competing priorities, progress to construction will be dependent upon the funding made available in future budget settlements.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development which town bus services will receive support from the £5m allocation in the Budget 2015-16.

(AQW 43042/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink faced an initial funding cut of £15m however I have been able to invest additional monies received in the final budget to safeguard the existence of all town services in 2015-16. The bus network will be retained. Nevertheless there will still be the need for Translink to make efficiencies in administration and overhead costs, to review the frequency of some services.

Translink will be consulting locally on the detail of this.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to outline the definition of a residential street as proposed by the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill; (ii) how many km of residential streets of this kind there are in Northern Ireland; and (iii) how much it would cost his Department to designate these residential streets with a speed limit of 20 mph.

(AQW 43045/11-15)

Mr Kennedy:

- (i) The Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill defines a length of road as a residential road if:
 - (a) a system of street lighting furnished by means of lamps placed not more than 185 metres apart is provided on that length of road (not being a special road), and the road of which the length of road is part has not been classified under Article 13 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (classification of roads); or
 - (b) if there is in force in relation to that length of road an order designating it as a restricted road.
- (ii) While my Department maintains a digital model of the road network in Northern Ireland, it is not possible to identify those lengths of road where a system of street lighting has been provided. Given that this is the case, my officials have used roads which are both urban and unclassified as a proxy. There are approximately 4,300 kilometres of roads of this type.
- (iii) It would require a significant commitment of staff resources to determine the extent of signing that would be need to be installed to give effect to the change in speed limits on residential roads. If, however, schemes completed in Portsmouth and Edinburgh are used as cost comparators the projected estimate for the 4,300km of roads in Northern Ireland would be within the range £6m to £26m.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place for 2015/16 to repair or replace broken fencing at roadsides in North Down.

(AQW 43057/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department will, where it has maintenance responsibilities, carry out repairs to any defective fencing that is noted during cyclical safety inspections.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42436/11-15, whether such public announcements were carried out in past instances; and if so (ii) when did they cease; and (iii) for what reasons.

(AQW 43062/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that announcements on Value Cabs onsite presence at Central Station are made on Enterprise trains. At the time of AQW 42436/11-15 no such announcements were being made on Enterprise trains due to problems with the on-board public address systems.

The public address systems on Enterprise trains are in the process of being repaired and will be completely replaced during the Enterprise trains overhaul which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2015.

Announcements in respect of Value Cabs are currently being reinstated and will continue to be made subject to the availability of the public address system.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the land acquisition required for the installation of a passing loop in the Derry to Belfast railway has been completed.

(AQW 43112/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise you that the land required for the construction of a passing loop at Bellarena has not yet been purchased. Negotiations with the landowner have proved to be unsuccessful so far. Consequently, officials in my Department have given approval to the Northern Ireland Transport Company to commence the vesting process in order to acquire the land. At this point it is not anticipated this issue will impact on the timetable for completion of the overall Phase 2 project.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development why NI Water has a 17 per cent efficiency gap between water companies in England and Wales.

(AQW 43116/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The comparison of NI Water against the frontier companies in England and Wales is a key measurement used by and reported on by the Utility Regulator as an assessment of NI Water's performance. For the PC10 period (2010-2013) the Utility Regulator reported that NI Water has outperformed the target set for closing the efficiency gap.

NI Water recently completed an assessment of its operating cost efficiency compared with that of equivalent, albeit private sector, bodies in England and Wales for the 2013/14 year. This assessment suggests that NI Water is 17% less efficient than the frontier benchmark companies in England and Wales. This places NI Water in Band C of the OFWAT's comparison of companies' relative efficiency using Band A to E, corresponding to 'most efficient' to 'least efficient' respectively.

Companies in England and Wales against which NI Water is compared, were privatised over twenty years ago and have been subject to a full economic regime since then. Unlike NI Water, which is a Non-Departmental Public Body and subject to governance as a public body, those companies have had greater freedom to drive transformation and are not subject to limitations on investment by the Public Expenditure (PE) regime.

NI Water has made significant improvements to its operating cost efficiency since its creation in 2007 when the efficiency gap to the frontier benchmark companies in England and Wales was 48.7%. In the period since 2007, NI Water is reporting a reduction in its annual operating costs by £60m whilst at the same time steadily improving the standard of service provided to its customers and consumers in Northern Ireland.

During the PC15 period NI Water is planning to continue to close the efficiency gap, and catch up with the band of 'Most Efficient' companies in England and Wales by 2020/21. However these plans are contingent upon the necessary operational and capital PE funding being made available.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what further plans his Department has to increase the number of cycle lanes.

(AQW 43117/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: You will be aware that last year I published a draft Bicycle Strategy setting out how I plan to make Northern Ireland a cycling community over the next 25 years. My officials are currently developing comprehensive cycling networks which will make travelling by bicycle a safe, more attractive way to make a journey. In support of this, my Cycling Unit is working on developing a number of pilot schemes and I am currently finalising individual budgets for 2015/16. When this is done I will be in a position to provide specific details of future work programmes.

I can also confirm that I plan to publish, for consultation, a draft Bicycle Network Plan for Belfast – which will set out proposals for a comprehensive bicycle network in the city – later this year.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the proposed cost of the new Strangford Ferry.

(AQW 43118/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department announced on 6 February 2015, the award of the contract to build a new ferry for Strangford at a cost of £5.7million. The contract was awarded to Cammell Laird of Merseyside. Further details on the project can be viewed via the web page below.

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/public_transport/new-ferries-planned-for-rathlin-and-strangford-ferry-services.htm

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to reports of proposed cancellations of twenty town bus services, which towns will be affected; and how the removal of these services will affect older people and people with disabilities.

(AQW 43212/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As a result of the additional monies I have secured in the final budget, town services will remain in existence for 2015/16. The bus network will be retained. Nevertheless there will still be the need for Translink to make efficiencies in administration, overhead costs and to review the frequency of some services.

Translink will be consulting locally on the detail of this.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will allow other vehicles to use bus lanes on Friday 13 March 2015, given that Translink have announced that no services will be running on that day.

(AQW 43469/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Under current legislation the Department does not have the power to suspend bus lanes. However, the legislation does permit vehicles to enter bus lanes upon the direction, or with the permission, of a constable in uniform. The PSNI has, on this occasion, confirmed that it does not intend to enforce bus lanes on Friday 13 March 2015.

However, this will not apply to the hard shoulder bus lanes on the motorways where the PSNI has confirmed enforcement will still take place.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the Strangford Ferry will be operational on Friday 13 March 2015.

(AQW 43539/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is very aware of the planned industrial action on Friday 13 March 2015 and the potential for disruption to passengers who travel on the Strangford Lough Ferry Service. Depending on the level of support for the industrial action, it is possible that the Strangford Lough Ferry Service may be suspended for all or part of that day.

The ferry is manned by two crews who operate the ferry on an early shift (07:30 to 15:00) and a late shift (15:00 to 23:00). If the number of staff reporting for work for each shift is not sufficient to make up the minimum crew complement of four, then the ferry service will be suspended.

Advance notification of possible suspension has been issued to passengers registered for SMS text alerts and is on the TrafficwatchNI website <http://trafficwatchni.com/>.

If the service is suspended at any time on 13 March, the travelling public will be advised through traffic bulletins on local media, variable message signs at the roadside, by SMS text alerts and the TrafficwatchNI website.

Department for Social Development

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of management surveys being carried out on all multi-storey flats including those which are owner-occupied.

(AQW 42042/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive has advised that all 32 of their multi storey blocks have had a management survey completed for their communal shared spaces. In addition a large number of flats have had individual surveys carried out and this will continue until all flats have been surveyed.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 41690/11-15, to detail (i) each project he refers to as having been assisted by way of salaries and running costs; (ii) the amount of money each listed project received per year over the last ten years for (a) salaries; and (b) running costs.

(AQW 42636/11-15)

Mr Storey: In line with the Department for Social Development's Retention and Disposal Schedule, financial records are not held beyond six years. My Department therefore, does not hold the details on the breakdown of funding as requested prior to the financial year 2008/2009.

The tables at Annex A below provide detail on (i) each project assisted by way of salaries and running costs; (ii) the amount of money each listed project received per year for the period 2008/2009 through to 2014/2015 for (a) salaries; and (b) running costs.

My Department provides funding to these organisations which facilitates the provision of childcare across various age ranges. All applications for funding are subjected to a thorough assessment and appraisal process in line with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation and Managing Public Money NI. It should be noted that DSD is not the employer and terms and conditions of employment are the responsibility of the individual funded organisations.

An Droichead Limited

Annex A

Financial Year	Salaries (£)	Running Costs (£)
2008/2009	25,977.76*	0.00
2009/2010	45,599.40	0.00
2010/2011	46,609.12	0.00
2011/2012	47,341.68	0.00
2012/2013	47,440.80	0.00
2013/2014	50,821.92	0.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Ardoyne Women's Group		
2008/2009	21,163.73*	1,746.00
2009/2010	37,213.08	3,082.94
2010/2011	38,168.52	3,175.43

Financial Year	Salaries (£)	Running Costs (£)
2011/2012	47,379.00	3,235.57
2012/2013	47,379.00	3,500.00
2013/2014	48,329.78	3,500.00
2014/2015	48,329.78	3,500.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Ashton Community Trust		
2008/2009	6,3751.03*	0.00
2009/2010	111,902.04	0.00
2010/2011	114,762.12	0.00
2011/2012	116,478.96	10,000.00
2012/2013	117,181.08	0.00
2013/2014	117,181.08	0.00
2014/2015	117,181.08	0.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Ionad Uibh Eachach		
2008/2009	28,272.00*	0.00
2009/2010	80,731.56	0.00
2010/2011	81,416.42	468.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Newtownards Road Women's Group Limited		
2008/2009	8,236.30*	807.00
2009/2010	21,364.68	1,169.76
2010/2011	21,929.76	1,169.76
2011/2012	22,715.16	902.00
2012/2013	22,405.32	0.00
2013/2014	22,405.32	0.00
2014/2015	22,405.32	0.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Shankill Womens Centre		
2008/2009	47,164.25*	6,507.00
2009/2010	88,457.52	6,602.56
2010/2011	90,742.60	2,075.12
2011/2012	116,130.00	11,486.90
2012/2013	117,774.00	11,486.90
2013/2014	117,774.00	11,486.90
2014/2015	117,774.00	11,486.90
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Southcity Resource & Development Centre		
2008/2009	27,846.12*	3,543.91
2009/2010	51,174.38	6,241.84
2010/2011	53,191.87	6,400.52

Financial Year	Salaries (£)	Running Costs (£)
2011/2012	54,090.70	8,700.00
2012/2013	53,323.50	4,839.44
2013/2014	53,323.50	4,791.06
2014/2015	53,323.50	4,581.89
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Star Neighbourhood Centre		
2008/2009	18,277.35*	0.00
2009/2010	40,229.00	0.00
2010/2011	41,261.00	0.00
2011/2012	42,210.00	0.00
2012/2013	42,293.00	0.00
2013/2014	42,293.00	0.00
2014/2015	42,293.00	0.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Tullycarnet Community Support Services		
2008/2009	14,647.58*	0.00
2009/2010	22,020.20	0.00
2010/2011	22,595.13	0.00
2011/2012	22,918.30	0.00
2012/2013	22,821.70	0.00
2013/2014	22,821.70	0.00
2014/2015	22,821.70	0.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Tullycarnet Primary School		
2011/2012	39,820.00*	58,944.00
2012/2013	41,796.00	65,093.00
2013/2014	43,465.00	66,746.00
2014/2015	44,127.00	70,016.00
* Contract awarded from September 2008 only		
Creggan Pre-School & Training Trust		
2008/2009	18,883.46	0.00
2009/2010	50,489.52	5,660.04
2010/2011	95,549.39	12,534.30
2011/2012	98,270.49	12,752.92
2012/2013	99,653.15	12,681.09
2013/2014	87,844.68	18,465.77
2014/2015	99,685.66	17,965.77
First Friends Play Group, Bangor		
2008/2009	8,122.34	0.00
2009/2010	679.85	0.00
Social Economy – support provided in start up period.		

Financial Year	Salaries (£)	Running Costs (£)
Focus on Family Skills Development & Education Project		
2012/2013	7867.19*	5,482.16
2013/2014	40,090.32	25,919.67
2014/2015	40,090.32	25,980.67
* Contract awarded from January 2013 only		
Ballysally Integrated Nurturing Project		
2011/2012	112,013.36	25,592.49
2012/2013	111,946.21	25,336.57
2013/2014	123,784.89	48,144.02
2014/2015	123,784.89	48,044.02

Background Note To Assembly Question AQW 42636/11-15

- 1 Mr Allister is a Traditional Unionist Voice MLA for the North Antrim Constituency.
- 2 Mr Allister is currently a Committee Member on both the Committee for Social Development and the Committee on Procedures.
- 3 The response to AQW 41690/11-15 advised that Neighbourhood Renewal did not specially fund organisations to provide nursery places. However it did support a number of projects by way of salaries and running costs which facilitate the provision of childcare across various age ranges.
- 4 The Department has been asked to provide the financial breakdown of salaries and running costs provided to these organisations during the last ten years. Records should not be retained past their useful life as the retention of too many records is expensive in terms of staff, time, space and equipment. In line with the Department for Social Development's Retention and Disposal Schedule, financial records are only held for six years. The Department therefore does not hold the details on the breakdown of funding as requested prior to the financial year 2008/2009.
- 5 All applications for funding are subjected to a thorough assessment and appraisal process in line with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation and Managing Public Money NI. Further information on individual projects can be provided if required.
- 6 The Data Protection Unit has advised that they are content with the information provided in relation to salaries from a data protection perspective.

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many liquor licences have been surrendered in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 42644/11-15)

Mr Storey: Although my Department is responsible for the legislation relating to the retail sale of alcohol in Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice is responsible for the administration of licences through the courts system.

The Minister for Justice has advised that to identify the number of liquor licences which have been surrendered in each of the last ten years would require a manual trawl of court records at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Social Development how many new licences for the sale of alcohol in pubs have been issued in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 42645/11-15)

Mr Storey: Although my Department is responsible for the legislation relating to the retail sale of alcohol in Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice is responsible for the administration of licences through the courts system.

The Minister for Justice has advised that to identify the number of new licences granted for the sale of alcohol in pubs in each of the last ten years would require a manual trawl of court records at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the estimated number of homes that have cavity wall insulation which, due to the date of installation or other defects, is currently inadequate.

(AQW 42651/11-15)

Mr Storey: I assume the Member is referring to cavity wall insulation in Housing Executive homes. The Housing Executive has advised that the number of homes is unknown but a key part of the current Department for Social Development/Housing Executive's Asset Management Commission work is a Stock Condition Survey which is considering thermal performance across Housing Executive stock. It is necessary to await the outcome of this work before taking investment decisions to

include any insulation works that may be required. Once the Stock Condition Survey is completed, a holistic and strategic perspective of the overall investment requirements and their relative priority within Housing Executive stock can be established and well planned, based on available budgets. In the meantime the Housing Executive will continue to manage any issues arising from problems with cavity fill on a responsive case by case basis.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what responsibility the Housing Executive has to fix substandard insulation in their properties.

(AQW 42676/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that they have no contractual or statutory obligation to remedy substandard insulation as it is not considered a matter of disrepair. However, where the Housing Executive is satisfied substandard insulation has caused damage or disrepair to the property, repairs will be carried out in accordance with its conditions of tenancy agreement.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on how many of the 241 social housing units promised for development in 2014/15 for Ballymena will be provided within the anticipated timescale.

(AQW 42745/11-15)

Mr Storey: The figure of 241 social housing units you have referred to in your question, relates to the number of planned schemes in the 2014/15 -2016/17 Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) for the Ballymena district.

The 87 units originally planned for 2014/15 have been delayed and are now planned to start in 2015/16.

Schemes may slip or be lost from a given programme year for a variety of reasons, such as difficulties achieving planning permission.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Social Development what measures will be put in place to assist unemployed claimants who have sanctions imposed on their benefits, so that they are able to maintain a basic standard of living.

(AQW 42790/11-15)

Mr Storey: There are currently measures in place to assist claimants who have sanctions imposed on their benefit. Claimants receiving Income Support or income related Employment Support Allowance who have a sanction imposed on their benefit will have their benefit paid at a reduced rate for the period the sanction remains in force. Claimants whose Jobseekers Allowance is sanctioned, are disallowed benefit for a specified period and they can apply for a hardship payment which will give them a minimum level of financial support during the period their benefit has been disallowed. The weekly amount of the hardship payment will take account of the claimant's individual circumstances.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what schemes or funding streams are available through his Department to assist with early years intervention.

(AQW 42808/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department does not have specific funding streams to assist with early years' interventions. However, through its Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund and Areas at Risk programme, my Department supports a number of early intervention projects ranging from Nurture Units, family support and health and wellbeing programmes to incredible years programmes which may impact across early years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how much European funding his Department has received in each of the last two financial years; and from which funding streams.

(AQW 42815/11-15)

Mr Storey: In the last two financial years my Department and its arms length body, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, have received £6.8m (2013/14) and £6.3m (2014/15) in European funding.

The sources of these funds are the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE III) and the European Regional Development Fund.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of homes owned by the Housing Executive in East Antrim that have gas fired central heating systems, as well as those heated by other means.

(AQW 42828/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that in the East Antrim constituency there are 2,725 properties that have gas fired central heating systems. They have also advised that those heated by other means are as follows:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| ■ Oil | 833 |
| ■ Electric | 225 |
| ■ Open Fire Back Boiler | 82 |
| ■ Roomheater | 16 |

- Liquefied Petroleum Gas 9
- Open fire 6

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have had sanctions imposed on their benefits in each year, since May 2011, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 42843/11-15)

Mr Storey: The information is not available in the format requested as it is not possible to provide the information broken down by constituency.

The number of sanctions applied where claimants fail to comply with the prescribed conditions for receiving a particular benefit is set out in the table below.

Benefit Conditionality Sanctions applied

Period	May 11 – Mar 12	Apr 12 – Mar 13	Apr 13 – Mar 14	Apr 14 – Jan 15
Totals	6,831	11,546	8,216	4,749

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Social Development how effective the current child support system has been in ensuring that the earnings of absent fathers, who are self-employed, are verified; and what further measures will be put in place to ensure these earnings are verified.

(AQW 42873/11-15)

Mr Storey: The policy intent underpinning Child Maintenance Reform Programme is to support separated parents to take greater financial responsibility for their children.

The most effective arrangements are generally those agreed directly between parents, but for those who can not agree and need to make an application to our statutory scheme, we now have a direct interface with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This gives us access to the most recent earnings information accepted by HMRC, allowing for quicker and more accurate child maintenance assessments to be undertaken than before.

Our new statutory scheme also includes greater enforcement powers with fees and charges for those parents who fail to fulfil their financial responsibility for their children.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 41690/11-15, how many nursery places are supported as a result of the salaries and running costs paid to each of these projects.

(AQW 42883/11-15)

Mr Storey: Pursuant to AQW41690/11-15 my Department supports a number of projects (AQW 42636/11-15 refers) by way of salaries and running costs. It does not specifically fund these organisations to provide nursery places through its Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 41690/11-15, what account is taken of other sources of funding, such as Bright Start - The Executive's Programme for Affordable and Integrated Childcare, to ensure projects are not being double funded from the public purse.

(AQW 42884/11-15)

Mr Storey: All applications for funding are subjected to a thorough assessment and appraisal process in line with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation and Managing Public Money NI. Consideration of funding received from any other sources forms a part of this assessment and appraisal process.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many Affordable Warmth surveys local councils are expected to have completed by the end of March 2015; (ii) how many have been completed; (iii) what work has been delivered as a result of completed surveys; and (iv) what is the total budget for paying local councils to undertake these surveys.

(AQW 42928/11-15)

Mr Storey: For 2014/2015 the Warm Homes Scheme is the Department's main scheme for tackling fuel poverty. The Affordable Warmth Scheme was launched in September 2014 to run alongside the Warm Homes Scheme until it comes to an end on 31 March 2015. The Affordable Warmth Scheme is being embedded across all council areas. The Service Level Agreement between my Department and Councils specifies a minimum of 1,000 completed surveys to be referred to the Housing Executive each year. Up to 5 March 2015 Housing Executive has received 2,041 completed Affordable Warmth surveys from the councils and surveyors continue to visit households and complete surveys. Housing Executive is now processing these 2,041 surveys to identify what energy efficiency measures are required and also checking the householder's eligibility for the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Housing Executive has processed payments to Councils on behalf of the Department totalling £1,386,000 which includes start up costs for the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of maintaining grass cutting and general gardening in Rathgill Estate, Bangor in the 2014/15 financial year.

(AQW 43017/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the cost for grass maintenance and general gardening for Rathgill Estate, Bangor in 2014/15 is £9,851.50.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost to the Housing Executive of grass cutting and general garden maintenance in Bloomfield Estate, Bangor in 2013/14.

(AQW 43089/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the total cost for grass cutting and general garden maintenance for Bloomfield Estate, Bangor in 2013/14 was £7,785.68.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 41780/11-15, why the answer differs from the information provided by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in a recent briefing paper to the Committee for Social Development, particularly paragraph 7 which stated that charities would be advised of their right to apply to the Commission for a review of its decision to institute a statutory inquiry under section 22 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008; and whether the answer or the briefing given to the Committee for Social Development by the Charity Commission is correct.

(AQW 43109/11-15)

Mr Storey: The answer differs because of an error in the briefing paper for the Committee for Social Development. The answer is correct.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development how many landlords registered under the Landlord Registration Scheme by the deadline of 25 February 2015.

(AQW 43124/11-15)

Mr Storey: At the deadline on 25 February 2015, there were 37,039 landlords registered with the Landlord Registration Scheme, providing details of 72,948 tenancies.

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.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the change in the average number of people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance between 2010 and 2014, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 43125/11-15)

Mr Storey: The following table details the number of Disability Living Allowance recipients from November 2010 to November 2014 broken down by Assembly constituency.

Assembly Area	Date				
	Nov-10	Nov-11	Nov-12	Nov-13	Nov-14
Belfast East	8,840	8,950	9,110	9,350	9,530
Belfast North	14,750	14,930	15,150	15,300	15,870
Belfast South	8,340	8,470	8,670	8,740	9,020
Belfast West	17,470	17,610	17,770	17,740	18,230
East Antrim	7,220	7,370	7,620	7,760	8,060
East Londonderry	8,250	8,450	8,770	9,090	9,460
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	9,240	9,610	9,840	9,060	9,510
Foyle	13,660	13,790	14,080	14,190	14,580
Lagan Valley	7,710	7,810	8,010	8,160	8,480
Mid Ulster	10,120	10,340	10,550	10,760	11,160
Newry And Armagh	12,020	12,250	12,550	12,640	12,950
North Antrim	8,320	8,590	8,810	9,060	9,440
North Down	6,150	6,330	6,510	6,650	6,870
South Antrim	7,870	8,110	8,380	8,520	8,830
South Down	10,870	11,120	11,460	11,640	11,920

Assembly Area	Date				
	Nov-10	Nov-11	Nov-12	Nov-13	Nov-14
Strangford	7,340	7,550	7,810	7,920	8,220
Upper Bann	12,760	12,920	13,100	13,170	13,590
West Tyrone	12,720	12,920	13,180	13,310	13,780
Unknown	1,160	820	910	2,320	2,710
Total	184,790	187,950	192,280	195,390	202,210

Claimants are allocated to an Assembly Area by postcode. In some cases this is not possible, for example, a postcode may be missing, incomplete or incorrectly recorded.

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.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42769/11-15, to detail the arrangement for administering revenue core funding to Volunteer Centres in Northern Ireland, since 2013.

(AQW 43194/11-15)

Mr Storey: New arrangements to support volunteering infrastructure organisations have been in place since 1 October 2013 providing support to seven volunteering infrastructure organisations in Northern Ireland.

The table provides detail on the level of support provided since 1 October 2013.

1/10/2013 - 31/03/2014

Organisation Name	Grant Award Amount
Causeway Volunteer Centre	£25,000.00
Cookstown & Magherafelt Volunteer Centre	£21,062.00
Craigavon and Banbridge Volunteer Centre	£20,548.65
Limavady Volunteer Centre	£22,956.65
North West Volunteer Centre	£28,334.00
Omagh Volunteer Centre	£19,385.52
Volunteer Now	£111,349.00
Volunteer Now	£188,304.97
	£436,940.79

1/04/2014 -31/03/2015

Organisation Name	Grant Award Amount
Causeway Volunteer Centre	£40,000.00
Cookstown & Magherafelt Volunteer Centre	£43,938.00
Craigavon and Banbridge Volunteer Centre	£39,451.35
Limavady Volunteer Centre	£37,043.35
North West Volunteer Centre	£58,666.00
Omagh Volunteer Centre	£40,614.48
Volunteer Now	£401,695.03
	£661,408.21

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development whether there are grants or funding available to assist in converting commercial properties in urban areas into residential properties.

(AQW 43271/11-15)

Mr Storey: Town and city regeneration is a key policy priority as my Department's Housing Strategy and Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework clearly sets out. The Housing Strategy specifically contains a commitment to

revitalise the Living Over The Shops (LOTS) initiative which can help to encourage the development of homes within vacant or underused commercial premises. This can in turn allow people to return to town and city living. The previous LOTS scheme, which helped create over 100 new dwellings, closed to applications in 2008/09 as a result of budget pressures associated with the economic downturn. Therefore unfortunately there is currently no assistance programme available for conversion projects of this type.

My officials are completing a review of the previous LOTS scheme and proposals are under development with a view to putting in place a revised assistance policy in the near future.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development whether redundancy payments are applicable costs within Neighbourhood Renewal funding when projects come to an end.[R]
(AQW 43280/11-15)

Mr Storey: The funded organisation is the employer and as such assumes all statutory employment responsibilities for its employees, including that of redundancy payments. As a result redundancy payments are not an applicable cost within Neighbourhood Renewal funding contracts.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development when applicants of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding 2015/16 will be notified of the outcome of their application.[R]
(AQW 43284/11-15)

Mr Storey: Neighbourhood Renewal provides services to people living in our most deprived communities. In this difficult financial climate I am seeking to protect those projects which demonstrate most effectively that they are meeting the objectives of the programme. The process of assessing applications on the basis of evidence of need and impact of each project is currently ongoing.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development when residents can expect the installation of new kitchens in Daly Park, Belleek.
(AQW 43385/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the properties in Daly Park, Belleek are included in a Kitchen Replacement Scheme which is currently programmed to begin in early 2016.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Social Development when confirmation will be provided in relation to Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to allow groups to plan for the future and continue to provide a service to their community.
(AQW 43418/11-15)

Mr Storey: Neighbourhood Renewal provides services to people living in our most deprived communities. In this difficult financial climate I am seeking to protect those projects which demonstrate most effectively that they are meeting the objectives of the programme. The process of assessing applications on the basis of evidence of need and impact of each project is currently ongoing.

Mr Gardiner asked Minister for Social Development why, in the event of joint ownership of a property, every individual owner must register and pay a fee in the Landlord Registration Scheme.

(AQW 43450/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 came into operation on 25 February 2014. Regulation 3(2) states that a landlord letting a dwelling house under a private tenancy is required to register, provide all of the information and pay the required fee. A landlord is defined in the Private Tenancies Order (2006) as "any person from time to time deriving title ...also includes any person other than the tenant... entitled to possession of the dwelling house."

Each owner has both joint and individual responsibility for adhering to the landlord's duties and responsibilities as laid out in the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. As the enforcement authority, councils require the details of all landlords to issue a fixed penalty notice or take alternative enforcement action where the landlord is in breach of existing regulations. As such, to comply with legislative and council requirements, all joint owners are required to complete registration.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made on proposals to alleviate town centre parking problems in Coleraine.
(AQO 7767/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department has been working with developers for a number of years to take forward schemes aimed at providing a mixed use development comprising additional retail space, new housing increasing parking spaces at both Abbey Street and The Mall car parks in Coleraine town centre.

The Abbey Street scheme would deliver:

- At least 540 parking spaces;
- Approximately 30,000 sq ft of retail accommodation; and

- 12 residential apartments.

The mall scheme would deliver up to:

- 900 car parking spaces in three underground levels of car parking
- Approximately 171,000 sq ft of retail accommodation
- 700 m² of office space
- 115 apartments above the retail floors

The schemes form part of the regeneration initiatives that were identified in the Coleraine Town Centre masterplan that was commissioned by my Department. These proposed developments are not, however, currently economically viable due to the mixed use requirements to provide retail space as well as additional parking spaces.

Departmental officials continue to work closely with the developers for the Lanes Scheme and the Ramparts scheme, to discuss proposals but it is difficult to predict when market conditions will improve sufficiently and if the developers can secure the necessary finances. Funding support by the Department would be subject to a satisfactory business case and capital budget allocations as well as council priorities in the event of transfers under RLG.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the success of Areas at Risk programmes.
(AQO 7768/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Areas at Risk Pilot Programme was launched in 2006 as part of the Renewing Communities initiative. The aim of the initiative was to provide support to communities which are located outside the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (Noble) 10% most deprived areas, but that are at risk of decline. Target areas normally received 2 years funding however in 2014/15 a number of areas where ongoing need was identified received 1 year's additional support.

Since the launch of the programme in 2006, 37 areas have been identified and targeted for intervention. There are currently 18 areas receiving support with contracts due to expire March 2015.

As a Programme, Areas at Risk has been very well received within its target areas and its ability to deliver progress across diverse projects and in multiple areas of community life.

My Department commissioned an interim evaluation into the then Areas at Risk pilot in 2011, following which the programme was mainstreamed. A final evaluation of the programme is due to commence early next year. Until such time I am not in a position to fully comment on the success of the programme.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development what steps his Department is taking to implement the next stage of Welfare Reform.
(AQO 7769/11-15)

Mr Storey: I was due to take the Welfare Reform Bill through its final stage yesterday but as the member is aware Sinn Fein, with support from your party, has placed a petition of concern against the Bill, which astounds me.

My Department is ready to progress a programme of work to put in place the operational arrangements for each of the changes which are being brought about by the Welfare Reform Bill. These changes would represent some of the most significant changes introduced in the last 60 years. The programme of work to implement these changes will require a period of dual running of the existing and new social security systems and it is expected the overall project will take up to 4 years to fully implement.

I will also be bringing forward a number of schemes which the Executive parties agreed at their 22 January meeting, and once these have been agreed, there will be a period of public consultation followed by sub ordinate legislation. The Social Security Agency is currently planning to have all of the schemes in operation by the end of 2015.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the development of a maintenance strategy and interim investment plan by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for its multi-storey residential blocks.
(AQO 7770/11-15)

Mr Storey: The new multi- storey Tower Block Strategy is currently being developed and will set out how the Housing Executive intends to invest in all of the blocks in the years ahead and will also be an integral part of a new Asset Management Strategy that will emerge primarily from the work that is currently being undertaken by Savills (UK) Limited as part of the Department for Social Development/Housing Executive's Asset Management Commission.

Savills is currently carrying out a stock condition survey of the Housing Executive's properties and this includes an inspection of the structure, mechanical and electrical installations, internal elements of all the tower blocks and an assessment of their short, medium and long term investment requirements. Technical survey reports for the Housing Executive's tower blocks are due by March 2015 and a draft multi-storey (tower blocks) asset management strategy is then due around May 2015.

However, whilst this work is ongoing, I tasked the Housing Executive to prepare an interim investment priorities plan based on their current understanding of the stock. This Priorities Plan is built around a number of themes, including bringing forward work to be carried out to a number of tower blocks. The purpose of the interim approach is to effectively bridge the gap that

exists between now and the development and delivery of the comprehensive strategy for maintaining all of the Housing Executive's housing assets leading, in turn, to a clear long term funding strategy.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any plans he has for cyclical maintenance in the Millburn Estate, Coleraine.

(AQO 7772/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that they have an External Cyclical Maintenance scheme for the Coleraine area programmed to start in May 2016 which includes 197 properties in the Millburn Estate.

The External Cyclical Maintenance works to the properties in the Millburn Estate will include repair or replacement to:

- | | | |
|----------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ roofs; | ■ paths; | ■ drainage; |
| ■ walls; | ■ fences; | ■ communal areas; and |
| ■ doors; | ■ chimneys; | ■ servicing/painting of windows |

Works will be carried out to individual properties on the basis of their condition.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has acted upon the recommendation from the Department of Finance and Personnel that disciplinary proceedings were warranted against Stephen Brimstone over his treatment of Cllr Jenny Palmer.

(AQO 7773/11-15)

Mr Storey: No

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of how landlords are cooperating with the Landlord Registration Scheme.

(AQO 7774/11-15)

Mr Storey: At 1 March 2015 over 35,000 landlords have registered and provided details of over 77,000 private tenancies. I assess this as a positive indication that landlords are cooperating well with the Landlord Registration Scheme. According to the 2011 House Condition Survey there were 125,000 private tenancies so we now have details of approximately 62 per cent of these.

Immediately prior to the Landlord Registration deadline of 25 February 2015 there were approximately 2,000 landlords registering per day.

In the first year of the Scheme, a number of landlords have raised concerns regarding the requirement of all joint owners to register separately and each pay the fee. I announced a review of the role and regulation of the private rented sector in November 2014 and have agreed to look at this requirement in the planned review.

My Department will continue to work with local councils to publicise and enforce the Landlord Registration Scheme to improve co-operation further.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development how long it takes the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to repair fire damaged properties.

(AQO 7776/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that in the last financial year 2013/14, the average time taken to repair any of their fire damaged properties from the date the fire was reported to job completion was 39 days.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Flanagan asked the Assembly Commission, pursuant to AQW 41118/11-15, (i) whether the prayer and Bible study meeting is open to members of all religious faiths and none; (ii) whether room bookings are made for these meetings; if so (iii) to provide further details; (iv) which individual or organisation organises the prayer and Bible study meetings; and (v) how often these meetings taken place.

(AQW 42748/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission does not organise any prayer or bible study meetings. I understand a group of staff meet informally twice a month for a prayer and bible study meeting which is open to all and is held in the office of one of those attending. However, as with other informal activities staff organise during lunch breaks, the Assembly Commission is not involved or responsible for the activities.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Assembly Commission, pursuant to AQW 42594/11-15, whether it expects to incur any costs in the future; and if so, what costs are anticipated.

(AQW 43084/11-15)

Mr Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): In response to the question, please find the following:

Pursuant to AQW 42594/11-15, to date, the Assembly Commission has not sustained any cost in staging the Red Bull Crashed Ice event and is not expecting to incur any cost in the future.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 20 March 2015

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline their Department's policy on publishing minutes of Executive meetings and meetings of Executive sub-committees.

(AQW 32003/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): All aspects of Executive business, including minutes of Executive meetings and papers relating to the deliberations of Executive sub-committees, are confidential, and are therefore not published.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the funding which has been provided for research into sexual violence and abuse, including the strategies which address these directly, since 2011.

(AQW 42484/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), and the Department of Justice (DoJ) jointly lead on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse.

OFMDFM has been advised that since 2011, DHSSPS has not provided any funding for research into sexual violence and abuse, either through or independent of the 'Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse' Strategy.

DoJ has advised that, as part of its five-year victim and witness strategy, it has committed to undertake research with victims of serious and sensitive crimes, including sexual violence and abuse, subject to the necessary resources being available. The aim of this research will be to assess victims' experience of the criminal justice system, with a view to addressing issues raised.

Junior Ministers remain committed to tackling all forms of domestic and sexual violence and are members of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

The Executive's Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016 sets out an overarching framework for departments, their agencies and other relevant statutory authorities to promote gender equality. The Strategy contains a key objective to eliminate gender based violence in society.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the date of the most recent meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence; and the number of times it has met since 2011.

(AQW 42485/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Department of Justice jointly lead on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse.

OFMDFM has been advised that the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence (IMG) was last scheduled to meet in October 2014; however, the meeting was postponed.

Since 2011, IMG has met on two occasions, 24 May 2012 and 14 November 2012.

Between meetings members have received written briefings and been updated both on the development of the new draft Strategy on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and on the outcome of the consultation on the Strategy.

It is anticipated that an IMG meeting will be arranged when the timetable for the publication of the new Strategy is fully confirmed.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

(AQW 42489/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Department of Justice jointly lead on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse.

OFMDFM has been advised that the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence (IMG) has met on five occasions since its inception in May 2008.

Between meetings IMG members have received written briefings and been updated both on the development of the new draft Strategy on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and on the outcome of the consultation on the Strategy.

It is anticipated that an IMG meeting will be arranged when the timetable for the publication of the new Strategy is fully confirmed.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the disability strategy.
(AQW 42593/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The first annual report on the delivery of the Executive's Disability Strategy, setting out the actions that all departments have undertaken, is currently being finalised.

It is anticipated that, subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive approval, the report will be published in the near future.

We are currently giving consideration as to how best to take forward work on disability policy after 2015.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the introduction of age discrimination legislation.
(AQW 42620/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We made a Written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to take forward proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to people aged 16 and over. The next step is to bring forward a consultation document setting out our proposals. Once the consultation is complete and a policy agreed, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the outcome of the 2008 review of the Civic Forum, including any conclusions reached.

(AQW 43005/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The review of the Civic Forum and of arrangements for engaging with civic society was commissioned in 2007 by the then First Minister and deputy First Minister. Responses received during the consultation phase of the review did not suggest a widespread desire for a return to a structure of the size and expense of the Forum, as it had previously operated.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking to improve internet access availability in the Loughbrickland and Ballyward areas.

(AQW 43093/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): As you will be aware broadband infrastructure and policy is the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment. However access to rural broadband is one of my highest priorities, and my Department is currently investing £5m as part of the larger NI Broadband Improvement Project, this has already seen some 7,000 rural dwellers across the north being enabled to be connected to broadband if they wish.

The areas of Loughbrickland and Ballyward will benefit generally from improved access to broadband from the overall project, but at this point in time it is too early to say what addresses will specifically benefit.

The project has still some implementation to do on the ground. To help keep you up to date I have attached a note providing websites that can offer information and help regarding current and future access to broadband. A copy of which has also been placed in the Assembly library.

I can assure you that my Department will continue to work with other stakeholders to help ensure broadband service access is increased throughout rural communities in the north of Ireland. This will ensure that more rural dwellers, farmers and businesses, can enjoy the benefits of working with the various government Departments online services.

Annex A

Access to Broadband in Rural Areas

Broadband speeds are continuing to improve so that rural dwellers can enjoy a faster and more reliable service at home and at work. It is important that rural dwellers understand how and where to find broadband information and get the answers needed quickly and with ease.

The site www.nibroadband.com provides answers to common questions and has a search option so you can check what broadband speeds are currently available in your area. The site also provides information on developments planned or in progress for your area.

Here is the link to the FAQs which will help with answering most questions. For others not covered in this section you can email superfastni@bt.com where someone will be happy to help.

This resource will give you the best and most up-to-date.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether any consideration is being given to establishing a dedicated body with responsibility for coastal erosion.

(AQW 43227/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There is no consideration being given by my Department establishing a dedicated body with responsibility for coastal erosion. There are a number of organisations responsible for sea defences which protect roads and railways, as well as key infrastructure such as ports and harbours. DARD is responsible for only 26 kilometres of sea defences, designated under the terms of the Drainage (NI) Order 1973. The Department's remit under this legislation is in relation to flooding as opposed to coastal erosion.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been invested since 2007 in the East Derry constituency (i) in single farm payments; (ii) for rural development; (iii) in forestry grants; and (iv) in other funding.

(AQW 43438/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total amount invested since 2007 in the East Derry constituency is:

- (i) Single Farm Payment - £176,994,938
- (ii) Rural Development - £3,613,412
- (iii) Forestry Grants - £927,541
- (iv) Other Funding:
 - Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowance - £17,137,749
 - Forest Road –Banagher Forest - £185,459
 - Agri-Environment Schemes - £21,727,434

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on funding for groups who assist the Protestant Unionist Loyalist community to access rural development funding.

(AQW 43603/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: It is my intention, subject to confirmation of my budget for the TRPSI Programme, to make funding available for a further year for the Rural Community Support Networks including additional funding for work in the Protestant Unionist Loyalist communities to allow these areas to consolidate their work to date and integrate fully with the Rural Support Networks going forward.

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline how the Young Farmers' Scheme is progressing within the Common Agricultural Policy reform proposals for Northern Ireland.

(AQO 7820/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A Guidance booklet for the Young Farmers' Payment was published on the DARD website on 6 February 2015. It contains detailed information on eligibility criteria and the evidence young farmers will need to submit in support of their application.

Farmers who qualify for the Young Farmers' Payment (including those who never held entitlements and those who will otherwise establish entitlements with a unit value below the regional average) may also be eligible to apply to the Young Farmers' category of the Regional Reserve to have entitlements allocated at the annual regional average value or the value of entitlements increased to the regional average. A Regional Reserve Guidance booklet is now available on the DARD website.

My Department has published these guidance booklets in advance of the Single Application Form (SAF) application period so that potential applicants have time to consider whether the Young Farmers' Payment and/or an application to the Reserve is appropriate to their circumstances and draw together the necessary documentation.

A Young Farmers' Payment registration process and Regional Reserve application process will open from mid March to 15 May 2015. During this time young farmer applicants will be required to complete a combined form, indicating whether they are registering for Young Farmers' Payment, applying to the Regional Reserve or both. The completed form and supporting evidence must be submitted in person at a DARD Direct office. They must also complete a SAF, indicating applications to the Basic Payment Scheme and Young Farmers Payment. The closing date for applications is 15 May 2015.

My Department will not be in a position to evaluate the success of the Young Farmers' Payment until all applications have been submitted and assessed.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

(AQO 7808/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Following the adoption of a Private Member's Motion on animal cruelty on 31 March 2014, I initiated a Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. My officials are taking this Review forward in conjunction with the Department of Justice and an Interim Report has now been produced.

The purpose of issuing the Interim Report is to allow further consultation on the emerging thinking and recommendations of the Review.

The Interim Report shows the progress of the Review to date across the four themes examined; Sentencing, Delivery Structures, Working Together and Serving the Public. It sets out the proposed recommendations which include increasing the maximum sentences available, establishing a single animal welfare website to bring together information from all three enforcement bodies and a publicity campaign to increase public awareness of who to contact if concerned about the welfare of an animal. The Review Steering Group is undertaking an eight week public consultation exercise on the Interim Report, this will run until Thursday 23 April 2015. The consultation documents are available on the DARD and DOJ websites. I would encourage members of the public and stakeholders to submit their views and further evidence during the consultation period.

The Review will take account of any views on the Interim Report and any new evidence it receives through the consultation process as it prepares its Final Report which is due to be published later this year. When I receive the Final Report I will consider the recommendations including any financial or resource implications for my Department.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to gain export licences for local beef, dairy and pork produce.

(AQO 7812/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As international trade is a reserved matter Defra take the lead on negotiations however they do this in close partnership with DARD officials as members of the various export partnerships, which seek to access new markets for meat and dairy, and ensure the interests of our industry are kept to the fore.

There are of course occasions when I need to raise specific issues with my Ministerial counterparts in Defra to highlight the importance of the issue to our industry and secure their support in resolving it.

In 2012 I discussed securing approval for the north to export pork to China with the previous Defra Secretary of State, Jim Paice agreeing that a Defra-DARD delegation would meet with Minister Niu Dun in Beijing to show our commitment to trading with them. I have since visited China twice and my officials have been part of trade missions to China on eight occasions to continue the momentum. We are preparing to host an inspection by Chinese officials in the next few months.

Australia is another important market for our pork industry on which I liaised with the then Defra Secretary of State, Owen Patterson. We are also preparing to host an inspection by Australian officials in the first half of 2015.

I recently wrote to Liz Truss, current Defra Secretary of State in relation to Chinese market access and in respect of re-establishing trade in poultry meat with a range of international markets, particularly with South Africa. For which approval was lost following the recent outbreak of avian flu.

I will continue to raise specific issues with my Defra Ministerial counterparts and continue to direct my officials to work closely with Defra counterparts to progress accessing priority markets for beef, dairy and pork identified by local industry.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the savings in departmental administration costs planned for 2015/16.

(AQO 7815/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD's proposed administration savings in 2015-16 are £3.2m. In addition the Department will have to absorb pay progression and inflationary administration costs that will require additional savings to be found.

Whilst a significant element of the savings will be generated from staff leaving under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, there will be other administration savings across the Department in overtime and in general administration costs such as travel and subsistence.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the opportunities associated with her decision to relocate the Rivers Agency to Cookstown.

(AQO 7816/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The relocation of Rivers Agency to Loughry College in Cookstown will help to stimulate the local economy through increased local spending, provision of high quality and high value public sector jobs and potentially jobs associated with the ongoing servicing of the new accommodation. There will also be benefits around construction and the increased footfall for the area.

This relocation project will also provide greater employment and career progression opportunities for local people in the mid-Ulster area and ensure greater accessibility to DARD services for those living in the region.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how she is supporting social farming projects.
(AQO 7817/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department will continue to promote and support the establishment of social farming across the north of Ireland. The initial Social Farming Across Borders project (SoFAB) was met with widespread support from farmers, health and social care service providers and from the participants. Funding for this initial project came to an end in September 2014.

My Department will help to set the strategic direction and operational delivery of social farming into the future by advising a new organisation, Social Farming Across Boundaries, that has been formed by farmers who engaged in the pilot phase. We will also be raising awareness of the beneficial impacts that social farming can have, not only for the health and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals but for the broader rural economy. I have allocated funding of £30,000 to support this work and a research component in order to investigate the effectiveness of the social farming model.

I am also pleased that this will complement the approach being taken by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in the south.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department is taking to tackle rural crime.
(AQO 7818/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Responsibility for tackling rural crime lies primarily with the PSNI, however my Department, through its Veterinary Service Enforcement Branch (VSEB) works with the PSNI in tackling rural crime at an operational level through the sharing of intelligence, the exchange of training and the conducting of joint operations and investigations.

VSEB staff have been working closely with the PSNI, An Garda Síochána, and colleagues in the south's Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and other Agencies (e.g. Local Councils, Food Standards Agency) in a number of investigations into livestock theft. I understand good progress is being made, arrests have been made and legal proceedings are ongoing on both sides of the border.

DARD also continues to work with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and representatives of the farming community on a number of joint initiatives aimed at reducing rural crime and raising awareness of action that can be taken to help prevent rural crime, including Farm Watch, the Freeze-branding initiative and the Crimestoppers Campaign.

In addition, the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) students on CAFRE programmes learn about appropriate responses to rural crime through input from visiting speakers, information leaflets and participation of the College Farms in PSNI-led programmes such as Farm Watch.

VSEB staff have also spoken on the subject at a UFU organised Rural Crime Conference and more recently VSEB Officers have spoken at PCSP meetings and answered questions from local Councillors. These events were good opportunities for my Department to engage with other stakeholders and encourage best practice and co-operation across the board.

I have met with the Chief Constable and the Minister of Justice on a number of occasions to highlight my concerns regarding rural crime and the impact it has on the farming community.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the success of the Young Farmers' Scheme.
(AQO 7819/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A Guidance booklet for the Young Farmers' Payment was published on the DARD website on 6 February 2015. It contains detailed information on eligibility criteria and the evidence young farmers will need to submit in support of their application.

Farmers who qualify for the Young Farmers' Payment (including those who never held entitlements and those who will otherwise establish entitlements with a unit value below the regional average) may also be eligible to apply to the Young Farmers' category of the Regional Reserve to have entitlements allocated at the annual regional average value or the value of entitlements increased to the regional average. A Regional Reserve Guidance booklet is now available on the DARD website.

My Department has published these guidance booklets in advance of the Single Application Form (SAF) application period so that potential applicants have time to consider whether the Young Farmers' Payment and/or an application to the Reserve is appropriate to their circumstances and draw together the necessary documentation.

A Young Farmers' Payment registration process and Regional Reserve application process will open from mid March to 15 May 2015. During this time young farmer applicants will be required to complete a combined form, indicating whether they are registering for Young Farmers' Payment, applying to the Regional Reserve or both. The completed form and supporting evidence must be submitted in person at a DARD Direct office. They must also complete a SAF, indicating applications to the Basic Payment Scheme and Young Farmers Payment. The closing date for applications is 15 May 2015.

My Department will not be in a position to evaluate the success of the Young Farmers' Payment until all applications have been submitted and assessed.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) on what date salmon netting licences stopped being valid; (ii) what considerations were given to loss of earnings for local fisheries; and (iii) what considerations were given to the potential adverse impact on the ecosystem of Lough Neagh.

(AQW 43161/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):

- (i) Salmon were withdrawn for the Lough Neagh draft net licence from 1 March 2014.
- (ii) Salmon was not a major target species for commercial fishermen on Lough Neagh and catch returns submitted to my Department confirm that they caught very few salmon in the years prior to 2014. Consequently my Department did not deem it appropriate to consider loss of earnings payments for those fishermen.
- (iii) This conservation measure was introduced to prohibit the commercial exploitation of wild Atlantic salmon in Lough Neagh tributaries as many of the rivers in the catchment have not met their conservation limit. This step would be viewed as a positive action by facilitating more salmon to move into tributary rivers to spawn.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 40461/11-15, when she expects the investigation into the death of elvers in Lough Erne in 2014 to be completed.

(AQW 43179/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has referred a report on the circumstances of this fish kill to its legal advisers and as such it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the amount of funding in the 2015/16 budget allocated to the City of Culture Legacy.

(AQW 43221/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: For the 15 month period January 2014 to March 2015, DCAL secured and is allocating more than £6m in additional funding for the North West to catalyse the achievement of key objectives through a strategic intervention grant programme – the North West Social and Economic Development Programme.

The suite of interventions supported by the Programme is designed to have a lasting impact, with no commitment to provision of resource consequentials in relation to capital investments, or future resource allocations.

There is no baseline budget to continue provision of additional funding in the North West after 31 March 2015.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the (i) City of Culture Legacy projects that were funded by the £1m allocation in the October Monitoring Round in (a) Derry; (b) Dungiven; (c) Coleraine; (d) Limavady; and (e) Strabane; and (ii) funding allocated to each project.

(AQW 43222/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Funding allocations from the £1m resource element of DCAL's North West Social and Economic Development Programme 2014/ 15 are shown in the table below:

Strategic Theme	Project	Details
Support for Continuation of Key City of Culture 2013 Events c£280k	Music Promise	Flagship City of Culture 2013 community music programme. SYNC element of Music Promise delivered by Nerve Centre.
	Portrait of a City	Flagship City of Culture 2013 community digital programme. Digital training delivered by Hive in Creggan.
	Music City	Flagship City of Culture 2013 music showcase. A weekend of school and community music programming with extension to wider NW in partnership with DCC and include marching bands and Ulster-Scots showcase activity.
	CultureTech	The North West's key digital and creative development festival. Extension of outreach to wider North West including Big Video Challenge in all NW schools.
	City Wide Festival Step Up Support	Step up support for community festival activity in Derry. Next Steps Partnership Group comprising Culturlann, LD Bands Forum, Tattoo, Maiden City Festival and Gasyard Feile.
	Walled City Tattoo	Support committed in 2013/ 14 for August 2014 Walled City Tattoo Event.

Strategic Theme	Project	Details
	An Droichead	An Culturlann cross community project with marching bands established as part of the 2013 All Ireland Fleadh.
	VAC Reading Rooms	Verbal Arts Centre's City of Culture 2013 literacy project now extended to the wider North West and Belfast.
	Playhouse	Extension of outreach programme to wider NW. Programme in partnership with PSNI targeting disengaged young people.
	Women of the World	November 2014 festival exploring women's issues. Specifically support for WoW schools event.
City Based NRA Capacity Building Interventions c£140k	Community Cultural Strategies	Support for activity, projects and events under Derry's four Community Cultural Strategies – Waterside, Outer West, Outer North and Triax. Variety of activity including festivals, events, engagement projects, skills development, a cultural audit and updating Waterside's Strategy.
Wider North West NRA and Rural Community Capacity Building Interventions c£112k	Joint NRA Project	Talent North West Project. A project coordinated and delivered by Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA) partnerships across the North West to develop new networks; share learning; and showcase local talent. The first time NRAs across the NW have collaborated on a joint project.
	Limavady	NRA targeted cultural projects across town and rural Community Associations to link the rural groups with the urban groups. Support for Stendhal Festival, community based arts festival, to allow continuation of outreach programme across the NW.
	Coleraine	NRA and rural targeted project with WOMAD delivering music, dance and art events with a focus on encouraging respect for different cultures and building capacity in community organisations to deliver events.
	Strabane	NRA and rural targeted projects with Alley Theatre: two productions with NRA and rural community for performance in January and February 2015; and craft collective community craft workshops and masterclass in Strabane Social Hub.
Cultural Hub Development c£255k	Creative Learning Centre Development	Allocations to Nerve Centre and via NI Screen in line with Executive commitment under the Innovation Strategy to enhance our Creative Learning Centres. Projects including Creativity Month, Conference and Cinema project.
	Rosemount	Programme support for cultural hub at Rosemount Factory.
	Mid Ulster	Support for Cornstore Creative Hub, community based facility, to extend Rural Key music outreach (rural version of SYNC).
Delivery, Marketing and Coordination c£213k		DCAL internal admin costs associated with NW Socio Economic Development Programme, direct DCAL event costs (eg Audience NI Conference 11 March 2015); marketing banners and pop up stands; and costs associated with wider coordination work to develop new linkages and partnerships in the North West. (5% of overall NW Socio Economic Development Programme.)

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 35970/11-15, when the company limited by guarantee to deliver City of Culture legacy programmes and activities will be established.
(AQW 43223/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Plans to establish a company limited by guarantee were based on a significantly higher allocation of funding for activity in the North West than my Department was able to secure through the in-year monitoring round process.

The funding secured has been administered through the Department's North West office, who will continue to provide support across the North West.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what value of construction work, to be funded from the capital budget, her Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.
(AQW 43224/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Department's capital budget for 2015/16 is £8.1m. This budget has not yet been fully allocated to specific projects but the latest estimate provided to me is that 75% (or £6m) is likely to be construction-related. This estimate should be treated as indicative only and subject to change.

As you may be aware, the existing capital budget does not cover the Stadiums' programme in 2015/16 (completing Windsor Park and progressing Casement Park). Additional budget allocations in respect of this programme will also be construction-related.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what value of construction work, to be funded from the resource budget, her Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43225/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department and its arm's length bodies anticipate spending in the region of £1m on buildings related maintenance in 2015/16. This value is subject to change and should be treated as indicative only.

New construction work is not funded from resource budget.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how the funding originally earmarked for the redevelopment of Casement Park will be allocated, should the issues surrounding the site remain unresolved by April 2015.

(AQW 43263/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: DCAL has been allocated One Hundred and Ten million pounds (£110m) by the Executive to deliver the Stadia projects which include the redevelopment of Casement Park. The Stadia Programme is part of the Programme for Government and is a priority for the NI Executive. The funding remains ring-fenced and cannot be used by the Department for other capital projects. It is part of a decision that was made by the Executive going back as far as March 2011 and I am committed to ensuring that this project becomes a reality.

There is a strong resolve within the Ulster GAA to submit a new planning application in 2015 to develop a regional stadium in Ulster at Casement Park.

Any new planning application will take account of the learning points raised in the judgment and I and my department will fully support them during the new planning process.

My Department and I remain committed to the re-development of Casement Park and we will work with all parties to facilitate this becoming a reality.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the grass football pitches in the (i) Antrim town; and (ii) Antrim District area which are (a) fit for use; and (b) not fit for use.

(AQW 43276/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Under the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986, the provision of leisure services, including maintenance of grass football pitches, rests in the first instance, with District Councils.

Sport NI, an arm's-length body of my Department, does not have any information relating to the condition of grass pitches in the north of Ireland.

I can confirm that the new Council Area of Antrim and Newtownabbey is fully engaged in Sport NI's Facilities Strategy Project and associated District Council Area Reports which when completed, will identify sporting facilities and requirements, including grass football pitches, for the Antrim area.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many disabled sports clubs have received funding from her Department, in each of the last three financial years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 43302/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department, through Sport NI, has invested just over £7.5 million in disability sports over the last three financial years, covering the financial period 2011/12 to 2013/14. This funding has been provided across nine constituencies in the north of Ireland, to a total of 16 organisations. These organisations who provide support to groups and clubs from throughout the north of Ireland include Disability Sport NI, Special Olympics and a number of District Councils. Detail of the funding distribution is provided at Annex A. The specific funding is broken down by constituency, financial year, organisation and programme.

While disabled sports clubs have not received funding directly from my Department, the funding referred to above has been provided to a number of organisations in order that they can offer disabled sports clubs access to a range of activities and programmes. Sport NI has also recently confirmed investment of approximately £392,000 to Disability Sport NI, to enable the delivery of an Active Clubs project during the period 2014-2018.

In addition, Sport NI has worked directly with a number of groups to provide sporting and leisure opportunities for people with a disability. Examples of groups include Ulster Deaf Sports Council, NI Blindsport Network, the Cedar Foundation, Autism Initiative NI, Coleraine and District Riding for the Disabled Association and the Fermanagh Lakers Disability Sports Club.

Annex A

Constituency/Organisation/Programme	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Grand Total
Belfast East Totals (funding detailed below)	392,510	255,676	377,750	1,025,936
Disability Sport NI				
Athlete Investment Programme	748,00	34,030	24,000	132,830
Building Sport	120,000			120,000
Disability Mainstreaming Policy	184,920	211,446	305,000	701,366
Equality Standard			3,750	3,750
Investing in Performance Sport	4,640	10,200		14,840
PerformanceFocus			45,000	45,000
Pre-Games Training Camps	5,000			5,000
Guide Dogs for the Blind Association				
Awards For Sport	3,150			3,150
Belfast South Totals (funding detailed below)	1,409,853	1,428,865	1,520,568	4,359,286
Belfast City Council				
Active Communities	650,502	669,080	688,305	2,007,887
Castlereagh Borough Council				
Active Communities	213,032	217,058	226,363	656,453
Friends of Glenveagh				
Awards For Sport	3,875			3,875
Royal National Institute for the Blind				
Awards For Sport	5,842			5,842
Special Olympics				
Business Case Investment	536,602	542,727	605,900	1,685,229
Belfast West Totals (funding detailed below)	1,791			1,791
Sport and Leisure FC				
Awards For Sport	1,791			1,791
East Antrim Totals (funding detailed below)	2,500		1,797	4,297
Gymnastics Northern Ireland				
Athlete Investment Programme	2,500			2,500
Roddensvale Special School (Larne)				
Active Schools			1,797	1,797
East Londonderry Totals (Funding Detailed Below)			7,529	7,529
Loreto College (Coleraine)				
Active Schools			3,080	3,080
Sandelford Special School (Coleraine)				
Active Schools			4,449	4,449
Lagan Valley Totals (funding detailed below)			18,000	18,000
UB Badminton Union of Ireland				
Athlete Investment Programme			18,000	18,000
Mid Ulster Totals (funding detailed below)	174,774	191,466	210,065	576,305
Cookstown District Council				

Constituency/Organisation/Programme	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Grand Total
Active Communities	174,774	191,466	210,065	576,305
Upper Bann Totals (funding detailed below)	292,963	308,174	324,154	925,291
Craigavon Borough Council				
Active Communities	292,963	308,174	324,154	925,291
West Tyrone Totals (funding detailed below)	218,519	209,497	214,567	642,583
Omagh District Council				
Active Communities	218,519	209,497	214,567	642,583
Grand Total	2,492,910	2,393,678	2,674,430	7,561,018

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the process by which the public can donate books to their local library.

(AQW 43363/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI has informed me that its stock policy states:

'Donations from the public will be accepted when they meet a service need and on the understanding that all items donated become the property of Libraries NI...The decision on whether to add donations to library stock will be based on the criteria for stock selection, the condition of the item(s) and the costs of processing . If added to stock, donated items can be placed in any service point.'

As a result members of the public / borrowers can leave donations at any branch library. Alternatively, if they wish to speak to a member of staff about offering donations they can contact the Libraries NI customer enquiry telephone number (028 3752 0738) or email its customer service team at enquiries@librariesni.org.uk

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans she has to improve and expand the provision of library services in (i) Banbridge; (ii) Portadown; and (iii) Lurgan.

(AQW 43380/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI has informed me that the Banbridge, Portadown and Lurgan libraries currently offer a wide range of programmes for children and adults. Libraries NI believe that Banbridge Library has the potential to substantially increase its customer base and its range of services. The organisation has been developing proposals in that regard. However these are still at a preliminary stage and are unlikely to be finalised and ready for consideration until the 2016/17 Budget period at the earliest.

As you may be aware a public consultation is currently underway in relation to the opening hours of all libraries in the North as a result of savings required in 2015/16. This consultation proposes changes to the opening hours for libraries in Banbridge, Portadown and Lurgan to enable them to maintain a similar range of programmes and services to those currently available. Anyone who believes improvements or expansion of service provision is required at these or any other libraries can make their views known to Libraries NI as part of the current consultation exercise.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when the lease on the Salmon Research Station in Bushmills will expire.

(AQW 43576/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The current lease of the Bushmills Salmon Research Station expires on 28 February 2029.

Department of Education

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail, by employing authority, the number of (i) teaching; and (ii) other staff suspended on full pay in each of the last five years, including the costs associated with the action.

(AQW 42964/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Details of the number of (i) teaching; and (ii) other staff suspended on full pay in each of the last five years, including the costs associated with the action, by employing authority, are shown in the tables overleaf.

Teaching staff suspended on full pay in each of the last five years, (1 April – 31 March:

(i) **2009/10 – 2013/14) including the costs associated with the action.**

**Employing Authority	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/2014	
	No. of Teachers	Total Cost	No. of Teachers	Total Cost	No. of Teachers	Total Cost	No. of Teachers	Total Cost	No. of Teachers	Total Cost
Education & Library Boards	16	£268,749	13	£332,498	15	£356,392	15	£421,733	21	£388,109
CCMS	26	£405,593	35	£251,079	21	£243,106	26	£252,373	32	£481,691
GMI	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other Maintained (including Irish Medium)	0	£ -	0	£ -	0	£ -	*	*	*	*

* Relates to fewer than 5 teachers or a cost based on fewer than 5 teachers.

** Figures exclude Voluntary Grammar Schools

(ii) Non-teaching staff suspended on full pay in each of the last five years, (1 April – 31 March 2009/10 – 2013/14) including the costs associated with the action.

	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14	
	No. of Staff	Associated Costs	No of Staff	Associated Costs	No of Staff	Associated Costs	No of Staff	Associated Costs	No of Staff	Associated Costs
NEELB	0	£0	0	£0	*	£27,859.38	*	£21,070.87	*	£11,012
WELB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SELB	10	£128,582	10	£102,092	8	£43,380	*	£42,841	7	£64,854
BELB	0	£0	*	£5,365	0	£0	*	£39,721	5	£59,721
SEELB	0	£0	5	£31,568	*	£1,655	*	£65,171.88	*	£27,405

- WELB has advised that this information is not accessible through a central system or database and they are therefore unable to provide the details requested.

* Relates to fewer than 5 non-teaching staff or a cost based on fewer than 5.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what level of contingency funding his Department is holding at the centre; and what plans are in place to distribute this funding to mitigate the impact of reductions to his budget.

(AQW 43254/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that my Department is holding a contingency fund of £5.6m for 2015-16. As I have previously stated, I consider it prudent, proactive financial management to set this funding aside, in order for me to deal with unforeseen pressures that may arise during 2015-16. In fact, this is a principle recognised in Treasury's own budgeting guidance.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the business plans submitted to his Department by the five Education and Library Boards in respect of a 1 per cent pay rise.

(AQW 43274/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information submitted by the five Education and Library Boards in respect of the 2014-16 pay award (ELB Main Pay Remit Business Case) is currently being validated and, once agreed, will be used to prepare a composite pay remit business case in compliance with Executive Pay Policy.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the High Court judgement of Mr Justice Horner against the Northern Education and Library Board in relation to their repeated failure to carry out a statutory assessment of a child with Special Educational Needs.

(AQW 43338/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of the outcome of the recent Judicial Review regarding various decisions taken by the North Eastern Education and Library Board in connection with the special educational needs provision for the child in question.

My officials will be writing to the relevant Chief Executive referring to the judgement and advising of the need to ensure that evidence from parents is considered and, in particular, that representations made by parents for statutory assessments should not be rejected or ignored, unless there is good reason to do so.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 42316/11-15, to outline the exact number of female Principals as a proportion to the total number of Principals in schools with more than 700 pupils.

(AQW 43346/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below details the number of principals in primary schools with 600 or more pupils by gender.

Table 1. Number of Principals by school size and gender.

	600 or more pupils	Fewer than 600 pupils
Female	8	458
Male	21	340
Total	29	798

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education how he intends to address the concerns of Principals and teachers following the issuing of Department of Education Circular 2015/08 - Key Stage Assessment Arrangements Moving Forward in 2014/15.

(AQW 43386/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department has a duty to point out the legislative requirements for Boards of Governors, principals and teachers as detailed in Circular 2015/08. It is inevitable that non-compliance with a legislative requirement, and a central plank of educational policy, will have consequences: for school leaders and governors who will not have the information they require to fulfil their functions, for the professional development of teachers, for parents and pupils who will be denied information on progress, and for the Department in monitoring system performance.

Even where full compliance is challenging, schools are encouraged to make every effort to fulfil the requirements of the arrangements, particularly in terms of providing information to parents.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education what value of construction work, to be funded from the resource budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43410/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Construction work is funded from the capital budget and therefore no resource budget will be applied to construction in FY15/16.

As you are aware budgets are very constrained for the next financial year. The Department has a gross capital budget of £147.3m for 2015/16 which is significantly below the initial gross budget allocation of £183.4m for 2014/15.

It is currently anticipated that £142.3m (of the overall £147.3m capital budget) will be allocated to construction works across the various capital programmes – major works, school enhancement, minor works and youth projects.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education what value of construction work, to be funded from the capital budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43411/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Construction work is funded from the capital budget and therefore no resource budget will be applied to construction in FY15/16.

As you are aware budgets are very constrained for the next financial year. The Department has a gross capital budget of £147.3m for 2015/16 which is significantly below the initial gross budget allocation of £183.4m for 2014/15.

It is currently anticipated that £142.3m (of the overall £147.3m capital budget) will be allocated to construction works across the various capital programmes – major works, school enhancement, minor works and youth projects.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education whether (i) all school buildings have been inspected in relation to asbestos; and (ii) remedial action has been implemented where asbestos has been discovered.

(AQW 43422/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All schools were surveyed for asbestos containing materials during 2003/2004 in accordance with the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2003. Schools are resurveyed in circumstances where there have been material changes to a building; to update asbestos records or where the auditing of previous reports has necessitated a school being re-inspected/resurveyed.

Current government policy states that provided the asbestos is in good condition, it is better to be managed for the remaining life of the school rather than to disturb it. As a result, removal or remedial action is only carried out if any deterioration has taken place (based on a risk assessment score) or if the asbestos containing material is to be disturbed as a result of maintenance, minor works or refurbishment/demolition works being carried out at a school.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to list the areas of work where his Department is actively collaborating with the Department for Employment and Learning.

(AQW 43476/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The areas of work where my Department is actively collaborating with the Department for Employment and Learning are:

- 14-19 Pathways
- Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Services Working Group
- Area Planning
- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)
- Careers Service
- Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme
- ICT Working Group
- Initial Teacher Education Intakes
- Inspection and Evaluation Services (provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate)
- Inter-Departmental Coordinated Services Group for the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus
- Introduction of the Unique Learner Number (ULN)
- Not in Education, Employment or Training Advisory Group
- Pathways to Success Strategy
- Post-19 Transition Focus Group
- Reform of the General Teaching Council (GTCNI)
- Registry Information Management System (RIMS)
- Regulation of Qualifications and Research into the Teaching of Essential Skills in Schools
- Review of Teacher Professional Learning
- Sentinus Intervention Programme 'IT's Your Choice'
- Shared Education Campuses Programme
- Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)
- STEM Strategy – 'Success through STEM'
- Steps to Work (StW)
- United Youth Design Team
- Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCETNI)/Higher Education Liaison Group (HELG)
- Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre Working Group
- Youth Employment Scheme (YES)
- Youth Service Regional Advisory Group

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for an update on discussions which the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment has undertaken with universities in England and the Irish Republic in relation to the portability of GCSEs and A-levels.

(AQW 43477/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In the light of policy divergence between England, Wales and here, there has been a need to develop measures to ensure the comparability and currency of GCSE and A Levels, particularly in terms of university entrance.

The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), as the regulator of general qualifications here, links with both the Universities and Colleges Admissions System (UCAS) and the Irish Universities Association (IUA).

Throughout the discussions with UCAS, there has been confidence expressed in the standards of our A/AS Level qualifications and, as such, that they can be used, through UCAS, for application to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) throughout England, Scotland, Wales and the north of Ireland.

The main focus of the discussions with IUA has been about ensuring equality of access to HEIs when two different qualifications systems are operating i.e. Leaving Certificate and A/AS Levels. These discussions have resulted in a number of positive developments and it is pleasing that three universities from the south of Ireland have announced that they are reviewing their entry requirements for students from here.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools in the North Eastern Education and Library Board that have cardiopulmonary resuscitation and peripheral artery disease awareness training as a compulsory part of their curriculum.

(AQW 43483/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not collate information on the specific topics that pupils are taught about in the classroom.

The minimum of what should be taught in our schools is detailed in legislation as high level Areas of Learning and within this framework schools can introduce topics, make connections and draw on a wide range of resources from a range of sources to meet the needs of their pupils.

The Areas of Learning provide opportunities to introduce awareness training in relation cardiopulmonary resuscitation and peripheral artery disease through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding in primary school and Learning for Life and Work in post-primary school but the decision to take up such opportunities will be a matter for each teacher/school.

The Department of Education does recognise that this is an important issue and we will be working with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in taking forward implementation of its Community Resuscitation Strategy. This will include facilitating the availability of CPR training resources through the C2k ICT managed service.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education how he intends to ring fence the Early Years Fund to ensure vital support continues to be available to children from socially disadvantaged families.

(AQW 43497/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund (administered on the Department's behalf by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO)) was originally established by DHSSPS in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a "closed" Fund since then to applicants that were in areas of greatest need at that time.

I have ensured that funding is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued support to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the budget for each school in South Down for 2015/16; (ii) the percentage cut this represents in comparison to the budget of 2014/15; and (iii) when school Principals and Board of Governors will be informed of new budgets.

(AQW 43511/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All grant-aided schools, funded under the Common Funding Scheme, were notified of their overall budget shares on 25 February 2015 and details are available on the Department's website: www.deni.gov.uk/schools and [infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding_formula_budgets_for_schools](http://www.deni.gov.uk/infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding_formula_budgets_for_schools)

Details of the budget shares will be provided to school by their Funding Authority.

Overall, the Aggregated Schools' Budget available for distribution to all schools in 2015/16 was marginally higher (+0.2%) than in 2014/15. Across all schools in the South Down constituency, delegated budgets for schools are +0.2% higher in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15. However, the level of funding for individual schools will reflect overall funding available for distribution and any changes in the profile of the school for 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 – for example, pupil numbers and year-groups, numbers of pupils identified as socially deprived using the measures of JSA/IS or FSME, pupils identified as Newcomers, of the Travelling Community, etc. or changes in other identified needs such as compensation for above average salary costs.

The requested details of budgets for each school in 2015/16 and the percentage change in overall budget for these schools compared to 2014/15 funding, are shown in the table below:

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
411-6176	Downpatrick Nursery	£90,357	-0.1%
413-6211	St Colmcille's Nursery	£188,008	-0.2%
413-6212	Convent of Mercy Nursery	£178,843	-3.5%
511-6197	Kilkeel Nursery	£206,799	-2.8%
513-6629	Seaview Nursery	£276,810	5.8%
401-1599	Castlewellan Primary	£237,205	-5.9%
401-1698	Newcastle Primary	£530,295	-3.6%
401-6123	Spa Primary	£485,973	2.9%
401-6235	Downpatrick Primary	£604,001	-1.4%
401-6650	Cumran Primary	£477,789	-23.3%
401-6681	Glasswater Primary	£318,995	5.5%
405-3009	Annsborough Integrated Primary	£222,727	2.7%
405-6541	All Children's Integrated Primary	£626,155	5.3%
403-1231	St Joseph's Primary Ballycruttle	£217,854	-9.4%

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
403-1328	Christ The King Primary, Ballynahinch	£372,070	5.4%
403-1350	St Malachy's Primary Kilclief	£270,213	3.1%
403-1526	St Patrick's Primary Saul	£520,241	-0.0%
403-1531	St Francis' Primary, Drumaroad	£310,901	4.6%
403-1663	St Joseph's Primary Carnacaville	£516,042	3.7%
403-1671	St Patrick's Primary Castlewella	£236,366	13.1%
403-1673	St Mary's Primary Ardglass	£314,582	6.9%
403-3002	St Mary's Primary, Aughlisnafin	£482,507	0.9%
403-3005	St Joseph's Primary Strangford	£183,422	5.2%
403-3007	St Macartan's Primary, Downpatrick	£518,676	-0.1%
403-3012	Holy Family Primary, Downpatrick	£547,754	-1.0%
403-3037	St Joseph's Primary Tyrella	£265,733	-2.8%
403-3040	St Brigid's Primary, Downpatrick	£742,146	4.4%
403-6016	St Joseph's Primary Killough	£240,546	-8.9%
403-6036	St Malachy's Primary Kilcoo	£403,472	-3.1%
403-6113	St Nicholas' Primary, Ardglass	£350,922	-2.3%
403-6133	Sacred Heart Primary, Dundrum	£257,443	-9.0%
403-6182	St Colmcille's Primary, Downpatrick	£658,299	11.7%
403-6454	St Malachy's Primary Castlewella	£967,548	5.9%
403-6455	St Patrick's Primary, Legamaddy	£473,210	1.1%
403-6635	St Mary's Primary Newcastle	£999,517	7.0%
403-6693	Our Lady & St Patrick Primary	£1,231,918	1.5%
404-6648	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	£301,011	-4.8%
501-1520	Dromore Road Primary, Warrenpoint	£280,485	7.0%
501-1611	Iveagh Primary	£667,433	0.5%
501-1649	Kilkeel Primary	£1,194,625	1.4%
501-1684	Annalong Primary	£488,416	-1.7%
501-6098	Brackenagh West Primary	£500,328	4.2%
501-6612	Bronte Primary	£531,909	0.1%
501-6616	Drumadonnell Primary	£643,448	-0.5%
505-6013	Kilbroney Integrated Primary	£423,494	10.3%
503-1318	Killowen Primary, Rostrevor	£329,298	-3.8%
503-1325	St Joseph's Primary, Ballymartin	£301,539	1.4%
503-1516	Moneydarragh Primary	£306,578	3.0%
503-1558	Ballyholland Primary	£620,867	-0.8%
503-1589	Grange Primary	£332,124	0.6%
503-1609	Carrick Primary, Warrenpoint	£1,047,552	0.4%
503-1653	St Matthew's Primary, Magheramayo	£274,019	10.6%
503-1694	Holy Cross Primary, Kilkeel	£364,329	-4.1%
503-1695	St Mary's Primary, Barr	£411,471	0.6%

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
503-1697	St Patrick's Primary, Mayobridge	£934,005	4.6%
503-3003	St Paul's Primary, Cabra	£280,060	4.2%
503-3004	St Mary's Primary, Rathfriland	£369,202	7.1%
503-3011	St Mary's Primary, Dechomet	£300,243	0.0%
503-3025	St Patrick's Primary, Ballymaghera	£831,446	1.4%
503-6001	St Mary's Primary, Glassdrumman	£219,042	-1.0%
503-6061	St Colman's Primary, Annaclone	£559,746	9.3%
503-6545	St Colmans' Primary, Killeel	£630,967	2.3%
503-6572	St Colman's Primary, Saval	£513,145	0.9%
503-6583	St Dallan's Primary, Warrenpoint	£1,294,429	2.7%
503-6605	St Patrick's Primary, Drumgreenagh	£285,399	5.8%
503-6673	St Bronagh's Primary, Rostrevor	£506,303	0.3%
504-6692	Gaelscoil na mBeann	£188,960	18.2%
423-0023	St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	£1,865,559	-5.0%
423-0161	St Colman's High School	£1,823,936	-1.4%
423-0211	St Malachy's High School	£4,178,476	5.3%
521-0016	Killeel High	£2,735,671	-1.9%
521-0127	Rathfriland High	£1,280,566	2.4%
521-0186	Newry High	£1,884,530	-3.6%
523-0059	St Columban's College	£830,213	-4.4%
523-0135	St Mark's High, Warrenpoint	£3,534,456	-2.4%
406-6588	Cedar Integrated Primary	£637,640	0.5%
426-0281	Shimna Integrated College	£2,532,854	5.8%
426-0309	Blackwater Integrated College	£1,068,338	-15.3%
441-0085	Down High School	£3,945,803	-0.1%
442-0088	St Patrick's Grammar, Downpatrick	£2,957,149	-6.0%
542-0045	St Louis Grammar, Killeel	£2,583,860	1.5%

* Figures include Transitional funding where applicable

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education how cuts will affect the budget of the North Eastern Education and Library Board and Southern Education and Library Board; and whether school transport provision will be affected adversely. (AQW 43520/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: On the 1st April 2015 the 5 Education and Library Boards will be dissolved and no longer exist. The new Education Authority will be in place from 1st April 2015 and will be allocated a Block Grant budget of £396.6million to cover costs including transport.

The home to school transport policy will apply to the Education Authority in the same manner as the individual Education and Library Boards. It will primarily be for the Education Authority to determine the amount of funding it will attribute to home to school transport in its budget proposals to my Department. The Education Authority's overall Budget proposals will be subject to my approval.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education what discussions he has had with Sentinus about the impact of their budget reduction. (AQW 43522/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Department of Education officials meet regularly with Sentinus as part of the monitoring arrangements for Sentinus programmes. Following my final budget announcement, officials will meet with Sentinus soon to discuss the range of STEM activities and priorities for 2015/16.

Mr B McCreagh asked the Minister of Education to detail the bodies in place to identify pupils with Special Educational Needs; and how many of these bodies are facing cuts to their budgets.
(AQW 43523/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs acknowledges that there is a continuum of special educational needs (SEN) and sets out a five stage approach to address this. Responsibility for identifying pupils within Stages 1-3 lies at school level with involvement by the Education and Library Board (ELB) at Stage 3 as necessary. Responsibility at Stages 4 and 5 rests with ELBs and schools.

In reaching my final decisions on the 2015-16 Budget allocations I ensured that support for children with SEN was prioritised. With this in mind, I will be notifying the Education Authority by way of strategic direction that SEN services (including Special Schools) should be protected and that these services will be provided efficiently and within the budget provided.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the budget for each school in East Derry for 2015/16; (ii) the percentage of cut this represents in comparison to the budget of 2014/15; and (iii) when school Principals and Boards of Governors will be informed of new budgets.
(AQW 43530/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All grant-aided schools, funded under the Common Funding Scheme, were notified of their overall budget shares on 25 February 2015 and details are available on the Department's website: www.deni.gov.uk/schools and [infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding_formula_budgets_for_schools](http://www.deni.gov.uk/infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding_formula_budgets_for_schools)

Details of the budget shares will be provided to school by their Funding Authority.

Overall, the Aggregated Schools' Budget available for distribution to all schools in 2015/16 was marginally higher (+0.2%) than in 2014/15. Across all schools in the East Derry constituency, delegated budgets for schools are 0.7% lower in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15. In the main, this reflects a fall in the overall number of pupils within these schools (0.9% lower in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15). The level of funding for individual schools will reflect overall funding available for distribution and any changes in the profile of the school for 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 – for example, pupil numbers and year-groups, numbers of pupils identified as socially deprived using the measures of JSA/IS or FSME, pupils identified as Newcomers, of the Travelling Community, etc. or changes in other identified needs such as compensation for above average salary costs.

The requested details of budgets for each school in 2015/16 and the percentage change in overall budget for these schools compared to 2014/15 funding, are shown in the table below:

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
211-6628	Limavady Nursery	£208,914	2.7%
311-6215	Kylemore Nursery	£221,924	-0.5%
311-6263	Ballysally Nursery	£181,688	0.4%
201-2087	Bellarena Primary	£168,268	1.0%
201-2298	Ballykelly Primary	£868,861	3.1%
201-6029	Drumachose Primary	£732,389	5.4%
201-6372	Cumber Claudy Primary	£416,647	6.3%
201-6426	Limavady Central Primary	£1,200,045	-5.0%
201-6656	Drumrane Primary	£396,491	4.2%
201-6700	Gaelscoil Neachtain	£290,989	5.6%
203-2263	St Canice's Primary, Feeny	£387,635	3.5%
203-2265	St Anthony's Primary (Roe)	£120,481	-20.4%
203-2286	St Matthew's Primary, Limavady	£313,071	-0.8%
203-2287	Termoncanice Primary	£1,468,159	-1.8%
203-2294	St Mary's Primary, Altinure	£484,583	-0.7%
203-2300	Listress Primary	£142,318	-3.9%
203-3706	Faughanvale Primary	£579,779	10.0%

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
203-3708	St Aidan's Primary, Magilligan	£200,929	8.6%
203-6045	St Canice's Primary, Dungiven	£879,935	-2.5%
203-6082	St Colmcilles Primary, Claudy	£712,392	0.4%
203-6085	St Peter's & St Paul's Primary	£196,757	-2.1%
203-6149	St Finlough's Primary, Sistrakeel	£288,095	4.4%
203-6187	St John's Primary, Dernaflaw	£404,010	-1.5%
203-6458	St Mary's Primary, Gortnaghey	£219,590	3.6%
204-6689	Gaelscoil Léim an Mhadaidh	£212,538	26.3%
301-0847	Portrush Primary	£577,761	1.3%
301-0892	Ballytober Primary	£258,293	-7.5%
301-2049	Carnalridge Primary	£522,341	-6.3%
301-2065	Culcrow Primary	£280,596	2.0%
301-2225	Damhead Primary	£542,000	-2.8%
301-2229	Hezlett Primary	£627,604	1.8%
301-2237	Killowen Primary, Coleraine	£588,771	-1.2%
301-2250	Portstewart Primary	£773,460	0.9%
301-2264	Millburn Primary	£1,055,811	-2.1%
301-2269	Kilrea Primary	£304,966	-1.3%
301-2284	D. H. Christie Memorial Primary	£1,063,643	5.1%
301-2288	Castleroe Primary	£314,309	9.8%
301-3700	Macosquin Primary	£554,438	2.6%
301-6052	Harpur's Hill Primary	£732,948	-0.8%
301-6055	Gorran Primary	£292,633	-3.3%
301-6119	Garvagh Primary	£305,013	-14.1%
301-6252	Ballysally Primary	£741,342	0.1%
301-6264	The Irish Society's Primary	£807,970	-5.9%
305-2071	Carhill Integrated Primary	£249,497	5.1%
303-0547	St Patrick's Primary Portrush	£282,845	-0.2%
303-2104	Ballyhackett Primary	£186,642	-4.8%
303-2202	St Columba's Primary Garvagh	£305,399	-0.9%
303-2231	St Colum's Primary Portstewart	£492,382	3.2%
303-2285	St Patrick's & St Joseph's Fed. Primary	£503,521	-4.3%
303-2297	St Malachy's Primary, Coleraine	£685,484	0.6%
303-3709	St John's Primary Coleraine	£534,036	-2.2%
303-6147	St Columba's Primary Kilrea	£657,680	7.7%
206-6665	Roe Valley Integrated Primary	£525,311	-0.9%
306-6544	Mill Strand Integrated Primary	£656,285	-0.3%
221-0302	Limavady High School	£3,116,450	0.9%
221-0312	Devenish College	£2,148,748	0.0%
223-0077	St Mary's High School, Limavady	£2,719,834	-3.6%

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
223-0122	St Patricks & St Brigids High College	£2,167,667	5.4%
223-0144	St Patrick's College, Dungiven	£1,285,221	-2.7%
321-0300	Coleraine College	£1,198,879	-5.9%
323-0110	St Joseph's College, Coleraine	£1,408,342	-7.4%
323-0151	St Paul's College	£1,245,566	-3.0%
241-0048	Limavady Grammar School	£3,542,148	-2.2%
341-0033	Coleraine High	£3,189,031	-0.9%
326-0290	North Coast Integrated College	£2,185,073	-2.3%
342-0032	Coleraine Academical Institution	£3,291,397	-0.5%
342-0034	Loreto College, Coleraine	£3,512,019	1.0%
342-0068	Dominican College, Portstewart	£2,191,076	-2.2%

* Figures include Transitional funding where applicable

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the schools to which the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools nominated Governors.

(AQW 43551/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) has no legal right to nominate school governors.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what actions he took to inform those employed in the Primary Languages Programme of the cut to its budget; and what resources and help he is putting in place to help with redundancies.

(AQW 43553/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department issued a letter to the Chief Executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), which runs the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) on behalf of all five Education and Library Boards, on 4 March 2015 to inform of my decision. Co-ordinators in the SEELB subsequently notified the tutors and staff.

My Department then issued a letter to all schools involved in the PMLP to inform them of my decision. The SEELB has already met with interested teachers to offer guidance and training on how resources created for the programme could be used by class teachers.

SEELB is currently considering the human resource issues, including potential redundancies, which may have arisen as a result of the decision to cease funding for this programme.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43347/11-15, following his Department's meeting, to detail the funding allocation for 2015/16, including details of what date funding will end.

(AQW 43561/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The funding allocation for 2015/16 for the Early Years Fund (which is administered on DE's behalf by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children) is £941,000. This will enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However, any such fund will have to be open to all, not just current recipients and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43001/11-15, how many contracts have been terminated due to persisted and/or serious non-compliance with the PSV Construction and Use Regulations.

(AQW 43570/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards inform me that there have been no instances of persistent and/or serious non-compliance with the PSV Construction and Use Regulations in the current contract period where the Boards have chosen not to terminate the contract. As such, no contracts have been terminated for this reason.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed cuts to the Primary Languages Programme.

(AQW 43586/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In order to protect frontline services and in particular the Aggregated Schools Budget, it has been decided that the earmarked funding for the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) will cease with effect from 31 March 2015.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board have been in contact with schools regarding how resources developed within the Programme can best be used by teachers in the future.

Individual schools may wish to continue to provide for an additional language in their schools, funded from their own budget.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what steps he is taking to increase funded pre-school places for children who live in the Bleary area of Craigavon.

(AQW 43605/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School Education Advisory Group (PEAG) in each Education and Library Board is responsible for the planning and provision of sufficient pre-school places in their area to meet the Executive's Programme for Government Commitment to provide a funded pre-school place for every child whose parent wants it.

Stage 1 of the pre-school admissions process for September 2015 intake is currently underway. Letters will issue to parents on 17 April 2015 advising if they have been offered a place of their choice. Those parents who have not secured a place will be invited to submit further preferences for consideration at stage 2 of the process.

The Chief Executive of the Southern Education and Library Board has advised my department that, at present, there is not a shortfall of places in the Bleary area of Craigavon.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Education (i) when the Primary Languages Programme started; (ii) what languages were included in the programme; and (iii) what was the cost of the programme in each year.

(AQW 43606/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department introduced the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) in 2007. Tuition in Spanish, Irish and Polish was provided through the programme. The following table provides the breakdown of funding provided to the South Eastern Education and Library Board for the PMLP.

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
£330k	£430k	£770k	£1,000k	£774k	£1,000k	£800k	£900k

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Education which Roman Catholic maintained schools participated in the Primary Languages Programme; and which languages were taught in each school through the programme.

(AQW 43607/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table lists the Roman Catholic maintained schools that participated in the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) who were taught Spanish (as at March 2015):

School Ref.	School Name
303-2011	Altayeskey Primary School
303-2257	Anahorish Primary School
303-2104	Ballyhackett Primary School
503-2208	Ballylifford Primary School
403-0823	Ballymacrickett Primary School
503-2463	Blessed Patrick O'Loughran Primary School
403-6618	Christ the Redeemer Primary School
503-1108	Clea Primary School
503-1130	Cloughoge Primary School
203-2631	Envagh Primary School
203-3706	Faughanvale Primary School
203-2212	Glendermott Primary School
203-6288	Good Shepherd Pr and Nursery School
203-2712	Gortnagarn Primary School
203-0381	Holy Child Primary School
503-1694	Holy Cross Primary School
203-6674	Holy Family Primary School

School Ref.	School Name
103-6566	Holy Family Primary School
203-6472	Holy Family Primary School
103-6623	Holy Trinity Primary School
503-6122	Jonesboro' Primary School
503-1318	Killowen Primary School
303-2197	Knocknagin Primary School
503-2262	Lissan (1) Primary School
203-6475	Longtower Primary School
103-6041	Mercy Primary School
503-1516	Moneydarragh Primary School
303-0688	Mount St Michael's Primary School
403-6693	Our Lady & St Patrick's Primary School
103-0313	Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School
503-6639	Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School
503-6590	Primate Dixon Primary School
203-3708	St Aidan's Primary School Magilligan
403-3306	St Aloysius Primary School
303-3313	St Bernard's Primary School
503-6101	St Brendan's Primary School
303-3326	St Brigid's Primary School
303-0890	St Brigid's Primary School
403-3040	St Brigid's Primary School
303-2018	St Brigid's Primary School (Tirkane)
203-2694	St Caireall's Primary School
203-6703	St Catherine's Primary School
303-6268	St Ciaran's Primary School
503-6634	St Clare's Abbey Primary School
503-6061	St Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery Unit
203-6082	St Colmcille's Primary School
203-6247	St Columba's Primary School
303-2205	St Columb's Primary School (Cullion)
203-2737	St Columcille's Primary School
303-0832	St Comgall's Primary School
403-6146	St Comgall's Primary School
503-6583	St Dallan's Primary School
203-2682	St Eugene's Primary School
203-6555	St Eugene's Primary School
403-3017	St Finian's Primary School
503-6457	St Francis Primary School (Aghaderg)
503-6633	St Francis' Primary School (Lurgan)
303-6100	St James' Primary School

School Ref.	School Name
103-6688	St John the Baptist Primary School
203-6032	St John's Primary School
503-2729	St John's Primary School (Kingsisland)
503-6675	St Josephs and St James Primary School
503-1340	St Joseph's Convent Primary School
403-1231	St Joseph's Primary School
303-6026	St Joseph's Primary School
403-0897	St Joseph's Primary School
403-3005	St Joseph's Primary School
403-1550	St Joseph's Primary School
103-6246	St Joseph's Primary School
203-6070	St Joseph's Primary School
403-3037	St Joseph's Primary School
503-1188	St Joseph's Primary School (Meigh)
403-3007	St Macartan's Primary School
403-6454	St Malachy's Primary School
503-6433	St Malachy's Primary School
503-6057	St Malachy's Primary School
403-6134	St Mark's Primary School
303-6046	St Mary's on the Hill Primary School
203-6356	St Mary's Primary School
103-6388	St Mary's Primary School
503-2699	St Mary's Primary School
503-6043	St Mary's Primary School
503-6006	St Mary's Primary School
403-6530	St Mary's Primary School
203-6696	St Mary's Primary School
403-1672	St Mary's Primary School
303-0621	St Mary's Primary School
403-6635	St Mary's Primary School
503-3004	St Mary's Primary School
203-1890	St Mary's Primary School
203-1895	St Mary's Primary School
203-1869	St Mary's Primary School
403-6428	St Mary's Primary School
203-2294	St Mary's Primary School (Altinure)
403-1673	St Mary's Primary School (Dunsford)
503-1172	St Mary's Primary School (Granemore)
203-2607	St Mary's Primary School (Killyclogher)
103-6140	St Michael's Primary School
503-3006	St Michael's Primary School (Finnis)

School Ref.	School Name
203-6090	St Nailes Primary School
403-6113	St Nicholas Primary School
303-6563	St Nicholas' Primary School
303-0719	St Olcan's Primary School
203-6143	St Oliver Plunkett Primary School
503-0972	St Oliver Plunkett Primary School
303-3303	St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School
303-6559	St Patrick's & St Brigid's Primary School
203-1828	St Patrick's Primary School
203-6094	St Patrick's Primary School
103-6698	St Patrick's Primary School
503-1667	St Patrick's Primary School
303-0547	St Patrick's Primary School
403-1628	St Patrick's Primary School
503-1158	St Patrick's Primary School
403-3028	St Patrick's Primary School (Ballygalget)
403-1671	St Patrick's Primary School (Burrenreagh)
503-3324	St Patrick's Primary School (Derrynaseer)
503-6605	St Patrick's Primary School (Drumgreenagh)
203-6387	St Patrick's Primary School (Dunamanagh)
203-6008	St Patrick's Primary School (Newtownstewart)
203-6581	St Patrick's Primary School (Pennyburn)
503-6031	St Patrick's Primary School Loup
103-6620	St Peter's Primary School
203-6153	St Scire's Primary School
503-1160	St Teresa's Primary School
103-6132	St Therese of Lisieux Primary School
303-3304	Tir-na-Nog Primary School

The following table lists the Roman Catholic maintained schools that participated in the PMLP who were taught Irish (as at March 2015):

School Ref.	School Name
203-6557	All Saints Primary School
503-1558	Ballyholland Primary School
403-0573	Ballymacward Primary School
303-0800	Barnish Primary School
503-1609	Carrick Primary School
403-1328	Christ the King Primary School
303-0434	Creggan Primary School
503-1088	Dromintee Primary School
203-2639	Drumduff Primary School
203-2600	Drumnabey Primary School (St Francis of Assisi)

School Ref.	School Name
503-1589	Grange Primary School
303-2275	Greenlough Primary School (St Mary's)
503-6567	Holy Trinity Primary School
203-2628	Knocknagor Primary School
203-2300	Listress Primary School
503-1126	Mount St Catherine's Primary School
503-6598	Our Lady's Primary School (Tullysaran)
203-2704	Recarson Primary School
403-6133	Sacred Heart Primary School
503-1163	St Brigid's Primary School
503-2727	St Brigid's Primary School
503-2698	St Brigid's Primary School
203-2662	St Brigid's Primary School
503-6673	St Bronagh's Primary School
203-2263	St Canice's Primary School
203-6045	St Canice's Primary School
403-3307	St Colman's Primary School
403-6182	St Colmcille's Primary School
303-6147	St Columba's Primary School
303-2202	St Columba's Primary School
203-6186	St Dympna's Primary School
303-2271	St Eoghan's Primary School
203-6149	St Finlough's Primary School, (Sistrakeel)
503-6610	St Francis of Assisi Primary School
403-6642	St Ita's Primary School
503-6121	St Jarlath's Primary School
303-2246	St John Bosco Primary School (Ballynease)
503-6622	St John's Primary School
303-2274	St John's Primary School
503-2715	St John's Primary School (Moy)
403-6016	St Joseph's Primary School
503-6463	St Joseph's Primary School
403-1660	St Joseph's Primary School
303-6050	St Joseph's Primary School
203-2700	St Joseph's Primary School
503-1325	St Joseph's Primary School
103-6621	St Joseph's Primary School
103-6565	St Kevin's Primary School
503-2624	St Macartan's Primary School
303-0848	St MacNisius' Primary School
103-6466	St Malachy's Primary School

School Ref.	School Name
503-2306	St Malachy's Primary School (Glencull)
503-6009	St Mary's Primary School
303-0894	St Mary's Primary School
503-2692	St Mary's Primary School
303-2281	St Mary's Primary School
503-1164	St Mary's Primary School
303-2273	St Mary's Primary School
503-6363	St Mary's Primary School , Aughnacloy
203-2612	St Matthew's Primary School
503-6180	St Oliver Plunkett Primary School
303-2285	St Patrick's & St Joseph's Primary School
503-1148	St Patrick's Primary School
503-1697	St Patrick's Primary School
503-1168	St Patrick's Primary School
303-6154	St Patrick's Primary School
503-6047	St Patrick's Primary School
503-2717	St Patrick's Primary School
503-6120	St Patrick's Primary School
503-1183	St Patrick's Primary School
503-3025	St Patrick's Primary School
503-6504	St Patrick's Primary School (Dungannon)
303-6292	St Patrick's Primary School (Glen)
403-1665	St Patrick's Primary School
203-6085	St Peter's & St Paul's Primary School
103-6589	St Teresa's Primary School
203-2731	St Teresa's Primary School
403-3012	The Holy Family Primary School
203-2603	Tummery Primary School

The following table lists the Roman Catholic maintained schools that participated in the PMLP who were taught Polish (as at March 2015):

School Ref.	School Name
503-2585	Edendork Primary School
103-0327	Holy Rosary Primary School
503-2591	Roan St Patrick's Primary School
303-6243	St Joseph's Primary School
203-2684	St Lawrence's Primary School
103-6505	St Matthew's Primary School
203-1880	St Ninnidh's Primary School
403-1526	St Patrick's Primary School (Saul)

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the Primary Languages Programme.
(AQW 43630/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) has been a very successful initiative for those schools involved. I know that many pupils enjoyed the opportunity to learn a language.

The PMLP, although very successful at engaging and teaching pupils, has been less successful at encouraging our teachers to develop the competency to teach a language. This was one of the original aims of the programme.

In light of the current and future budget situation, I would encourage schools that are interested in providing modern languages at primary level, to consider applying for Erasmus+ funding to develop the competence of teachers within the school. I regard building capacity among class teachers as the most sustainable approach to primary language provision.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Education what assurances he can give that funding will be made available for the Primary Languages Programme, in the next financial year.
(AQW 43631/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In order to protect frontline services and in particular the Aggregated Schools Budget, it has been decided that the earmarked funding for the Primary Modern Languages Programme will cease with effect from 31 March 2015.

Individual schools may wish to continue to provide an additional language in their schools, funded from their own budget.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education why he has decided to remove support by C2K for the ALICE system in schools.
(AQW 43637/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I did not take the decision to remove the ALICE system in schools, this was an operational matter. I understand the removal of the software is necessary, as it is 20 years old and is no longer updated by the supplier.

The Department of Education has been aware for some time that the ALICE system provided via C2k is out of date and the company supplying it has been providing services in maintenance mode only. Furthermore, it does not fit well with the new cloud-based services provided under the current C2k Education Network contract.

The provision of a library management system to replace ALICE was included in the original scope of the current C2k Education Network contract which commenced in April 2012, but it could not be purchased due to financial constraints at that time. It remained an option which C2k could take up at some point during the current contract and the Department has been aware of this need and has tried to secure the necessary funds. Unfortunately, the continuing constrained financial environment has meant that funds have not been secured for this purpose. This is regrettable, but it is not possible to fund a replacement for ALICE and unfortunately it is no longer possible for C2k to continue with the provision of ALICE to schools.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what options have been offered to schools when the C2K support contract for ALICE ends on 31 March 2015.
(AQW 43638/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Support for ALICE will cease on 31 March 2015, however C2k have undertaken to provide ongoing support for the old software until the end of the academic year.

C2k has written to schools to make them aware that an opportunity now exists to enable them to purchase new library management software, using their own budgets, via the Capita catalogue.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many schools currently use the ALICE system to run their school library services.
(AQW 43639/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 345 active users of the ALICE Library Management System.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the role that school libraries play in the school improvement process.
(AQW 43640/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I appreciate that school libraries can enrich and support learning by encouraging and enabling pupils to acquire independent learning skills.

They can also make a significant contribution to various Department of Education policy areas in terms of addressing the school improvement agenda and improving pupil outcomes in literacy, particularly those pupils, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may have limited access to reading materials at home.

Good school library provision can provide pupils with access to a wide range of high quality information and reading resources. Such provision can, for example, enable younger pupils to improve their reading and also foster their imagination, curiosity and enjoyment of reading and provide older pupils with access to resource materials for research.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what discussions took place with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure prior to his decision to remove the support for the ALICE system.

(AQW 43641/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There have been no discussions with the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) regarding the decision to remove support for the ALICE library management software system in schools.

ALICE is provided for schools via the C2k ICT Managed Service funded by the Department of Education. DCAL has no involvement in the services provided via the C2k contract.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what impact the decision to cut the funding for the Early Years Fund will have in Upper Bann, specifically in relation to (i) places withdrawn and (ii) jobs threatened.

(AQW 43688/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a "closed" Fund since then to only those groups that were in areas of greatest need of support at that time.

221 children in the Upper Bann area benefit from the Fund which is administered on the Department of Education's behalf by Early Years, the Organisation for Young Children (EYO). 64 of those children are in funded Pre-School Education Programme places and the Pre-School Advisory Groups will monitor the position to ensure that a place continues to be available for every child whose parents want it.

Nine posts are fully supported by the Fund within the range of groups in the area that receive funding and a contribution made towards salaries in two of the groups.

I have ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education how many (i) Early Years groups and (ii) children will be affected by his decision to cut the funding for the Early Years Fund.

(AQW 43690/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a "closed" Fund since then to only those groups.

During 2014/15 there were 153 recipients of the Department of Education (DE) DE Early Years Fund which is administered by Early Years, the Organisation for Young Children (EYO). According to monitoring information supplied to DE officials by EYO in relation to 2014/15, 2559 children received services under the Fund.

I have ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43018/11-15 and AQW 43021/11-15, whether the Randalstown Central Primary School proposal, which was published in January 2014, was processed according to the Guidance issued in September 2014; and if so, how it was lawful to assess a proposal against Guidance which did not exist at the material date of its submission.

(AQW 43773/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As outlined in my answer to AQW 43021/11-15, the establishment of a nursery unit represents a significant change to a primary school and therefore requires the publication of a Development Proposal (DP).

Whilst DP 281 for Randalstown Central PS was published in February 2014 and my answer referred to the Development Proposal Guidance published in September 2014, the previous Guidance of 2003 was in place at the time of publication of DP 281.

A link to the 2003 guidance is as follows: http://www.deni.gov.uk/dev_proposal_for_grant_aided_schools-3.pdf

The 2003 Guidance also stated that the addition of a nursery unit to an existing school would represent a significant change and so require a Development Proposal.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what action he is taking to find a solution to the multiple tests that are required to gain entry to some post-primary schools.

(AQW 43881/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I do not recognise the unregulated entrance tests used by a minority of post-primary schools (65 for Transfer 2015) in contravention of the Department's guidance on post-primary transfer and international evidence on the socio-economic inequalities associated with the use of academic selection. These schools have consciously decided to place a barrier, in the form of multiple entrance tests, in the path of pupils wishing to be considered for admission. This is despite the fact that all schools now teach to the same curriculum and, under the Entitlement Framework, all schools are now required to offer access to a broad range of subjects.

There is no justification for forcing any child to sit an entrance test, let alone multiple tests, when the majority of our post-primary schools (138 for Transfer 2015) already use a fairer approach to transfer from primary to post-primary school. Those opposed to academic selection need to challenge schools which have made a conscious decision to use unjustified and educationally unsound entrance tests when in fact another system is in place and operational. The time has long passed for making excuses for these schools.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) when applicants to the European Social Fund were informed that financial capability assessment had not been completed and that departmental officials would be contacting organisations for clarification on applications; (ii) how many applicants were (a) contacted; and (b) not contacted by officials; and (iii) how many of the applicants in each case proceeded to Stage 2.

(AQW 42703/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

- (i) The Department issued correspondence on 6th February advising 18 applicants that their applications were still under review due to the financial capability assessment. The letter did not specifically advise those applicants they would be contacted for clarification.
- (ii) During the Phase I assessment process (a) 27 applicants were contacted for further information as outlined in the Guidance Notes for Applicants and (b) 107 were not contacted. It should be noted that this contact does not relate to (i).
- (iii) Of the 27 applicants contacted as outlined at (ii) 20 proceeded to Stage 2. Of the 107 applicants not contacted 46 proceeded to Stage 2.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for a breakdown of the £70m recurring costs related to Ulster University's Magee campus expansion.

(AQW 42910/11-15)

Dr Farry: The figure of £70m, which I quoted in the Assembly on 23 February, is an estimated rounded figure which comprises £23 million of annual recurrent costs, as quoted in the business case for the expansion of Magee; an estimated £25 - £40 million per annum structural underfunding of higher education in Northern Ireland compared to England; and, the £16 million which I have to remove from the block grant to the higher education institutions in 2015-16. To ensure that the Magee campus is expanded on a sustainable and competitive basis, as per the vision of the One Plan, around £70 million of additional funding would be required.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he is promoting Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects in higher education.

(AQW 43235/11-15)

Dr Farry: Promoting the importance of STEM subjects is a key priority for my Department. Since taking office in 2011, my Department has supported an additional 1,419 undergraduate places in STEM subject areas. At postgraduate level, I have funded an additional 234 new PhDs in areas of economic relevance, increasing the number of Postgraduate Awards to 729. My Department is also committed to increase this to 1,000 awards by 2020.

In support of the STEM Strategy, 'Success through STEM', my Department continues to take forward various STEM activities and initiatives in conjunction with the higher education sector to encourage more of our young people to study STEM subjects and ultimately pursue a career in STEM. The Department's Bring It On Campaign has helped to grow university applications for computer-related disciplines at our universities. Since 2009, applications have increased at the Ulster University and Queen's University by approximately 90%. This year I launched the Computing and Engineering Scholarship Programme for undergraduates studying relevant degree courses in the subject areas of computing and engineering. My Department also provided funding towards the inaugural Science Festival in February, alongside Queens University and Ulster University which promoted the importance of science.

In addition to the work my Department has undertaken, the universities have also committed, under my Department's higher education strategy, 'Graduating to Success', to rebalance their profile of courses, so that subject areas offered more closely reflect the needs of the economy.

This concerted effort has helped to contribute to a positive impact on the latest numbers of STEM qualifiers in Northern Ireland. The latest higher education statistics show that the proportion of qualifiers from Northern Ireland higher education

institutions with 'Narrow' STEM (Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Computer Science and Engineering & Technology) qualifications for 2013/14 now stands at 20.7%, a significant uplift from the 2012/13 rate of 18%.

Maintaining this momentum will become ever more difficult as a result of the budget cuts being faced by my Department in 2015-16 and the subsequent impact this has on student places at the universities. However, given the importance of the STEM and Skills agenda to the future economic prosperity of Northern Ireland both universities have agreed to protect undergraduate STEM places from any undergraduate place reductions next year.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what opportunities exist for adults with learning difficulties who want to engage in further education courses.

(AQW 43504/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides £4.5 million, per year, ring-fenced funding to Further Education (FE) colleges, through the Additional Support Fund, to help colleges support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enrolled in FE provision. This funding enables FE colleges to provide additional technical and personal support for these students and also tailored discrete courses. The fund was recently increased by £1m in recognition of the importance of enabling access and providing support to students with learning difficulties/disabilities to meet their goals in education, progression to employment or towards independent living.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are represented across the entire range of FE course provision. Some students receive additional learning support and participate on 'mainstream' academic and vocational courses; others attend discrete provision which is specifically designed to meet their individual needs and is delivered in a more supported environment. This provision has a higher staff to student ratio than mainstream provision so students benefit from being in smaller class sizes and from extra assistance provided by classroom assistants and other specialist staff. In addition to the academic content, these programmes have a strong focus on lifeskills, occupational and employability skills.

My Department's Training for Success (TfS) programme is also delivered within FE colleges. This programme offers participants the opportunity to gain relevant work experience, professional and technical skills as well as the personal and behavioural skills required to progress into employment in their chosen field of work. TfS participants with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive a range of additional support from colleges and external support suppliers contracted by my Department.

In addition, a pilot was run in three colleges, to enhance the transition between the college's vocational programmes, delivered through the Discrete Learning Units for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the Department's own Disability Employment Service. The aim of the pilot was to help these students move from FE provision into employment following completion of their training. During the period of this project, 137 students have been referred to specialist employment support, with 48 of these students having secured paid employment.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 42410/11-15, how this definition would apply should the drilling pass through a shale layer.

(AQW 43074/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The answer to AQW 42410/11-15 stated that, in the petroleum industry, the terms conventional and unconventional do not apply to drilling operations but to the types of reservoir in which oil or gas may be trapped.

Drilling through a shale layer is no different to drilling through any other type of rock. Drilling parameters may be varied to take account of factors such as the hardness or chemistry of a particular rock type, but the drilling methodology remains the same. Drilling operations are carried out according to industry specifications established through the experience gained from drilling hundreds of thousands of deep boreholes worldwide since the nineteenth century and thousands of exploration and production wells in the onshore and offshore UK.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what value of construction work, to be funded from the resource budget, her Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43078/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has no construction work planned to start in 2015-16 that will be funded from the Resource budget.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what value of construction work, to be funded from the capital budget, her Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43079/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The value of construction work, that will be funded from my Department's Capital budget and will start in 2015-16, is estimated at £9.6 million.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 42410/11-15, whether the Carboniferous Viséan Murlough Bay Formation, that Rathlin Energy Ltd proposes to drill into at Ballinlea 2, is an unconventional or a conventional reservoir.

(AQW 43155/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Carboniferous Viséan Murlough Bay Formation, which Rathlin Energy Ltd proposes to drill into at the Ballinlea No. 2 location, is believed to be the main oil and gas source rock for hydrocarbons that may be trapped in the conventional Carboniferous sandstone reservoirs that are the primary targets of the proposed Ballinlea No. 2 exploration well.

The results from the Ballinlea No. 1 well indicate that the organic-rich shales of the Murlough Bay Formation have reached a thermal maturity level sufficient to have generated significant amounts of hydrocarbons. As with many other thermally-mature organic-rich shales, not all the hydrocarbons generated will have been expelled from the formation and the Murlough Bay Formation can also be considered to be a potential unconventional reservoir that may host shale oil or shale gas.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 42410/11-15, whether the Carboniferous Westphalian Coal Measures and Millstone Grits, that Rathlin Energy Ltd proposes to drill into at Ballinlea 2, is an unconventional or conventional reservoir.

(AQW 43157/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Both the Carboniferous Coal Measures and Millstone Grit contain sandstones with the potential to act as conventional oil or gas reservoirs and these conventional reservoir intervals are the targets of the proposed Ballinlea No. 2 well.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there are any plans to reinstate the Air Route Development Fund to attract new air routes and carriers.

(AQW 43158/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department is examining the potential, including costs, for a new Northern Ireland specific air route development fund which would commence operation in 2016/17. The purpose of this fund would be to develop connectivity to business destinations and those routes with inbound tourism potential.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Common Arrangements for Gas Bill.

(AQW 43180/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As noted in my 18 November 2014 letter to the ETI Committee Chair, legislation for CAG is no longer required. The focus will be on complying with new EU gas Network Codes.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much Invest NI has awarded in grant aid since 2010 to firms based in South Belfast.

(AQW 43312/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI releases information at sub-regional level following each financial year end; therefore, the most up to date figures available show that between 1st April 2010 and 31st March 2014, Invest NI has approved offers of support worth £148 million to businesses located in the South Belfast constituency area.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the tidal and wave energy proposals at Ballycastle are not able to proceed due to a lack of appropriate infrastructure.

(AQW 43331/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I am aware of the issues facing the tidal projects wishing to connect to Ballycastle and as these are regulatory issues, I have recently written to the Regulator on this matter.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much land InvestNI has available for industrial development in (i) Carrickfergus; (ii) Larne; and (iii) Newtownabbey.

(AQW 43378/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI's land holding across the Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey Council areas total some 427 acres of which 118 acres remain available to support business development. This land is actively promoted to potential investors both indigenous and foreign direct.

In Carrickfergus Invest NI has approximately 16.9 acres of available land, in Larne 3.8 acres and in Newtownabbey 97.7 acres. These figures are correct as at 1st December 2014.

In addition to that within its ownership, Invest NI is also aware of significant private sector property provision across the three Council areas. Further details can be found through the commercial property database on the NI Business Information website.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the progress of the Moyle Interconnector.

(AQW 43457/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Mutual Energy, owner of the Moyle Interconnector, has recently entered into a contract for the manufacture and installation of two new low voltage submarine cables which will restore the Moyle Interconnector to its previous capacity and reliability by late 2016.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Superfast Rollout Programme will target rural areas where businesses have poor access to broadband provision, during the survey and design process.

(AQW 43494/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Superfast Rollout Programme Phase 2, is a £17 million project aimed at extending the reach of Superfast Broadband services across Northern Ireland, with a target completion date of 2017. A contract for this Programme was signed on 27 February 2015 and will bring more choice and improved speeds to over 38,000 premises across Northern Ireland.

The Project will begin with an extensive survey and design process, which will take place over a number of months. Until this planning work is completed, it will not be possible to say what specific premises will benefit from this upgrade.

However, it is expected that the majority of areas that will see improved superfast broadband services, will be in rural areas.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 42624/11-15, to detail the expected timeframe for extending the Super-connected Cities Programme to council areas outside of Belfast and Londonderry.

(AQW 43495/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As stated in my previous answer, the Super Connected Cities Programme is managed by Broadband Delivery UK, a unit within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It is my understanding that the programme will be extended for a one year period, commencing on 1 April 2015.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the expenditure and progress on the rollout of broadband connectivity in the rural areas of Mid Ulster.

(AQW 43519/11-15)

Mrs Foster: To date, my Department has made payments totalling £5.04 million to BT for the delivery of the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project. Due to the nature of the project, this expenditure cannot be broken down to constituency level. I can however advise that the project is progressing according to schedule and by 31 December 2014 just under 17,500 premises across Northern Ireland had benefitted from the improvements being delivered including almost 2,600 in the Mid Ulster area.

Department of the Environment

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the budget allocated to the NGO Grant Scheme.

(AQW 43205/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Under the final Budget for 2015-16, my Department's non ring-fenced Resource DEL budget was reduced by 10.7% to £104.2 million, the highest percentage reduction of all the Departments.

Given the constrained budget for my Department for 2015-16, you will appreciate that difficult decisions need to be taken. I am currently working through the final detail on allocations and whenever these have been finalised my Department will inform all individuals and groups of the final Budget position.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the budget allocated to the War Memorial Grant Scheme.

(AQW 43206/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The War Memorial Grant Scheme is administered by the War Memorials Trust, a UK charity that works for the protection and conservation of war memorials across the UK. As a registered charity the Trust relies on voluntary contributions to undertake its work. The Trust does not receive any funding from my Department.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the historical sites currently owned and maintained by the NIEA.

(AQW 43207/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Details of the historical sites that are currently owned by the Department of Environment and maintained by NIEA are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Historical sites owned by the DOE and maintained by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Historic Monuments in State Care
County Antrim

Historic Monuments in State Care	
Antrim Round Tower*	Drumadrough Fort
Ballylumford Dolmen	Duncarbit Standing Stones
Ballywee Rath and Souterrain	Dunluce Castle* and Village Field
Bonamargy Friary*	Harryville Motte and Bailey
Carrickfergus Castle	Kinbane Castle
Carrickfergus Gasworks+	Layd Church
Carrickfergus Town Walls	Lissanduff Earthworks
Castle Lug	Lissue Rath
Coshkib Twin Forts	Moira Station House and Junction Box*
Craigs Dolmen*	Muckamore Priory
Craigs Lower (The Broad Stone)	Olderfleet Castle
Cranfield Church	Ossian's Grave
Dalways Bawn*	Spring Farm Rath
Dooley's Cairn Court Tomb*	
County Armagh	
Annaghmare Court Tomb	Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone
Armagh Priory*	Kings Stables
Ballykeel Dolmen & Cairn	Lisnaminty Rath
Ballymacdermot Court Tomb	Lisbanemore Cashel
Castle Dillon Obelisk	Lisdoo Cashel
Clonlum North Cairn	Moyry Castle
Clonlum South Cairn	Navan Fort
Clontygora Court Tomb	Slieve Gullion North Cairn
Eglisk Crosses	Slieve Gullion Passage Tomb
Haughey's Fort	Tray Bog
Killeavy Churches	Tynan Cross
County Down	
Annadorn Dolmen	Kirkistown Castle
Ardtole Church*	Legannany Dolmen
Audley's Castle*	Lisnagade Fort
Audleystown Cairn*	Lisnavaragh Fort
Ballycopeland Windmill	Loughinisland Churches
Ballynoe Stone Circle	Maghera Church and Round Tower
Ballyspurge – The White House*	Mahee Castle
Clough Castle*	Millin Bay Cairn*
Cowd Castle*	Mound of Down
Derry Churches*	Movilla Abbey
Dromore Cross	Narrow Water Castle*
Dromore Mound	Nendrum Monastic Site
Drumadonnell Cross	Newtownards Priory

Historic Monuments in State Care	
Drumena Cashel	Portaferry Castle
Dundrum Castle*	Quoile Castle
Duneight Motte and Bailey*	Richhill Gates, Hillsborough
Dunnaman Court Grave*	Ringhaddy Castle*
Giants Ring*	Ringhaddy Church*
Goward Dolmen*	Rough Fort
Greencastle Royal Castle	Scrabo Tower (Londonderry Monument)
Grey Point Fort	Shandon Park Mound
Grey Abbey*	Sketrick Castle
Hillsborough Fort*	St John's Point Church
Hillsborough Court House*	St Patrick's Wells at Struell
Hollywood Motte*	St Tassagh's Church and Graveyard*
Inch Abbey	Strangford Castle
Jordan's Castle	Tullynakill Church
Kilclief Castle	Woodgrange Rath & Tower House
Kilfeaghan Dolmen	
County Fermanagh	
Aghalucher Church	Enniskillen Castle Barracks
Aghanaglack Court Grave	Inishmacsaint Church and Cross
Castle Archdale Old Castle	Monea Castle*
Castle Balfour*	Portora Castle*
Devenish Monastic Site	Tully Castle
Drumskinney Stone Circle	White Island Church and Figures*
County Londonderry	
Ballintemple Bullaun Stone	Ervey Court Tomb
Ballybriest Dual Court Tomb	Gortycavan Mound
Ballybriest Wedge Tomb	Innishrush Crannog
Ballygroll Pre historic complex	Knockoneill Court Tomb
Ballynascreen Church*	Maghera Old Church
Banagher Old Church	Magheramore Rath
Bellaghy Bawn	Martello Tower Magilligan
Bovevagh Old Church	Mill Loughan Motte
Brackfield Bawn*	Mobuy Standing Stone
Church Island Church	Mountsandel Fort
Derry City Walls*	Mullaboy Standing Stone
Drum Fort	Tamnyrankin Court Tomb
Drumgormal Rath	Tirkane Sweat House
Dunalis Souterrains*	Tirnonny Dolmen
Dungiven Priory	Tullyherran Fort

County Tyrone	
Ardboe Cross and Abbey*	Errigal Keerogue Church and Cross
Balix Lower Court Tomb	Glenknock Portal Tomb
Ballywhollan altar	Grange Standing Stone
Ballywhollan Carnagat	Grange Standing Stones
Ballywhollan Carnfadrig	Harry Avery's Castle
Beaghmore Stone Circles	Kilucan Chambered Cairn
Benburb Castle*	Kilucan Long Cairn
Berrysford Standing Stone	Killyliss Rath
Carrickmore Womens Graveyard*	Knockmany Passage Grave*
Castle Caufield*	Lisky Chambered Tomb
Churchtown Druids Altar	Magherglass Church
Churchtown Wedge Tomb	Mountjoy castle
Clogher Hillfort*	Moy Gates
Copney Stone Circles*	Newtownstewart Castle
Cregganconroe	Reaskcor Tree Ring
Creggandevesky	Reaskmore Penal Altar
Crocknacanty	Roughan Castle*
Derryloran Church	Tattykeel Standing Stone
Donaghmore Cross	Tullaghoge Fort
Dungororan Rath	

* In State Guardianship or leased from owner

+ Leased to others to manage

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the parks and open spaces currently owned and maintained by the NIEA.

(AQW 43208/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Details of the parks and open spaces that are currently owned by the Department of Environment and maintained by NIEA are provided in Table 1 below. In addition to the sites listed, NIEA maintains a number of other sites. These include sections of country parks which it leases, and nature reserves; which it maintains under management agreements with Forest Service and leases from the Crown Estate. It also leases several nature reserves to environmental charities to maintain.

Many of the historical sites listed in the table supplied in response to AQW 43207/11-15 also provide public open spaces.

Table 1 – Parks and open spaces owned by the DOE and maintained by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Country Parks	
Castle Archdale Country Park	Redburn Country Park
Crawfordsburn Country Park	Roe Valley Country Park
Ness Country Park	Scrabo Country Park
Peatlands Park	
Nature Reserves	
Altikeeragh	Kebble, Kinramer N & S (Rathlin)
Ballyquintin Point	Killard
Banagher Glen	Lough Naman Bog
Belshaw's Quarry	Lusty Beg Island

Country Parks	
Binevenagh	Meenadoan
Blacker's Rock: Brookend, Kell's Point, Killycolpy, Killywoolaghan & Sheeky's Wood	Montiaghs Moss
Boorin	Mullenakill & Annagarriff (Peatlands Park)
Brackagh Bog	Ness & Ervey Woods (Ness Country Park)
Caldanagh Bog	Portrush Nature Reserve
Cloghy Rocks & Granagh Bay (part)	Quoile Pondage
Crossmurrin & Killykeeghan	Reilly & Gole Woods & Inishfendra (Crom)
Derryleckagh	The Murrins
Dunloy Bog	Tolan's Point
Fairy Water Bog (Claragh Bog)	Tullywannia
Garry Bog (part)	Turmennan Fen
Hanging Rock (Marlbank)	Turmoyra Marsh
Miscellaneous open spaces	
Lands at Upper Dunmurry Lane	Inish Davar (Lower Lough Erne)
	Inishmacsaint (Lower Lough Erne)

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the change in the number of cases dealt with by the NI Environment Agency in each year since its inception.
(AQW 43262/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency responds to thousands of requests from members of the public, business and elected representatives each year in relation to a range of issues, for example, water pollution incidents, illegal waste dumping and damage to listed buildings.

It is not possible to provide the information to the member in the format requested. If the member requires information in relation to specific areas of activity, we can investigate further and determine whether this can be made available.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether, as part of the Executive's policy making and economic planning, he will provide NISRA with the requisite funding to take part in the Office for National Statistics' Wealth and Assets Survey.
(AQW 42278/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I have asked my officials to seek the views of other departments on their need for and funding available to run a Wealth and Assets survey. After that process is complete I will reply to the Member setting out an overall position.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what evaluation was made of compulsory redundancy schemes to reduce the public sector.
(AQW 42474/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Compulsory redundancy schemes were not considered by the Executive as one of the measures to reduce the size of the public sector.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action his Department is taking to ensure a fair and consistent rating for riding schools, equestrian centres and livery yards, so that they can operate economically and offer more people the experience of taking up horse riding as a sport.
(AQW 42585/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Commercial riding schools, equestrian centres and livery yards are valued for rating purposes on the same rental basis as other business property. Broadly speaking the rental value of a property will reflect its economic worth and the rate bill is levied in direct proportion to its value. The revaluation of all non-domestic property will take effect next month and this will help restore that relationship, by basing rate bills on more up to date rental values.

Riding schools that are set up as clubs and charities and used for non profit making purposes will get sport and recreation rate relief or exemption. Commercial undertakings will not be entitled to this, however, small business rate relief does extend to this type of business providing its net annual value is less than £15,000 and the ratepayer does not operate a chain of such establishments.

The promotion of horse riding and encouraging greater participation in the sport is a matter for DCAL or DARD, as the policy competent departments.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the progress of the Apartments Bill.

(AQW 42613/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has been co-ordinating the cross-departmental work on a Bill which will provide for the registration of managing agents. I would have liked the Bill to be further on, but there have been extensive discussions about which department should oversee the proposed register of managing agents. I recognise that people are keen to resolve the difficulties that they have been encountering and I will be doing all within my power to ensure that that remaining point is resolved.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of the Minister for Employment and Learning's decision not to ban zero hours contracts and given that contracted service providers to the Civil Service often use zero hours contracts, whether the current position within NI Civil Service and its stance against zero hours contracts will be affected; and if not, why this is the case,

(AQW 42626/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has no policy on zero hours contracts. I will however consider the implications of the proposals on such contracts that the Minister for Employment and Learning is bringing.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the current average wage in Northern Ireland, broken down by constituency or other administrative unit.

(AQW 42665/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Median gross annual earnings for all employees at April 2014 by parliamentary constituency (place of residence) in Northern Ireland are provided in Table 1 attached, sourced from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

Table 1: Median Gross Annual Earnings for All Employees by Parliamentary Constituency - 2014

	All
Northern Ireland	£18,764
Belfast East	x
Belfast North	£16,711
Belfast South	£23,095
Belfast West	£16,137
East Antrim	£21,773
East Londonderry	£17,944
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	£15,853
Foyle	£16,724
Lagan Valley	£20,134
Mid Ulster	£17,136
Newry and Armagh	£17,965
North Antrim	£17,596
North Down	£18,657
South Antrim	£19,455
South Down	£17,937
Strangford	£18,956
Upper Bann	£18,374

	All
West Tyrone	£17,066

- x Number too small to provide a reliable estimate.
- 1 All employees includes both full-time and part-time workers

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what incentives have been put in place to encourage civil servants selected for redundancy under the Voluntary Exit Scheme to invest and become economically active within the private sector. (AQW 42831/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: No civil servants will be selected for redundancy. This is a voluntary exit scheme, the overarching objective of which is to secure a permanent NICS pay bill reduction in the 2015/16 financial year. The Voluntary Exit Scheme will compensate staff who choose to apply and are selected to leave. While economic incentives for staff wishing to set up in their own business can be signposted, it is ultimately very much a decision for the individual as to which future career path they wish to pursue on leaving the NICS.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans he has to ensure staff availing of the Voluntary Exit Scheme will not leave employment having had no support to adjust to this major change at potentially an unexpected point in their lives. (AQW 42833/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The overarching objective of the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme is a permanent NICS pay bill reduction in the 2015/16 financial year. It is a voluntary scheme which will compensate staff who choose to apply and are selected to leave.

The normal support mechanisms, including employment-related information, that are available to all persons leaving employment are also available to NICS staff choosing to leave via the Voluntary Exit Scheme and while arrangements are in place for these to be signposted to staff, it is entirely a decision for the individual as to whether they choose to avail of the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what budget has been set aside for career support for civil service staff who avail of the Voluntary Exit Scheme. (AQW 42890/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: No separate dedicated budget has been set aside for this purpose. The NICS Exit Scheme is entirely voluntary and will compensate staff who choose to apply and who are selected to leave. The normal support mechanisms for anyone wishing to seek alternative employment are available to staff choosing to leave via the Scheme, for example through the Department for Employment and Learning Careers Service and Employment Service. Sources of information already available, including employment-related information, will be signposted to staff and will be made available within existing resources.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the vacant space, with details including size, ownership and former occupier, which was formerly occupied by public sector organisations in the Fermanagh District Council area. (AQW 42933/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not hold the requested information.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how he hopes to realise the aim of reducing 20,000 civil service jobs by way of a Voluntary Exit Scheme. (AQW 42937/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There is no plan to reduce the civil service by 20,000 jobs. The figure of 20,000 represents an estimate of the expected reduction in size of the public sector over four years from 2015/16.

The Executive faces a range of financial pressures which require early action to reduce costs, particularly salary costs.

Voluntary exit schemes incentivise people to leave and offer each organisation the opportunity to minimise disruption to service delivery through timely and planned use of redeployment.

The voluntary exit schemes form one part of a range of strategic personnel interventions aimed at reducing pay bill costs. Other interventions include public sector pay restraint, moratoria on recruitment and embargoes on substantive promotion.

A similar approach has been adopted in Scotland, England and Wales to achieve significant reductions in costs.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what actions her Department has taken to highlight that the common practice in Northern Ireland whereby on the grant of a lease, or letting of land, a landlord may oblige their tenant to pay for the agent's professional services, also referred to as letting fees, is illegal. (AQW 42962/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not oversee the activities of landlords nor is it responsible for monitoring trade practices or the protection of consumers. In relation to the former, the Department for Social Development has introduced a Landlord Registration Scheme which provides for a central register of landlords and helps with education and support to landlords. In relation to the latter the Trading Standards Service of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has investigated a number of cases relating to letting agents and, in so doing, has highlighted available guidance.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide a projected timeframe as to when the business case concerning the civil service equal pay dispute will be tabled before the Northern Ireland Executive.

(AQW 43009/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: It has been established that there are no valid equal pay claims for both PSNI and NIO civil service staff upon which to base a settlement. The paper I circulated to Executive colleagues before last summer recognises the moral argument put forward, and I hope it will satisfactorily resolve the issue for this group of staff.

However, my recommendation and any associated expenditure require the approval of the Executive and I therefore await the agreement of Executive colleagues for the paper to be brought forward for discussion. While I appreciate the frustration of staff affected by this issue, the matter is now in the hands of the Executive.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if NISRA will continue to collate statistics using the 26 council model after 1 April 2015.

(AQW 43013/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: From April 2015, the presentation of statistics will move to the new 11 local government district areas. However, there will be instances for statutory or user need reasons where statistics will also be presented on the current 26 local government district areas.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the savings made by using online payslips in the 2014/15 financial year compared to the previous system, shown by (i) amount; and (ii) as a percentage.

(AQW 43050/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Civil Service's payroll service does not use online payslips.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what value of construction work, to be funded from the resource budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43076/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department currently plans to start resource construction work to the value of £7,743,000 in the 2015/16 financial year.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what value of construction work, to be funded from the capital budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43077/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department currently plans to start capital construction work to the value of £6,550,000 in the 2015/16 financial year.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions have taken place with the new councils to explore the possibility of shared services between central and local government.

(AQW 43105/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Over the last year my officials have met with DOE officials and council officials on a number of occasions. This includes a meeting in October 2014 between the Chief Executive of the NICS shared services organisation, DOE officials and the 11 new local government chief executives, to discuss the opportunity for councils to explore working with the NICS shared services as the preferred solution to shared delivery of back office services.

Mrs D Kelly asked Minister of Finance and Personnel whether claimants who had previously been awarded Disability Living Allowance and are not awarded Personal Independence Payments in the future will remain eligible for a rate rebate.

(AQW 43110/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Currently payment of rate rebate, through Housing Benefit, depends on the level of a person's income and not on whether Disability Living Allowance is in payment. My Department recently concluded a consultation which contained two options for a new rate rebate scheme to take account of Welfare Reforms.

In common with the current scheme, neither option is contingent upon receipt of either Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence. Therefore, the question of a continuing eligibility based on either Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment does not arise.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the legislative provisions which permit interdepartmental transfers ahead of in year monitoring rounds.

(AQW 43162/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In year monitoring rounds are an Executive process that provide for the reallocation of resources across departments. There is no legislation relating specifically to in-year monitoring rounds.

Interdepartmental transfers, known as technical transfers, are processed through in-year monitoring exercises. However, they do not require Executive approval.

The Budget Bill provides the legislative authority for departments to use resources. The Spring Supplementary Estimates and related Budget Bill will incorporate all changes to departmental budgets undertaken through in-year monitoring rounds.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail how his Department will ensure that Civil Servants under the age of 40 will not be discriminated against under the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 43163/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme is open to virtually all permanent NICS staff, regardless of age.

The Scheme has been equality screened, which concluded that there is no evidence to suggest an adverse impact on any of the Section 75 Groups.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the amount of money; (i) identified in dormant bank accounts; and (ii) allocated to the Executive in each of the last 3 years.

(AQW 43181/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Financial institutions participating in the dormant accounts scheme do so on a voluntary basis and surrender funds held in dormant accounts to the Reclaim Fund. To date £629 million has been surrendered to the UK Reclaim Fund from dormant accounts.

Through the apportionment process Northern Ireland received an allocation of £1.331m in 2011-12, a further £1.387m was received in 2012-13, £2.334m in 2013-14 and £1.371 has now been received for 2014-15.

In total Northern Ireland has now been allocated some £6.423m of dormant accounts funding. It is my intention that this funding will be used in 2015-16 to establish a new social innovation fund.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, on average, how many paid training and staff development days civil servants receive on an annual basis.

(AQW 43183/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In the Department of Finance and Personnel, for the 2014-15 reporting year to date, individuals have received on average of 2 days paid training and staff development days.

The Member should contact individual departments for their information.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 41882/11-15, to detail (i) the criteria used to indicate locations and sectors which have not fared so well since 2001; and (ii) the changes in rate liability for these locations and sectors

(AQW 43196/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The criteria is simple. A revaluation seeks to closely follow the market as at an earlier in time, fixed valuation date. It is therefore the relative changes in market rental values that occurred from 2001 to the new valuation date of 2013 that affect the outcome of the 2015 revaluation. Anything that affects rents - demand, supply, location, size, type, condition and services, to name some of the main factors, will be evidenced in the new rateable values.

Locations and sectors that have not fared so well will be those that experienced lower than average rental growth, comparing 2001 rental levels to 2013 rental levels.

Analysis showing changes in rate liability for business sectors in each of the 26 district council areas is available to view at www.dfpni.gov.uk/lps/index/reval2015ni/local_briefings.htm. Additionally the website now shows for each of the new Net Annual Values (NAVs), rate poundages and annual rates estimates for 2015/16 and the percentages changes from 2014/15, at <http://revalpublication.dfpni.gov.uk/>.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 41948/11-15, to detail the expected timeline for the review of the current business rates system.

(AQW 43197/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I have advised the Assembly that a review of business rates will commence when the non domestic Revaluation has bedded in.

The review will begin in June with an Innovation Lab, which will help define the scope of the review and advise on its conduct. Informed by this work, my Department will draw up terms of reference before summer recess which will include timelines and milestones for the work.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in pursuant to, AQW 42391/11-15, how there can be a “standard” contract for an event of this nature.
(AQW 43198/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The contract document which was signed by Red Bull was developed with the Departmental Solicitor’s Office for the hosting of all events on the Stormont Estate.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 42391/11-15 did Red Bull have free use of the Stormont Estate for the hosting of the Downhill event and what resulting extra costs fell upon his Department, such as staff costs.
(AQW 43199/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Department of Finance and Personnel does not levy a charge for the use of the Stormont Estate. Extra costs incurred by my Department in respect of this event were in relation to staff overtime in the Estate Management Unit.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 42391/11-15, was there a promotion company or other third party with which the party negotiated in regard to this event.
(AQW 43200/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Negotiations in relation to the Red Bull Downhill Ice Cross World Championships on the Stormont Estate were conducted with Green Means Go (Red Bull International’s event organiser).

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether any consideration been given to flexi-working / touchdown type facilities being made available in Ballycastle, Ballymena, and Ballymoney.
(AQW 43216/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Flexi-working / touchdown type facilities are available in Academy House, Ballymena and one is planned to open in Coleraine in 2015. The Government Office Estate managed by my Department does not include any properties in Ballycastle. Consideration has not been given to providing flexi-working / touchdown type facilities in Ballymoney.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Civil Servants working in Belfast live in the Moyle, Ballymoney and Ballymena council areas.
(AQW 43217/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Available data indicates that of civil servants in the Northern Ireland Civil Service working in Belfast, some 45 live in Moyle Council area, 79 live in Ballymoney Council area and 282 live in Ballymena Council area. The actual figures may be higher, as home postcodes for 10 per cent of civil servants working in Belfast are not recorded.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, how many Civil Servants have been involved in working from home arrangements in each of the last 5 years; and what percentage this is of the overall workforce.
(AQW 43218/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In general, working from home arrangements are permissible on an informal and locally agreed basis from time to time. However, School Inspectors employed by the Department for Education are contracted to work from home on a permanent basis as their role involves a considerable amount of travel to various locations throughout Northern Ireland. Working from home has no impact on the normal pay and conditions of service, therefore no central information is captured and there are no overall statistics held on the number of civil servants who avail of working from home arrangements.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what savings can be made from Civil Servants working from home; and (ii) what costings his Department has calculated for Civil Servants working from home.
(AQW 43219/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In general, working from home arrangements are agreed on an informal and locally agreed basis with the exception of School Inspectors working for the Department of Education, who are recruited on the basis that they will work from home. As there is no impact on pay and conditions of service, no central information, statistics, costs or savings are captured on the number of civil servants working from home.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, how many Civil Servants could avail of the touchdown type facilities being introduced in Omagh and Coleraine.
(AQW 43220/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The details of the touchdown type facilities to be introduced in Omagh and Coleraine have yet to be finalised, including the number of data points. This, along with relevant departments' flexible and agile working practices, would influence how many civil servants could avail of the facilities.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many agency staff are employed within the (i) Civil Service; and (ii) Public Sector.

(AQW 43248/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There are currently 445 agency workers employed in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. My Department does not hold information relating to agency staff employed within the wider public sector.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel pursuant to AQW 42391/11-15, whether a promotion company or other third party was negotiated with in regard to this event or that managed the event on behalf of Red Bull.

(AQW 43279/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Negotiations in relation to the Red Bull Downhill Ice Cross World Championships on the Stormont Estate were conducted with Green Means Go (Red Bull International's event organiser).

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether there are any grants or funding available to assist in converting commercial property into residential property in urban areas.

(AQW 43285/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not provide any grants or funding to assist in converting commercial property into residential property in urban areas.

This response is provided for the Department of Finance and Personnel only as the information for all departments is not held centrally. The Member should contact individual departments for their information.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the allocations of financial transactions capital for 2016/17.

(AQW 43301/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Budgets for 2016-17, including allocations of Financial Transactions Capital will not be determined until after the next UK Spending Review.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what facilities are available in Omagh and Coleraine for touchdown type working.

(AQW 43316/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The details of the touchdown type facilities to be introduced in Omagh and Coleraine have yet to be finalised. It is however envisaged that the facilities will, in the first instance, facilitate laptop users only but may be expanded to include desktop computers.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the Community and Voluntary Groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department or its arms length bodies since 2011: and (ii) the amount received in each case.

(AQW 43372/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has not provided funding to Community and Voluntary Groups in North Down since 2011.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for each calendar year from 2011 to 2014 to detail (i) the number of overseas visitors; (ii) the number of overseas visitors who visited Fermanagh; (iii) the number of overseas holidaymakers; (iv) the number of overseas holidaymakers who visited Fermanagh; (v) the estimated expenditure of overseas visitors in Fermanagh.

(AQW 43423/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The numbers of overnight trips to NI by all external visitors (from outside NI) and by external visitors for holiday/leisure/pleasure purposes are detailed in Table 1 (2011-13). Figures for 2014 will be published later this year.

The numbers of overnight trips to Fermanagh/NI by all external visitors (from outside NI) and by external visitors for holiday/leisure/pleasure purposes are detailed in Table 2 (three year average 2011-13). Figures broken down by individual year are unavailable.

The expenditure of all external visitors (from outside NI) on overnight trips to Fermanagh/NI is detailed in Table 3 (three year average 2011-13).

Table 1: The number of overnight trips by (i) all external visitors and (ii) external visitors for holiday/leisure/pleasure purposes - Northern Ireland (2011-2013).

Overnight Trips (thousands)	2011	2012	2013	2011-2013 (average)
All external visitors	1,932	1,984	2,093	2,003
External visitors for holiday/leisure/pleasure purposes	532	630	632	598

Table 2: The number of overnight trips by (i) all external visitors and (ii) external visitors for holiday/leisure/pleasure purposes – Fermanagh/ Northern Ireland (three year average 2011-13).

Overnight Trips (thousands) Three year average (2011-2013)	Fermanagh	Northern Ireland
All external visitors	92	2,003
External visitors for holiday/leisure/pleasure purposes	22	598

Table 3: Expenditure by all external visitors on overnight trips – Fermanagh/ Northern Ireland (three year average 2011-13).

Overnight Trip Expenditure (£M) Three year average (2011-2013)	Fermanagh	Northern Ireland
Expenditure by all external visitors	£29M	£404M

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the rationale for the differing retirement ages for PSNI and Fire Service personnel.

(AQW 43439/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Service Pension Commission, chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness recommended public service pension schemes for both police officers and firefighters, should adopt a pension age of 60 so as to reflect the unique nature of their work. This policy rationale was incorporated in the Public Service Pensions Bill introduced in the Assembly on 17 June 2014.

At Consideration Stage for the Bill the Assembly debated and passed an amendment that the pension age for firefighters should differ and be set in secondary legislation at not less than 55 but not exceed 60. The full rationale for that Assembly amendment is outlined in the official record of the debate.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Civil Servants work in Belfast and live in North Down.

(AQW 43459/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Available data indicates that of civil servants in the Northern Ireland Civil Service working in Belfast, some 1,043 live in North Down Council area. The actual figures may be higher, as home postcodes for 10 per cent of civil servants working in Belfast are not recorded.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what are the financial implications in the form of penalties imposed by Westminster as a result of the decision not to proceed with the Welfare Reform Bill (NIA13/11-15) on Monday 9th March 2015.

(AQW 43485/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Any delay in the implementation of welfare reform will create a risk that the £114 million reduction will apply in full to the Executive's Budget in 2015-16.

HM Treasury have not indicated the level of reductions beyond 2015-16 however Social Security Agency (SSA) estimates of the foregone UK Exchequer savings of not implementing welfare reform in Northern Ireland are as follows:

£million

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
196	283	366	366

In addition to the Resource DEL reductions applied by HM Treasury, non-implementation will also lead to significant capital costs associated developing a bespoke IT system for Northern Ireland – SSA have suggested that this may be in the region of £705 million over a number of years.

Failure to proceed with the Welfare Reform Bill will also put at risk the other aspects of the financial package agreed under the Stormont House Agreement.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Civil Servants (i) have submitted their names for consideration under the Voluntary Exit Scheme, and (ii) what implications will there be for the Scheme if the Stormont House Agreement does not proceed.

(AQW 43486/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As of 11.00 a.m. on 11 March 2015, 4,200 staff have submitted their names for consideration under the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme.

The implications for the Scheme if the Stormont House Agreement does not proceed, and assuming that alternative funding is not made available from other sources, are likely to be very significant. The Scheme Business Case could not be implemented, meaning that the anticipated pay-bill saving of approximately £26 million in 2015/16, and approximately £90 million per annum thereafter, would not be secured. Departments would then need to reconsider their 2015/16 Business Plans and divert budget from project and programme delivery to fund the salary savings foregone and of course staff morale would be impacted adversely.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total number of Civil Servants who have applied to the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 43559/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As of 11.00 a.m. on 12 March 2015, 4,351 staff have submitted their names for consideration under the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the financial implications in any delay in implementing the Welfare Reform Bill.

(AQW 43583/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Any delay in the implementation of welfare reform will create a risk that the £114 million reduction set out by HM Treasury will apply in full to the Executive's Budget in 2015-16.

HM Treasury have not indicated the level of reductions beyond 2015-16 however, Social Security Agency (SSA) estimates of the foregone UK Exchequer savings of not implementing welfare reform in Northern Ireland are as follows:

£million			
2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
196	283	366	366

In addition to the Resource DEL reductions applied by HM Treasury, non-implementation will also lead to significant capital costs associated developing a bespoke IT system for Northern Ireland – SSA have suggested that this may be in the region of £705 million over a number of years.

Failure to proceed with the Welfare Reform Bill will also put at risk the other aspects of the financial package agreed under the Stormont House Agreement.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that he has accepted in principle the concept of a specialist drugs fund which could grant access to life extending drugs, whether he will now suspend a prescription charges consultation which he has linked to that fund, given that sufficient funds through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme are now available to immediately allow such access for people who need it now without the necessity for such charges.

(AQW 42857/11-15)

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I announced a consultation on 17 February around an evaluation of the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process which included a recommendation to establish a Specialist Medicines Fund. The re-introduction of prescription charges is necessary to ensure that funding for specialist and innovative medicines is put on a secure financial footing. I have no plans to suspend the consultation process.

As in 2014/15 returns from the PPRS will be re-invested to support financial pressures associated with the growth in branded specialist medicines.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of reports of suspicious fraud received by the Counter Fraud Service via (a) email; (b) the Health and Social Care Fraud Hotline; and (c) in writing; and (ii) the (a) number; and (b) result of investigations instigated in each month of the last three years.

(AQW 42975/11-15)

Mr Wells:

i The table below shows the number of suspected fraud cases reported:

Year	Fraud Report ⁽¹⁾	Hotline ⁽²⁾
2012/13	132	18
2013/14	223	51
2014/15	224	52

Notes:

- (1) Fraud Reports are those cases of suspected fraud reported by the HSC to CFS
- (2) Hotline entries include allegations of fraud reported via the regional HSC Fraud Hotline, the CFS online reporting tool and allegations received in writing.

ii. The table below shows the result of investigations in total for 2012-13, 2013-14 and February year to date for 2014-15.

	Number of New Fraud Investigations In-year	Sanctions Applied ^{(1) (2)}
2012-13	84	35
2013-14	146	52
2014-15 Feb YTD	162	68

Notes:

- (1) Sanctions do not correspond directly with the fraud investigations during that period.
- (2) Relates only to criminal sanctions (such as prosecutions, recovery of money or removal from GP registration) and does not include other types of sanction that have been imposed by the referring organisations (such as summary charges or other disciplinary charges).

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the new Omagh Hospital site, to detail (i) the methods of disposal of earth and excavation works materials from the site; and (ii) the location to which the material is taken.

(AQW 43003/11-15)

Mr Wells: All materials from the Omagh Hospital site have been removed in accordance with the Waste Regulations (2011) and under the Duty of Care Regulations. All inert waste material removed from site was processed in accordance with the main contractors Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Any contaminated material was segregated at site, uploaded to vehicles by machine under supervision and in a controlled zone, and safely transferred by lorry in sealed containers, when applicable. All consignments were tracked and fully documented with full duty of care documentation. Removal works were overseen by an environmental consultant with sampling and testing undertaken at appropriate intervals throughout the process. The material has been taken to the disposal locations listed below:

- Barr Environmental, Garlaff Landfill, Skares Road, Cumnock, Scotland
- Augean Port Clarence Landfill, Augean North Ltd, Port Clarence hazardous landfill site, Off Hunstman Drive, Stockton-on-Tees
- Eastwood's Landfill, Eastwood Ltd, Crosshill non-hazardous landfill, 18 Crosshill Road, Crumlin
- Tullyvar Landfill, 130 Tullyvar Road, Aughnacloy, Co Tyrone
- Site 110M South of Junction of Garvallah Rd/Corkhill Road, Seskinore, Omagh

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the mechanisms in place whereby deaf children are provided support by social care teams; and to outline the eligibility criteria.

(AQW 43010/11-15)

Mr Wells: I refer the member to the detailed responses provided by the Health and Social Care Trusts which are attached at Annex A.

Annex A

Responses from Health and Social Care Trusts

Northern HSC Trust

The Trust does not have in place a dedicated Children's Services team for children with hearing impairment. The Northern Trust takes the approach of the child first, as opposed to the diagnosed condition first.

Service provision is needs led and subject to assessment under the auspices of the UNOCINI Framework (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland). This Assessment Framework is outlined below.

It should be understood that, before an assessment of need is undertaken by Social Care, a child will have had access to universal services such as G.P. and health visiting/school nursing services. Children with additional needs may also have accessed targeted interventions such as Applied Health Professional involvement (speech and language therapy/occupational therapy/physiotherapy/dental/orthoptic services) or Surestart Partnerships, Family Support Hubs and the Primary Mental Health Team.

For a small number of families, intensive support is required from a range of community and professional services. This may include examples such as neonatal units, family centres, social work intervention including Family Support and Intervention Teams and Children with Disability Teams, in a supportive capacity.

Children with complex and/or acute needs are those who, if they stayed at home, may have risks posed to them in respect of their health and emotional wellbeing. Such children may be the subject of a Child Protection Plan or a care arrangement alternate to home. These are the children and families with whom the Children's Services Social Work Teams have most involvement, in particular the Gateway and Family Support Intervention Teams. The Children with Disability Social Work Teams (who carry out these same functions in respect of safeguarding); also have involvement with children whose long term diagnosed conditions have a significant impact on their and their families lives. All of these Social Work teams, where the need has been identified, carry out carers assessments.

A specific service which is provided by social care to children with hearing impairment is that of assessment in respect of equipment needs - when a self-referral by parent or a professional is made for same. These referrals tend to be made to the Children with Disability team and onward referral is processed to the Physical and Sensory Service (for Adults) where the relevant technicians are located.

Thereafter, the assessment processes in terms of need, outlined above, apply.

South Eastern HSC Trust

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Sensory Support services have the following mechanisms in place whereby deaf children inclusive of their families are provided support by social care teams. The support is provided in conjunction with other professionals, organisations and agencies that together meet the assessed needs of deaf children and their families.

- Services to children are organised through single points for entry within localities. A referral is received through Gateway and then assessed by a dedicated Social Worker for Deaf/Hard of Hearing (HOH) children. This means that families can expect a consistent response and pathway of services.
- Children are designated as Children in Need under the Children's Order and as such are all offered an annual review of their needs.
- Paediatric audiology pathway - Social Work support at point of diagnosis either through new-born screening or through paediatric audiology. Social Work from Sensory Support is part of the hospital Multidisciplinary Team and meets monthly with hospital audiology colleagues for onward referral within the community.
- Multidisciplinary paediatric community meetings – all community professionals involved with the child will meet regularly to discuss services provided – Sick Children's Medical Officer, Speech & Language Therapist, Peripatetic Teaching service, National Deaf Children's Society Social Worker with on-going liaison between professionals, organisations and parents/families.
- Social Work assessment, care plan and review process is on-going with the child and their parents/families. A Carers assessment is offered and completed as required throughout this process with possible application for carers respite payment as applicable.
- Parents support groups – provides parents and families with information support and activities.
- Parent Volunteers – peer support for newly diagnosed families
- Parent's newsletter –distributed quarterly to all families in partnership with SEHSCT to share up to date relevant news and information.
- Advocating on behalf of Deaf children within the mainstream education service, contributing to the statementing process and working closely with the Peripatetic teaching service.
- Liaison with Jordanstown School and involvement within the review process.
- Liaison with specialist mental health / behaviour services – i.e. Children's Mental Health service
- Transition services – liaison with housing executive / CAB re benefits
- Link to health development to ensure deaf children and their families have access to same activities and services as other children i.e. swimming lessons with communication support – tennis coaching from Deaf tutor – horse-riding ,trampolining
- Assessment for suitable equipment to assist with language acquisition and independence skills.
- Family Sign Classes – informal set of sign classes to introduce all members of the family to basic sign language are completed annually.
- Communication support – individual communication support can be offered to families to assist with family signing where the family need additional support

- Deaf awareness sessions – sessions can be arranged as required by families where children are moving into new environments or to ease community integration for either formal such as nursery primary or secondary school or informal such as Brownies, Scouts, sporting leaders etc
- Deaf role model / link to deaf community – Community Support Worker can offer a link to the deaf community for parents and children to enable a positive role model.

The eligibility criteria for the Trust Sensory Deaf and Hard of hearing service covers all ages of people who have a diagnosed hearing loss, are profoundly deaf, are sign language communicators, have a dual hearing/visual loss or those experiencing tinnitus.

Belfast HSC Trust

Children who are deaf are referred to the Children with Disabilities team by professionals through the referral section of the UNOCINI framework. The relevant criteria are: 'Children who have a permanent hearing loss that would be diagnosed as moderate to profoundly deaf'.

- On receipt of referral, the child is screened by the team leader to determine if an initial assessment requires to be undertaken by a social worker or whether a referral to the Children's Sensory Support clinic is more appropriate. This is based on the reason for referral.
- If an initial assessment is required, this will be undertaken by the community team, who may also refer the child to the Children's Sensory Support clinic if required. The outcome of the initial assessment will determine which services are offered based on the needs identified.
- Alternatively, if an initial assessment under the UNOCINI framework is not required the child will be offered an appointment at the Children's Sensory Support clinic. At this appointment they meet with the social worker to discuss diagnosis and any concerns that the child or family have and their practical needs. At this point an action plan and, if appropriate, a Support Plan is developed.
- The child and family are introduced to the Environmental Aids Officer from the sensory support service. They talk through aids that may be beneficial to the child. If it is felt appropriate, a referral can be made to complete an environmental aids assessment with the child in their home. This may result in the child accessing a loop system, loud tone/flashing door bell, smoke alarm and/or a baby link - as assessed. These items are provided free by the Trust. Information regarding equipment that may be beneficial for the child but not supplied by the Trust is also discussed, e.g. IPADs, IPODs and Apps.
- The child/family will also be advised of voluntary organisations, i.e. NDCS and NIDYA (now called Action deaf youth) to access information, youth clubs, social events and mail lists. The Trust can also refer to British Deaf Association who has a mentoring scheme for deaf children/young adults and information service. The child can also be referred to the peripatetic support service to assist with aids and support within the educational environment. If it is felt that the child would benefit from longer term social work support, the case is then allocated and a full assessment of need is undertaken and carer assessment is offered where appropriate.

Western HSC Trust

Criteria for Eligibility

Any individual, including a child, who is deaf or has a "significant" hearing loss (significant is agreed to mean requiring hearing aids following referral to and assessment by local audiology department) is eligible to receive a service from the Sensory Support Team and children are viewed as "children in need" and prioritised accordingly.

Mechanisms in place for Providing Support

WHST has a process in place reference children diagnosed with a hearing loss and requiring a hearing aid or children newly diagnosed prelingually profoundly deaf.

The Audiology Department will contact Sensory Services to advise when the child's first hearing aid fitting is to take place and it arranges to have a social worker from the team present at that appointment to meet with parents. The purpose of that meeting is to advise parents of the range of services available to their child from both the statutory and voluntary sectors. They are advised that with their consent, the WHST will inform the following services that their child has been diagnosed with a hearing loss:

- Peripatetic Teacher for child with hearing loss in Western Education & Library Board
- Family Officer from National Deaf Children's Society
- Speech & Language Therapy
- Community Paediatrics

This is to ensure that those providers are aware of the child and can make contact with the family if appropriate, to offer support as required.

Parents at this point can choose whether to avail of services from the Sensory Team. If they feel it inappropriate or unnecessary at the time, they are given information and contact details so that they can be in touch at a later stage if they so wish.

This process evolved as a result of the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme and the WHSCT feels it is very beneficial for all concerned.

Alternatively, the WHSCT operates an open referral system whereby a child may be referred, with parental consent, by another professional or voluntary sector, e.g.:

- Health Visitor
- Community Paediatrician
- Consultant
- Western Education & Library Board Peripatetic Teacher
- Speech & Language Therapy
- NDCS

or family, i.e. parents or guardians, and the Trust will carry out an assessment of need in terms of service requirements.

Southern HSC Trust

There are clear pathways within SHSCT for onward referral to support services when a child is diagnosed with a Permanent Childhood Hearing Impairment (PCHI). The care and support for children with hearing loss is provided by a multi-disciplinary team which includes Parents, ENT, Audiology and Hearing Aid Services, Specialist Speech and Language Therapy, GP's, Health Visitors, Community Paediatrics, Social Services and the Hearing Support Team within Education.

When a child is identified with PCHI, the ENT Consultant, with the consent of the Parents/Guardians, notifies by letter all the Professionals mentioned above. The Peripatetic Teacher is identified as the key worker co-ordinating services for the child and the entire group are kept informed of progress. Parents are given an information booklet outlining the role of each service and how and when to contact them. Social Services may be contacted by any of the Team or by the parent when support is required. Good communication between the Team ensures that each child has on-going assessments, rehabilitation and is reviewed regularly.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of his Department's financial expenditure on outsourcing outpatient appointments to the private sector, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43012/11-15)

Mr Wells: Exact expenditure on outpatient appointments provided in the independent sector in each of the last three years is not readily available.

In 2013/14, the estimated expenditure on outpatient appointments carried out in the independent sector was £11.4 million. The Western Trust did not record elective care expenditure in the form requested prior to 2013/14; however the estimated expenditure on outpatient appointments provided in the independent sector in the other Health and Social Care Trusts was £5.8 million in 2011/12 and £10.3 million in 2012/13.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) nurses in each Health and Social Care Trust; and for his assessment of the regularity of appointments with an MS nurse.

(AQW 43068/11-15)

Mr Wells: The number of MS specialist nurses in each Trust is set out in the table below:

Health and Social Care Trust	Number of MS nurses
Belfast	6.1 wte
Northern	0.5
South Eastern	0
Southern	2
Western	1.64 wte
Total	10.24 wte

The regularity of appointments is a matter of clinical judgment and is based on individual patients' needs.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what procedures are in place to protect staff in Muckamore Abbey Hospital from attack by forensic and other patients; and to outline how the employer's duty of care towards staff is being met, including, what protective clothing is provided.

(AQW 43096/11-15)

Mr Wells: Muckamore Abbey is a specialist hospital providing assessment and treatment services to learning disabled adults and all admissions to the hospital are the subject of comprehensive risk assessments undertaken by the multi-disciplinary team. Such assessments take account of the often complex needs of each patient and include consideration of any health

and safety issues pertaining to staff and other patients. This remains the subject of continuous review during all hospital admissions.

Comprehensive training programmes are provided for staff which reflects the complex needs of the patient population. This includes specialist training programmes relating to the management of actual or potential aggression.

Any incident of concern is formally reported in accordance with the Trust's governance arrangements and is reviewed by the multi-disciplinary team to ensure effective risk management arrangements are in place.

A zero tolerance approach to the prevention and management of aggression and violence towards staff in the work place is in place and is reflected in Trust policy and procedures. A range of staff support arrangements is in place which in addition to line management arrangements includes support provided through Staffcare and the Trust's Occupational Health Service.

In relation to personal protective clothing, this is provided as required for the management of bodily fluids including changes of uniform.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many incidents of assault on staff by patients have been recorded at Muckamore Abbey Hospital in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43097/11-15)

Mr Wells: The number of recorded assaults on staff by patients in Muckamore Abbey Hospital for the last three years ending September 2014 is as follows:

Year Ending	Verbal Assault	Physical Assault	Total
September 2012	29	487	516
September 2013	45	709	754
September 2014	37	671	708

Muckamore Abbey is a specialist hospital providing assessment and treatment services to learning disabled adults. Incidents of verbal or physical abuse by patients on staff by persons with a mental illness / learning disability are usually as a result of the illness itself, rather than any malicious intent.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to his proposals to move to an all-island network for paediatric cardiac services, when Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin will have full capacity to provide surgery for all Northern Ireland patients.

(AQW 43129/11-15)

Mr Wells: I would refer the Member to my Statement to the Assembly on 3 March 2015. The Congenital Heart Disease Network Board will take forward a phased implementation of the network over the next 15-18 months. This timeframe reflects the need to build capacity in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, to receive additional patients from Northern Ireland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, to specify the availability of the £1 million announced by Mr John Compton as being available for paediatric cardiac services; and how it differs from the £1 million announced as being available through the Change Fund.

(AQW 43153/11-15)

Mr Wells: The former chief executive of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) indicated in 2013 that £1m would be made available to invest in the future model for Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services (PCCS) proposed by the HSCB's PCCS Working Group in April 2013. Pending a decision from my predecessor on the future service model for these services, the HSCB utilised this funding to support the costs of paediatric cardiac surgery undertaken outside Northern Ireland. I have now made available £1.2m in 2015/16 to invest in the model recommended by the International Working Group. The amount of money to be invested in the approved future model has therefore increased from a combination of Executive Change Funding and my Department's budget for 2015/16.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average weekly cost of providing a bed for intermediate care in the independent sector.

(AQW 43169/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern and Southern Trusts have confirmed that they strive to secure independent provider beds for intermediate care at the regional Independent Care Home Tariff Rate, which is set by the HSC Board. The rates for the 2014/15 financial year are as follows: Residential Care Home - £461 per week and Nursing Home - £581 per week.

The South Eastern Trust has advised that the 2014/15 average intermediate care bed cost in the independent sector is £600 per week.

The Belfast Trust has advised that they commission from independent providers interim beds to aid in timely discharge from hospital in the care planning process, and rehabilitation beds which provide further specialised treatment to patients prior to return to home. These cost between £630 and £670.50 per bed per week.

The Western Trust does not commission independent provider beds for intermediate care.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was spent on intermediate and respite care beds in the independent sector in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years.
(AQW 43170/11-15)

Mr Wells: The following tables provide information on the South Eastern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust spend on intermediate and respite care beds in the independent sector over the last three years. Table A represents the entire Trust area spend and Table B represents spend in the North Down and Ards area only.

Table A - Trust spend

Year	Intermediate & Respite Care bed spend in the Independent Sector (£)
2012/13	2,270,853
2013/14	2,144,954
2014/15	2,376,645

Table B – North Down and Ards spend

Year	Intermediate & Respite Care bed spend in the Independent Sector (£)
2012/13	1,537,504
2013/14	1,390,749
2014/15	1,611,491

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was spent on intermediate and respite bed provision in the independent sector in North Down and Ards in each of the last three years.
(AQW 43171/11-15)

Mr Wells: The following tables provide information on the South Eastern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust spend on intermediate and respite care beds in the independent sector over the last three years. Table A represents the entire Trust area spend and Table B represents spend in the North Down and Ards area only.

Table A - Trust spend

Year	Intermediate & Respite Care bed spend in the Independent Sector (£)
2012/13	2,270,853
2013/14	2,144,954
2014/15	2,376,645

Table B – North Down and Ards spend

Year	Intermediate & Respite Care bed spend in the Independent Sector (£)
2012/13	1,537,504
2013/14	1,390,749
2014/15	1,611,491

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42588/11-15, why the actual admission has to be completed by a family member and not via Day Care; and why clients can not be admitted via Day Care on the first day of their stay, as was previously permitted.
(AQW 43182/11-15)

Mr Wells: In the Northern HSC Trust, admissions for adults with severe learning disabilities attending residential respite/short break facilities are completed by family members to ensure that the relevant information for clients can be updated and so that the client's belongings and medication are appropriately accounted for. As there can be several weeks between admissions, it is important that a client's personal information is updated to ensure a safe and effective service. I am informed that this has been the policy of the Northern Trust for some time.

Clients can be admitted and discharged to respite/short breaks care via Day Care, however their personal belongings and medication must be delivered by a family member to the unit. This is to ensure that the medication recorded and administered during the client's stay is in line with GP instructions.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, on average, how many paid training and staff development days (i) nurses; and (ii) doctors receive on an annual basis.

(AQW 43184/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (i) Registered nurses are entitled to 4% paid training and staff development days per year. This equates to approximately 10.6 days per nurse per annum.

This allocation is in accordance with the Delivering Care: Nursing Staffing in Northern Ireland framework and includes statutory and mandatory training.

- (ii) Consultants, Specialty Doctors and Associate Specialists are entitled to 10 days paid training and development per year or 30 days over 3 years. Junior Doctors are entitled to 30 days annually.

This allocation is stated in their associated Terms and Conditions of Employment.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, on average, how many paid training and staff development days fire fighters receive on an annual basis.

(AQW 43185/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) employs both Wholetime (WT) and Retained Duty System (RDS) Firefighters to provide operational service delivery across Northern Ireland.

On average RDS personnel undertake 12 paid training and staff development days per annum.

The expectation is that a Wholetime Firefighter will spend a minimum of 2 hours per shift training and on average a Wholetime Firefighter will attend centrally delivered training 6 days per annum.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the fire stations that will be downgraded to meet the budgetary constraints being imposed on the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

(AQW 43186/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) has asked to finalise its efficiency plans for 2015/16 before submission to my Department.

NIFRS' savings proposals must be prioritised on the basis of those that minimise the impact on service delivery. Any changes to service delivery must ensure the continued safety of both the public and the firefighters who deliver the service.

Changes to service delivery will require consideration of public consultation by NIFRS. Final agreement to the NIFRS savings proposals will be on the basis of evidence-based reforms. Proposals will also be subject to consultation processes, as appropriate

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of cardiac surgical operations on patients resident in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years in (a) Northern Ireland; (b) the Republic of Ireland; and (c) Great Britain; and (ii) the current total and average cost to the Health Service of these cardiac surgical operations.

(AQW 43187/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (i) Information on the number of cardiac surgical operations on patients resident in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years in Northern Ireland; the Republic of Ireland; and Great Britain is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Cardiac Surgery Activity (Adult and Paediatric Procedures) 2009/10 – 2013/14

Year	Northern Ireland	Republic of Ireland	Great Britain	Total
2009/10	896	190	109	1195
2010/11	968	160	50	1178
2011/12	1005	176	66	1247
2012/13	1005	145	12	1162
2013/14	1018	112	97	1227

Source: HSC Board

- (ii) Estimates of total and average costs for all activity included in Table 1 with the exception of paediatric transfers in 2013/14 and Extra Contractual Referrals are included in Table 2. Estimate of average paediatric cardiac transfer costs (based on invoices paid) in 2013/14 are included in Table 3.

Table 2: Cardiac Surgery Cost Estimates 2009/10 - 2013/14

	Number of Procedures	Estimated Total Cost (£)	Estimated Average Cost (£)
2009/10	1,195	20,739,833	17,356
2010/11	1,178	19,447,659	16,509
2011/12	1,247	22,258,730	17,850
2012/13	1,162	19,320,033	16,627
2013-14	1,123	20,182,773	17,972

Source: HSC Board

Table 3: Paediatric Cardiac Transfer in 2013/14 – estimated average costs

	Number of Procedures	Estimated Total Cost (£)	Estimated Average Cost (£)
Dublin	13	231,191	17,784
GB	91	2,886,798	31,723
Total	104	3,117,989	29,981

Source: HSC Board

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of referrals for heart surgery to (i) Mater Private Hospital, Dublin; (ii) Blackrock Hospital, Dublin; (iii) Guys Hospital, London; (iv) HCI International Medical Centre, Glasgow; and (v) any other hospital, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 43188/11-15)

Mr Wells: The table below shows the number of referrals for heart surgery to the Mater Private Hospital, Dublin; the Blackrock Hospital, Dublin; Guys Hospital, London; HCI International Medical Centre, Glasgow; and any other hospital in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland, in each of the last four years.

	Mater	Blackrock	Guys	HCI	Other	NI	Total
2010/11	154	6	50	-		968	1,178
2011/12	162	14	63	-	3	1,005	1,247
2012/13	34	111	-	-	12	1,005	1,162
2013/14	-	99	-	-	110	1,018	1,227

Source: HSC Board

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many heart surgery operations have been carried out in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years.

(AQW 43189/11-15)

Mr Wells: The total number of cardiac surgery procedures performed in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years is given in the table below;

Year	Heart Surgery Episodes
2010/11	968
2011/12	1005
2012/13	1005
2013/14	1,018

Source: HSC Board

Note: Activity stated in the table above relates to both adult and paediatric patients who were resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their procedure.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42486/11-15, for his assessment of the effectiveness of these measures, including in encouraging victims of sexual violence and abuse to report these crimes.

(AQW 43193/11-15)

Mr Wells: The measures included in my response to AQW 42486/11-15, which are wide-ranging in nature, have contributed to enhance the provision of advice and support to victims of sexual violence and abuse and raise awareness of health and social care needs.

These services encourage victims of sexual violence and abuse to report these crimes, where necessary and appropriate, to the authorities. This decision though may ultimately rest with the victim. Should victims decide on this route additional support will be provided through the criminal justice system and victims are also encouraged to use to the services of Victim Support NI.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent by patients on television facilities in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust in the last twelve months; and whether all hospitals charge patients for television facilities.

(AQW 43241/11-15)

Mr Wells: Information on spend by patients on television facilities in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is not available. This service is operated by an independent company and as such the amount spent by patients is not known to the Trust.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times he has met with Trade Unions representing the blue light service employees who are planning industrial action on 13 March 2015.

(AQW 43273/11-15)

Mr Wells: For the purposes of this answer 'blue light service' is interpreted as Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS).

Since taking up Office, I have met formally with Trade Unions representing the NIAS on three separate occasions.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been treated in beds in hospital corridors in the last month; and what his Department is doing to avoid the use of such beds.

(AQW 43296/11-15)

Mr Wells: At key pressure times, situations have arisen where non-designated beds have been used by a patient where an inpatient bed is not immediately available. It is not possible to determine the number of patients who have been treated in a non-designated bed in a hospital corridor, as these are not included as bed stock on the Patient Administration System. There have been occasions where patients have been placed in such a bed for brief periods in a select range of ward environments to either reallocate beds to meet unscheduled patient needs or to alleviate pressures on an Emergency Department.

Trusts are expected to ensure that any additional beds have the appropriate staffing levels and are in clinical areas that do not compromise the safety and/or dignity of patients.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether beds in hospital corridors are counted towards the capacity of a hospital; and if so, how many such beds are in each hospital

(AQW 43297/11-15)

Mr Wells: Bed occupancy is a measure in hospital capacity and information on the availability and occupancy of beds in wards open overnight in HSC hospitals is collected quarterly by the Department. As such, any beds outside of a hospital ward would not be counted towards the capacity of a hospital.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional work pressures on staff his Department has considered in relation to patients treated on beds in hospital corridors.

(AQW 43298/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department, and the Health and Social Care Board, expect HSC Trusts to ensure that any additional beds that are opened are adequately staffed and that care is provided in an appropriate clinical environment. It is, however, inevitable that during any prolonged period of escalated activity, some staff will be required to work additional hours due to the increased workload.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the proposed cuts to the Fire Service will affect public safety.

(AQW 43322/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) has been asked to finalise its efficiency plans for 2015-16 before submission to my Department.

NIFRS' savings proposals must be prioritised on the basis of those that minimise the impact on service delivery. Any changes to service delivery must ensure the continued safety of both the public and the firefighters who deliver the service.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department considers minimum staffing levels to be acceptable for the everyday running of the Health Service.

(AQW 43333/11-15)

Mr Wells: It is the responsibility of employing organisations to ensure that staffing levels are consistent with the provision of safe and cost effective patient care.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, against the backdrop of increasing budgetary demands, for his assessment of the role the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority plays in ensuring that appropriate standards of care are given to recipients of domiciliary care packages across each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 43354/11-15)

Mr Wells: Under The Regulation and Improvement Authority (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 domiciliary care agencies are subject to a minimum of one inspection each year. However, where concerns are identified this frequency may increase.

The role and functions of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority [RQIA] are governed by the legislation – the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 and related regulations.

In its inspections RQIA assesses the quality of services delivered by domiciliary care agencies for service users, against relevant regulations and published minimum standards. Inspection reports include, where necessary, quality improvement plans detailing what improvements are required to meet regulations and minimum standards, and an associated timescale.

Where RQIA identifies concerns it may take escalated enforcement action including the issuing of notices of failure to comply with regulations, placing conditions of registration, deregistration of a manager or service provider, fines or prosecution through the courts.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether Health and Social Care Trusts have plans to reduce the duration of homecare visits from fifteen minutes to eight minutes, for recipients of domiciliary care packages.

(AQW 43355/11-15)

Mr Wells: The duration of homecare visits for clients in receipt of domiciliary care packages is based on a professional assessment of individual needs and therefore varies across clients. The duration of each visit can range from 15 minutes up to 1 hour, depending on the assessed needs of the client. All HSC Trusts have advised me that they have no plans to reduce the duration of homecare visits.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether the reduction in hourly rates for domiciliary care providers is conducive to (i) the Transforming Your Care plan, which emphasises prevention as a way of helping people remain at home; and (ii) in enabling sustainability for domiciliary care sector.

(AQW 43356/11-15)

Mr Wells: Health and Social Care Trusts have advised my Department that there has been no reduction recently in the hourly rate paid to domiciliary care providers.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for a breakdown of the number of nurses employed currently in the palliative care ward of Tyrone County Hospital; (ii) to detail the numbers employed in this ward in the last four years; (iii) for confirmation that no nurse currently employed in the palliative ward will be redeployed to other duties; and (iv) that no nurse has been redeployed during the current financial year.

(AQW 43401/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (i) Breakdown of the number of nurses employed currently in the palliative care ward of Tyrone County Hospital by whole time equivalent (WTE) and headcount (HC).

Nursing & Midwifery

	Band 5		Band 6		Band 7		Total HC
	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	
Feb-15	8.43	11	0.86	1	1	1	13

Total = 13

- (ii) Number of nurses employed in the palliative care ward of Tyrone County Hospital in the last four years.

Nursing & Midwifery

Financial year	Band 5		Band 6		Band 7		Total HC
	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	WTE	HC	
2010/11	7.12	10	0.86	1	1	1	12
2011/12	8.55	11	0.86	1	1	1	13
2012/13	15.12*	18	0.86	1	1	1	20*
2013/14	9.74	12	0.86	1	1	1	14

*The increase in WTE during 2013 was as a result of additional cover for maternity and absenteeism.

- (iii) WHSCT has advised that within Tyrone County Hospital there are two inpatient wards for which nursing skill mix reviews have been completed. Staffing levels are maintained in both these wards in accordance with the skill mix reviews. Staff may be asked to move between the two wards to ensure safe staffing levels are maintained in both wards. This is reviewed on a daily basis by the Ward Manager and Head of Service/Lead Nurse. This flexibility in use of qualified nurses is common across all hospitals.
- (iv) The Trust has confirmed that no nurse has been redeployed during the current financial year.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many Occupational Therapists are employed in each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) how many Occupational Therapists are specifically trained to deal with children in the 0 - 5 age group; and (iii) the waiting times for Occupational Therapy appointments in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 43404/11-15)

Mr Wells: (i)(ii) The information requested on the current number of Occupational Therapists is provided in Table 1 below. Trusts have also provided the number of Paediatric Occupational Therapists, but note that they are trained to work with all children aged 0-18, not just the 0-5 age group specifically.

Table 1: Current number of Occupational Therapists, including sub set of Paediatric Occupational Therapists, by HSC Trust

HSC Trust	Total Occupational Therapists		Of which: Number of Paediatric Occupational Therapists	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	307	257.67	51	37.82
Northern	230	193.84	37	29.23
South Eastern	153	136.28	21	16.5
Southern	198	176.61	32	26.33
Western	128	114.0	14 Core Children's OT Services + 3 Western Educational Support Team	10.5 Core Children's OT Services + 2.5 Western Educational Support Team

Source: HSC Trusts

(iii) Table 2: Number of People Waiting for an Occupational Therapist at 31 January 2015 by HSC Trust area and Time Waiting

HSC Trust	Length of time waiting at 31 January 2015					Total
	0 – 3 weeks	3 – 6 weeks	6 – 9 weeks	9 – 13 weeks	>13 weeks	
Belfast ¹	346	392	379	492	372	1,981
Northern	600	229	327	454	1,275	2,885
South Eastern	412	197	196	124	40	969
Southern	433	150	212	182	202	1,179

HSC Trust	Length of time waiting at 31 January 2015					Total
	0 – 3 weeks	3 – 6 weeks	6 – 9 weeks	9 – 13 weeks	>13 weeks	
Western	387	177	268	326	1,304	2,462
Total	2,178	1,145	1,382	1,578	3,193	9,476

Source: Health and Social Care Board

1 Figures for the Belfast Trust are at 31 December 2014, the latest available

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the impact of the proposed 5.5 per cent cut in the Fire and Rescue Service budget; and whether this proposed cut can be reversed through the additional £200m being allocated to his Department in 2015/16.

(AQW 43406/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) has been asked to finalise its efficiency plans for 2015-16 before submission to my Department.

NIFRS' savings proposals must be prioritised on the basis of those that minimise the impact on service delivery. Any changes to service delivery must ensure the continued safety of both the public and the firefighters who deliver the service.

The additional £200m referred to does not take account of the fact that £50m was also removed from the DHSSPS budget and the net increase is in fact £150m. The Final Budget removed 15% from those areas considered by the Finance Minister to be non frontline health and social care service. As NIFRS does not provide front line health and social care this element of the DHSSPS budget would have been reduced by 15%.

However, the NIFRS has been given a proposed reduction of 5.5% to its 2015/16 budget as part of my Departments plan to deliver a balanced financial position in 2015/16.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42361/11-15, whether the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme rebate for 2014/15 has been exclusively spent on drugs; and what mechanism his Department employs to ensure this is the case.

(AQW 43455/11-15)

Mr Wells: Returns made under the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) are made to the Health and Social Care Board. The HSC Board has advised that PPRS receipts for 2014/15 received to date have been used to offset the growth in expenditure on branded medicines.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the implications of working overtime on personal indemnity insurance for doctors who work in hospitals; and whether this is compensated for in doctors' pay.

(AQW 43456/11-15)

Mr Wells: Doctors who are employed either by the NHS or another healthcare organisation should not require additional insurance or professional indemnity cover if they practise exclusively within the terms of that employment; this includes working overtime for that employer. The Department would not therefore be aware of the implications of working overtime on personal indemnity insurance as this would be a personal matter between the doctor and the insurer.

Many doctors who could rely on corporate cover to meet the requirement, however, choose to have personal cover although they have no self-employed practice. Whether or not Doctors choose to take additional cover in these circumstances is entirely a matter for their own judgement.

As this is a matter of personal judgement HSC Trusts do not meet the costs associated with personal indemnity insurance.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the future of the Causeway Hospital, following the publication of the Donaldson Report.

(AQW 43489/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Trust's model for services in Causeway and the Glens area is based around an acute hospital in Coleraine with an Emergency Department and supporting clinical services, a well-developed intermediate care service and community teams evenly distributed across the area.

A public consultation has been launched on the Donaldson report and its recommendations to help inform future decisions. The closing date for this consultation is Friday 22 May 2015.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 37462/11-15, to detail how services to increase (i) awareness raising, information and support; (ii) training; and (iii) short-breaks, respite and support to carers, are being developed through the Dementia Strategy Implementation Group.

(AQW 43490/11-15)

Mr Wells: These three workstreams are being taken forward as part of the joint Atlantic Philanthropies/Delivering Social Change Dementia initiative. This initiative was launched in September 2014 and will provide funding of £6.25m over three years with the aim of improving health and social care services for people living with dementia and their carers.

The project will: promote greater understanding and awareness of dementia across the whole community; enhance the quality of services for people with dementia through improved training opportunities for staff; and develop a range of innovative support services for carers of people with dementia. Detailed work plans are in place for each workstreams.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how much has been budgeted for the redevelopment of the Ravara Training and Resource Centre in Bangor (ii) if this budget is ring-fenced; and (iii) the timeline for the completion of the project.

(AQW 43502/11-15)

Mr Wells: The redevelopments at Balloo and Ravara are part of a wider project to enhance Learning Disability services in North Down. The business case for this project is being processed with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. The anticipated cost for the project is £13.178m capital with additional recurrent revenue of £0.462m.

Due to the current financial constraints, there are a number of projects under consideration like this one that cannot currently be progressed as no funding is available to take these forward. There is therefore currently no budget allocation for this project and it is not ring fenced. The timeline for completion of this project will therefore be dependent on appropriate business case approvals and budget availability.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how much has been budgeted for the redevelopment of the Balloo Training and Resource Centre in Bangor (ii) if this budget is ring-fenced; and (iii) the timeline for the completion of the project.

(AQW 43503/11-15)

Mr Wells: The redevelopments at Balloo and Ravara are part of a wider project to enhance Learning Disability services in North Down. The business case for this project is being processed with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. The anticipated cost for the project is £13.178m capital with additional recurrent revenue of £0.462m.

Due to the current financial constraints, there are a number of projects under consideration like this one that cannot currently be progressed as no funding is available to take these forward. There is therefore currently no budget allocation for this project and it is not ring fenced. The timeline for completion of this project will therefore be dependent on appropriate business case approvals and budget availability.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether any consideration has been given to amending abdominoplasty/apronectomy policy to make criteria more realistic and attainable.

(AQW 43518/11-15)

Mr Wells: Criteria for access to abdominoplasty/apronectomy is set out in the Health and Social Care Board's Effective Use of Resources Policy; the Board has advised that there are no plans to amend significantly the referral criteria for this procedure.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43230/11-15, what steps he is taking to address the increasing numbers of patients diagnosed with dementia.

(AQW 43524/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department's Regional Dementia Strategy was launched in 2011 and contains 44 recommendations. Implementation of the recommendations is being taken forward by the Dementia Strategy Implementation Group which is co-chaired by the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency.

Significant progress has been made across a range of the recommendations in the Strategy, including the development of memory clinics across the five Health and Social Care Trusts. This service will provide timely diagnosis for people with dementia and information and support to inform decisions about future care and treatment.

Looking to the future, the Atlantic Philanthropies/Delivering Social Change Dementia initiative, which was launched in September 2014, will provide funding of £6.25m over three years to improve health and social care services for people living with dementia. The initiative will focus on three key strands: promoting greater understanding and awareness of dementia across the whole of the community; enhancing the quality of services through improved training opportunities for staff; and developing innovative support services for carers of people with dementia.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42947/11-15, when he intends to schedule the review of Support for Undergraduate Medical and Dental Education; and whether it is being scheduled as a priority.

(AQW 43527/11-15)

Mr Wells: A review of the Supplement for Undergraduate Medical and Dental Education has been identified as a priority project to be taken forward by my Department. As advised in AQW 42950/11-15, the timing of the review is subject to the necessary resources being identified to take it forward in light of other competing Departmental priorities.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount spent on agency nurses in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43571/11-15)

Mr Wells: The table below details the expenditure on Nursing Agency staff for the period 2009/10 -2013/14.

Agency Staff – Nursing £s

Year	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
09/10	*6,066,000	*540,199	*3,303,414	1,185,710	*1,268,818	12,305,407
10/11	*2,818,000	612,964	*3,398,887	452,734	*1,525,742	8,808,327
11/12	*3,114,000	836,225	2,031,664	263,240	*2,070,303	8,315,432
12/13	*3,742,000	1,078,594	2,768,074	672,111	*1,591,350	9,852,129
13/14	5,326,064	1,153,486	2,187,685	232,546	*2,224,631	11,124,413

Source: Trust Finance Returns except those marked *, which have been recently sourced from the HSC Trusts.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average hourly cost of an agency nurse, compared with a nurse employed by the Health Service.

(AQW 43572/11-15)

Mr Wells: Nursing Agencies charge a wide range of standard hourly rates which can vary, for example, from around £14.37 to £42.60 in specific circumstances such as, being dependent on when shifts are worked, location and particular agency. In addition the amount the Agency is paid may not be the amount paid directly to the Agency nurse. It is not possible therefore to compare rates in a meaningful way.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the process by which Health and Social Care Trusts administer direct payments to (i) disabled people aged 16 or over; (ii) carers; (iii) people with parental responsibility for a child with a disability; and (iv) 16 and 17 year old children with disabilities.

(AQW 43651/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Carers and Direct Payments Act (N.I) 2002 gives Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts the power to make direct payments. Subsequently, my Department issued guidance to HSC Trusts to aid in the interpretation of this legislation, in addition to clearly detailing the accounting and monitoring arrangements in the administration of direct payments. This guidance applies to all client groups and can be accessed via the attached links:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/direct_payments_legislation_and_guidance_for_boards_and_trusts.pdf <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/eccu3-09.pdf>.

In addition, Departmental guidance on the administration of Direct Payments for persons who lack capacity to consent has also been issued to the HSC Board and HSC Trusts and can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/eccu-1-2012-circular-direct-payments-lack-capacity-to-consent>.

All Direct Payment guidance has been developed to ensure clear governance structures are in place for both individual clients and HSC staff. I expect HSC Trusts to keep the administration of Direct Payments under review in order to ensure systems maintain a person-centred focus, whilst retaining the assurances needed for the responsible use of public money.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has been given to funding the drug Vimizin for sufferers of Morquio Syndrome; and what other treatments are in place for people with this disease.

(AQW 43671/11-15)

Mr Wells: Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland is guided by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) in determining which of the many new drugs treatments coming to market may be made routinely available.

Vimizim (elosulfase alpha) is currently going through the NICE highly specialised technology assessment programme. It is expected that guidance on its use in the NHS will be published in October 2015 and my Department will then consider its application in Northern Ireland.

At present there is no other treatment available for people with morquio syndrome.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the future of the Multiple Sclerosis Centre at Dalriada Hospital, Ballycastle.

(AQO 7795/11-15)

Mr Wells: The services provided at the Multiple Sclerosis Centre at Dalriada Hospital have been restored to levels before changes had been made to facilitate the temporary closure of the unit. The Trust is engaging with service users to explore options for the future delivery of MS respite services.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his specific proposals to improve the standard of social care provided as part of Transforming Your Care.

(AQO 7797/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Transforming Your Care Review identified that “Social care will also be a central part of the support provided to enable independent living. This will include access to a diverse range of provision to meet people’s social and emotional needs and tackle social isolation.”

My department has continued to work to improve the quality of social care in Northern Ireland, including:

- The rollout of a regional approach to Self Directed Support - offering individuals more control over their personal support budgets, to avail of greater flexibility, independence and choice in how and when social care services are provided.
- The introduction of Reablement services which are designed to support people to live independently in their own homes for longer. This involves working with individuals whose independence is at risk, helping to rebuild their confidence, develop (or re-learn) daily living skills and promote social inclusion.
- Support for people with a learning disability, many more of whom are now able to live semi-independently in the community with support rather than in hospital or institutions. Improvements and modernisation of buildings-based day services for those individuals with the most complex conditions is also continuing.
- Improving mental health services, following the Bamford Review and Transforming Your Care. We continue to focus on implementing the more recovery-based approaches envisaged by that review. We have also pursued the resettlement of existing residents of institutional care and inpatient beds to more independent living in the community through the provision of intensive home support, alternative supported living arrangements and individual budgets.

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the current child mortality rate is one of the worst in Europe, whether he plans to introduce a series of public health measures in a bid to reduce avoidable child deaths.

(AQO 7798/11-15)

Mr Wells: Reducing child mortality rates in Northern Ireland is of paramount importance. In keeping with the rest of the UK, infant mortality rates here have been declining steadily for many years, however, it is concerning that they remain higher than in some European countries.

Injuries are responsible for a substantial proportion of childhood deaths and my Department recently launched a new Home Accident Prevention Strategy that focuses on high risk groups.

I also welcome the recent report from the Royal College of Paediatrics into ‘Why Children Die’, which makes a number of public health related recommendations in areas such as home accident prevention, breastfeeding, smoking, alcohol restriction, and sudden infant death.

Measures are in place to address these issues through implementation of the public health strategic framework “Making Life Better”, and associated strategies and programmes for tobacco control, breastfeeding support, substance misuse, suicide prevention, and family support and early years services.

Programmes to improve children’s educational attainment, emotional wellbeing, and nutrition also make an important contribution. Other public health measures designed to improve children’s health include an extensive and evolving childhood vaccination programme to protect against a range of serious and potentially fatal diseases.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the recent Report on Primary Care Prescribing (NIA 230/11-16) by the Public Accounts Committee on the savings which could be made from prescribing lower cost drugs, what action he will take to ensure that all possible savings are realised.

(AQO 7799/11-15)

Mr Wells: I welcome the Public Accounts Committee report on Primary Care Prescribing. My Department is considering all of the report’s findings in the context of ongoing efforts to ensure that proper procedures continue to be applied to the

management of public funds and in delivering improved health and social care. That includes seeking to maximise deliverable efficiencies through ongoing engagement with the HSC Board, GPs, pharmacists and the pharmaceutical industry.

Mr Milne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the recommendations made by Ann Watts of The Change Emporium in the review of the Benefits Management Framework for Transforming Your Care, will be acted upon.
(AQO 7800/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health Committee engaged Ms Watts to undertake a short review of the Benefits Management arrangements for work by the Health and Social Care Board on implementing service changes in response to Transforming Your Care.

The report produced by Ms Watts provided useful suggestions on how the benefits management arrangements could be enhanced. The Department provided a detailed response to the Health Committee's report. The suggested refinements to the benefits management approach will be taken forward through ongoing programme management arrangements.

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for an update on the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust's short to medium-term plans for health care in North Down.
(AQO 7801/11-15)

Mr Wells: The South Eastern Trust is working to manage a challenging financial position in 2014/15, which includes the delivery of its contingency plans and the implementation of additional constraints surrounding its workforce and other non-pay budgets.

Looking to next year, the final budget for 2015/16 is exceptionally challenging for my Department. Work is ongoing with all of the Trusts, HSCB and other Arm's Length Bodies to clarify the implications of the Executive's final budget and develop balanced financial plans for 2015/16.

Given the need to live within budget and meet rising demand, I expect that there will inevitably be an impact on the pattern of delivery of some services.

In any case, I can assure you that maintaining the safety of services for patients and clients across the whole of the South Eastern Trust will remain a priority.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he is making information and statistics regarding the Health Service more readily accessible to the public.
(AQO 7802/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department publishes some 67 Official and National statistics publications, monthly, quarterly and annually. These cover the full range of activity across the entire health and social care systems including performance against 36 Ministerial standards and targets and 109 indicators of performance, information on emergency care, inpatients, outpatients, cancer services, mental health services, respite, domiciliary care, child protection, fostering and adoption. We publish the results of a range of surveys of users' experience and utilisation of services, information on obesity, drugs and alcohol consumption and detailed analysis of health and social care inequalities. The release of all of this information is well publicised in advanced and each is accompanied by a statistical press release. To further promote and encourage transparency and accountability, all the information is presented in a user friendly way on a newly developed section of our website that makes use of the latest infographics and interactive tools to encourage users to explore the data at a whole range of geographic levels.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that 25 per cent of all GP referrals are musculoskeletal related, what consideration he has given to using better the skills of physiotherapists and other allied health professionals to alleviate the pressure on GPs.
(AQO 7803/11-15)

Mr Wells: 'Direct access' is a system that facilitates patients to refer themselves to a Physiotherapist without having to be referred by a GP. In 2015-16, the PHA and HSCB intend to pilot physiotherapy self-referral arrangements in the SE Trust area to inform decisions on whether such arrangements should be established across Northern Ireland.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has held with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the development of a cross-departmental internet safety strategy.
(AQO 7804/11-15)

Mr Wells: Executive Ministers have agreed to commission and fund the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) to develop a cross-departmental internet safety strategy and costed action plan on their behalf. This will build on the work already undertaken in this area by the SBNI and complement wider national strategy. The general approach was agreed following discussions and meetings with OFMDFM.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are in place, or are being planned, to provide post-acute rehabilitation for people with brain injuries.

(AQO 7805/11-15)

Mr Wells: Rehabilitation services for people with brain injury vary according to the specific nature/severity of their injury and the patient's stage of recovery.

Rehabilitation may be provided on an in-patient or out-patient basis at local or regional hospitals or via community based rehabilitation teams.

Inpatient rehabilitation is provided at the following locations:

- Regional Acquired Brain Injury Unit, Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast. (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust)
- Spruce House, Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry. (Western Health and Social Care Trust)
- Thompson House Hospital, Lisburn. (South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust)
- Neuro-behavioural Unit, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Belfast. (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust)

These units provide a network of in-patient rehabilitation services operating on a regional and local basis.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he plans to promote local healthcare at EU level to attract European funding.

(AQO 7806/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Executive is committed to maximising Northern Ireland's engagement in Europe and I am seeking to ensure that the health sector continues to make a significant contribution to this effort. Across Europe we are all facing similar health challenges associated with comparable demographics and it therefore makes sense for us to work together, promoting the exchange of knowledge and best practice.

European Commission initiatives such as the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing have enabled us to develop some strong partnerships with other regions where there are areas of particular mutual interest. Northern Ireland has been recognised as a Three Star Reference Site in that Partnership, reflecting our position as one of the foremost regions in Europe in the realm of healthcare innovation. On foot of this we have established the Reference Site Collaborative Network which is aimed at sharing expertise, maximising EU funding opportunities.

This is a long-term agenda but I would suggest our engagement in European initiatives have helped us make more effective bids for European funding opportunities. Throughout 2014/15 the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and our Health and Social Care Trusts have collaborated with our universities and European partners to develop Horizon 2020 and Third EU Health Programme bids. Both these programmes are heavily over-subscribed. To date one bid under Horizon 2020 and two bids under the Third EU Health Programme have been successful.

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the publication of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI report into the unannounced inspection of HMP Magilligan, what further representations or recommendations, and from which agencies and individuals, has he received calling for an overhaul or improvement of the Supporting Prisoners at Risk process.

(AQW 43059/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Independent Monitoring Board also asked for a review of the SPAR process in their last Annual Report.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the publication of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI report into the unannounced inspection of HMP Magilligan and in respect of the latest concerns over the management of Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPARs), whether he will have the process reviewed with a view to keeping SPARs open on vulnerable prisoners, until they have worked through a system toward closure, particularly in respect of closures which are based on verbal assertions of improvement by the individuals subject to the SPARs.

(AQW 43130/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the response I gave to AQW/42971/11-15.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42370/11-15, how these change managers are expected to deal with the unique challenges with no experience of these issues.

(AQW 43175/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the response I gave to AQW/42370/11-15, and repeat that the Organisational Change Manager is one member of the senior management team that leads a wider team of senior managers with extensive experience.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Justice to detail the finance committed by the Northern Ireland Executive to the Northern Ireland Community Safety College project at Desertcreat.

(AQW 43190/11-15)

Mr Ford: An allocation of £53.3m was provided for the NI Community Safety College in 2015-16. However, this was dependent on agreeing the drawdown of unspent funds from HM Treasury in 2015-16.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice who has responsibility for the investigation into the incident at the Extern gate of HMP Maghaberry on 2 February 2015.

(AQW 43191/11-15)

Mr Ford: On 2 February, during a protest outside Maghaberry Prison, a prison officer's vehicle was surrounded and he was subjected to abuse and intimidation. This must have been a very frightening experience and the officer acted with great professionalism.

The Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has discussed the policing of the protest with the Deputy Chief Constable and a senior officer is undertaking an urgent review of the arrangements that should apply in future.

NIPS has conducted an internal review of the incident and concluded that a formal investigation should commence. The Prison Service's Professional Standards Unit is responsible for that investigation.

Both strands of work are ongoing and will report to their respective senior managers. Once they are complete, decisions about how information or recommendations should be shared or implemented will be taken.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice how long the investigation into the incident at HMP Maghaberry on the 2 February 2015 will last.

(AQW 43192/11-15)

Mr Ford: On 2 February, during a protest outside Maghaberry Prison, a prison officer's vehicle was surrounded and he was subjected to abuse and intimidation. This must have been a very frightening experience and the officer acted with great professionalism.

The Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has discussed the policing of the protest with the Deputy Chief Constable and a senior officer is undertaking an urgent review of the arrangements that should apply in future.

NIPS has conducted an internal review of the incident and concluded that a formal investigation should commence. The Prison Service's Professional Standards Unit is responsible for that investigation.

Both strands of work are ongoing and will report to their respective senior managers. Once they are complete, decisions about how information or recommendations should be shared or implemented will be taken.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice who will receive the findings of the investigation into the incident at HMP Maghaberry on the 2 February 2015.

(AQW 43201/11-15)

Mr Ford: On 2 February, during a protest outside Maghaberry Prison, a prison officer's vehicle was surrounded and he was subjected to abuse and intimidation. This must have been a very frightening experience and the officer acted with great professionalism.

The Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has discussed the policing of the protest with the Deputy Chief Constable and a senior officer is undertaking an urgent review of the arrangements that should apply in future.

NIPS has conducted an internal review of the incident and concluded that a formal investigation should commence. The Prison Service's Professional Standards Unit is responsible for that investigation.

Both strands of work are ongoing and will report to their respective senior managers. Once they are complete, decisions about how information or recommendations should be shared or implemented will be taken.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice whether the prison officers, who were on duty at HMP Maghaberry on 2 February 2015, will be privy to the findings of the report into the incidents that occurred on that night.

(AQW 43209/11-15)

Mr Ford: On 2 February, during a protest outside Maghaberry Prison, a prison officer's vehicle was surrounded and he was subjected to abuse and intimidation. This must have been a very frightening experience and the officer acted with great professionalism.

The Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has discussed the policing of the protest with the Deputy Chief Constable and a senior officer is undertaking an urgent review of the arrangements that should apply in future.

NIPS has conducted an internal review of the incident and concluded that a formal investigation should commence. The Prison Service's Professional Standards Unit is responsible for that investigation.

Both strands of work are ongoing and will report to their respective senior managers. Once they are complete, decisions about how information or recommendations should be shared or implemented will be taken.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to outline the process and current governing rules on the statutory discount charge. (AQW 43250/11-15)

Mr Ford: Schedule 2 of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 allows for the deduction, as prescribed in regulations, of the sums assessed as payable in respect of Court of Judicature cases supported by legal aid. The deduction was originally set at 10% of the value of bills as determined by the Taxing Master. This was reduced to 5% in 1988 and remains at that level currently. The deduction is taken after the Taxing Master has made his assessment and is only applicable to the sums payable to solicitors and barristers.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice how the recent proposal to introduce a levy of up to 15 per cent on all legal work completed is related to the current statutory charge scheme. (AQW 43251/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no direct relationship between the statutory deduction and a proposal for a Levy of up to 15% on payments from the legal aid fund. The statutory deduction of up to 10% applies to civil fees which have been assessed by the Taxing Master. The proposal for a Levy is intended to be a temporary emergency measure. This is to address the shortfall in budget for legal aid, while other permanent measures are put in place to reduce demand for, and cost of, legal aid.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice how the reduction in the scope of legal aid will affect a member of the public who has been injured through no fault of their own in their quest to access justice. (AQW 43252/11-15)

Mr Ford: The vast majority of money damages cases are progressed without recourse to legal aid. Only five percent of personal injury claims are currently pursued with the assistance of legal aid.

The reforms I am proposing will see some cases retained within the scope of legal aid including serious clinical negligence, serious claims involving the actions of agents of the state and cases relating to industrial disease. The full details are currently being finalised. As is currently the position, individuals may still be able to pursue personal injury claims by other means which include car insurance, household insurance, after the event insurance or trade union assistance.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what options are open to victims if agencies fail to abide by any specific aspects contained in the Victims' Charter, following failed representations with the service provider in question; and why an independent body is the next option and not his Department as the creator of the charter. (AQW 43260/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Victim Charter sets out the entitlements of victims and the standard of service they can expect to receive. My Department co-ordinated the drafting of the Charter, but the responsibility for the delivery of the entitlements and services contained within it falls to the relevant statutory or voluntary sector organisations. It contains a section outlining the options available to victims should any of the service providers fail to deliver on their obligations.

I would hope that, in the majority of cases, concerns can be resolved by the organisation in question. However, should a victim remain dissatisfied, they can raise the matter with an independent organisation. This may include the Northern Ireland Ombudsman, the Police Ombudsman, the Independent Assessor of Complaints and my Department (for the voluntary sector service providers).

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many fine defaults are currently under summons within the court system, broken down by court division. (AQW 43261/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the number of current Default Hearing Notices issued for a future default hearing broken down by court division as of 11 March 2015.

Court Division	Number
Antrim	434
Ards	407
Armagh & South Down	763
Belfast	1064
Craigavon	283
Fermanagh & Tyrone	435
Londonderry	349

Court Division	Number
Grand Total	3735

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42558/11-15, as opposed to, or in conjunction with, briefings from agencies within his departmental remit, what engagement has he or his Department held with non-government agencies, including the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and various victims groups, in respect of Sarah's Law and its potential introduction.

(AQW 43294/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has held discussions with agencies, including the NSPCC, who are involved as part of the strategic oversight of the public protection arrangements (PPANI). The PPANI strategic arrangements also include a victims' sub group with representatives of various victim organisations.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether there is a stipulated time frame in law or adopted best practice guidance by which an arrested person in custody is to have contact with a solicitor; and if so, to provide copy of said legislation or guidance.

(AQW 43326/11-15)

Mr Ford: By way of summary, Article 59 of the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 provides that a person arrested and held in custody in a police station or other premises is entitled, if he or she so requests, to consult a solicitor privately at any time. If a request is made, he/she must be permitted to consult a solicitor as soon as is practicable except to the extent that delay is permitted by Article 59.

In any case he/she must be permitted to consult a solicitor within 36 hours from the relevant time – generally the time at which the person arrested arrives at the first police station to which he/she has been taken after arrest.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he will order an audit or enquiry into the (i) justification of the expenditure on the drop-down security bollards; and (ii) viability of the bollards and financial outlay.

(AQW 43328/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have no plans to order a specific audit of expenditure on drop down security bollards. Such expenditure may be included within sample testing as part of the regular internal audits carried out across all areas of Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service expenditure.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice whether he will meet with the PSNI to discuss what additional support his Department can offer to ensure that support for neighbourhood watch volunteer co-ordinators is maintained.

(AQW 43383/11-15)

Mr Ford: Neighbourhood Watch, a tripartite arrangement between the Department of Justice, The Northern Ireland Policing Board and the PSNI, was launched in Northern Ireland in June 2004.

In 2012 the Neighbourhood Watch Steering Group engaged consultants to undertake a review of Neighbourhood Watch regarding its operation and future delivery.

Recommendations from that review included that all Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) should take ownership for Neighbourhood Watch Schemes at a local level and PCSPs now provide the support, advice and guidance for Neighbourhood Watch schemes in their area.

Officials from the DOJ Community Safety Unit meet with colleagues in the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Policing Board on an ongoing basis to review the support currently available and revise if appropriate.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice (i) who is responsible for the co-ordination of neighbourhood watch schemes and the volunteer co-ordinators; (ii) what measures are taken to ensure that information about crime and suspect activity is appropriately communicated to the co-ordinators; and (iii) what measures are taken to ensure that the contribution of volunteer co-ordinators is valued.

(AQW 43384/11-15)

Mr Ford: Each Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) is responsible for the co-ordination of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and the volunteer co-ordinators in its area. The PCSP is also responsible for providing support, advice and guidance to the Scheme.

PSNI meet with Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators to address information sharing and agree procedures for receiving regular updates and Crime Prevention messages.

The contribution of volunteer co-ordinators may be recognised in a number of ways by PCSPs and PSNI, including at local crime prevention meetings and events which recognise the role of the volunteers who give their time freely to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in their area, including those involved in Neighbourhood Watch.

I am aware of the dedication of the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators across Northern Ireland and the commitment and enthusiasm of individual volunteers and I encourage them to continue working with the PSNI and the PCSP to address local community safety issues.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42558/11-15 which agency supplies the information when a parent or guardian makes a request under the current disclosure system.
(AQW 43435/11-15)

Mr Ford: Disclosure of information to third parties about an individual offender is covered within section 6 of the Guidance to Agencies on Public Protection Arrangements (PPANI) and section 21 of the PPANI Manual of Practice. Whilst this guidance is specific to cases within PPANI (which includes certain violent offenders in addition to sexual offenders) the procedures are followed as best practice for cases not meeting PPANI criteria.

Prior to any disclosure by any agency, a number of factors will be considered such as the category of risk, nature of disclosure, and the reasons for it. This will involve, where relevant, the sharing of information and discussion of the individual case between professional representatives of the various agencies.

Whilst verifiable self-disclosure by an offender is normally the best option, each agency has its own powers and procedures that cover disclosure e.g. Social Services where child protection issues have been identified, PBNI where disclosure is a condition within a licence or order or PSNI where disclosure is a condition of a SOPO or where there is an imminent risk to an individual. The agencies will liaise to ensure that the most appropriate method of disclosure (i.e. what to disclose and to whom) for the specific case is progressed in a timely fashion.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he has received a request to set up an alternative staff association for PSNI.
(AQW 43436/11-15)

Mr Ford: Yes. Legislation prohibits the establishment of alternative associations. Nevertheless, I was asked how a new staff association might be set up and I advised the correspondent that I do not consider it appropriate or necessary.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the recently released figures of missing sex offenders, (i) how many offenders are missing in Northern Ireland; (ii) for how long has each offender been missing; and (iii) to list the category of each offender.
(AQW 43458/11-15)

Mr Ford: Figures provided by PSNI in response to a Freedom of Information request, included in recently published media reports, identified that there were 3 Northern Ireland registered sex offenders whose whereabouts were currently unknown.

Responsibility for considering public disclosure of personal data in such cases lies with the PSNI and you may wish to direct your question to the Chief Constable. The PSNI response may however be subject to certain restrictions.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42764/11-15, whether other agencies, within his departmental remit and that are part of the multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland, can provide information on this case.
(AQW 43460/11-15)

Mr Ford: As outlined in my answers to previous questions on this matter representatives of the multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) have offered to facilitate a meeting with public representatives to discuss any concerns and explain the work of the agencies in local communities. These agencies cannot discuss individual cases.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what consideration has been given to the introduction of measures to prevent the creation of monopolies in legal representation through the payment of legal aid.
(AQW 43545/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Legal profession in Northern Ireland has a broad base with over 700 registered barristers and some 2000 individual solicitors, or firms, all of whom, as appropriate, can access legal aid for their clients. I therefore have no plans to introduce any measures that would restrict individual solicitors or firms from accessing legal aid for their clients.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQO 7785/11-15, what correspondence he has had with his counterparts in Westminster and Dail Eireann about setting up a cross border inquiry.
(AQW 43582/11-15)

Mr Ford: On 2 February, during a protest outside Maghaberry Prison, a prison officer's vehicle was surrounded and he was subjected to abuse and intimidation. This must have been a very frightening experience and the officer acted with great professionalism.

The Director General of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has discussed the policing of the protest with the Deputy Chief Constable and a senior officer is undertaking an urgent review of the arrangements that should apply in future.

NIPS has conducted an internal review of the incident and concluded that a formal investigation should commence. The Prison Service's Professional Standards Unit is responsible for that investigation.

Both strands of work are ongoing and will report to their respective senior managers. Once they are complete, decisions about how information or recommendations should be shared or implemented will be taken.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQO 7785/11-15, what are the complex issues surrounding conducting a cross border inquiry.
(AQW 43584/11-15)

Mr Ford: The matter is under consideration by officials in my Department and the Department of Justice and Equality. This work is at an early stage due to the complexity of the issues which include matters of jurisdiction and national security.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice when he will publish the new draft regulations for injury on duty payments.
(AQW 43686/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is anticipated that the draft injury benefit regulations will be the subject of targeted consultation once legislative drafting has been completed. It is currently envisaged that this will take place in the latter part of 2015.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43173/11-15 and from the figures provided, to detail (i) how many individual breaches does each case equate to; and (ii) which cases are before (a) Magistrates and (b) Crown Courts.
(AQW 43716/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are a total of 15 cases relating to 23 charges of breach of a sexual prevention order before the courts as of the 6 March 2015.

These cases are broken down across the court tiers as detailed in the table below.

Court Division	Magistrates' Court		County Court (on appeal)		Crown Court		Total	
	Cases	Breaches	Cases	Breaches	Cases	Breaches	Cases	Breaches
Antrim	2	Def A – 1 Def B - 3	-	-	1	Def A - 1	3	5
Ards	1	Def A - 1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Armagh and South Down	-	-	-	-	1	Def A - 1	1	1
Belfast	5	Def A – 2 Def B – 2 Def C – 3 Def D – 1 Def E - 1	2	Def A – 1 Def B - 1	-	-	7	11
Craigavon	2	Def A – 3 Def B - 1	-	-	-	-	2	4
Fermanagh and Tyrone	-	-	-	-	1	Def A - 1	1	1
Total	10	18	2	2	3	3	15	23

Source: Integrated Court Operating System (ICOS)

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what is the current religious breakdown of the PSNI.
(AQW 43729/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current religious composition of the PSNI is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board.

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PSNI.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development what assurances he has had from Translink that Limavady will continue to receive a town bus service adequate to the needs of its people.
(AQW 41758/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): During the draft budget consultation for my Department one possible result of the drastic reduction in budget highlighted was the potential withdrawal of some town services and potential service reductions and consolidation of others.

In relation specifically to local town services I am pleased to confirm to you that I have been successful in securing additional resource from the Executive, now included in the final 2015/16 budget, to be used to maintain, as far as possible, Translink's provision of much needed town services.

This could mean that services in listed towns will be maintained but there may still be an impact on frequency of services aligned to passenger usage.

Translink is currently reviewing its overall levels of service provision, with the aim of conducting consultation with local representatives as necessary.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the dial a lift community transport service. **(AQW 42085/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: My Department provides funding from the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) for the Dial A Lift scheme, managed by the Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP's). Dial A Lift is aimed at reducing social exclusion in rural areas for people with reduced mobility. This service is provided to all members of the scheme including people with disabilities who can avail of transport for various purposes that would include local shops, post office or bank, training and local employment, pharmacy, visiting friends or family and includes some local health service appointments.

In 2013/14 the Partnerships provided 243, 967 Dial A Lift Trips to 4780 active users. The grant from my Department in 2013/14 totalled £3.4 million.

The Partnerships also receive some financial support from Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) through the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme which allows individual members from the rural community to use their SmartPass to access transport through this scheme jointly funded by DARD.

Demand for Dial A Lift services has grown over the last number of years and each Partnership now has to prioritise services to ensure that transport is available to the most vulnerable members.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) for an update on his Department's proposals to introduce additional traffic calming measures in the village of Clabby, Co Fermanagh; (ii) how many responses were received in favour of the proposals; (iii) to detail the number of pedestrians crossing the road in the most recent survey of the village; (iv) how many vehicles passed through the village on a daily basis according to the most recent survey; (v) what is the estimated cost of introducing the measures; and (vi) what impact the measures would have on traffic travelling through the village. **(AQW 43085/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy:

- (i) Additional traffic calming measures and a reduced speed limit will be provided at Clabby Road, Clabby within the next four to six weeks. These will consist of two sets of speed cushions and associated warning signage. The speed limit on the additional section of traffic calming is also being reduced to 30mph to tie in with the speed limit on the existing traffic calmed route through the village. Gateway type speed limit signage will also be erected to confirm the start of the new speed limit.
- (ii) One response was received to the advertised traffic calming proposals from a resident of Clabby Road, who fully supported the proposals and claimed to represent residents in the local area. No letters of objection were received.
- (iii) No surveys have been undertaken of pedestrian crossing movements at Clabby.
- (iv) The volume of traffic recorded on Clabby Road over a 24 hour period in July 2014 was 2078 vehicles per day.
- (v) The estimated cost of the proposed traffic calming measures and speed limit alteration is approximately £2500.
- (vi) It is anticipated these measures will reduce vehicle speeds and improve road safety for all users of this route.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration his Department was given to reducing the maximum speed limit on 'A' class roads in Fermanagh. **(AQW 43086/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: You may be aware that the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy to 2020 contains an action measure indicating that, following completion of a speed management review, TransportNI will consider whether a reduction in the national speed limit on rural single carriageway roads might be a worthwhile option.

My Department is currently carrying out assessments of the speed limits on all 'A' class roads in Northern Ireland utilising its speed management policy guidelines. When these assessments have been completed, the results will be further considered at a strategic level before the outcome is published.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures are being put in place to reduce the impact of the closure of the junction at Mersey Street on North Down traffic travelling into Belfast in the mornings on the (i) A2 dual carriageway at Holywood; (ii) Sydenham bypass; and (iii) Parkway, Belfast.

(AQW 43098/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Water (NIW) is currently completing essential sewerage upgrade works in the Mersey Street area of East Belfast. This essential work will improve the local storm water and sewerage infrastructure and the estimated completion date is June 2015.

Due to the nature of the work, a certain amount of disruption will be inevitable. However, every effort is made to mitigate this and keep such disruption to an absolute minimum.

A road closure is required to allow safe access to the site at Mersey Street. The road closure will be between Connswater Bridge and Dee Street and a traffic diversion is in place for all other traffic, with routes clearly signposted, and vehicle access for residents maintained as far as possible.

Any customer with any queries or special requirements relating to access should contact Waterline on 08457 440088.

Mersey Street is a route through a residential area that has been treated with traffic calming measures, which may be used by some commuters travelling from North Down into Belfast in the mornings. However, the main traffic routes to Belfast from North Down are the A2 trunk road and the A20 Newtownards Road, which are better able to accommodate the larger volumes of traffic that travel between North Down and Belfast on a daily basis.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will review the Department's gritting procedures for the Craigtlet area following the recent snow fall on Monday 2 March 2015 which left dangerous driving conditions for motorists.

(AQW 43101/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Salting operations were carried out on Sunday 1 March 2015 at 19.00 and again in the early morning of Monday 2 March at 03.00. After each action, the condition of the road network was checked and reported back to the Duty Controller before drivers or supervisors were released.

It was noted during the site inspection at approximately 06.30 there were light showers with some snow but that the previous salting actions were effective and no further actions were necessary.

Throughout this period my Department was monitoring weather and road conditions and undertook salting action as necessary. However, weather forecasting is not always as accurate as we would like and despite their best efforts my officials are unable to guarantee snow/ice free roads. Rain showers and surface water runoff from adjacent land can cause salt wash off and drivers therefore should drive in a manner commensurate with the prevailing weather conditions.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 41697/11-15, to detail the causes of these fires.

(AQW 43108/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The requisite information regarding the incidents referred to in my response to AQW 41697/11-15 are attached in the table below.

Causes of Thermal Incidents on Buses, 2010 to 2014

Year	Total Number of incidents	Cause of incident
2010	1	Engine fuel leak
2011	7	2 engine fuel leaks 2 engine fuel pump failures 1 engine oil leak 1 electrical wiring defect 1 air system valve failure
2012	5	2 engine fuel leaks 2 electrical wiring defects 1 electrical alternator failure
2013	7	1 engine failure 1 engine turbocharger defect 1 engine fuel leak 2 electrical alternator failures 1 electrical wiring defect 1 electrical starter motor defect
2014	3	2 electrical alternator failures 1 electrical wiring defect

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development what funds are available to complete Phase II, including the passing loop, of the Derry to Belfast railway.

(AQW 43111/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In my recent statements relating to Phase 2 of the Coleraine to Londonderry Track Renewals project, I have confirmed my commitment to its completion. Consequently, when considering the split of the capital funding allocated to my Department for 2015/16, I have ensured that the necessary funding needed for the project during 2015/16 will be available to Translink. This will, of course, depend upon a successful procurement and approval of the revised business case.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant AQW 41408/11-15, (i) for a breakdown of public costs involved in the approval and construction of the rank; and to detail any external funds that were secured, including the purpose for which they were secured.

(AQW 43133/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The total cost of the project was £620k and it was fully funded by my Department in 2003.

Translink has advised that it is not possible to isolate costs relating solely to the taxi rank itself.

As outlined in AQW 41408/11-15, the purpose of the project was to put in place a traffic management system at Central Station, a minor part of which was the provision of the taxi rank.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development what value of construction work, to be funded from the capital budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43135/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise that £132 million, funded from the capital budget, has been identified to be spent on construction work starting in the 2015-16 financial year. However, I would also advise that as the business areas within my Department are still working on the detail of their budget allocations this figure is subject to change.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development what arrangements were in place for snow ploughing and gritting of the A6 Glenshane Road and the Coleraine to Limavady mountain road during the recent snowfalls.

(AQW 43144/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The total resource available for delivery of winter service on the A6 Glenshane Road and the Coleraine to Limavady mountain road is as follows:

- 4No. Salt Spreaders in Limavady;
- 4No. Salt Spreaders in Coleraine;
- 3No. Salt Spreaders in Magherafelt; and
- 2No. Snow Blowers.

In addition, external contractors can provide up to 39 tractor mounted snow ploughs for use in the above District Council areas.

During the most recent period of snowfall in the area, that is, from 03:30 on Monday 2 March 2015 to 12:00 on Wednesday 4 March 2015, sixteen full salting actions were performed on Glenshane Pass using up to three Salt Spreaders and three tractor mounted snow ploughs. Approximately 70 tonnes of salt was used.

During the same period, nine full gritting actions were performed on Coleraine Mountain Road and approximately 47 tonnes of salt was used.

These operations were directed by my officials who took informed decisions on the time of each salting and/or snow clearance action based on Met Office forecasts.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42436/11-15, (i) whether there are any other methods of advertising the services of the taxi firm in place; (ii) whether these methods are within the remit of the contract; and (ii) whether the handing over of the taxi firm's business card constitutes the booking procedure as required by law for private hire.

(AQW 43177/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that:

- i) as stated in AQW 41458/11-15 there are stands and signage directing passengers emerging from trains to access the taxi services. There is no other advertising in the form of posters, etc. on premises, or on buses;
- ii) the contract does not mandate any specific form of advertising; and
- iii) the exchange of business cards between taxi operator and customer would not in isolation be considered a booking or effecting a booking for the purposes of private hire taxis as per the Taxi Operators Licensing Regulations (NI) 2012.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the works in the Fermanagh District Council area that are approved under NI Water's PC15 Business Plan.

(AQW 43178/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The projects listed in the table below are in the Fermanagh District Council area and are included in the PC15 Final Determination. Delivery of these projects by NI Water is subject to funding availability.

Name of Planned Capital Investment	Description of Planned Capital Investment
Clabby Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW)	Upgrade of wastewater treatment works to address quality compliance and development pressures
Killyhelvin Water Treatment Works (WTW)	Improvements and management to sludge settlement and storage systems at Killyhelvin Water Treatment Works
South / South East Zonal Study South Phase 1 Work Packages	Replacement of circa 37km of poorly performing water mains together with improvement works/alterations to network valving, service reservoirs and water pumping stations in the area.
Castle Archdale WwTW's Appraisal	Replacement of the existing wastewater treatment works. The proposal involves creating an Integrated Constructed Wetland on a new site adjacent to the existing WwTW. This involves the treatment of polluted wastewater through natural biological processes.
Rossory Wastewater Pumping Station Upgrade Feasibility Study	Upgrade of existing pumping station to address capacity and odour issues.
Killyhelvin Treatability	Scheme seeks to address potential non-compliance with Drinking Water Regulations.
Killyhelvin Clear Water Tank	Construction of new clear water tank to provide adequate storage in the event of works failure.
Clabby WwTW	Increase the capacity of a waste water treatment works in order to facilitate future development.

In addition to these specifically identified projects, NI Water will also make significant capital investments in a number of programmes of work across Northern Ireland which will deliver work within Fermanagh District Council area.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the timeframe for the replacement of broken street lights in North Down.

(AQW 43267/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is anticipated it will take a further 8 weeks to clear the backlog of defective lights in the North Down area.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the amount allocated to the (i) road network; and (ii) road and foot way repairs in South Belfast since 2010.

(AQW 43313/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Expenditure by my Department on the road network is not analysed on a Parliamentary Constituency basis.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42371/11-15, whether the exclusivity of the rank was part of the original contract or was this added following the approval and construction of the rank.

(AQW 43325/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that the original terms of the contract stipulated that the tender was to provide "a dedicated taxi service to NIR travelling passengers".

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42737/11-15, to list each park in Ballycastle in which Transport NI has agreed to introduce a 20mph zone; and when it is planned that each of these will be introduced.

(AQW 43330/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The roads that are now subject to a speed limit of 20mph in the Whitehall area of Ballycastle are as follows:

- Leyland Avenue;
- Leyland Court;
- Leyland Crescent;
- Leyland Heights;
- Whitehall Avenue;
- Whitehall Close;
- Whitehall Court;
- Whitehall Crescent;
- Whitehall Drive;
- Whitehall Gardens;
- Whitehall Heights;
- Whitehall Park;

- Whitehall Place;
- Whitepark Court; and
- Whitepark Drive.

The 20mph speed limit is now enforceable.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the Disabled Persons Badge application form DB1 on the departmental website is the most up to date application form.

(AQW 43339/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The most up-to-date Disabled Persons Badge application form (DB1) can be accessed via the NI Direct website and is the one that is most commonly used by applicants.

Officials were made aware that an old form was still accessible via both the NI Direct and DRD websites, however, the links to the old form have since been removed from both websites.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the criteria used when assessing the need for a reduction in the speed limit on a road.

(AQW 43360/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The need for a change in speed limit on a road is assessed in accordance with the guidelines contained within TransportNI's policy and procedure guide entitled 'Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland'. This document gives detailed guidance on the factors that must be taken into account when considering a change from the default 60mph national speed limit. These include measuring the mean speed of traffic, the collision history, the level of development and the purpose of the road under consideration. Speed limits on the upper tier rural road network, consisting mainly of "A" class roads, are currently under review.

The policy and procedure guide can be accessed at; www.drndni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=9110

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the rationale for the proposed Carrickmore Road, Ballycastle (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

(AQW 43400/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department received a request from the owner of No. 40 Carrickmore Road, Ballycastle to abandon a short portion of the public road from No. 40 Carrickmore Road to a car park and turning area to the west. Moyle District Council confirmed that it had no objection to the abandonment and had entered into an agreement with the owner of No. 40 Carrickmore Road to assert a public right of way over the area.

As my Department has no objection in principle to the proposed abandonment, a draft Order was published and is now subject to a period for objection, which expires on 14 April 2015.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans NI Water has for the sale of Lough Cowey.

(AQW 43785/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In May 2014, expressions of interest in a number of redundant NI Water reservoirs, including Lough Cowey, were invited from the public sector, in accordance with the Department of Finance and Personnel's Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland guidance document. No expressions of interest were received in respect of Lough Cowey and NI Water therefore intends to offer the site for sale on the private market during the 2015/16 financial year.

Department for Social Development

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on negotiations between the Social Security Agency and staff regarding the future of Lisahally Processing Unit in Derry.

(AQW 42349/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): My officials are currently engaged with both staff and Agency Trade Union regarding the future of the Lisahally Processing Unit. The most recent meeting with Agency Trade Union took place on 13th February 2015 and with all staff in the Lisahally Processing Unit on 26 January 2015. At these meetings Trade Union representatives and staff were updated on the ongoing discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the future of the Lisahally Processing Unit.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development to detail, broken down by claimaint, the overall sum of the total accumulated benefits paid the ten highest benefits claimants in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 42728/11-15)

Mr Storey: At June/July 2014, it was identified that the total annual benefits (Social Security Agency benefits², Housing Benefit, Child Benefit and Tax Credits) paid to the ten working-age households, in receipt of the highest amount of benefits, is estimated to be £567,000 (rounded to the nearest £1,000).

The average annual benefit amount received by these households is estimated to be £56,700 (rounded to the nearest £100).

I recognise the concerns that such figures may generate and I felt it important to provide the Member with illustrative case studies which show how an individual household could be entitled to these levels of benefit payment. It is important to point out that these case studies would be equally applicable in any other part of the United Kingdom. These case studies are not based on any specific households.

In the first example this is an unemployed couple living in rented accommodation with five children, two of whom are receiving the high rate care and high rate mobility of Disability Living Allowance. One of the parents is receiving Carers Allowance.

Example 1

Benefit	Rate
Jobseeker's Allowance	£86.55
Child Tax Credit	£441.21
Housing Benefit	£120
Carer's Allowance	£61.40
Disability Living Allowance	£276.30
Child Benefit	£73.90
Total Weekly Income	£1,059.36
Total Annual Income	£55,086.72

In the second example this is a couple living in rented accommodation with five children, one of the children is receiving high rate care/high rate mobility of Disability Living Allowance. Both parents are also disabled with one parent receiving high rate care/high rate mobility and one receiving mid rate care/low rate mobility. One adult is receiving Carer's Allowance.

Example 2

Benefit	Rate
Employment and Support Allowance	£266.95
Child Tax Credit	£357.63
Housing Benefit	£120
Carer's Allowance	£61.40
Disability Living Allowance	£352.40
Child Benefit	£73.90
Total Weekly Income	£1,232.28
Total Annual Income	£64,078.56

A household may include a single adult, or a married or cohabiting couple plus any of their dependent children.

The agreement reached by the Executive parties at Stormont Castle could potentially impact on the income being received by these households if in Example 2 either of the parents did not qualify, or, received a lower payment rate when they are reassessed for Personal Independence Payment. In both examples the households would be exempt from the Benefit Cap due to someone in the household receiving a disability benefit as is the case in GB.

In accordance with the code of practice for Official Statistics from the UK Statistics Authority, official statistics must not reveal the identity of an individual or organisation, or any private information relating to them. As a result the benefit details for an individual household in Northern Ireland cannot be provided.

The information provided is an Official Statistic. The Production and dissemination of all such Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by the UK Statistics Authority.

2 Benefits not included in this calculation include Child Disability Living Allowance, Guardian's Allowance, Widow's Pension, War Widow's or War Widower's Pension, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, Armed Forces Independence Payment and War Pensions.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 40960/11-15, to confirm that any decision of his Department may be revised by a decision under Article 18 which includes a decision of an appeal tribunal on a referral under Article 28D(1)(b); and therefore that any person has a right of appeal, to an appeal tribunal, against this decision.

(AQW 42976/11-15)

Mr Storey: Article 18 of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 provides for decisions made by the Department to be revised. Article 18 also allows the Department to revise a decision of the Appeals Tribunal in limited circumstances, which would then be considered a decision of the Department to which there is a right of appeal to a Tribunal.

If the Department implements a Tribunal determination it remains a decision of the Tribunal, to which there is a right of appeal to the Child Support Commissioner on a question of law under Article 25 of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 40960/11-15, to confirm that a person has a right of appeal to a child support appeal tribunal on a referral decision.

(AQW 42977/11-15)

Mr Storey: If a referral determination of the Tribunal has been revised by the Department under Article 18 of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 it can be appealed to a Tribunal. If the Department implements a Tribunal's determination a right of appeal is available to the Child Support Commissioner on a question of law under Article 25 of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 40960/11-15, to confirm that a decision on a referral is considered a decision made by the Department.

(AQW 42978/11-15)

Mr Storey: If the Department revises a referral determination, of the Tribunal, it is considered a decision of the Department and a right of appeal is available to a Tribunal under Article 22 of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

If the Department implements a Tribunal determination it remains a decision of the Tribunal, a right of appeal is available to the Child Support Commissioner on a question of law under Article 25 of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how many child support referrals his Department has made to an Appeal Tribunal under Article 28D(1)(b) of the Child Support Order 1991; and how many of the decisions made by these Appeal Tribunals were subsequently appealed.

(AQW 42979/11-15)

Mr Storey: Since November 2002, the Child Maintenance Service has made 50 referrals to an Appeal Tribunal under Article 28D(1)(b) of the Child Support Order 1991.

Subsequently 6 of the decisions were appealed.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development to confirm that Article 58 of the Social Security and Child Support (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (NI) 1999 does not apply to a determination on a referral from an Appeal Tribunal.

(AQW 42980/11-15)

Mr Storey: Regulation 58 of the Social Security and Child Support (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations (NI) 1999 is concerned with an application for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioner in relation to a social security decision as made by a Tribunal. It does not apply to a determination made by a Tribunal in relation to a child support decision by virtue of reg 53(3)(b) and 57C.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what were the security concerns relating to the office of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland referred to in its 2013-14 annual report; (ii) whether information in that office was not held securely; and (iii) when these concerns will be resolved.

(AQW 43032/11-15)

Mr Storey:

- (i) The security concerns were in respect of external lighting and access to the building.
- (ii) Information in the office was and is held securely.
- (iii) The Department has undertaken remedial works and the Commission is continuing to monitor the security of the building.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development what criteria the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland uses to determine which of its four approaches to investigation, as set out in its recent briefing paper presented to the Committee for Social Development, is appropriate in each individual case; and whether these criteria are different from the rest of the United Kingdom.

(AQW 43034/11-15)

Mr Storey: In determining which of the 4 approaches to take in each individual case, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland will: consider whether the concern falls within its remit; consider the risks associated with the concern; assess information to determine either that the concern is unsupported or that there are genuine issues which require further investigation; and utilize a risk-based approach to determine the level of the investigation and what further action might be required. It is considered that the criteria are in line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development whether the risk assessment process used by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland has been accredited under ISO 3100; and if not, why the Commission recommends on its website a higher standard than it applies to itself.

(AQW 43035/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Commission's website references the publication of a free risk management guide for charities, produced by the Institute for Risk Management, which states: "There are lots of risk management standards to choose from. Most are based on ISO 31000, which is recognised across the world. This guidance sets out the key elements of ISO 31000 and is consistent with Charity Commission guidance".

The Commission is not recommending a standard higher than that which applies to itself; rather it welcomes a guide that may be of use to charities.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 41824/11-15, what measures his Department will be taking to address the shortfall in crisis loans calls going unanswered in Shaftesbury Square; and whether additional funding will be allocated for this in 2015/16.

(AQW 43051/11-15)

Mr Storey: On 19 May 2014 the handling of teleclaims applications for Shaftesbury Square and a number of other offices was centralised in Lisburn Jobs and Benefits Office. This significantly increased the percentage of calls that were answered within the Belfast Region. Indeed since April 2014 to February 2015 88,072 calls have been offered in the Belfast Region of which 96.38% were answered. More recently, the Social Security Agency has made a significant investment to modernise and support the introduction of a new network wide telephone service for Crisis Loan applications operating from Omagh Jobs & Benefits Office. It is expected that the new service for claims for Crisis Loans will be fully operational by April 2015.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of homes owned by the Housing Executive in North Down that have gas fired central heating systems, as well as those that are heated by other means.

(AQW 43106/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that in the North Down constituency there are 2,360 properties that have gas fired central heating systems. They have also advised that those heated by other means are as follows:-

■ Oil	1,616
■ Economy 7	139
■ Open Fire Back Boiler	157
■ Roomheater	74
■ Open fire	22
■ Wood Pellet	1

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development what value of construction work, to be funded from the resource budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43136/11-15)

Mr Storey: In the forthcoming financial year, the Department will have ongoing responsibility for upkeep, repair and maintenance of its physical assets. At this stage, no firm amounts have been allocated to elements of this work that can be described as construction.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development what value of construction work, to be funded from the capital budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43137/11-15)

Mr Storey: The capital budget for Urban Regeneration work in 2015-16 is £25m. Of this, some £10.8m will be spent on projects which will start construction work during the next year. The remaining £14.2m will be used to complete construction work on projects which have already been started.

A number of Housing Associations have been awarded flexible loan finance under the Affordable Home Loans Fund and Financial Transactions Capital, to increase the supply of affordable homes across Northern Ireland.

The Affordable Home Loans Fund stands at £19 million and will be used to pay construction works to deliver 600 new homes by 2020, while a further £21.7 million of Financial Transactions Capital will see empty homes refurbished and brought back

into use as well as the introduction of a new Rent to Purchase initiative. The empty homes and rent to purchase initiatives will utilise funds to purchase existing properties, as well as the construction works associated with

refurbishment. As all of these schemes will take advantage of housing market conditions to maximise delivery and return, it is not possible at this stage to provide a definitive figure of capital spend in each year.

The Department has also set aside £0.7m for appeals service accommodation works in 2015-16.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42334/11-15, to detail the outcomes of these meetings, and whether the minutes are available for Voluntary Community Sector Groups.

(AQW 43142/11-15)

Mr Storey: My initial meeting with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Co-Chairs of the Joint Forum in October 2014 was held as part of my round of introductory meetings with key VCS stakeholders. No formal minutes of the meeting were taken.

Following Joint Forum meetings, minutes are produced for circulation and are summarised in a Joint Communiqué. These are circulated to Joint Forum members for distribution to their voluntary and community networks and public sector colleagues. The Joint Forum secretariat also publishes these documents on the DSD and NICVA websites.

The minutes and communiqué for the Joint Forum meeting I attended on 18 February 2015 have yet to be finalised and are planned to issue within the next 2 weeks.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of homes owned by the Housing Executive that have (i) oil fired central heating; (ii) gas fired central heating; (iii) heating by other means, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 43166/11-15)

Mr Storey: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not collate details of the types of heating systems in their stock by parliamentary constituency. A breakdown by Council area has been provided as follows: -

Council Area	Gas	Oil	Other*
Antrim Borough Council	1,060	1,147	132
Ards Borough Council	2,055	1,435	344
Armagh City District Council	411	1,269	219
Ballymena Borough Council	910	1,421	267
Ballymoney Borough Council	311	1,005	122
Banbridge District Council	296	1,251	215
Belfast City Council	17,685	2,224	1,921
Carrickfergus Borough Council	1,420	348	110
Castlereagh Borough Council	2,465	577	676
Coleraine Borough Council	334	2,100	595
Cookstown district council	13	903	98
Craigavon Borough council	1,452	2,329	295
Derry City Council	2,455	4,177	224
Down District Council	12	1,879	470
Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council	3	1,547	189
Fermanagh District Council	0	1,669	293
Larne Borough Council	757	350	181
Limavady Borough Council	376	973	86
Lisburn City Council	4,162	1,411	544
Magherafelt District Council	2	1,139	128
Moyle District Council	0	704	110
Newry & Mourne District Council	739	1,966	305
Newtownabbey Borough Council	2,898	875	476
North Down Borough Council	1,885	390	266

Council Area	Gas	Oil	Other*
Omagh District Council	31	1,516	217
Strabane District Council	2	2,029	108

* Other – includes properties with heating such as electric, gravity fed back boiler, liquid petroleum gas, open fire back boiler etc.

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Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost to the Housing Executive of grass cutting and general garden maintenance in Breezemount Estate, Bangor in 2013/14.

(AQW 43204/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the total cost for grass cutting and general garden maintenance for Breezemount Estate, Bangor in 2013/14 was £6,470.40.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development how many households are considered to be in (i) fuel poverty, spending at least 10 per cent of income on energy; (ii) extreme fuel poverty, spending at least 25 per cent of income on energy, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 43226/11-15)

Mr Storey: The 2011 Northern Ireland House Condition Survey reported that

- (i) 42% (294,240) of households in Northern Ireland were in fuel poverty and needed to spend 10% or more of their income on heat and light; and
- (ii) 4.8% (33,499) of households in Northern Ireland were in extreme fuel poverty and needed to spend over 25% of their income on heat and light.

Fuel poverty information is not available at constituency level, but I have attached information based on the 2011 House Conditions Survey at local council level.

2011 House Conditions Survey

Council	Number of Households	Percent of Fuel Poor Households
Antrim Borough Council	19,709	38 - 42%
Ards Borough Council	30,964	38 - 42%
Armagh City and District Council	21,216	43 - 46%
Ballymena Borough Council	20,270	47 - 51%
Ballymoney Borough Council	11,424	52 - 56%
Banbridge District Council	17,975	38 - 42%
Belfast City Council	151,567	32 - 37%
Carrickfergus Borough Council	13,234	43 - 46%
Castlereagh Borough Council	27,254	38 - 42%
Coleraine Borough Council	23,332	52 - 56%
Cookstown District Council	10,543	52 - 56%
Craigavon Borough Council	35,297	38 - 42%
Derry City Council	40,468	47 - 51%
Down District Council	25,745	43 - 46%
Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council	16,560	47 - 51%
Fermanagh District Council	18,840	52 - 56%
Larne Borough Council	10,859	52 - 56%
Limavady Borough Council	12,007	47 - 51%
Lisburn City Council	44,913	38 - 42%

Council	Number of Households	Percent of Fuel Poor Households
Magherafelt District Council	12,282	47 - 51%
Moyle District Council	6,560	52 - 56%
Newry and Mourne District Council	34,406	43 - 46%
Newtownabbey Borough Council	33,371	38 - 42%
North Down Borough Council	32,679	38 - 42%
Omagh District Council	15,059	52 - 56%
Strabane District Council	14,708	52 - 56%

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Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what was the cost to the Housing Executive of grass cutting and general gardening maintenance in the Whitehill Estate, Bangor, in the last financial year.
(AQW 43236/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the total cost for grass cutting and general garden maintenance in the Whitehill estate, Bangor in 2013/14 was £8,510.69.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what was the cost to the Housing Executive of grass cutting and general gardening maintenance in the Loughview and Redburn Estate, Holywood, in the last financial year.
(AQW 43237/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the total cost for grass cutting and general garden maintenance in the Loughview and Redburn estates, Holywood in 2013/14 was as follows:-

- Loughview £4,759.92
- Redburn £2,506.19

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what regulation exists in respect of letting agents; and whether further regulation is required or planned.
(AQW 43270/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department does not currently have any regulatory powers in relation to letting agents in Northern Ireland.

However, the regulation of letting agents is one of a number of issues being considered under the review of the role and regulation of the Private Rented Sector which is currently underway. Developments in other jurisdictions, in relation to letting agents, will be considered under the review.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development how he is supporting organisations and their employees who are put on protective notice pending the outcome of the Neighbourhood Renewal 2015/16 Application Process.[R]
(AQW 43281/11-15)

Mr Storey: The process of assessing applications on the basis of evidence of need and impact of each project is currently ongoing for the 2015/2016 period. Throughout this process, officials are seeking to protect those projects which demonstrate most effectively that they are meeting the objectives of the programme and organisations are being kept informed of developments.

However, it should be noted that any decision to place staff on protective notice rests with the funded organisation that is the employer and as such assumes all statutory employment responsibilities for their employees.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development how many employees of Neighbourhood Renewal funded projects in East Londonderry are currently on protective notice pending the outcome of the Neighbourhood Renewal 2015/16 Application Process.[R]
(AQW 43282/11-15)

Mr Storey: The funded organisation is the employer and as such assumes all statutory employment responsibilities for its employees, including the decision to place staff on protective notice. I have been advised that thirty-three employees working in Neighbourhood Renewal funded projects in East Londonderry are currently on protective notice.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Renewal projects in East Londonderry.[R]
(AQW 43283/11-15)

Mr Storey: Neighbourhood Renewal provides services to people living in our most deprived communities. The process of assessing applications on the basis of evidence of need and impact of each project is currently ongoing. Throughout this process, officials are seeking to protect those projects which demonstrate most effectively that they are meeting the objectives of the programme.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development for the commencement date of legislative changes on higher levels of pension for those with 35 years of National Insurance contributions, scheduled for 6 April 2016.

(AQW 43289/11-15)

Mr Storey: Subject to Assembly approval, Part 1 of the Pensions Bill, currently before the Assembly, provides for a new state pension scheme for people reaching state pension age on or after 6 April 2016. The Bill provides for Part 1 to come fully into operation on 6 April 2016. However, to ensure that the scheme can be fully functional from that date, some provisions will be commenced earlier. For example, it is anticipated that some provisions will be commenced shortly after Royal Assent to allow the Department to make Regulations necessary to support the new scheme.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost to the Housing Executive of grass cutting and general garden maintenance in Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee in 2013/14.

(AQW 43315/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the total cost for grass cutting and general garden maintenance for Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee in 2013/14 was £7,761.17.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development to outline, the number of (i) families and (ii) individuals on the waiting list for social housing in the Fermanagh District Council area.

(AQW 43424/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the breakdown of applicants in the Fermanagh District Council area at 31 December 2014 was as follows: -

	Single Person*	Small Adult*	Small Family*	Large Adult*	Large Family*	Older Person*	Total
Total Applicants	420	25	144	9	53	123	774
Housing Stress	165	9	43	4	27	59	307

*definition of household types

- Single person – one person 16-59 years old;
- Small adult – two persons 16-59 years old;
- Small family – one or two persons aged 16 or over, with 1 or 2 children;
- Large adult – three or more persons aged 16 or over with or without one person aged 0-15;
- Large family - one or two persons aged 16 or over and three or more persons 0-15 or three or more persons 16 or over and two or more persons aged 0-15;
- Older person – one or two persons aged 16 or over, at least one over 60.

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Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQO 7278/11-15 when he said his proposals to the Executive would ensure “that no one in Northern Ireland is adversely affected as a result of the changes”, why he gave that assurance and whether this is still his position.

(AQW 43487/11-15)

Mr Storey: When stating that we, the Northern Ireland Assembly, can progress the issue of Welfare Reform in a way that is efficient and effective, and so that no one in Northern Ireland is adversely affected as a result of the changes, I was referring to the introduction of Universal Credit which includes full Transitional Protection for those claimants my Department move to the new benefit.

This protection will ensure that no one is worse off and this will remain the case until they have a significant change in their circumstances.

I have already clarified this position to the Belfast Telegraph on 28 January when they asked what was meant by my statement to the Assembly and I am happy to clarify this again.

Indeed, on 10 February in the Assembly Chamber, I again said that I was disappointed to see headlines in the newspapers which read, ‘No one will be out of pocket over a new welfare system, pledges Minister’, the article at the time went on to give a narrative based on just one element of the welfare system, Universal Credit. I am astonished that, at this stage, the fact that Universal Credit is just one part of the wider Welfare Reform programme is still not understood.

It is not, and has never been right to assume that everyone would be protected as a result of the mitigating schemes currently being developed; instead these schemes will provide support for those who may have suffered financial loss as a result of the welfare changes.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Social Development when the North Belfast Advice Partnership can expect to receive a response to their funding application to the Belfast Regeneration Office for four advice posts and outreach services, as their existing funding expires on 31 March 2015.

(AQW 43560/11-15)

Mr Storey: Neighbourhood Renewal provides services to people living in our most deprived communities. In this difficult financial climate I am seeking to protect those projects which demonstrate most effectively that they are meeting the objectives of the programme. The process of assessing applications on the basis of evidence of need and impact of each project is currently ongoing.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on his Department's future funding proposals for Small Pockets of Deprivation.

(AQW 43702/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Small Pockets of Deprivation programme provides services to people living in some of our most deprived communities. The process of assessing applications on the basis of evidence of need and impact of each project is currently ongoing. Throughout this process, officials are seeking to protect those projects which demonstrate most effectively that they are meeting the objectives of the programme.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr B McCrea asked the Assembly Commission what savings are anticipated from the proposed reduction in the number of MLAs (i) directly from Salaries and Office Cost Expenses; and (ii) indirectly from reduced requirements on Assembly resources.

(AQW 43082/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The level of financial support for Members is a matter for the Independent Financial Review Panel (IFRP). Based on the levels of financial support for Members in place for 2015-16 and assuming a reduction of 18 Members, the table below sets out the direct savings from Members' salaries and Office Costs Expenditure.

Direct Costs Per Annum

MLA Salary	£48,000
MLA Salary On-Costs (Pension and NIC)	£16,992
OCE	£67,161
Direct cost per MLA	£132,153
Direct cost for 18 MLAs	£2,378,754

Indirect savings are harder to quantify but it is anticipated that savings would be achieved across a number of categories of expenditure. For example, savings are likely to be achieved in expenditure items such as Members' travel costs, Members' staff pension contributions, office consumables, etc. A broad average for these items is shown below.

Indirect Costs Per Annum

Members' Travel	£5,000
Members' staff pension contributions	£5,000
Members' other costs (redundancy, temp secretarial, etc.)	£1,000
Indirect cost per MLA	£11,000
Indirect cost for 18 MLAs	£198,000

A reduction of 18 MLAs is also likely to lead to a reduction in the need for support services provided to Members by the Assembly Secretariat. At this time, specific savings in staffing or administrative costs arising from a reduction in the number of Members has not been quantified.

Lord Morrow asked the Assembly Commission for its assessment of the progress made on the Parliament Buildings' roof project. **(AQO 7830/11-15)**

Mr Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): I refer to the Assembly question you tabled for oral answer on 16 March 2015, which was not taken, namely:

“To ask the Assembly Commission for its assessment of the progress made on the Parliament Buildings roof project.”

You will be aware that the Assembly Commission appointed Tracey Brothers from Enniskillen to carry out the works and that work on site started in late May 2014.

The primary objective of the works is to provide a waterproof solution to problems that have plagued the building for many years but the project does also include the refurbishment and replacement of all roof mounted building services installations as well as incorporating some environmental improvements. Work to date has included the removal of redundant roofing materials and M&E service installations. Large areas of the roof have now been re-covered with the proprietary waterproofing product and all of the roof-mounted M&E plant has been replaced and/ or refurbished.

Unfortunately, the inclement weather has affected progress on some of the work items, particularly the re-roofing and the external painting. However, despite these difficulties the contractor remains broadly on programme and completion is still expected to take place in May 2015.

The Commission is very conscious of the noise and disruption that building users have tolerated in order to facilitate the works and we are also very grateful to those building users who have been temporarily relocated (internally or in decant accommodation) for the duration of the works.

The Member will also be pleased to note that the project is currently on target for completion within the agreed tender sum.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 27 March 2015

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Ms McGahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the scope of the Goods, Facilities and Services legislation will be finalised.

(AQO 5994/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to those aged 16 and over.

Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the scope of the Age Discrimination legislation relating to Goods, Facilities and Services will be published.

(AQO 6140/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to those aged 16 and over.

Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Mr Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the projected timescale for the introduction of age discrimination legislation with regard to the provision of goods, facilities and services.

(AQO 6278/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to those aged 16 and over.

Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why Programme for Government 2011/15 commitment number 44, to extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services, has not been delivered.

(AQW 39998/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Programme for Government commitment in respect of age discrimination legislation is number 38, not 44.

We made a Written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to people aged 16 and over.

Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the nature of any recent communication with the Commissioner for Older People in respect of extending age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services.

(AQW 40000/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Junior Ministers met the Chief Executive of the Commissioner for Older People on 16 December 2014 to discuss the Programme for Government commitment to extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services. On foot of this meeting, the Commissioner for Older People wrote to Junior Ministers on 15 and 30 January 2015 seeking further clarification on how this Programme for Commitment would be delivered.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the Programme for Government 2011/15 commitment to extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services has not yet been delivered.

(AQO 7224/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We made a Written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to people aged 16 and over.

Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on legislation to outlaw age discrimination in the provisions of goods, facilities and services.

(AQW 40124/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to people aged 16 and over.

Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Mr Lunn asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what actions have been taken to increase the diversity of Public Boards since the publication in January 2014 of the Under-Representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland report by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

(AQW 41146/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We welcome the Commissioner's report on diversity in public appointments, and we recognise that some sections of our society are under-represented on the boards of public bodies. We are committed to achieving greater diversity in public appointments, consistent with the overall principle of selection on merit, as a means of ensuring effective public bodies.

OFMDFM officials, in conjunction with other departments, are taking forward the recommendations in the Commissioner's report and are encouraging greater participation from those groups currently under-represented on public bodies. Officials have put in place measures to raise awareness of public appointment opportunities amongst under-represented groups – an important step in encouraging a wider range of applications.

Whilst a number of the Commissioner's recommendations will take some time to achieve, actions that have already been taken include:

- the establishment of an inter-departmental public appointments forum to share best practice across departments, with diversity as a standing agenda item for this group;
- independent advice and a challenge function is provided to the Forum by a senior academic with considerable experience in equality and diversity issues;
- producing the twice-yearly All Aboard publication which gives details of public appointment opportunities arising over the next six months;
- circulating upcoming appointment opportunities to an extensive mailing list of several hundred individuals and organisations, including private and voluntary sector groups;
- departments interview larger numbers of applicants for appointments;
- information sessions and outreach events are held with stakeholders and interested groups, to raise awareness of public appointments and explain the process;
- posts on public bodies are filled to address specific skills, in order to build effective teams; and
- departments are developing alternatives to established criteria such as better use of presentations, in order to encourage more applications.

Work is also ongoing to improve the baseline information available on public appointments, and to identify and address the barriers preventing people from applying for positions.

The current Commissioner for Public Appointments, John Keanie, has advised us of his intention to stand down from his post in August 2015. We acknowledge the excellent work and commitment that Mr Keanie has brought to this role, and wish him well for the future.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether there are plans to include children and young people in the extension of age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services.

(AQW 41763/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to take forward proposals to extend anti-discrimination law to give legal protection from unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to people aged 16 and over.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the progress being made on the United Youth programme of Together: Building a United Community, to ensure that it extends to Young People in rural areas.

(AQW 42200/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: One of the seven core headline actions committed to within Together: Building a United Community is the development of the United Youth Programme. This Programme is designed to offer structured employment, work experience, volunteer and leisure opportunities and is open to young people from both rural and urban areas who are not in education, employment or training.

To date there has been comprehensive and detailed engagement with youth related organisations and young people themselves to ensure the programme has maximum buy-in and consensus.

The co-design process, begun by OFMDFM, is being continued by the Department for Employment and Learning and is being supported by a Design Team.

The first pilot to help inform the design for the United Youth Programme which was rolled out by Springboard has concluded and has now been evaluated. A call for concept proposals, to deliver pilot projects, was issued in early September. Following a development phase in the Autumn, over 150 pilot applications from a wide range of sectors were submitted in December. An assessment of these proposals was completed with assistance from the programme's Design Team.

As a result, 50 successful organisations (57 proposals) have been selected to proceed to a further development stage, following which around 10 pilot schemes will be taken forward to move into delivery mode later in 2015, prior to the anticipated full roll-out of the programme in 2016.

A list of those organisations successful in proceeding to the next stage can be found at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/successthroughskills/united-youth.htm>

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many managers are employed on foot of Victims and Survivors Service funding in Wave Trauma Centre; and for their Department's assessment of the staff balance between managers and other staff.

(AQW 42325/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Victims and Survivors Service has advised us that it currently provides WAVE Trauma Centre with funding for 5 managerial positions across 2 centres.

The positions were assessed independently through a Green Book Economic Appraisal.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Regional Strategy Action Plan as associated with the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence, including the resources allocated to implement such a strategy.

(AQW 42488/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Department of Justice jointly lead on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse.

OFMDFM has been advised that work to progress the actions detailed in the joint Domestic and Sexual Violence Action Plan, which was endorsed by the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence (IMG) in April 2012, is still ongoing. It is monitored by the Regional Strategy Group for Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse and its associated Sub-Groups.

In late 2013, IMG members agreed to extend the Action Plan until the publication of the new Strategy.

Given the wide ranging nature of the work and service provision there would be a disproportionate cost in providing the total resource allocation.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will put the potential for UK wide promotion of road racing as an agenda item on a forthcoming British Irish Council meeting, particularly the Isle of Man TT and the North West 200.

(AQW 42546/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The British Irish Council currently has twelve sectoral work areas, none of which deals specifically with road racing.

Agendas for all meetings of the British Irish Council are drawn up through prior consultation and agreement between all eight member administrations and are intended to promote further co-operation on matters of mutual interest to all of them.

We can therefore offer no commitment that the potential for UK wide promotion of road racing will be included on a future agenda, however, British Irish Council summits do provide other opportunities for the administrations to share information with other Council members about events of particular importance.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what schemes or funding streams are available through their Department to assist with early years intervention.

(AQW 42810/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Within OFMDFM, the Delivering Social Change Framework recognises that having the best possible start in life is of critical importance. Its initial focus has been on identifying the needs of children and families. Key areas for support included early years and early interventions; literacy and numeracy; transitions, integrated delivery and joined up planning and commissioning.

The Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme aims to address the need for affordable and accessible childcare by creating and sustaining up to 7,000 school age childcare places over the next three years. A first call for applications to the Grant Scheme attracted 77 applications, 50 of which were successful. These successful projects will sustain 1,165 places and create 365 new places and represent funding of £1.9 million over a three year period. A second call attracted 42 further applications; these are currently under assessment. We propose to hold a third call for applications in 2015.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the community and voluntary groups in South Belfast that were awarded funding by their Department, or its arm's-length bodies in each month of the last two years; (ii) the date that funding was awarded; (iii) who awarded the funding; (iv) the method by which funding was paid; (v) the amount of funding awarded in each case; and (vi) who was involved in any presentations.

(AQW 42830/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The table below summarises the funds paid to community and voluntary groups in the South Belfast parliamentary constituency by OFMDFM either directly or via its arm's length bodies. The information is available on the basis of financial years and is not available on a monthly breakdown. All funds were paid via electronic bank transfer and no ceremonial presentations were made. A table detailing a full breakdown of funds awarded has been placed in the Assembly Library.

OFMDFM Branch/ALB	Financial Year			
	2013-15	2013-14	2014-15 Year to Date	Total
Community Relations Council (ALB)		£115,102	£124,705	£239,808
Good Relations Funding & Delivery Branch		£480,053	£622,650	£1,102,703
Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry			£4,000	£4,000
Victims and Survivors Service (ALB)		£86,184	£75,739	£161,923
Racial Equality Unit (Letter of Offer covers a two year period)	£982,848			£982,848
Total	£982,848	£681,339	£827,094	£2,491,281

The table above does not include funds awarded to Belfast City Council, funded via OFMDFM's District Councils Good Relations Programme, as the Department does not hold the detail on how these funds are dispersed to grantees.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the expected timeframe for the roll out of Age Discrimination legislation.

(AQW 42845/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We made a Written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015, announcing our decision to bring forward proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination against people aged 16 and over by those providing goods, facilities and services.

Subject to Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the spring, setting out our policy proposals on this matter. Following consultation, we will then consider the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Mr Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps have been taken to ensure there is the highest level of financial scrutiny given to organisations receiving public funding for community-based projects and services.

(AQW 43037/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has in place a robust set of grant policies and procedures that ensure checking of all grant claims and a yearly verification visit to every funded project / organisation.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 42333/11-15, whether there are plans to appoint a member, as representative of the Northern Ireland Executive, to the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

(AQW 43067/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There are currently no plans to appoint a member, as representative of the Northern Ireland Executive, to the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

Mrs Dobson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions they had with the community prior to publishing Together: Building a United Community.

(AQO 7683/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The good relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community was published on 23 May 2013 and was the culmination of a long and detailed process which included a three month public consultation on the Executive's draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy.

This consultation period attracted 288 written responses and included a wealth of views and material gathered from 11 public meetings and 15 targeted sectoral meetings, including consultation sessions with the voluntary and community sector. In the development of Together: Building a United Community we have listened carefully to the wide range of detailed views provided in these responses on our approach to good relations and the cross-party working group used the consultation analysis as the basis for its considerations.

The interest shown throughout the 2010 consultation process indicates the commitment of individuals and groups from across our society towards building a united community.

Since we launched the Together: Building United Community Strategy, we have harnessed this commitment and continued to engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders as part of the detailed design of the many actions being delivered.

We greatly value the role played by the wide range of community groups, public authorities and interested individuals that willingly engage with us in the design of good relations work. There is a wealth of knowledge in this sector and we will continue to draw on this expertise in shaping and implementing our policies.

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consultation their Department had with community and voluntary sector groups before publishing Together: Building a United Community.

(AQO 7687/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The good relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) was published on 23 May 2013 and was the culmination of a long and detailed process which included a 3 month public consultation on the Executive's draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy.

This consultation period attracted 288 written responses and included a wealth of views and material gathered from 11 public meetings and 15 targeted sectoral meetings, which included meetings with representatives from the voluntary and community sector. In the development of Together: Building a United Community we have listened carefully to the wide range of detailed views provided in these responses on our approach to good relations and the cross-party working group in particular used the analysis of consultation responses as the basis for its considerations.

The interest shown throughout the 2010 consultation process indicates the commitment of individuals and groups from across our society towards the issues that T:BUC is currently seeking to address. We are determined to harness this commitment as we go forward with the implementation of our good relations strategy and regular engagement with a broad range of stakeholders will be taken forward as the implementation phase develops.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Shackleton site.

(AQO 7690/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are pleased to report that demolition work is now progressing on the Shackleton site in preparation for the relocation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's headquarters. The relocation of DARD will bring hundreds of high quality public sector jobs to the area and will be a great boost for local businesses. This demonstrates the Executive's commitment to decentralising public sector jobs.

In addition, NI Water has identified part of the site for use as an Integrated Constructed Wetlands, an environmentally friendly facility which would replace the wastewater treatment works that currently deals with waste from Ballykelly village.

With the aim of further unlocking the potential of the site, our officials are currently making arrangements for the disposal of the remainder of the site. It is anticipated that it will be placed on the market early in the 2015/16 financial year.

We look forward to making more positive announcements in the near future about the development of the Shackleton site.

Mr B McCrea asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the HEAT Scheme.
(AQW 43165/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A potential Household Energy and Thermal Efficiency (HEaT) Project continues to be developed by OFMDFM. Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders has taken place and pre-market engagement sessions have been held to gauge market capacity to deliver such a Programme.

A number of potential delivery options for the proposed HEaT Programme are currently being explored, along with a number of potential funding streams. Both the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department for Social Development are involved in the development process to ensure any potential initiative would align with and complement existing provision.

A decision on whether or not to proceed with the proposed HEaT Programme will depend on an assessment of its overall viability.

Mr Ramsey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when their Department will publish the Disability Strategy.
(AQW 43203/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive's Disability Strategy was published in February 2013.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the child poverty strategy will be published.
(AQW 43431/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive's first Child Poverty Strategy 2011-14 was published on 24 March 2011. The Executive's 2014-17 Child Poverty Strategy is currently under consideration and it is envisaged that it will go to the Executive shortly. The Strategy will be published as soon as possible after Executive agreement.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she plans to begin the transfer of her departmental headquarters to the North West.
(AQO 7657/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Our plans, as detailed in the Outline Business Case indicate that the first stage of construction of the new headquarters will be completed and ready to be occupied by the end of 2017. To ensure that the knowledge management arrangements are appropriate for a move of this scale, the work to develop the outline business case concluded that a transitional approach to staff movement should be incorporated. The plan was to have some 350 staff move into the new headquarters when the first phase of construction completes with around 30 or so of these staff working in the northwest for DARD in advance of that.

The recent Expressions of Interest survey highlighted that there is a high demand across the NICS for posts in Ballykelly. While the level of demand may change (following the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme) there will be an opportunity to implement transitional arrangements for some staff earlier. I have asked my officials to consider this matter in detail and I expect an update before summer 2015. My expectation at this stage is that before the end of this year, DARD will identify staff to work in accommodation in the northwest with a view to moving them into the new headquarters when completed towards the end of 2017.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 43043/11-15, for a breakdown of these figures by individual slaughter house.
(AQW 43329/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In 2013, 181323 sheep were processed for the halal market and in 2014, 193470 were processed. I cannot provide a breakdown of these figures by individual slaughter house. This is commercially sensitive information that the Department, as regulator, obtains in confidence and therefore it would not be appropriate to disclose information concerning the customer base of Food Business Operators or their market share for speciality products.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what support is in place for students who are completing the Veterinary Nurse course through the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.
(AQW 43332/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A dedicated team is in place within CAFRE to deliver the Veterinary Nursing courses. This team is supplemented with specialist delivery staff sourced externally to deliver specific aspects of the course.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the contract with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, including its value per annum; and the work they carry out on behalf of her Department.

(AQW 43334/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) was established in 2006, under the Agriculture (NI) Order 2004. The Order requires AFBI to carry out such scientific work as may be assigned to it by the Department. It is on this basis that, annually, DARD agrees and commissions a broad programme of scientific work from AFBI which is known as the Assigned Work Programme (AWP). The AWP outlines DARD's requirements for delivery by AFBI, including research and development, statutory diagnostic testing and associated scientific advice within the parameters established by the Order.

In addition, the DARD/AFBI Memorandum of Understanding sets out the key principles upon which the customer/provider relationship should operate, including how both organisations will work together to develop, deliver and monitor the AWP.

AFBI's Strategic Cost Model estimates that in 2014/15, the value of the Assigned Work Programme is £41.2m.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in Hillsborough has not provided verification and feedback on samples taken by the Agri-food Inspection branch since August 2014; whether there is a stipulation in the contract to recover costs.

(AQW 43336/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: On an annual basis, DARD commissions a broad programme of scientific work from Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) which is known as the Assigned Work Programme (AWP). The DARD/AFBI Memorandum of Understanding sets out the principles upon which this customer/provider relationship should operate, including how both organisations will work together to develop, deliver and monitor the AWP. AFBI is allocated a budget from DARD and it is required to operate within its annually agreed allocation.

As part of the AWP, AFBI carries out a range of animal feed analyses including some at AFBI Hillsborough on the composition of feed. A particular staff resourcing issue at AFBI Hillsborough resulted in some delay in the provision of verified results for compositional analysis. AFBI Hillsborough has, however, provided the suite of results to DARD, pending formal verification.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what value of construction work, to be funded from the resource budget, her Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43416/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: It is currently estimated that the value of construction work funded from the DARD Resource budget that will start in 2015/16 is £4.5 million.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what value of construction work, to be funded from the capital budget, her Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43417/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: It is currently estimated that the value of construction work funded from the DARD Capital budget that will start in 2015/16 is £14.3 million.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 42784/11-15, what is the longest time taken to remove a reactor.

(AQW 43449/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Based on the current Veterinary Epidemiology Unit dataset commencing in calendar year 2007, the longest time taken in the interim to remove a TB reactor to slaughter was 217 calendar days. This was during 2009, and was due to a herd keeper's repeated failure to cooperate with the valuation, removal and slaughter process.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many trees were lost to Ash Dieback disease in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43463/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The first finding of Chalara ash dieback in the north of Ireland was in November 2012 and Statutory Plant Health Notices requiring destruction of affected ash saplings and associated plant debris were issued to reduce the risk of disease spread. Forest Service provided assistance to ensure the sites were dealt with as swiftly as possible and around 18,800 ash saplings were destroyed as a result of outbreaks at 23 premises in 2012. As part of trace forward exercises and specific surveys of recently planted ash for symptoms of the disease, Departmental officials confirmed outbreaks at a further 68 premises in 2013 and around 73,300 ash saplings were destroyed. Surveillance in 2014 confirmed only two new outbreaks and around 1,900 ash saplings were destroyed. No further outbreak sites have been detected in 2015 to date.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration was given to ensuring that Social Partner Composition of the new Local Action Group Boards reflected the community background of the respective council areas.

(AQW 43466/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Each LAG is required to form a Board. All registered LAG members were invited to a facilitated meeting of their LAG for discussion and agreement on the arrangements for the selection of social partner composition on the LAG Board. Guidance was provided as to the necessary balance and representation of the LAG in line with each area's geography, gender, age and other Section 75 considerations. Members agreed their own composition requirements (as required under the LEADER methodology) and were invited to nominate (including self nomination) and vote for Board membership. Nominations had to be supported by two other LAG members and voting was undertaken in line with LAG agreed criteria for that area. The Social Partner election has now taken place in every area and those elected are now confirming their appointment.

The establishment and election processes adopted by the new LAGs have been robust and transparent and are in line with the 'LEADER' approach ie bottom up, local people making local decisions.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's reasons for the mooted closure of Crossnacreevy Plant Testing Station.
(AQW 43491/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In common with the rest of the public sector, both my Department and AFBI face significant budgetary pressures in 2015/16 and beyond.

DARD officials have, therefore, undertaken significant work with AFBI colleagues at a strategic level to develop a way forward for the organisation and to ensure that it remains viable and sustainable in the future.

I am awaiting AFBI's final set of proposals and at this stage, no decision has been taken to close AFBI's Crossnacreevy site and its future will be considered within the above context.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what assessment or business case has been completed on the future of the Crossnacreevy Plant Testing Station.
(AQW 43492/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer also to my response to your question AQW43491/11-15.

AFBI is currently finalising its 2015/16 business plan and its 2020 Strategy papers. These will contain AFBI's costed proposals to address its budget pressures for the year ahead and to the end of the decade. I expect that those proposals will include AFBI's assessment of its future estate requirements including rationalisation and reorganisation. At this stage, AFBI has not presented its definitive plans in relation to the future of its Crossnacreevy site.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department takes to ensure that all animals slaughtered using halal methods are stunned prior to slaughter.
(AQW 43536/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The welfare of animals at the time of slaughter is regulated here by the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (NI) 2014 which gives effect to Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

All Business Operators here comply with the stunning requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 and no animal is slaughtered here without pre-stunning. Only one abattoir here currently slaughters sheep for the Halal market but all animals processed for this market are stunned prior to slaughter.

Business Operator compliance with the regulatory requirements is verified by an Official Veterinarian, assisted by Official Auxiliaries. Officials are present on site in each establishment throughout slaughter operating hours. The Officials conduct checks on Business Operator compliance throughout the day and periodically audit the Business Operator's compliance with the Regulations. The frequency of the checks and audits is dependent on the professional judgment of the Official Veterinarian who is guided by his or her findings on a daily basis, on his or her own reports or those of colleagues, and on the Business Operator's historic compliance.

The slaughter industry here has tailored itself to supply the major food retailers in Britain and here. A pre-requisite of supplying these companies is that the highest animal welfare standards are adhered to. Practising non-stun slaughter is therefore not an option for these companies.

My officials continue to monitor developments in the regulation of animal welfare at the time of slaughter throughout Britain and the EU and I will consider all developments to ensure the highest standards of animal welfare are maintained.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what stage the proposal for a new entrance to the new departmental headquarters on the main Limavady to Londonderry road has reached.
(AQW 43635/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A Transportation Assessment has just been completed which considers the optimum position of the proposed new access road. This assessment is currently being considered by my officials in conjunction with staff from DFP's Central Procurement Directorate.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with TransportNI regarding the proposal for a new entrance for her departmental headquarters on the main Limavady to Londonderry road. (AQW 43636/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Following the announcement of the relocation to Ballykelly, my officials and representatives from DFP's Central Procurement Directorate met with TransportNI to discuss the transport implications of the proposed development. In consultation with TransportNI, a Transportation Assessment has been completed. This assessment is currently being considered by my officials in conjunction with staff from Central Procurement Directorate.

The consultation between my Department and TransportNI will continue as necessary throughout the lifetime of this project.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is the estimated current commercial value of the largest Public Forest in Northern Ireland. (AQW 43644/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The largest public forest is Slieveanorra Forest, County Antrim which is 3,397 hectares.

As part of Land and Property Services market valuation of the Department's forests at 31st March 2014, Slieveanorra Forest is attributed a value of £11.92 million.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from her Department, or its arm's-length bodies, since 2011; and the amount of funding received in each case.

(AQW 43648/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Please see below list of Community/Voluntary groups in the North Down constituency that have received funding from my Department since 2011.

Financial Year	Investment received	Community/ Voluntary Groups that have received funding	Programme/Scheme from which Funding Awarded
2011/12	£3,584.	Ards over 50's forum supported by Age Concern North Down (& Ards)	NI Rural Development Programme – Axis 3,
2011/12	£27,200	Glencraig Playgroup / ASC	TRPSI – Rural Childcare Programme provided grant aid to rural childcare organisations to improve access to, and facilities for local childcare.
2011/12	£76,765.54	Positive Futures for People with Learning Disabilities	TRPSI – Rural Childcare Programme provided grant aid to rural childcare organisations to improve access to, and facilities for local childcare.
2011/12	£4,916	Growing Connections NI	TRPSI - Rural Challenge Programme 2009
2011/12	£4,980	Millisle Community Association	TRPSI - Rural Challenge Programme 2009
2012/13	£36,784	Millisle Youth Forum	NI Rural Development Programme – Axis 3, Measure 3.5 Village renewal and development
2012/13	£4,812	Friends of Grey Point Fort	NI Rural Development Programme – Axis 3, Measure 3.3 encouragement of tourist activities
2012/13	£4,402	Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn Residents Association	NI Rural Development Programme – Axis 3, Measure 3.5 Village renewal and development
2012/13	£99,710	County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN), Downpatrick. Rural Community Development provision for Lisburn, North Down & Ards area.	TRPSI – Rural Community Development Support Service
2013/14	£4,770	Millisle & District Community Association	NI Rural Development Programme – Axis 3, Measure 3.5 Village renewal and development
2013/14	£99,710	County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN), Downpatrick. Rural Community Development provision for Lisburn, North Down & Ards area.	TRPSI – Rural Community Development Support Service

Financial Year	Investment received	Community/ Voluntary Groups that have received funding	Programme/Scheme from which Funding Awarded
2013/14	£66,745	County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN)	TRPSI – Maximising Access Rural Areas (MARA) Project – this is a regional project split across 13 Delivery Zones- one of which cover the North Down Area.
2014/15	£99,710	County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN), Downpatrick. Rural Community Development provision for Lisburn, North Down & Ards area.	TRPSI – Rural Community Development Support Service
2014/15	£56,710	County Down Rural Community Network (CDRCN)	TRPSI – Maximising Access Rural Areas (MARA) – this is a regional project split across 13 Delivery Zones - one of which cover the North Down Area.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what records are kept of the number of dog breeders; and how are breeders regulated.

(AQW 43672/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Dog breeding here is regulated by the Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 (the 2013 Regulations). These Regulations, which are enforced by District Councils, define a breeding establishment as one or more premises, within the same District Council area, operated by the same person from which that person keeps 3 or more breeding bitches; and

- (a) breeds 3 or more litters of puppies in any 12 month period;
- (b) advertises 3 or more litters of puppies for sale in any 12 month period;
- (c) supplies 3 or more litters of puppies in any 12 month period; or
- (d) advertises a business of breeding or selling of puppies.

Subject to certain qualifying criteria and some exceptions, any person wishing to breed dogs must obtain a licence from the District Council in which the establishment is located.

The 2013 Regulations set out clear welfare standards with which commercial dog breeders must comply. Council inspectors will visit each premises to assess whether or not it meets the 12 licensing conditions specified in the Regulations which include:

- the requirement to provide suitable accommodation, whelping facilities and diet;
- the requirement to microchip all dogs and pups in the establishment;
- a control on the age a bitch can be breed at and the number of litters she that can be produced in her lifetime;
- a minimum age a pup can leave the breeder; and
- the need for breeding establishments to maintain records and introduce written socialisation and enrichment programmes for approval by the council.

The Regulations also provide Council inspectors with strong enforcement powers to take action and to prosecute as necessary any commercial breeder who is operating in sub-standard conditions.

Councils are required to maintain a register of all persons licensed under the 2013 Regulations in their area. Details of the number of dog breeding establishments here can be obtained by contacting District Councils directly.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what efforts are being made to prevent unlicensed puppy farming.

(AQW 43673/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 was passed here by the Assembly on 18 February 2013 and came into operation on 1 April 2013.

The Regulations, which are enforced by District Councils, provide commercial dog breeders with clear standards which they must meet to ensure the welfare of all breeding bitches, stud dogs and pups in the establishment. Council inspectors visit each premises to assess whether or not it meets the 12 licensing conditions set out in the Regulations before a licence is granted. Inspectors have powers to take action and to prosecute any commercial breeder who is operating in sub-standard conditions.

In addition, the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 provides powers to prevent unnecessary suffering to any animal and it places a responsibility on people to secure the welfare of animals, including pups and bitches, for which they are responsible.

I appreciate that regulation alone will not stop so called "puppy farming". This will take a concerted effort by members of the public, future dog owners, good dog breeders and enforcement agencies working together to identify breeders, licensed or unlicensed, who put financial gain before the welfare needs of their dogs and pups.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many dairy farmers have left the industry in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43685/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: From the register of licensed milk producers, the number of dairy farms leaving the industry in recent years is as follows:

- 2014/15 – 69
- 2013/14 – 87
- 2012/13 – 20*
- 2011/12 – 68

* Incomplete data for this year

The number of new registrations over the same period is as follows:

- 2014/15 – 37
- 2013/14 – 22
- 2012/13 – 41
- 2011/12 – 40

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many employees in her Department have retired since April 2010; and how many are due to retire by April 2018.

(AQW 43694/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: From April 2010 to date 264 employees have retired from my Department. As the default retirement age of 65 was removed in August 2008 for all NICS employees, it is not possible to estimate the number of staff due to retire from DARD by April 2018. Staff can continue to work beyond the age of 65 until they choose to retire.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the impact of the Voluntary Exit Scheme on the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

(AQW 43790/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: AFBI is currently developing its business case to seek funding for its Voluntary Exit Scheme.

The level of funding that AFBI may secure in the context of the £200 million pool of funding available for such Schemes across the public sector in 2015/16, the number of AFBI staff who may apply to exit under its Scheme and when the successful applicants may exit the organisation are all unknown at this stage.

Therefore, I am unable to provide a definitive assessment of the impact of a Voluntary Exit Scheme on AFBI at this time.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why training courses for farmers are being withdrawn at Greenmount College; and which courses are affected.

(AQW 43947/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As part of the Tory Government's ideologically driven assault on the Executive's block grant, DARD is required to achieve savings of 15.1% or £29.9m in the 15/16 budget. As over 50% of the DARD budget relates to staff costs, part of the Department's savings plan will involve a reduction of around 300 posts by September 2015. These reductions are being delivered across the Department, including in the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). Training courses for farmers are being withdrawn as part of CAFRE's savings.

The main courses at Greenmount Campus which are affected are Safe Use of Pesticides; Tractor Driving; Telehandler Operations and All Terrain Vehicle Driving. A number of other courses are also affected, such as those regulated by Animal Medicines Training Regulatory Authority; Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Training; First Aid; Transport of Animals and BASIS / FACTS training for people working with pesticides and fertiliser respectively.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she has taken to ensure that the protestant, unionist and loyalist community has an effective voice on the Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee.

(AQW 44144/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Membership of the Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee is specified in EU Regulation and must include public authorities, economic and social partners, environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination. To ensure continuity between

Programmes, the organisations which are represented on the current Monitoring Committee were invited to become members of the new Monitoring Committee. Additional representation was invited from organisations that were members of the Rural Development Programme Stakeholder Consultation Group. The organisations which were invited also provide a balance of representation across the Programme themes of competitiveness, environment and broader rural. Member organisations were asked to take into account the Section 75 balance when nominating their representatives. I will keep the membership of the new Monitoring Committee under review. I want to ensure that the Committee continues to operate effectively and provide balanced representation across rural development interests in the north throughout the period of the next RDP.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps she is taking to protect arts festivals aimed at working class communities, given the significant cuts to the Arts Council budget.
(AQW 43303/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Decisions on how budget reductions in 2015-2016 will impact on art forms funded by the Arts Council are a matter, in the first instance, for its Board. Final decisions on funding allocations for 2015-2016 will be communicated to organisations towards the end of March 2015, at which point any impact on festivals aimed at working class communities can be assessed.

I met with the Chair of the Arts Council to discuss the potential impact of the reductions and to examine how best to implement them with a view to, as a priority, protecting frontline services and funding to areas of deprivation.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail her Department's investment in Upper Bann in each year since 2011, including (i) the organisations who have received funding and (ii) the level of investment received.
(AQW 43427/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: A listing of investments is attached. Investment is understood to include both capital and resource funding but excludes the running costs of library sites. It is reported on a financial year basis except in the case of North South Bodies whose spend is reported on a calendar year basis.

Funder	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Amount £	Year
Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	Festival	5,075	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Dollingstown Ulster-Scots Society	Festival	1,200	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlish Ulster-Scots Group	Festival	690	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	Summer School	1,763	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Corcain Cultural & Development Association	One-Off Event	250	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Corcain Cultural & Development Association	One-Off Event	250	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	One-Off Event	250	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	One-Off Event	250	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Battlehill Pipe Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,650	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Clonmacash Pipe Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,650	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Dollingstown Ulster Scots Cultural & Heritage Society	Music & Dance Tuition	630	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilmore Community Development Association	Music & Dance Tuition	1,650	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Kingshill Community Development Association	Music & Dance Tuition	360	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Sterritt Memorial Ulster-Scots & Drumming Society	Music & Dance Tuition	525	2011

Funder	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Amount £	Year
Ulster-Scots Agency	Upper Bann Fusiliers Flute Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,575	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlish Ulster-Scots Group	Music & Dance Tuition	676	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	Music & Dance Tuition	1,539	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Dollingstown Ulster-Scots Cultural & Heritage Society	Music & Dance Tuition	525	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	AB Cultural Society	Community Workers Scheme	14,456	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Clounagh Junior High School, Gilford PS, Lisnadill PS, Portadown College, Auglish US Community, Donard PS, Edenderry PS, Ballydown PS and Lurgan Show.	Peripatetic Tutor Costs	6,446	2011
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan	390	2010/11
Libraries NI	Brownlow Library	CCTV	3,550	2010/11
Arts Council NI	All Set Cross Cultural Project	Annual Funding	25,000	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Millennium Court Arts Centre (Portadown 2000)	Annual Funding	40,000	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Ulster Youth Choir	Annual Funding	20,100	2011/12
Arts Council NI	The Armagh Rhymers Educational & Cultural Organisation	Annual Funding	67,000	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Performa Sports Ltd	Performa Sports Desktop Application	10,000	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Mobilizd	Formula Fun Game Design & Digital Asset Library	6,200	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	Attendance at Sibiu International Theatre Festival	250	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	Sim Residency in Reykjavik, Iceland.	250	2011/12
Arts Council NI	North Armagh Artists Collective	NAAC - STart UP	5,000	2011/12
Sport NI	Annagh United FC	Awards For Sport	6,982	2011/12
Sport NI	Craigavon Intercultural Programme	Awards For Sport	5,043	2011/12
Sport NI	Southern Sports Partnership	Talent ID & Development	12,500	2011/12
Sport NI	Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities	237,159	2011/12
NI Museums Council	Craigavon Museum Service	Resource - Purchase of Display Boards	347	2011/12
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic Film Festival	Education Programme	1,600	2011/12
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic	Film clubs	1,177	2011/12
Northern Ireland Screen	Waterside House Historical Group	2 x Digital Film Archive Presentation (Resource)	140	2011/12
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Visit from Portadown Probus Group	75	2011/12
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	FETTU exhibition in Lough Neagh Discovery Centre	150	2011/12

Funder	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Amount £	Year
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from Portadown College	390	2011/12
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Stargazing Live at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre	140	2011/12
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Teacher Training Courses - Edenderry PS, Portadown, Seagoe PS, Portadown & St Francis PS, Lurgan	1,340	2011/12
NI Museums Council	F E McWilliam Gallery and Studio	Resource - Cataloguing and Documentation	2,340	2011/12
NI Museums Council	F E McWilliam Gallery and Studio	Resource - Conservation of Works on Paper	3,000	2011/12
Libraries NI	Lurgan Library	Refurbishment	37,000	2011/12
Libraries NI	Brownlow Library	Refurbishment	175,000	2011/12
Libraries NI	Brownlow Library	Fixtures and Fittings	31,275	2011/12
Libraries NI	Portadown	Refurbishment	68,598	2011/12
Foras na Gaeilge	Gaelphobal na Lorgan	Funding for youth event scheme	3,500	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	Dollingstown Ulster-Scots Society	One-Off Event	250	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilmore Community Development Association	One-Off Event	240	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	Battlehill Pipe Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,642	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	Kingshill Community Development Association	Music & Dance Tuition	315	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	Upper Bann Fusiliers Flute Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,650	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	Hardy Memorial PS, Clounagh Junior High School, Derryhale PS, Auglish US Community, Ballydown PS, Donard Special School.	Peripatetic Tutor Costs	10,000	2012
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic Film Festival	Education Programme	1,600	2012/13
Northern Ireland Screen	Craigavon Museum Service	1 x Digital Film Archive Presentation (Resource)	70	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Ulster Youth Choir (based in Portadown)	2012/13 Deficit Funding	13,375	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Mobilizd	Formula Fun v1.0 for iPhone	5,695	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Downshire Guiding Star Flute Band	Purchase of Musical Instruments	5,000	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	Travel to New York	300	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	The Genii Magic Gathering 2012	300	2012/13
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic	Filmclubs	17,250	2012/13
Department	Banbridge Council	Water recreation grant - canoe slalom course upper bann river Stramore	20,000	2012/13
Sport NI	Segway NI	Adventuremark	750	2012/13
Sport NI	Southern Sports Partnership	Talent ID & Development	18,000	2012/13
Sport NI	Banbridge Amateur Boxing Club	Pre-Games Training Camps	9,995	2012/13

Funder	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Amount £	Year
Sport NI	Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities	252,351	2012/13
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Stargazing Live at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre which included visits from St Teresa's PS, Lurgan and King's Park PS, Lurgan	865	2012/13
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Teacher Training Courses - St Brendan's PS, Craigavon, Edenderry PS, Portadown, St Patrick's PS, Lurgan, Drumgor PS, Craigavon	1,560	2012/13
Foras na Gaeilge	Gaelphobal na Lorgan	Funding for summer camp	1,550	2013
Ulster-Scots Agency	Bleary & District Pipe Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,650	2013
Ulster-Scots Agency	Joseph Forde Memorial Pipe Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,650	2013
Ulster-Scots Agency	Derryhale PS, Tandragee Junior High School, Clounagh Junior High School and Ballydown PS.	Peripatetic Tutor Costs	5,522	2013
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic Film Festival	Education Programme	2,000	2013/14
Northern Ireland Screen	Aughnacloy Nursing Home	1 x Digital Film Archive Presentation (Resource)	70	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Lagan Canal Trust	Lagan Navigation	2,500	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Millennium Court Arts Centre (Portadown 2000)	Upgrade exhibition spaces	11,469	2013/14
Arts Council NI	The Armagh Rhymers Educational & Cultural Organisation	Purchase of equipment	4,789	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Joseph Forde Memorial Pipe Band	Purchase of musical instruments	5,000	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Blacks skull Orange and Blue Flute Band	Purchase Musical Instruments	5,000	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Kilmore Flute Band	Purchase of musical instruments	4,946	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	Trip to Royal College of Art, London	100	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	David Lyttle & Interlude: Showcase in Los Angeles	600	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Millennium Court Arts Centre (Portadown 2000)	Development Award	3,354	2013/14
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic	Film clubs	7,447	2013/14
Armagh Planetarium	Armagh Planetarium	Visit by Ceara Special School, 49 pupils, ticket price covered by Planetarium	235	2013/14
Armagh Planetarium	Armagh Planetarium	Planetaliens at Armagh Planetarium - Lurgan Model PS attended	875	2013/14
NI Museums Council	Craigavon Museum Service	Resource - Conservation of Paper Items	350	2013/14
NI Museums Council	Craigavon Museum Service	Resource - Conservation and Display of Cart	390	2013/14

Funder	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Amount £	Year
Department	Outdoor recreation NI	Water recreation grant - canoe steps Clare Glen Tandragee	17,090	2013/14
Department	Banbridge Council	Water recreation grant - seating at Gilford, Scarva	1,445	2013/14
MAGUS	Craigavon Borough Council	Research/publication on Ulster-Scots in Dollingston	15,800	2013/14
Sport NI	St Peter's GAA Club (Lurgan)	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme	238,875	2013/14
Sport NI	4th Portadown Scouts	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme	179,311	2013/14
Sport NI	Maralin Village Primary School (Magheralin)	Active Schools	1,986	2013/14
Sport NI	Southern Sports Partnership	Talent ID & Development	18,000	2013/14
Sport NI	Banbridge Amateur Boxing Club	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme	286,650	2013/14
Sport NI	Annagh United FC	Sport Matters: Community Capital Programme	245,000	2013/14
Sport NI	Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities	277,810	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for 2 pupils from St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan and New-Bridge Integrated College, Banbridge	880	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from Portadown College	585	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon	780	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from New-Bridge Integrated College, Loughbrickland	975	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from Portadown College	585	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for 2 pupils from Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon and 1 pupil from Banbridge High School	1,625	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Visit to Observatory from Edenderry PS, Portadown	45	2013/14
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Stargazing Live at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre	140	2013/14
Foras na Gaeilge	Gaelphobal na Lorgan	Funding for summer camp	1,750	2014
Ulster-Scots Agency	Battlehill Pipe Band	Music & Dance Tuition	975	2014
Ulster-Scots Agency	Joseph Forde Memorial Pipe Band	Music & Dance Tuition	1,950	2014
Ulster-Scots Agency	Derryhale PS	Educational Flagship Programme	2,400	2014

Funder	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Amount £	Year
Northern Ireland Screen	Loughbrickland Women's Institute	1 x Digital Film Archive Presentation (Resource)	70	2014/15
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic Film Festival	Education Programme	2,000	2014/15
Northern Ireland Screen	Browlow Hub, Craigavon Area Council	Browlow Hub, Craigavon Area Council, Screening of 70's Doc Markets 22/9/14	350	2014/15
Northern Ireland Screen	Cinemagic	Filmclubs	14,292	2014/15
NI Museums Council	Craigavon Museum Service	Resource - Conservation and Display of Giant Irish Deer skull	488	2014/15
NI Museums Council	F E McWilliam Gallery and Studio	Resource - Acquisition of Study for Princess Macha III	1,201	2014/15
Sport NI	Wolfe Tone GAC (Derrymacash)	Awards For Sport	1,507	2014/15
Sport NI	Seagoe FC	Awards For Sport	1,530	2014/15
Sport NI	Craigavon Borough Council	Active Communities	269,625	2014/15
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon	585	2014/15
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from Portadown College	195	2014/15
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Work experience placement for pupil from Lismore Comprehensive School, Craigavon	195	2014/15
Armagh Observatory	Armagh Observatory	Visit to the Observatory from St Mary's PS, Banbridge	300	2014/15
Armagh Planetarium	Armagh Planetarium	Visit by Drumcree College Special Needs class, 25 pupils, ticket price covered by Planetarium	140	2014/15
Armagh Planetarium	Armagh Planetarium	Visit by Donard Special School, 27 pupils, ticket price covered by Planetarium	145	2014/15
Armagh Planetarium	Armagh Planetarium	Visit by Clounagh Junior High School - Learning Support Unit, 24 pupils, ticket price covered by Planetarium	130	2014/15
Arts Council NI	In name of John Burke	WW1 Trench Experience.	10,000	2014/15
Arts Council NI	Poyntzpass Silver Band	Purchase of Musical Instruments	5,000	2014/15
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	Virus Metropolis	500	2014/15
Arts Council NI	Individual Artist	Collaborating and Recording in the US with Joe Lovano	500	2014/15
Total			2,831,019	

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions she has had with NI Screen and the BBC in the last 12 months about future collaboration.

(AQW 43443/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have had a number of discussions with NI Screen regarding the BBC and its impact on and value to the north of Ireland. I believe it is important that we work together to increase the value and sustainability of the BBC's impact in the North of Ireland with a view to securing a higher number of BBC network programmes produced in the north of Ireland.

I met with the BBC Director General, Lord Hall in October last year and emphasised to him the need for increased local investment and accountability. I also stressed the need for more programmes made in the devolved nations to be broadcast across all of the BBC's networks. In addition, I underlined the need to limit the impact of reduced BBC budgets and to carefully maintain the BBC's role in local partnerships through this difficult economic period.

I will continue to work to ensure that the screen industries in the North of Ireland receive fair and equitable treatment and that the BBC and other broadcasters are aware of the needs of the local sector and incorporate this in future planning. I support the introduction of a simple and transparent BBC strategy for the North and will continue to work with the BBC and other stakeholders to achieve this as soon as possible.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from her Department, or its arm's-length bodies, since 2011; and the amount of funding received in each case. (AQW 43647/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information you have requested is set out on the attached listing. Spend is reported on a financial year basis except in the case of North South Bodies which report spend on a calendar year basis.

Funder	Organisation	Amount	Year
Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyrobert Drumming Club	1,650	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballygrainey Rural Development Association	1,650	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Cleland Memorial Pipe Band	1,500	2011
Ulster-Scots Agency	Hollywood True Blues Flute Band	1,650	2011
Sport NI	Bangor Swimming Club	2,119	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Camerata Ireland	40,000	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Seacourt Print Workshop Limited	50,550	2011/12
Arts Council NI	Camerata Ireland	42,500	2011/12
Foras na Gaeilge	Féile Nasca (Nasca Community Festival)	520	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	Cleland Memorial Pipe Band	1,005	2012
Ulster-Scots Agency	North Down First Flute Band	1,643	2012
Arts Council NI	Camerata Ireland	15,164	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Seacourt Print Workshop Limited	6,114	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Somme Memorial Flute Band	5,000	2012/13
Arts Council NI	Seacourt Print Workshop Limited	17,448	2012/13
Foras na Gaeilge	Robert A. McMillen CD 'Rogha'	2,000	2013
Sport NI	Abbey Villa FC	233,845	2013/14
Sport NI	Bangor FC	238,875	2013/14
Sport NI	Hollywood Yacht Club	46,899	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Camerata Ireland	1,085	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Seacourt Print Workshop Limited	8,250	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Flutes and Drums Donaghadee	3,825	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Johnston Memorial Flute Band	3,874	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Camerata Ireland	40,000	2013/14
Arts Council NI	Seacourt Print Workshop Limited	19,513	2013/14
Sport NI	Bangor Ladies FC	900	2014/15
Sport NI	Kilcooley Womens Centre	678	2014/15
Total		788,256	

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure why (i) no consultation was held with the holders of salmon draft net licences on Lough Neagh; and (ii) a period of notice was not given before the licences were withdrawn. (AQW 43682/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) I can confirm that officials wrote to all holders of Lough Neagh draft net licences in 2012 and 2103. The letters advised of the poor state of salmon stocks and asked that any salmon caught be returned to the Lough unharmed. The letters also signalled my Departments intention to consult on a range of salmon consultation measures and to bring forward legislation to introduce amongst other measures a mandatory cessation of commercial salmon netting.

My Department held a public consultation on a range of salmon conservation measures, some affecting the commercial netting of salmon, which ran from 1 May 2012 to 24 July 2012. Notices publicising the consultation were published in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and Newsletter on 1 May 2012.

The Department undertook a further consultation on proposed draft legislation for additional salmon conservation measures on the 3 July 2013 to a targeted section of stakeholders including the Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum.

- (ii) Draft nets are still licensed on Lough Neagh for the capture of freshwater fish other than salmon. The Salmon Netting Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (SR No. 15) which came into operation on the 1st March 2014, prohibited the use draft nets for the capture of salmon on Lough Neagh.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the scientific data to support the withdrawal of the salmon draft net licences on Lough Neagh.

(AQW 43683/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Wild Atlantic salmon across its range are in serious decline and southern stocks, including some in North America and Europe, are threatened with extinction. At the 'Salmon Summit' in La Rochelle, France in October 2011, international scientists confirmed that wild Atlantic salmon are dying at sea in alarming numbers.

Long term monitoring of the survival of salmon during the marine phase of their life cycle at my Department's Bushmills Salmon Research Station shows a decline from around 30% returning from the sea prior to 1997 to less than 5% today.

The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute assess and monitor salmon stocks in the DCAL area annually. This allows assessment for compliance against the management targets set and is used to develop future salmon conservation policy.

An independent scientific committee has been established to review the data for major salmon rivers in the DCAL area each year. Recommendations are made to my Department to identify if commercial nets can harvest salmon, the waters where salmon can be harvested by anglers and what numbers can be taken.

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) aims to conserve, restore, enhance and rationally manage Atlantic salmon stocks through international co-operation. As a jurisdiction within a Member State, we are expected by the EU to work towards meeting the objectives of NASCO agreements and resolutions.

In light of the perilous position of this iconic species, I brought forward new legislation, which came into effect from 1 March 2014 that introduced mandatory catch and release for salmon and sea trout angling and a prohibition of all salmon and sea trout netting across the DCAL jurisdiction except where rivers affected are consistently meeting their Management targets. The aim of these conservation measures is to facilitate more adult salmon to migrate to their natal rivers and spawn, in order to contribute to safeguarding the future of the species. The majority of salmon rivers in the Lough Neagh catchment are not meeting their conservation limits and therefore to allow any harvesting would jeopardise the stock recovery in them.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how long it is envisaged that the salmon draft net licences on Lough Neagh will remain withdrawn.

(AQW 43684/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Department may consider the resumption of the draft netting of salmon in the following circumstances:

- (i) If it is not likely to have an adverse effect on a Special Area of Conservation as defined under the Habitats Directive, and
- (ii) The management targets for all rivers affected by the nets have been consistently met for a period of three out of five years.

Currently the vast majority of the rivers flowing into Lough Neagh are not meeting their Management targets. It is therefore not known when the Department will be in a position to allow draft netting for salmon in the Lough.

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the relationship between the Irish Language Act and Irish Language Strategy 2015-35.

(AQO 7872/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Acht na Gaeilge and the Irish Language Strategy will enhance protect and develop the Irish language. Acht na Gaeilge will give the Irish language statutory recognition and afford it the necessary legal protections that will help ensure equality and respect. The Irish Language Strategy sets out a roadmap for the Irish language over the next twenty years in a range of areas such as education, public services, the community and the media. The Strategy promotes the Irish language in a positive way aiming to open the language up to everyone who chooses to learn and use it.

The Strategy also has the objective of securing legislative protection for the Irish language and calls for Acht na Gaeilge to be brought forward to the Executive and Assembly at the earliest possible time and the repeal of the Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737.

My Department's current consultation on proposals for an Irish Language Bill seeks the public's view on what Acht na Gaeilge should contain and I would call on all those with an interest in the Irish language to take the opportunity to have their voice heard by responding to the consultation by 5 May 2015.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what input her Department had into the report on the juvenile European eel fish kill at Ballyshannon in May 2014.

(AQO 7868/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can confirm that my officials have been directly involved in the content of the report on the elver kill at the Electricity Supply Board facility at Ballyshannon on 22 April 2014. The report provides details on the background to elver collection, the circumstances of the incident and recommendations to avoid similar incidents occurring in the future.

One of the recommendations in the report is the implementation of a new protocol agreed by ESB, Inland Fisheries Ireland and my Department, which defines roles and responsibilities for the capture and transport of elvers around the dams at Ballyshannon on the River Erne. The new draft protocol has been developed and agreed by the three parties and was in place for 17 March 2015, the official beginning of this season's elver migration into the Erne catchment. A site visit has also taken place to see the new upgraded elver collection facilities at Ballyshannon, as agreed in the new protocol.

I will shortly be meeting with my counterpart in the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to formally sign off on the new protocols, which will make significant progress in minimising the possibility of the loss of elvers on the scale of the incident in April 2014.

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has had any discussions with the Ulster Council of the Gaelic Athletic Association on it submitting a new planning application for the redevelopment of Casement Park.

(AQO 7869/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: A local residents group, Mooreland and Owenvarragh Residents' Association, (MORA) applied for a Judicial review into the decision and this was granted. The case was heard over 13 days between 9 September and 13 October 2014. On 18th December 2014 Mr Justice Horner quashed the existing planning approval for the Casement Park project.

Since Mr Justice Horner's decision on the 18th December 2014 I have met with the Ulster Council of the Gaelic Athletic Association to discuss the outcome of the Judicial Review and to hear details on how the Ulster Council were planning to move forward.

Since the ruling the GAA, the department and the relevant team members have studied the judgement in order that the new Planning Application will fully address and take into account the points raised in the judgement.

There is a strong resolve within the Ulster GAA to submit a new planning application in 2015 to develop a regional stadium in Ulster at Casement Park. The new application will take account of the learning points raised in the judgment and DCAL will fully support Ulster GAA during the new planning process.

The redevelopment of Casement Park is an Executive Programme for Government pledge and therefore will remain a key priority.

DCAL is committed to the re-development of Casement Park and will work with all parties to facilitate this becoming a reality.

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions she, and her Department, have had with Disability Sport NI in order to ascertain the impact of the cut in their funding.

(AQO 7870/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Discussions between Disability Sport NI, my Department and Sport NI officials have taken place regularly particularly as the impact of the budget has become clear.

As Minister within the past year, I have met with Angela Hendra, the Chair and with Kevin O'Neill, the Chief Executive of Disability Sport NI, to hear concerns at first hand and to discuss plans for the body's new Business Strategy.

My departmental officials have also met Disability Sport NI to discuss the impact of the cuts. These discussions are continuing and will aim to establish what potential exists for in-year help as has been granted in past years, to understand definitively what the actual impact is on Disability Sport programmes.

My Department's delivery body, Sport NI, have also had regular contacts with Disability Sport NI, particularly over the last 9 months to ensure that the sporting needs of people with a disability are safeguarded in the context of anticipated budget reductions. This includes correspondence in November 2014 where it wrote to Disability Sport NI affirming the "strategically significant role" played by DSNI in the past and Sport NI's draft Corporate Plan 2015-2020 acknowledges the importance of continuing to improve provision for people with a disability.

While final budget allocations have still to be finalised my Department has had to indicate to Sport NI a potential eleven point two percent cut to its exchequer budget in 2015/16, compared to its 2014/15 baseline, the SNI Board has submitted a budget

for 2015/16 to DCAL that proposes a ten percent reduction in funding to Disability Sport NI compared to its 2014/15 baseline Letter of Offer. This ten percent cut reflects more favourably than the potential eleven point two percent cut that other bodies in the same position will face.

However, in addition to the baseline allocation for 2015-16 of one hundred and forty six thousand, two hundred and fifty pounds, Sport NI has confirmed investment of approximately three hundred and eighty three thousand pounds to DSNI to support delivery of its Active Clubs project in the period 2015-18.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has any plans to facilitate the exhibiting of museum stored arts exhibitions in local venues.

(AQO 7871/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: National Museums has a statutory duty to ensure, so far as practicable, that objects stored in its collections, including arts objects, are exhibited to the public. It is also obliged to assist the public to interpret and understand the significance of these items.

In keeping with these duties, I wish to ensure that our museums will not ultimately become warehouse facilities for the majority of their collections and I have made this expectation known to the Trustees and Senior Management Team.

Provided that environmental, safety and security conditions are met, it is my view that libraries, schools and other venues at the heart of local communities can, and should, be used for exhibiting museum items.

Having taken into account my views, National Museums is seeking to find new and innovative ways of providing loans to local venues, especially those situated in communities suffering deprivation and disadvantage.

As part of this approach National Museums is developing a Collections, Access and Engagement Strategy for my consideration. I expect this document to set out a clear plan as to how its collections will be made more accessible.

I am pleased that National Museums welcomes requests for the loan of its material and looks forward to increased partnership working with suitable venues in the future.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action is being taken to ensure that sport for people with disabilities does not receive a disproportionate level of departmental cuts.

(AQO 7873/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: While budget allocations remain to be finalised, Sport NI has indicated that there is a potential reduction to Disability Sport NI's funding of around sixteen thousand pounds. This figure is not disproportionate to the level of cuts being applied across DCAL and its ALBs. Indeed it is a lower cut than the eleven point two percent cut identified for other organisations in similar positions.

I remain fully supportive of Disability Sport NI and all it seeks to do to provide sporting opportunities to those with profound physical difficulties and to ensure that those with sporting prowess and skills are not excluded from opportunities to participate, to experience success and to benefit physically, emotionally and mentally from the activities they engage in.

The importance of the work that organisations such as Disability Sport NI and indeed Special Olympics Ireland do cannot be overstated.

Department of Education

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what restrictions he intends to place on the new Education Authority in terms of funding decisions.

(AQW 43232/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): In setting the Education Authority's 2015-16 budget, I have confirmed that a number of frontline budgets should continue to be protected. These include: Special Education Needs (including Special Schools); Extended Schools; Free School Meals Entitlement; Counselling; Youth and Early Years.

Whilst these frontline budgets are to be protected, the Education Authority must ensure that the services are provided efficiently and effectively, that statutory obligations are complied with and that expenditure is contained within the overall 2015-16 Block Grant allocation provided. As such the Education Authority is still required to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness in these areas.

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education what measures will be taken to address the governance issues in controlled schools within the Southern Education and Library Board, as identified by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, and the resulting Data Protection Breaches relating to personal information of pupils and staff.

(AQW 43275/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2014, whistle blowing allegations were lodged with the Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) in relation to governance issues at a single school in the Southern Education Library Board (SELB) area. The SELB has responded in full to the NIAO on all of the issues raised by the whistleblower and is working closely with the Board of Governors of the school involved.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 42825/11-15, to detail the financial and contractual implications of this decision.

(AQW 43479/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There will be no financial or contractual implications resulting from staff transferring to the Education Authority (EA). The Staff Transfer Scheme being prepared by the Department will confirm, inter alia, that all staff transferring will be afforded protection of their existing contractual terms and conditions in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) Regulations 2006.

Once established and in due course, the EA will review organisational structures and future business needs based on funding availability.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Education which controlled primary schools participated in the programme; and which languages were taught in each school through the programme.

(AQW 43608/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table lists the controlled and controlled integrated primary schools that participated in the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) who were taught Spanish (as at March 2015):

School Ref.	School Name
401-6399	Abbey Primary School
401-6201	Academy Primary School
401-3046	Alexander Dickson Primary School
301-2234	Ampertaine Primary School
405-6541	All Childrens Integrated Primary School
401-1608	Anahilt Primary School
301-0829	Antrim Primary School
501-1115	Armstrong Primary School
301-6244	Ashgrove Primary School
401-6202	Ballinderry Primary School
401-0720	Ballycarrickmaddy Primary School
301-0809	Ballycarry Primary School
301-6170	Ballyhenry Primary School
305-3333	Ballycastle Integrated Primary School
401-1650	Ballyholme Primary School
301-3315	Ballykeel Primary School
201-2298	Ballykelly Primary School
401-1567	Ballynahinch Primary School
301-0802	Ballynure Primary School
501-6138	Bocombra Primary School
201-6645	Bready Jubilee Primary School
501-6612	Bronte Primary School
201-1894	Brookeborough Primary School
301-3310	Broughshane Primary School
401-0762	Brownlee Primary School
501-6391	Bush Primary School
301-2049	Carnalridge Primary School
301-6129	Carniny Primary School

School Ref.	School Name
301-3301	Carnmoney Primary School
301-0841	Carrickfergus Central Primary School
301-0553	Carrickfergus Model Primary School
401-1310	Carrickmannon Primary School
401-6020	Carrowdore Primary School
401-3044	Carryduff Primary School
301-2288	Castleroe Primary School
501-2538	Churchill Primary School
501-2726	Cookstown Primary School
201-6663	Cooley Primary School
501-1175	Cortamlet Primary School
401-1645	Crawfordsburn Primary School
301-0741	Creavery Primary School
305-0859	Crumlin Controlled Integrated Primary School
301-2282	Culnady Primary School
201-6372	Cumber Claudy Primary School
401-6650	Cumran Primary School
301-2225	Damhead Primary School
501-1119	Darkley Primary School
301-0754	Doagh Primary School
501-6178	Donacloney Primary School
401-1654	Donaghadee Primary School
501-2632	Donaghmore Primary School
101-6060	Donegall Road Primary School
201-2711	Donemana Primary School
401-6235	Downpatrick Primary School
401-6649	Downshire Primary School
401-1619	Dromara Primary School
501-1520	Dromore Road Primary School
501-6616	Drumadonnell Primary School
201-6656	Drumrane Primary School
301-6063	Dunclug Primary School
301-0558	Duneane Primary School
201-2378	Dunmullan Primary School
401-0788	Dunmurry Primary School
201-0382	Ebrington Controlled Primary School
501-1189	Edenderry Primary School
201-2638	Edwards Primary School
101-0146	Euston Street Primary School
301-6414	Fairview Primary School
101-6205	Fane Street Primary School
105-6535	Forge Integrated Primary School
405-3308	Fort Hill Integrated Primary School

School Ref.	School Name
201-6564	Fountain Primary School
301-0891	Fourtowns Primary School
301-0594	Garryduff Primary School
401-6681	Glasswater Primary School
101-6485	Glenwood Primary School
301-0794	Gracehill Primary School
301-0817	Greenisland Primary School
401-1300	Grey Abbey Primary School
205-2035	Groarty CIPS
301-0822	Groggan Primary School
101-0232	Hardy Memorial Primary School
501-1129	Hart Memorial Primary School
301-6444	Hazelbank Primary School
301-2229	Hezlett Primary School
401-1631	Hollywood Primary School
501-2646	Howard Primary School
301-6264	Irish Society's Primary School
301-0835	Kells & Connor Primary School
505-6013	Kilbroney Integrated Primary School
301-2237	Killowen Primary School
401-6145	Killowen Primary School
301-2269	Kilrea Primary School
405-1569	Kircubbin Integrated Primary School
301-0780	Kirkinriola Primary School
401-1373	Kirkistown Primary School
401-1674	Knockbreda Primary School
301-6283	Knockloughrim Primary School
101-3018	Knocknagoney Primary School
401-3043	Lead Hill Primary School
301-3325	Leaney Primary School
201-6426	Limavady Central Primary School
201-6218	Lisbellaw Primary School
401-0807	Lisburn Central Primary School
501-2611	Lisfearthy Primary School
501-1153	Lisnadill Primary School
201-6203	Lisnagelvin Primary School
401-1657	Lisnasharragh Primary School
301-0745	Loanends Primary School
301-0466	Longstone Primary School
401-1267	Loughries Primary School
301-3700	Macosquin Primary School
301-2267	Magherafelt Controlled Primary School
201-6127	Maguiresbridge Primary School

School Ref.	School Name
301-0812	Mallusk Primary School
101-6498	Malvern Primary School
501-6436	Markethill Primary School
201-2344	McClintock Primary School
301-2264	Millburn Primary School
501-1651	Milltown Primary School
201-1789	Moat Primary School
401-6104	Moirra Primary School
501-2280	Moneymore Primary School
401-1699	Moneyrea Primary School
301-0818	Moorfields Primary School
301-3323	Mossgrove Primary School
301-6015	Mossley Primary School
501-6543	Moyallon Primary School
301-0870	Moyle Primary School
501-1019	Mullaglass Primary School
201-2261	Newbuildings Primary School
401-1698	Newcastle Primary School
401-1345	Newtownards Model Primary School
301-6257	Oakfield Primary School
101-0273	Orangefield Primary School
501-6658	Orchard County Primary School
301-6058	Parkhall Primary School
401-6401	Pond Park Primary School
405-1601	Portaferry Integrated Primary School
401-1507	Portavogie Primary School
301-6440	Portglenone Primary School.
301-0847	Portrush Primary School
301-2250	Portstewart Primary School
501-6078	Poyntzpass Primary School
201-2669	Queen Elizabeth II Primary School
301-0816	Randalstown Central Primary School
501-1165	Rich Mount Primary School
401-6615	Riverdale Primary School
101-0266	Seaview Primary School
401-0882	Seymour Hill Primary School
301-6005	Silverstream Primary School
201-6442	Sion Mills Primary School
401-6123	Spa Primary School
301-0570	Straid Primary School
301-0804	Straidbilly Primary School
301-0879	Straidhavern Primary School
301-0860	Sunnylands Primary School

School Ref.	School Name
501-1116	Tandragee Primary School
101-0301	Taughmonagh Primary School
301-6014	Templepatrick Primary School
201-6102	Tempo Primary School
501-6079	The Cope Primary School
301-2233	Tobermore Primary School
301-3330	Victoria Primary School
101-6532	Wheatfield Primary School
301-0874	Whitehead Primary School
301-0827	Whitehouse Primary School
501-6451	Windsor Hill Primary School
301-0404	Tildarg Primary School

The following table lists the controlled and controlled integrated primary schools that participated in the PMLP who were taught Polish (as at March 2015):

School Ref.	School Name
501-2621	Aughnacloy Primary School
501-6027	Drumhillery Primary School
101-6537	Lowwood Primary School
501-0992	Lurgan Model Primary School
201-2691	Omagh County Primary School

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how much his Department has spent on catering equipment contracts; and (ii) the top five companies, broken down by funds received from his Department for this work, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43713/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education has not had any catering equipment contracts in place during the last five years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what plans has his Department have for the long term future of the Cotton Reading Unit.

(AQW 43766/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The long term future of the Cottown Reading Unit will be a matter for the Education Authority to determine.

In reaching my final decisions on the 2015-16 Budget allocations I ensured that support for children with SEN was prioritised. With this in mind, I will be notifying the Education Authority by way of strategic direction that SEN services (including Special Schools) should be protected and that these services will be provided efficiently and within the budget provided.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how many pupils from BT22 currently attend (i) Bangor Grammar School; (ii) Bangor Academy; (iii) St Columbanus' College; and (iv) Glenlola Collegiate.

(AQW 43770/11-15)

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

Number of post primary pupils resident in the BT22 postcode area who were enrolled in Bangor Grammar school, Bangor Academy, St Columbanus' College and Glenlola Collegiate 2014/15

School name	Total pupils
Bangor Grammar School	47
Bangor Academy and 6th Form College	27
St Columbanus' College	8
Glenlola Collegiate	46

Source: NI school census

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) which Early Years projects in North Down will receive reduced funding in 2015/16; and (ii) how much funding will be reduced in each case.

(AQW 43777/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund (which is administered by Early Years – the Organisation for young people (EYO) on behalf of the Department) was established by DHSSPS in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a "closed" Fund since then to applicants that were in areas of greatest need at that time.

There are no groups in North Down that are funded by the Early Years Fund and therefore there will be no impact on any group in North Down of the budget reduction to the fund.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Education for an update, including timescale, for the delivery of the integrated campus at Moy County, Tyrone.

(AQW 43778/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Moy Shared Education Campus will provide an 11 class-base school building on a new site to accommodate both Moy Regional Primary School and St John's Primary School, Moy. The schools will share facilities including a multi-purpose hall, play areas and ancillary accommodation while retaining their own ethos and identity.

A Project Board, jointly chaired by Southern Education and Library Board and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools officials, has been established and the feasibility study and economic appraisal are expected to be completed next month. Only after approval of the economic appraisal, and subject to available capital funds, will the project proceed to tender and construction. At this stage, therefore, it is not possible to give a definite date for delivery of the project.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the budget for each school in North Down in 2015/16; (ii) how this compares with 2014/15; and (iii) when school Principals and Board of Governors will be informed of the new budgets.

(AQW 43779/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All grant-aided schools, funded under the Common Funding Scheme, were notified of their overall budget shares on 25 February 2015 and details are available on the Department's website: www.deni.gov.uk/schools and [infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding_formula_budgets_for_schools](http://www.deni.gov.uk/infrastructure/schools_finance/common_funding_formula_budgets_for_schools)

Details of the budget shares will be provided to school by their Funding Authority.

Overall, the Aggregated Schools' Budget available for distribution to all schools in 2015/16 was marginally higher (+0.2%) than in 2014/15. Across all schools in the North Down constituency, delegated budgets for schools are +1.3% higher in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15. However, the level of funding for individual schools will reflect overall funding available for distribution and any changes in the profile of the school for 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 – for example, pupil numbers and year-groups, numbers of pupils identified as socially deprived using the measures of JSA/IS or FSME, pupils identified as Newcomers, of the Travelling Community, etc. or changes in other identified needs such as compensation for above average salary costs.

The requested details of budgets for each school in 2015/16 and the percentage change in overall budget for these schools compared to 2014/15 funding, are shown in the table below:

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
411-0029	Bangor Nursery	£212,391	0.74%
411-0030	Hollywood Nursery	£126,075	10.49%
411-6175	Trinity Nursery	£188,774	1.84%
401-1265	Ballyvester Primary	£344,993	-0.27%
401-1631	Hollywood Primary	£1,113,666	15.11%
401-1645	Crawfordsburn Primary	£596,581	2.02%
401-1650	Ballyholme Primary	£1,567,479	-0.28%
401-1654	Donaghadee Primary	£1,121,653	-1.03%
401-1670	Clandeboy Primary	£769,600	16.83%
401-1681	Millisle Primary	£635,070	2.75%

DE Ref	School Name	Funding 2015/16 *	% funding Variance
401-3023	Bloomfield Primary	£1,228,018	3.09%
401-3045	Grange Park Primary	£1,030,527	0.73%
401-6002	Kilcooley Primary	£646,429	4.88%
401-6067	Rathmore Primary	£1,508,461	2.06%
401-6111	Towerview Primary	£981,946	-2.97%
401-6192	Kilmaine Primary	£1,671,888	-0.01%
401-6430	Ballymagee Primary	£1,100,258	5.46%
405-1680	Bangor Central Integrated Primary	£1,598,768	-2.28%
405-3020	Glencraig Integrated Primary	£578,240	-1.62%
403-1628	St Patrick's Primary Holywood	£733,706	4.12%
403-3008	St Anne's Primary, Donaghadee	£211,559	-4.49%
403-6146	St Comgall's Primary, Bangor	£753,676	-2.05%
403-6148	St Malachy's Primary Bangor	£1,054,783	7.51%
421-0296	Bangor Academy and 6th Form College	£5,893,350	-0.76%
425-0024	Priory Integrated College	£2,300,576	8.08%
441-0097	Glennola Collegiate	£4,252,165	-0.80%
442-0015	Bangor Grammar School	£3,742,058	1.58%
442-0044	Sullivan Upper School, Holywood	£4,700,979	-0.24%
423-0107	St Columbanus' College	£2,423,714	-1.48%

* Includes Transitional Funding as applicable

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the impact on school transport in the South Eastern Education and Library Board as a result of budget cuts in 2015/16.

(AQW 43782/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: On the 1st April 2015 the 5 Education and Library Boards will be dissolved and no longer exist. The new Education Authority will be in place from 1st April 2015 and will be allocated a Block Grant budget of £396.6million to cover costs including transport.

The home to school transport policy will apply to the Education Authority in the same manner as the individual Education and Library Boards. It will primarily be for the Education Authority to determine the amount of funding it will attribute to home to school transport in its budget proposals to my Department. The Education Authority's overall Budget proposals will be subject to my approval.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the languages offered to primary school pupils in the Primary Modern Languages Programme; and what alternatives are available for teaching modern languages in primary schools.

(AQW 43823/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I would refer the member to the answers provided to AQW 43606/11-15 and AQW 43630/11-15 tabled respectively by Nelson McCausland MLA and Jimmy Spratt MLA and published in the Official Report on 20 March.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what steps the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment are taking to develop a programme of support for the teaching of modern languages in primary schools.

(AQW 43824/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Between 2005 and 2009, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in conjunction with the BELB, NEELB and SEELB, conducted a Primary Languages Project, building on earlier pilots in 2003/04 and 2004/05. The project focused on sustaining primary language teaching where schools had expertise and on building long-term capacity.

On close of the project in 2009, all materials were made available to the education sector on the Curriculum website. They include teacher guidance and pupil activities for French, German, Spanish and Irish at Key Stage 1 and can be found at: <http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/microsite/pl/index.asp>.

More recently, CCEA has conducted an initial consultation on the feasibility of developing support (materials and associated initial training) for the teaching of Irish and aspects of a shared cultural heritage. Future actions will be dependent on the findings of the consultation and on availability of funding.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of Secondary Level Pastoral Care provision in meeting the personal and social development of pupils; and to detail the budget allocated for these services in each of the last three years. [R] (AQW 43835/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Pastoral care is about schools demonstrating their concern for the personal and social development of all pupils, regardless of age or ability. Pastoral care is at its most effective when it is all pervasive and fully integrated into the school's daily routines, its curriculum and its extra-curricular activities.

It is recognised that Pastoral care provision will differ from school to school but the quality of pastoral care influences the whole-school ethos and is of crucial importance in creating an atmosphere in which all young people feel secure, know they are valued as individuals and encouraged in their learning, growth and social development in a healthy and safe environment.

Individual schools' pastoral care provision is evaluated through the inspection process. There is no budget for pastoral care provision.

You may wish to note that the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (primary level) and Learning for Life and Work (post-primary) elements of the revised curriculum both provide opportunities to discuss and explore a wide range of personal and social development issues such as relationships, drugs, alcohol, etc, so that pupils are better equipped to make good choices and decisions.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 37589/11-15, in which he acknowledged the importance of language learning both socially and economically and its capacity to help our young play their full part in our increasingly diverse society and to achieve their full potential, to detail (i) whether his Department remains committed to this principle; and (ii) what his Department is doing to ensure that the appropriate funding is in place to maintain the Primary Modern Languages Programme in local schools. (AQW 43846/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department remains committed to language learning. As such, languages are a statutory requirement at Key Stage 3. Schools are encouraged to offer a wider range of modern languages. They are now able to choose any of the languages of the 27 EU member states to meet the minimum requirement.

In order to protect frontline services and in particular the Aggregated Schools Budget, it has been decided that the earmarked funding for the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) will cease with effect from 31 March 2015.

I am aware that some schools provide language tuition outside of the PMLP and hope that these schools and those schools which had been part of the programme can continue to provide an additional language, funded from the schools own budget.

Some schools have applied for Erasmus+ funding to develop language provision in their schools and I would encourage more primary schools to consider this if they would like to build staff competence to provide an additional language.

Mr Allister asked Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43095/11-15, how he maintains that Taylorstown Playgroup and Round Tower Community Playgroup are within a five mile radius of Randalstown Central Primary School, when on page 15 of the briefing paper to the minister both are stated to be 5.2 miles away. (AQW 43867/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Taylorstown Playgroup and Round Tower Community Playgroup are within a five mile radius of Randalstown Central Primary School as illustrated by the map at Appendix G of the submission.

The reference to 5.2 miles on page 15 of the submission is to the distance by road, not the radius.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how the issue of female genital mutilation is addressed in schools. (AQW 43884/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has issued Multi Agency Practice Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to all Principals, Designated Teachers, Boards of Governors and the ELB Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS).

FGM is included in Child Protection training which covers warning signs, appropriate response and signposting to further information and sources of help.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether teachers are given training on the issue of female genital mutilation. (AQW 43885/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has issued Multi Agency Practice Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to all Principals, Designated Teachers, Boards of Governors and the ELB Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS).

FGM is included in Child Protection training which covers warning signs, appropriate response and signposting to further information and sources of help.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education for a breakdown of the total cost of Key Stage 1 and 2 testing in each primary school in Upper Bann; and how these tests are independently monitored and evaluated.

(AQW 43930/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are no statutory tests at Key Stages 1 or 2. Pupil progress is assessed through a system of teacher-assessment.

The Department does not collect data on other measures, for example commercial assessments, which schools may use to complement the statutory arrangements.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what assessment has been made of the use in schools of Applied Behaviour Analysis interventions for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

(AQW 43941/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not advocate exclusive adherence to any specific single intervention or theoretical perspective in relation to autism, but maintains the view that provision should be child centred, focused on a comprehensive assessment of the child's autism and how it affects his or her ability to learn, and in particular to learn alongside other children. Provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including autism, is tailored to meet the identified individual needs of a child.

It is therefore a decision for the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to determine whether Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), or indeed any other intervention, is the most appropriate provision to meet an individual child's educational needs. The ELBs will operate programmes of support for cases where ABA has been requested and where they deem it to be appropriate to meet the individual needs of the child.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of how the desire to meet targets to identify Special Educational Needs and requirements amongst children impacts on the quality and successful of the assessments utilised.

(AQW 43958/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are no targets regarding the identification of children's special educational needs (SEN). The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs states that children with SEN should be identified as early as possible and assessed as quickly as is consistent with thoroughness.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Education what plans his Department has in place to ensure the continuation of youth services after youth workers employed by the Western Education and Library Board, who were placed on Protective Notice in January 2015, depart their posts.

(AQW 43992/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Decisions on the allocation of the Education Authority's youth service budget are an operational matter for the Education Authority.

Future funding of youth services by the Education Authority and the Youth Council will be in line with the Regional Youth Development Plan and Priorities for Youth and within the resources available.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education how cuts will affect the budget of the Western Education and Library Board; and whether school transport provision will be adversely affected.

(AQW 44022/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I refer the member to my answer to his earlier question AQW 43520/11-15 published in the official report on 20 March 2015.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Education what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is a closer alignment between the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Services in order to raise standards in our schools.

(AQO 7880/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Every School a Good School highlights that the primary responsibility for school improvement rests with schools themselves.

My Department is clear in its policy and practice that inspection is an integral part of and aligned with the school improvement process and with the work of other key stakeholders in this area.

Through inspection and the work of the District Inspectors, ETI not only highlights good practice, but also points to areas which require improvement in the interests of learners.

It is recognised that in striving to ensure that the characteristics of a good school are embedded universally, schools may require support to develop and deliver the improvement required in order to raise standards. The nature and source of that support may differ depending on the context of the school but at its core will be the school itself, its managing authority and the Inspectorate, working together

There are many examples of how the ETI works closely with schools, their managing authorities and with policy teams in the department to ensure close alignment of our efforts to raise standards. This now includes the principal's involvement in

inspection moderation meetings, the managing authorities presence during schools' inspection feedback, the facilitation of primary and post primary principals conferences, the production of programmes for ESaGS.tv and the dissemination of good practice guides.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Education what cuts he would make to his Department, to fund the additional resources identified by Martin McGuinness, to provide more funding beyond that agreed in the Stormont House and Stormont Castle Agreements.

(AQO 7879/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I cannot speculate about cuts that I have not been asked to make.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Education, following the opening of the new facilities for Gaelscoil and Naíscoil na Speiríní, to outline the benefits this will have for the development of the Irish language.

(AQO 7883/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I must clarify that my Department does not have responsibility for the overall development of the Irish language. This is the responsibility of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

My Department's role is to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education.

Gaelscoil and Naíscoil na Speiríní have been delivering quality education through the medium of Irish to children in Straw, Draperstown and the surrounding area for ten years. There has been a steady rise in enrolments in recent times. Now the school has moved to improved premises in a better location, it is the start of an exciting new chapter for staff, pupils and parents.

These new facilities are an endorsement of Irish-medium education and provide a solid foundation for the continued growth of Irish-medium education in the Straw area.

Indeed Gaelscoil and Naíscoil na Speiríní are part of a flourishing Irish-medium sector in the north of Ireland. The sector continues to grow in size and to improve in quality. The language is part of our rich, shared heritage and is thriving.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Education to outline the effect of the reduction to the Early Years and Sure Start Budget for 2015/16.

(AQO 7884/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The requirement to reduce the Department of Education's expenditure by £97.6million in one financial year has regrettably resulted in reduced funding to some worthy programmes, including within the Early Years sector. I have aimed to minimise any impact.

The Early Years Fund (administered on the DE's behalf by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO)) was originally established by DHSSPS in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a "closed" Fund since then to applicants that were in areas of greatest need at that time.

I have ensured that funding is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued support to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

I have protected the Sure Start budget as far as possible so that the original reduction of £2m has been reduced to £1m.

The reduction of £1m leaves a Sure Start budget of £24.7m for 2015/16. It is anticipated that the reduction will be realised as far as possible from areas within service delivery where greater efficiencies can be realised, with the aim of protecting front line services.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education what provision will be made for primary school pupils to learn modern foreign languages in 2015/16.

(AQO 7885/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Modern languages are not a statutory part of the curriculum at primary level here. It is a matter for primary schools to decide whether they wish to teach an additional language and to allocate resources accordingly.

No specific funding has been allocated by my Department for 2015/16 to provide foreign language tuition at primary level.

The curriculum is now much less prescriptive in curricular content than previously, providing greater opportunities for schools to tailor their teaching to meet the needs of the pupils in their classrooms. This includes opportunities for schools to look at language and culture from other countries.

While no specific funding has been allocated by my Department for the 2015/16 financial year, schools could if they wish to do so fund language tutors from their own LMS budget.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Education how he plans to deliver contingency funding to schools in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area in 2015/16.

(AQO 7886/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As outlined in my response to the member's recent written question, each Funding Authority must establish a Contingency Fund to meet certain unexpected costs incurred by schools. For controlled and maintained schools, from 1 April 2015, this responsibility will fall to the new Education Authority, and it will be for the Authority to establish appropriate arrangements to support their schools in the South Eastern regional area, along with all other regions, within the overall budget available to the Authority.

The existence of a contingency fund for exceptional cost demands does not absolve schools from their obligation to meet less severe eventualities by prudent management of their delegated budgets.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Education when he intends to announce the members of the Board of the new Education Authority.

(AQO 7887/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chair and 20 members will take up post when the Authority is formally established on 1 April. I announced on 4 March that I had selected Ms Sharon O'Connor as Chairperson and the 20 member appointments were announced on 19 March.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Education what steps he is taking to make the excellent examples of science, technology, engineering and mathematics teaching in our primary schools available to all.

(AQO 7888/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: At primary level, the curriculum provides for science, technology and engineering within "The World Around Us".

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) review of 'World Around Us' (WAU) highlighted the good practice that is evident in the majority of our primary schools. I have accepted the recommendations of the ETI report for my Department, including supporting the full implementation of the science and technology strand of WAU in all schools, and my officials are currently considering what actions might help deliver these recommendations.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his Department's strategy for people not in education, employment or training.

(AQW 43514/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department leads the way on the agreed cross-departmental strategy for those young people in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) category, 'Pathways to Success' (PtS), which was initiated in May 2012.

The PtS approach has a particular focus on helping those young people who face barriers to participation, while also dovetailing with complementary proposals to tackle the wider problem of youth unemployment in the current challenging economic context.

The current round of funding for NEET interventions will cease at the end of March 2015 and my Department will continue to support young people not in education, employment or training through the new European Social Fund (ESF) Programme commencing in April 2015. Through ESF and the contribution from my Department, the following funding will be invested:

- Community Family Support Programme (CFSP) [ESF and DEL] = £5.7m Total (including match funding) = £9m
- Unemployed and Economically Inactive (ESF and DEL) = £19m Total (including match funding) = £28m
- Collaboration and Innovation Fund (CIF)/NEET type projects [ESF and DEL] = £13.5m

Total (including match funding) = £21m

This means a grand total of almost £60m will be invested in young people in the NEET category over the next three years. In addition, there is a separate ESF strand for people with disabilities which will include young people in the NEET category.

As part of the implementation of the strategy, my Department initiated a formal evaluation which was undertaken by the Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion, (CESI), a London based not-for-profit-company dedicated to tackling disadvantage and promoting social inclusion in the labour market.

The key question CESI was asked to address is whether PtS, two years into a 7 year programme, is on track, with a view to identifying any mid course corrections that might be required.

The following six key DEL programmes were considered in the evaluation of the PtS strategy:

- 1) CFSP;

- 2) the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS);
- 3) the CIF;
- 4) Steps 2 Success (First Start);
- 5) the Youth Employment Scheme (YES); and
- 6) Training for Success (TfS), Level One.

Each of the programmes was assessed from the perspective of performance data against objectives, and was benchmarked against similar programmes, where possible, and from the perspective of participant experiences. The evaluation also covered the other Government Departments involved and the implementation architecture, including the DEL-led cross-Departmental Steering Group which co-ordinated the evaluation and includes a DEL Analytical Services representative.

CESI have now produced a near final draft which will be with me in the next few weeks in early April and which will be published shortly after that.

My Department's Careers Service currently provides dedicated advice and support to all 16-17 year olds in the NEET category. These clients are allocated a specific careers adviser who provides support and advocacy to assist them to secure an appropriate education, employment or training opportunity. Careers advisers also work with those young people who have unfortunately dropped out of education and training, to help them back into a positive labour market opportunity.

I have also referenced a number of new initiatives which will provide additional support to those young people furthest away from the labour market. These include:

The United Youth Programme (UYP)

My Department is leading on the development of the Executive's United Youth Programme which has two specific outcomes:

- i. The personal development of young people who are in the NEET's category, to improve their confidence, skills and experience; and
- ii. The promotion of good relations between these young people and others across the community, including people (and particularly young people) from other community backgrounds.

In the early pilot phase, I am particularly interested in finding new and creative ways of engaging those most disadvantaged or at risk of exclusion.

Apprenticeships

In June 2014, my Department published *Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships* which will be central in transforming our skills landscape and securing our economic success.

The new model for apprenticeships will be in place for 2016 and includes a range of commitments to increase participation by a wide range of individuals. In particular, a pilot project will be taken forward to develop a new youth training offer to widen access to apprenticeships to individuals with disabilities or other barriers that are impacting on their ability to engage in education and training.

Economic Inactivity

My Department is currently working in partnership with DETI, DSD, Invest NI and DHSSPS to develop a new strategy to tackle economic inactivity. A key aspect of this Strategy will be the delivery of initiatives designed to reduce the numbers of young people who are economically inactive.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 42459/11-15, to detail why the practice of digitally recording substantive hearings began.

(AQW 43615/11-15)

Dr Farry: The practice of digitally recording tribunal hearings began in order to reduce the need for verbatim note taking on the part of the tribunal and therefore speed up the proceedings.

It is also recognised that it could be useful during proceedings where there is a dispute over what was said by a witness and in dealing with complaints about judicial conduct.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 42460/11-15, why there is no formal requirement to digitally record all hearings.

(AQW 43616/11-15)

Dr Farry: Existing arrangements, which allow judicial discretion as to whether a hearing is digitally recorded, are appropriate and reasonable; my Department has not been in receipt of evidence suggesting that a formal requirement to record proceedings is necessary.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 42461/11-15, why records are not maintained for the information requested.

(AQW 43618/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Office of Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal (OITFET) gathers statistical data which is commonly requested by those with an interest in the tribunals' work. It is not aware of any previous demand for the requested information.

The gathering of data on the number of litigant requests for digital recordings and the number of those requests granted would require significant new administrative commitments. These would be difficult to justify in the context of the present challenging budgetary settlement.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 42496/11-15, why the administration fee of £25 for transcripts is included in this waiver.

(AQW 43619/11-15)

Dr Farry: The cost to the litigant of a transcript is comprised of the actual cost of the transcript, sourced from an external provider, and a £25 administration fee payable to the Office of Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal (OITFET).

OITFET has scope to waive the £25 administration fee, the only part of the cost which it generates, having regard to the litigant's financial means. However, it is neither resourced to meet the ad hoc cost of external transcription nor the more substantial cost that would arise from providing such a service in-house.

My Department will shortly launch a public consultation dealing with the employment tribunal service and I would welcome representations on this and other issues as part of that work. Going forward, I will be seeking to set in place improved tribunal rules and procedures, always having regard to the need to operate the service efficiently and effectively, particularly in the present context of a challenging budget settlement.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the employers that have participated in the ESS First Start Programme in East Londonderry; and (ii) the number of 18-24 year olds gaining (a) temporary and (b) permanent employment as a result.

(AQW 43699/11-15)

Dr Farry: First Start was initially delivered as a strand of the Steps to Work programme and following the closure of Steps to Work to new entrants as a strand of Employment Service Support.

The network of Lead Contractors responsible for the delivery of both Steps to Work and Employment Service Support liaised with employers to source suitable vacancies for the First Start programme; consequently my Department does not hold detail on the employers participating on a constituency basis.

Validated statistical information is not yet available that would allow me to report on the number of 18-24 year olds gaining (a) temporary and (b) permanent employment following participation on Employment Service Support First Start at present.

Management information collected on the First Start strand of Employment Service Support indicates that by 16 March 2015 over 355 clients have found subsidised employment opportunities through this initiative across Northern Ireland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the rationale that allows the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education to be delivered at Ulster University but not at Stranmillis University College.

(AQW 43704/11-15)

Dr Farry: Ulster University, from its inception in 1968, has always included a Certificate (or equivalent) in Religious Education available to students of all faith backgrounds as an integral part of its teacher education provision. This was achieved with the agreement of both the Protestant and Catholic Church hierarchies.

The former Board of Governors of Stranmillis University College made representations to St Mary's University College and the former Bishop, the Most Reverend Dr Patrick Walsh, in 2005, on the potential for access by Stranmillis students to the St Mary's programme; however, the College's request for access to the St Mary's programme was rejected.

I remain committed to ensuring equality of access for all student teachers.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when will he announce the replacement of the Northern Regional College in Coleraine.

(AQW 43851/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Northern Regional College is developing an Outline Business Case which will address the accommodation needs throughout the College Estate including the Coleraine area. The College is seeking to have Department of Finance and Personnel approval of this business case by August 2015. Following this approval, I will formally announce the size and location of any replacement College campuses.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 42760/11-15 what discussions have taken place between departmental officials and St Mary's Teacher Training College in relation to the commencement of external students being accepted for the completion of the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education.

(AQW 43854/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has engaged with St Mary's University College on a number of issues arising from the Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure, including delivery of the Certificate of Religious Education. I would welcome and encourage external students being allowed the opportunity to complete the Certificate at St Mary's.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to list the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from her Department or its arm's-length bodies since 2011; and the amount received in each case.
(AQW 43377/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):

Client Name	Voluntary / Community Group	Year	Total Assistance (£)
Accept Care (Social Firms) Limited	yes	2011-12	2,800
Accept Care (Social Firms) Limited	yes	2011-12	46,000
Positive Futures: Achieving Dreams. Transforming Lives.	yes	2013-14	5,000
Positive Futures: Achieving Dreams. Transforming Lives.	yes	2013-14	50,000
Positive Futures: Achieving Dreams. Transforming Lives.	yes	2014-15	20,000

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the recent announcement by EirGrid of its sponsorship of the GAA Football U21 Championship, whether the sponsorship is by EirGrid TSO or EirGrid Group.
(AQW 43420/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Sponsorship arrangements are a matter for the company.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much EirGrid and SONI are expending on sponsorship; and to which groups.
(AQW 43421/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Sponsorship arrangements are a matter for the companies concerned. SONI expenditure on sponsorship over the last two years has been minimal.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the use of the Roe Valley Country Park, Benone and Benevenagh for the Game of Thrones television series, whether these areas feature in tourism promotional material for the forthcoming season.
(AQW 43468/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Northern Ireland's connection with the hugely successful Game of Thrones series is a key theme for both of our tourism bodies in all of their marketing activity.

Tourism Ireland will join forces with HBO for a Game of Thrones campaign scheduled to launch in April, to coincide with Season Five of the series.

Content on its website, which attracts 14.25 million unique visits a year, is being refreshed to reflect the new locations in Northern Ireland, including the Roe Valley.

The new locations will also be listed on the Game of Thrones locations section on the Discover Northern Ireland website at www.discovernorthernireland.com/gameofthrones/ and the downloadable Game of Thrones locations map will also be updated to include any new locations as will the web film. These elements will be promoted through Tourism Northern Ireland's social media channels.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the progress of the North/South Interconnector.
(AQW 43515/11-15)

Mrs Foster: NIE submitted its revised planning application in May 2013, incorporating information requested by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC). I understand that the file has been returned to PAC for re-commencement of its inquiry but that additional information for the related EirGrid application will have to be submitted in support of the application. I am informed that EirGrid is expected to submit its final application to the Irish Planning Authority in April or May. It will then be a matter for the respective planning authorities to set dates for consideration of the applications.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department and Invest NI have supported businesses in (i) Magherafelt; (ii) Cookstown; and (iii) Dungannon District Council area, in the last three years.

(AQW 43517/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI offers a range of financial and practical assistance to businesses across Northern Ireland. Support covers key areas such as skills, research and development, exporting, job creation and capital development.

Support is also available to entrepreneurs seeking to start a new business, for example through the Regional Start Initiative, delivered on Invest NI's behalf by Enterprise NI.

Invest NI's Business Support Team handles enquiries from businesses throughout Northern Ireland and advice and guidance is also available through nibusinessinfo.co.uk - the official online channel for business advice provided by Invest NI in partnership with NI Direct.

Invest NI releases information at sub-regional level following each financial year end; therefore, the most up to date figures available are for 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2014. During this time Invest NI approved offers of support to 600 businesses worth £34million in the Cookstown, Magherafelt and Dungannon council areas. This support will contribute to £181million of investment into these areas.

Council Area	No of Businesses	Total Assistance £m	Total Planned Investment £m
Cookstown	158	9.08	57.71
Dungannon	263	16.65	81.53
Magherafelt	179	8.07	42.25
Total	600	33.81	181.48

For example, in July 2014 Invest NI announced an offer of £614,000 to support an expansion by Cookstown-based CDE Global which will promote 50 new jobs.

Other initiatives which have supported businesses in the Cookstown, Dungannon & South Tyrone and Magherafelt District Council areas include telecoms support, with 168 street cabinets being fibre-enabled to deliver broadband services of up to 80 Megabits per second as part of the Next Generation Broadband Project.

Through the Logon-ni Programme, which sought to stimulate take-up of broadband by local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), between 2008-2013, 741 businesses across the Cookstown, Dungannon & South Tyrone and Magherafelt District Councils areas had participated in the programme leading to 1,224 completed action plans.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many small and medium sized enterprises in North Belfast her Department has supported through investment since 2011.

(AQW 43662/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI releases information at sub-regional level following each financial year end; therefore, the most up to date figures available show that between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2014, Invest NI has approved offers of support to 324 SMEs located in the North Belfast constituency area. For example, Invest NI offered over £167,000 support to Core Systems NI Ltd towards a Research & Development project and the creation of eight high quality software development jobs to enable the company to access new opportunities within the US marketplace.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what support her Department is providing to hospitality businesses in East Londonderry, in anticipation of the Open Championship coming to Royal Portrush in 2019.

(AQW 43731/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Royal Portrush Golf Club has been invited to join the rota to host the Open Championship. It is hoped that the first event will be hosted in 2019, however this is still to be confirmed and it is subject to securing planning approvals for course improvements and completion of the works.

As for all major events which Northern Ireland has hosted and will host, Tourism NI will work with key partners to plan for and deliver the event including engagement with the local authority and business community in the area to maximise the economic benefits of hosting such a prestigious tournament.

Department of the Environment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) whether his Department has, or intends to, enter into an agreement, with the Ulster Farmers Union that farmers will no longer be prosecuted or sanctioned for low level pollution incidents; (ii) whether this practice has been adopted in any other region of the UK; (iii) whether there are no adverse implications for achieving compliance with the stringent requirements of the Water Framework Directive as a result; and (iv) what expert advice he received before agreeing to enter into such an agreement.

(AQW 42531/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment):

- (i) whether his Department has, or intends to, enter into an agreement, with the Ulster Farmers Union that farmers will no longer be prosecuted or sanctioned for low level pollution incidents

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is currently being developed between the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU). The MoU aims to create a stronger, more effective working arrangement between the NIEA and UFU to deliver stronger compliance performance and improved environmental outcomes that reduce conflict and support sustainable farming practices. There are several issues, including the best approach to achieving compliance on low-level pollution incidents, being discussed for how to create these improvements. No final agreement has yet been reached.

- (ii) whether this practice has been adopted in any other region of the UK

The practice of working in partnership with farmers and farming associations to achieve higher levels of compliance is commonly adopted across the UK. These are informing the negotiations.

- (iii) whether there are no adverse implications for achieving compliance with the stringent requirements of the Water Framework Directive as a result

NIEA will not enter into any agreement with the UFU that would result in adverse implications for achieving compliance with the stringent requirements of the Water Framework Directive. Indeed, any agreement will be designed to deliver strengthened compliance.

- (iv) what expert advice he received before agreeing to enter into such an agreement

The MoU is being developed to reduce the conflict that exists between the NIEA, UFU and farming community, which is not conducive to positive environmental outcomes. Improving working relationships between all concerned will lead to increased communication and in turn, higher compliance levels in the agricultural sector. This MoU is being developed following internal consultation and advice from senior NIEA officials.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 42175/11-15, whether he will provide a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment report.

(AQW 42929/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment determination will be placed in the Assembly library.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment whether the Northern Ireland Environment Agency is planning to close Crawfordsburn Country Park on public holidays.

(AQW 42936/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In light of budgetary pressures, my Department is assessing levels of visitor services across its various country parks.

However public and bank holidays are among the most popular days of the year to visit our Country Parks and I can assure you that all our Country Parks, including Crawfordsburn, will remain open on public and bank holidays.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment how he will work in conjunction with the Minister of Justice to ensure that there will be stronger enforcement action across all sections of the taxi industry.

(AQW 42982/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can advise the Member that my officials will continue to engage with the Department of Justice on a range of taxi regulatory and enforcement issues, such as regulations that would give the Driver & Vehicle Agency new powers of seizure of illegal taxis, to ensure that there is effective regulation of all sections of the taxi industry. This includes working with the Public Prosecution Service in respect of prosecutorial issues and the presentation of evidence to the courts.

My Department is also subject to periodic inspection by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate to ensure that the regulatory systems and working practices carried out are effective and efficient which helps to strengthen public confidence.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the main causes of water pollution incidents across Northern Ireland in the 2014/15 financial year.

(AQW 43026/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for investigating, under the Water (NI) Order 1999, reports of water pollution, for regulating discharges to waterways and underground strata and for initiating enforcement action where appropriate.

NIEA investigates approximately 2100 water pollution incidents per annum. Substantiated incidents are classified by Source (where the pollution originates) and Severity (the environmental impact of the pollution) where the latter is assessed as High, Medium or Low using the 'NIEA WMU Water Pollution Incidents Severity Classification System'.

As the 2014/15 financial year is not complete, the confirmed figures for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 December 2014 inclusive are provided. The data requested is set out in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Confirmed Water Pollution Incidents by Source and Severity 1 March 2014 to 31 December 2014 inclusive.

Source	High	Medium	Low	Total
Domestic	0	2	118	120
Farm	7	76	187	270
Industry	2	18	101	121
NIWL	1	20	103	124
Other	7	13	182	202
Transport	0	0	8	8
Total	17	129	699	845

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether the targeted carboniferous sandstone reservoir in planning application E/2013/0093/F has already been categorized by GSNI as tight sandstone, having porosities 5 per cent and permeabilities less than 0.1 millidarcies.

(AQW 43028/11-15)

Mr Durkan: GSNI have advised my Department that they would not categorise the Carboniferous sandstone reservoir that forms the target of the proposed Ballinlea No.2 exploration well, which is the subject of planning application E/2013/0093F, as tight sandstone.

Analysis of the well logs from the Ballinlea No. 1 exploration well indicates several potential conventional reservoir intervals in the Carboniferous sandstones with average porosities of about 10% and these are the targets for the Ballinlea No. 2 well.

I would stress that this application is for an exploratory borehole. My officials have rigorously examined the application and the proposed processes involved. Based on discussions and advice from other statutory bodies, they are content that the application is classified as conventional exploration.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether, in planning application E/2013/0093/F, Rathlin Energy intend to use nitrogen rather than water in the proposed hydraulic fracturing of the carboniferous sandstone reservoir; and whether the volume of nitrogen to be injected in the proposed hydraulic fracturing of the carboniferous sandstone reservoir is such that, if water was to replace nitrogen, the 2014 EU recommendation definition of high volume hydraulic fracturing would be met.

(AQW 43030/11-15)

Mr Durkan: High volume hydraulic fracturing as defined in the 2014 EU recommendation report, is a process which involves injecting 1000m³ or more of water per fracturing stage or 10,000m³ or more of water during the entire fracturing process into a well.

Rathin Energy Limited as part of their exploration may have to undertake a stimulated conventional fracture to improve the permeability (connectivity) of pores within the target reservoir should planning permission be granted for the development.

I can confirm that the company intend to use nitrogen during the proposed stimulated conventional fracturing process.

The stimulation fluid will consist of approximately 41 tons of sand (proppant) and 115m³ of stimulation fluid. It will be mixed with 9,600m³ of nitrogen before being pumped down the wellbore, through the perforations and into the formation.

The purpose of the nitrogen is not as a stimulation fluid but a medium to aid the recovery of the stimulation fluid at surface after stimulation has occurred. The use of nitrogen limits exposure of the stimulation fluid to the formation by energising the flow back water aiding maximum recovery of flow back water at surface.

I would stress that application E/2013/0093/F is for the exploration and testing of conventional oil and gas. My officials have rigorously examined the application and processes involved and having discussed the applications with other statutory bodies are content that the application is classified as conventional exploration.

I can assure you that the application will be subject to the full scrutiny of the planning process and at this time no decision on the planning application has been taken.

My Department's Single Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) reaffirms my position that there should be a presumption against the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until the Department is satisfied that there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment if the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency has any plans not to open public parks such as Crawfordsburn Country Park during public holidays due to the non-payment of overtime.
(AQW 43038/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In light of budgetary pressures, my Department is assessing levels of visitor services across its various country parks.

However public and bank holidays are among the most popular days of the year to visit our Country Parks and I can assure you that all our Country Parks, including Crawfordsburn, will remain open on public and bank holidays.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment, given that the report arising from the internal inquiry into the difficulties protecting Drumclay Crannog was passed to his predecessor on 23 October 2013 and given his predecessor's commitment to distribute copies of this review to the Minister for Regional Development, the Committee for the Environment, the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure and elected representatives for this area, when this distribution will take place.
(AQW 43121/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The report in question did not arise from an internal inquiry. Rather, the previous Minister for the Environment commissioned Professor Gabriel Cooney, to provide an objective "Review of the context of the excavation of a crannog in Drumclay townland, County Fermanagh, on the route of the Cherrymount Link Road".

A copy of the full report was circulated, in confidence, to the Minister for Regional Development, and to the Chairs of the Environment and the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committees, in September 2014. I want to enable a wider circulation of the key findings and recommendations of the report. In order to achieve this, my officials have liaised with Professor Cooney about the preparation of an executive summary/key findings document. Work continues in this regard, and a date for receipt of such a document is currently being agreed. I will ensure you and other elected representatives are provided with a copy of it when it is finalised.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment what input the Loughs Agency had as a statutory consultee in reference to in-river hydro-schemes on Loughs Agency rivers; and whether it opposed a number of these developments.
(AQW 43143/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can advise the member that since April 2011, Loughs Agency were consulted on 22 separate hydroelectric schemes on rivers for which they have a statutory responsibility.

In some cases the Agency has raised no objection to the scheme subject to a number of conditions to be attached to the permission. I can confirm that in a number of other cases currently under consideration by the Department, the Agency has raised issues about the scheme including concerns about the creation of new and significant obstacles to fish movement, impacts on spawning and nursery areas for salmonids, fish migration and cumulative impacts.

The Agency's consultation responses will be carefully considered by the Department and, where necessary, appropriate changes to the scheme and/ or mitigation measures will be sought before coming to a decision on the application.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment what is the position of NIEA in reference to bonfire material currently being accumulated at Mossley, Newtownabbey; and whether the NIEA will seek to remove the noxious materials at this, and other, sites.
(AQW 43145/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Burning tyres generates toxic fumes and by-products which are extremely dangerous to both humans and animals. So we are determined to work with local councils to reduce the burning, particularly of tyres, on bonfires.

On 4 February 2015, Newtownabbey Borough Council reported the alleged disposal of approximately 100 waste tyres on a bonfire site located between Manse Road, and Milewater Drive in New Mossley, Newtownabbey to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

The council subsequently provided details of the vehicle used, and a potential witness to the incident and the NIEA is now investigating the matter.

I should be clear that the legal position in relation to bonfires is complex and relevant powers are exercised by a number of public bodies.

Local councils have overall responsibility for managing bonfires and whilst the NIEA does not have powers to remove waste itself from bonfire sites, I have directed the NIEA to seek to prevent illegal dumping of tyres through targeting waste producers and carriers.

I will also be hosting a meeting in early April 2015 to which I will be inviting all Local Councils in Northern Ireland to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to progressively reduce the burning of tyres on bonfires.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment, with respect to the planned merger with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, what future plans his Department has for the Water Management Unit premises on the Antrim Road, Lisburn.

(AQW 43154/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department of the Environment has no plans to alter the current work staff profile undertaken at Lisburn before May 2016, apart from any relocations of staff required as a consequence of the Civil Service VER scheme. The new Department to be created in May 2016 may review its estate holdings and it would be a matter for the new Minister to decide on the future locations of staff and functions in the new Department.

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment, with respect to the planned merger with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, what future plans his Department has for the relocation of staff based at the Water Management Unit on the Antrim Road, Lisburn.

(AQW 43156/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department of the Environment has no plans to alter the current work staff profile undertaken at Lisburn before May 2016, apart from any relocations of staff required as a consequence of the Civil Service VER scheme. The new Department to be created in May 2016 may review its estate holdings and it would be a matter for the new Minister to decide on the future locations of staff and functions in the new Department.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment what habitats assessments have been carried out since 1995 to assess the effect of Northern Ireland Water discharges and abstractions on the ecosystem in Lough Neagh, particularly the effect on the wildlife protected under the Special Protection Area designation.

(AQW 43164/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In preparation for the formation of Northern Ireland Water (NIW) in 2007 an exercise was carried out to produce a Test of Likely Significance to cover water abstractions and discharges to the major water bodies in Northern Ireland.

Consultants were commissioned by Water Service (the predecessor body of NIW) to carry out a "Regulation 43" review of the existing discharges under the Habitats (HD) and Birds Directives for all wastewater treatment works (WWTW) to determine their impacts upon Natura 2000 sites across Northern Ireland.

In June 2007 an assessment was completed for the Lough Neagh area. All further WWTW upgrades have been screened and where appropriate a further HD Article 6 assessment has been carried out. As a result two further assessments have been carried out for WWTWs discharging in the Lough Neagh area.

A Test of Likely Significance was also carried out in July 2005 and December 2012 on the three Public Water Abstractions from Lough Neagh.

On each occasion it was determined that there would be no significant impact on the designated sites (Lough Neagh ASSI and Lough Neagh & Lough Beg Special Protection Area).

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what buildings in Holywood are listed.

(AQW 43238/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Based upon the 1974 ward boundaries – which is how the department holds such records - the number of listed buildings are as follows in the requested areas:- Holywood 85; Donaghadee 58, and Millisle 7. A list of these buildings, which has been produced from the Northern Ireland Buildings Database, has been placed in the Assembly Library.

You will be aware, however, that there have been boundary changes since 1974, and as such the figures should not be taken as definitive in relation to the current boundaries.

NI Buildings Database

Listed Buildings within Millisle area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/05/001	Carrowdore Castle, Abbey Road, Ballyrawer [near Carrowdore], Millisle, Newtownards Co Down BT22 2JH		B+	Country House
HB24/05/003	Entrance gateway to Carrowdore Castle Carrowdore Castle, Carrowdore, Ballyrawer, Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2JH		B2	Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
HB24/05/004	Christ Church (C of I) Woburn Road, Ballyrawer, Millisle Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2HY		B+	Church

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/05/018	Woburn House Ballywalter Road, Drumfad, Millisle Newtownards, Co Down BT22		B2	Office
HB24/05/019	Woburn Cottage 30 Woburn Road, Drumfad, Millisle, Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2HY		B2	House
HB24/05/025	112 Ballywalter Road Millisle, Newtownards, Co. Down BT22 2HS		B2	House
HB24/05/031	Millisle and Ballycopeland Presbyterian Church Ballywalter Road, Ballymacruise, Millisle, Newtownards, Co. Down BT22 2HS		B2	Church

Listed Buildings within Donaghadee area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/06/001	Donaghadee (Cof I) parish church Church Place, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DB		B+	Church
HB24/06/002	Tower on The Motte off Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Tower
HB24/06/003	Manor Farm 106 Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0ED		B2	Outbuildings
HB24/06/007	31 New Road Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DR		B1	House
HB24/06/008 A	33 New Road Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PY		B2	House
HB24/06/008 B	35 New Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PY		B2	House
HB24/06/009	37 New Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DU		B2	House
HB24/06/013	16-16a Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	
HB24/06/016 A	24 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DS		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/016 B	26 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DT		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/016 C	28 Warren Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DT		B2	Hotel - Terrace
HB24/06/016 D	30 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DS		B2	House
HB24/06/019 A	53 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	Hotel - Terrace
HB24/06/019 B	55 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House
HB24/06/019 C	57 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/019 D	59 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/019 E	61 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/025	71 Newtownards Road, Ballyfotherley, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PT		B1	House
HB24/06/027	55 Hogstown Road, Ballyfotherly, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	House
HB24/06/031	Herdstown House, 11 Hogstown Road, Herdstown, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0NL		B1	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/06/034	Light House, Mew Island, Mark, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B	Light House/ Navigation
HB24/06/036	Methodist Church 2 Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DA		B2	Church
HB24/06/038	The Stone House 93 Warren Road, Portavoe, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PJ		B1	House
HB24/06/039 A	12 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/06/039 B	14 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/06/039 C	16 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/07/002	19 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/003	First Presbyterian Church High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	Church
HB24/07/004	Former Town Hall 24 High Street, Donaghadee Co Down		B+	Office
HB24/07/005	23-25 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HH		B2	Office
HB24/07/006	36 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	House
HB24/07/008 A	59 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/008 B	61 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	House
HB24/07/009 A	The Manor House High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		A	House
HB24/07/009 B	Manor House NW extension Manor House, High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Outbuildings
HB24/07/013 A	15 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HD		B1	House
HB24/07/013 B	17 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HD		B1	Shop
HB24/07/014	19 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/015	Old Market House (& Court House) New Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	Shop
HB24/07/016	12 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	School
HB24/07/018 A	25 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/019	28 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/021	Harbour House South End, South Pier, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/022	The Harbour, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	Harbour/ Pier
HB24/07/023	Light House The Harbour (South pier), Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	Light House/ Navigation Mark
HB24/07/024	Former Admiral Leslie Hall 2 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Church
HB24/07/025	Prospect House 4 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/026	Rosebank, 8 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/027	Railway overbridge (to The Commons) (off Millisle Road), Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Bridge
HB24/07/029	24 Killaughey Road (off Cannyreagh Road), Cannyreagh, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	House
HB24/07/032	Erin Lodge, Rosepark Avenue [off Killaughey Road], Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/07/033	[Former railway] bridge, Killaughey Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Bridge
HB24/07/044	Ballyvester House, 84 Ballyvester Road, Ballyvester, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B+	House
HB24/07/055	Water Tower, Hunt's Park (off Killaughey Road), Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Water Works Structures
HB24/07/057	Ulster Bank, 30 New Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Bank
HB24/07/058	Ballyvester School, 244 Killaughey Road, Ballyvester, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	School
HB24/07/059	'Grace Neill's Bar', 33 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Public House
HB24/07/060	Masonic Hall, 1 Millisle Road / 2 Killaughey Road, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	Hall

Listed Buildings within Holywood area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/19/002 A	118-120 High Street, Holywood, County Down BT18 9HW		B1	Shop
HB23/19/002 C	122 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HW		B1	House
HB23/19/006 A	140 High Street, Holywood, County Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 B	142 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 C	144 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 D	146 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 E	148 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/19/006 F	150 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/007	St Helen's House, 155 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9LG		B1	House
HB23/19/009	St Colmcille's Tower & Spire, 2a My Lady's Mile, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9EW		B2	Church
HB23/19/011	1 Ean Hill, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	House
HB23/20/002	Withers and Henderson Memorial, High Street, Holywood, County Down		B2	Memorial
HB23/20/005 A	4 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AZ		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/005 B	Rollo House, 6 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AZ		B2	Office
HB23/20/010	First Holywood Non-Subscribing, Presbyterian Church, High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AQ		B1	Church
HB23/20/012	High Street Presbyterian Church, High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AE		B2	Church
HB23/20/013	Public Library (Former Lower Sullivan School), High Street, Holywood, Co. Down		B	Library
HB23/20/014	First Holywood Presbyterian Church, 7 Bangor Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B2	Church
HB23/20/016 A	Martello House, 13 Bangor Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B1	House
HB23/20/016 B	Clifden House, 15 Bangor Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B1	House
HB23/20/017 A	4 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT19 0NX		B1	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/20/017 B	3 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT19 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/018 A	Tudor Hall, 5 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/018 B	Tudor House, 6 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/019 A	2 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/019 B	1 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/020 A	1 Stewart's Place, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9DX		B2	House
HB23/20/020 B	3 Stewart's Place, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9DX		B1	Church
HB23/20/022 A	20 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	House
HB23/20/022 B	22 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/022 C	24 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/022 D	26 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/023 A	28 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/023 B	30 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/023 C	32 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	
HB23/20/024	33 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office
HB23/20/030	Orange Hall, Redburn Square, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	Hall
HB23/20/033 A	1 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 B	2 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 C	3 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 D	4 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 A	5 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 B	6 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 C	7 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 D	8 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/038	Parochial Hall, Church Road, Holywood, Co. Down		B	Hall
HB23/20/039 A	Holywood Parish Church of Ireland, 71 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B+	Church
HB23/20/039 B	Holywood Parish Centre, 71 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	Hall
HB23/20/040 A	80 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 B	82 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 C	84 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 D	86 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 E	88 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 F	90 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/041	St. Philip & St. James Parish Hall, 92 Church Road, Holywood, Co. Down BT18 9BX (AKA Holywood Old School)		B1	Hall
HB23/20/050 A	5 Demesne Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9DQ		B2	House
HB23/20/050 B	7 Demesne Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9DQ		B2	House
HB23/20/056 A	33 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/056 B	35 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/20/057 A	39 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/057 B	41 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/057 C	43 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 A	1 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 B	2 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BE		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 C	3 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 D	4 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/060 A	61 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/060 B	63 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/061	20 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/063	79 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/065 A	1 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 B	2 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 C	3 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 D	4 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 E	5 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/065 F	6 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/065 G	7 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/066 A	93 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/066 B	95 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BG		B1	House
HB23/20/067 A	85 Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/071	The Former Post Office, 43 High St., Holywood, Co. Down		B1	Office
HB23/20/072	134 Church Road, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	House
HB23/20/073	Johnny the Jig, High Street, Holywood, County Down		B2	Memorial
HB23/20/082	McCammon Memorial Masonic Hall, 11 Sullivan Place, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9JF		B2	Hall
HB23/20/085	23 Church Avenue, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BJ		B2	House

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what buildings in Donaghadee are listed.
(AQW 43239/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Based upon the 1974 ward boundaries – which is how the department holds such records - the number of listed buildings are as follows in the requested areas:- Holywood 85; Donaghadee 58, and Millisle 7. A list of these buildings, which has been produced from the Northern Ireland Buildings Database, has been placed in the Assembly Library.

You will be aware, however, that there have been boundary changes since 1974, and as such the figures should not be taken as definitive in relation to the current boundaries.

NI Buildings Database**Listed Buildings within Millisle area**

HB Ref No	Address	Survey1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/05/001	Carrowdore Castle, Abbey Road, Ballyrawer [near Carrowdore], Millisle, Newtownards Co Down BT22 2JH		B+	Country House
HB24/05/003	Entrance gateway to Carrowdore Castle Carrowdore Castle, Carrowdore, Ballyrawer, Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2JH		B2	Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
HB24/05/004	Christ Church (C of I) Woburn Road, Ballyrawer, Millisle Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2HY		B+	Church
HB24/05/018	Woburn House Ballywalter Road, Drumfad, Millisle Newtownards, Co Down BT22		B2	Office
HB24/05/019	Woburn Cottage 30 Woburn Road, Drumfad, Millisle, Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2HY		B2	House
HB24/05/025	112 Ballywalter Road Millisle, Newtownards, Co. Down BT22 2HS		B2	House
HB24/05/031	Millisle and Ballycopeland Presbyterian Church Ballywalter Road, Ballymacruise, Millisle, Newtownards, Co. Down BT22 2HS		B2	Church

Listed Buildings within Donaghadee area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/06/001	Donaghadee (Cof I) parish church Church Place, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DB		B+	Church
HB24/06/002	Tower on The Motte off Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Tower
HB24/06/003	Manor Farm 106 Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0ED		B2	Outbuildings
HB24/06/007	31 New Road Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DR		B1	House
HB24/06/008 A	33 New Road Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PY		B2	House
HB24/06/008 B	35 New Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PY		B2	House
HB24/06/009	37 New Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DU		B2	House
HB24/06/013	16-16a Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	
HB24/06/016 A	24 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DS		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/016 B	26 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DT		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/016 C	28 Warren Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DT		B2	Hotel - Terrace
HB24/06/016 D	30 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DS		B2	House
HB24/06/019 A	53 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	Hotel - Terrace
HB24/06/019 B	55 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House
HB24/06/019 C	57 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/06/019 D	59 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/019 E	61 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/025	71 Newtownards Road, Ballyfotherley, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PT		B1	House
HB24/06/027	55 Hogstown Road, Ballyfotherly, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	House
HB24/06/031	Herdstown House, 11 Hogstown Road, Herdstown, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0NL		B1	House
HB24/06/034	Light House, Mew Island, Mark, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B	Light House/ Navigation
HB24/06/036	Methodist Church 2 Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DA		B2	Church
HB24/06/038	The Stone House 93 Warren Road, Portavoe, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PJ		B1	House
HB24/06/039 A	12 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/06/039 B	14 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/06/039 C	16 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/07/002	19 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/003	First Presbyterian Church High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	Church
HB24/07/004	Former Town Hall 24 High Street, Donaghadee Co Down		B+	Office
HB24/07/005	23-25 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HH		B2	Office
HB24/07/006	36 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	House
HB24/07/008 A	59 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/008 B	61 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	House
HB24/07/009 A	The Manor House High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		A	House
HB24/07/009 B	Manor House NW extension Manor House, High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Outbuildings
HB24/07/013 A	15 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HD		B1	House
HB24/07/013 B	17 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HD		B1	Shop
HB24/07/014	19 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/015	Old Market House (& Court House) New Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	Shop
HB24/07/016	12 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	School
HB24/07/018 A	25 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/019	28 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/021	Harbour House South End, South Pier, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/022	The Harbour, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	Harbour/ Pier
HB24/07/023	Light House The Harbour (South pier), Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	Light House/ Navigation Mark

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/07/024	Former Admiral Leslie Hall 2 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Church
HB24/07/025	Prospect House 4 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/026	Rosebank, 8 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/027	Railway overbridge (to The Commons) (off Millisle Road), Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Bridge
HB24/07/029	24 Killaughey Road (off Cannyreagh Road), Cannyreagh, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	House
HB24/07/032	Erin Lodge, Rosepark Avenue [off Killaughey Road], Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/033	[Former railway] bridge, Killaughey Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Bridge
HB24/07/044	Ballyvester House, 84 Ballyvester Road, Ballyvester, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B+	House
HB24/07/055	Water Tower, Hunt's Park (off Killaughey Road), Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Water Works Structures
HB24/07/057	Ulster Bank, 30 New Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Bank
HB24/07/058	Ballyvester School, 244 Killaughey Road, Ballyvester, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	School
HB24/07/059	'Grace Neill's Bar', 33 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Public House
HB24/07/060	Masonic Hall, 1 Millisle Road / 2 Killaughey Road, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	Hall

Listed Buildings within Holywood area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/19/002 A	118-120 High Street, Holywood, County Down BT18 9HW		B1	Shop
HB23/19/002 C	122 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HW		B1	House
HB23/19/006 A	140 High Street, Holywood, County Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 B	142 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 C	144 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 D	146 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 E	148 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/19/006 F	150 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/007	St Helen's House, 155 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9LG		B1	House
HB23/19/009	St Colmcille's Tower & Spire, 2a My Lady's Mile, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9EW		B2	Church
HB23/19/011	1 Ean Hill, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	House
HB23/20/002	Withers and Henderson Memorial, High Street, Holywood, County Down		B2	Memorial
HB23/20/005 A	4 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AZ		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/005 B	Rollo House, 6 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AZ		B2	Office
HB23/20/010	First Holywood Non-Subscribing, Presbyterian Church, High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AQ		B1	Church

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/20/012	High Street Presbyterian Church, High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9AE		B2	Church
HB23/20/013	Public Library (Former Lower Sullivan School), High Street, Holywood, Co. Down		B	Library
HB23/20/014	First Holywood Presbyterian Church, 7 Bangor Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B2	Church
HB23/20/016 A	Martello House, 13 Bangor Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B1	House
HB23/20/016 B	Clifden House, 15 Bangor Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B1	House
HB23/20/017 A	4 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT19 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/017 B	3 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT19 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/018 A	Tudor Hall, 5 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/018 B	Tudor House, 6 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/019 A	2 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/019 B	1 Tudor Park, Holywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/020 A	1 Stewart's Place, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9DX		B2	House
HB23/20/020 B	3 Stewart's Place, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9DX		B1	Church
HB23/20/022 A	20 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	House
HB23/20/022 B	22 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/022 C	24 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/022 D	26 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/023 A	28 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/023 B	30 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/023 C	32 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	
HB23/20/024	33 Shore Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office
HB23/20/030	Orange Hall, Redburn Square, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	Hall
HB23/20/033 A	1 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 B	2 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 C	3 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 D	4 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 A	5 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 B	6 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 C	7 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 D	8 The Crescent, Holywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/038	Parochial Hall, Church Road, Holywood, Co. Down		B	Hall
HB23/20/039 A	Holywood Parish Church of Ireland, 71 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B+	Church
HB23/20/039 B	Holywood Parish Centre, 71 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	Hall
HB23/20/040 A	80 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 B	82 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 C	84 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/20/040 D	86 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 E	88 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 F	90 Church Road, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/041	St. Philip & St. James Parish Hall, 92 Church Road, Holywood, Co. Down BT18 9BX (AKA Holywood Old School)		B1	Hall
HB23/20/050 A	5 Demesne Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9DQ		B2	House
HB23/20/050 B	7 Demesne Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9DQ		B2	House
HB23/20/056 A	33 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/056 B	35 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/057 A	39 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/057 B	41 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/057 C	43 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 A	1 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 B	2 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BE		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 C	3 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 D	4 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/060 A	61 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/060 B	63 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/061	20 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/063	79 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/065 A	1 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 B	2 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 C	3 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 D	4 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 E	5 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/065 F	6 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/065 G	7 Ardmore Terrace, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/066 A	93 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/066 B	95 Victoria Road, Holywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BG		B1	House
HB23/20/067 A	85 Victoria Road, Holywood, County Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/071	The Former Post Office, 43 High St., Holywood, Co. Down		B1	Office
HB23/20/072	134 Church Road, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	House
HB23/20/073	Johnny the Jig, High Street, Holywood, County Down		B2	Memorial
HB23/20/082	McCammon Memorial Masonic Hall, 11 Sullivan Place, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9JF		B2	Hall
HB23/20/085	23 Church Avenue, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BJ		B2	House

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what buildings in Millisle are listed.
(AQW 43240/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Based upon the 1974 ward boundaries – which is how the department holds such records - the number of listed buildings are as follows in the requested areas:- Hollywood 85; Donaghadee 58, and Millisle 7. A list of these buildings, which has been produced from the Northern Ireland Buildings Database, has been placed in the Assembly Library.

You will be aware, however, that there have been boundary changes since 1974, and as such the figures should not be taken as definitive in relation to the current boundaries.

NI Buildings Database

Listed Buildings within Millisle area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/05/001	Carrowdore Castle, Abbey Road, Ballyrawer [near Carrowdore], Millisle, Newtownards Co Down BT22 2JH		B+	Country House
HB24/05/003	Entrance gateway to Carrowdore Castle Carrowdore Castle, Carrowdore, Ballyrawer, Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2JH		B2	Gates/ Screens/ Lodges
HB24/05/004	Christ Church (C of I) Woburn Road, Ballyrawer, Millisle Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2HY		B+	Church
HB24/05/018	Woburn House Ballywalter Road, Drumfad, Millisle Newtownards, Co Down BT22		B2	Office
HB24/05/019	Woburn Cottage 30 Woburn Road, Drumfad, Millisle, Newtownards, Co Down BT22 2HY		B2	House
HB24/05/025	112 Ballywalter Road Millisle, Newtownards, Co. Down BT22 2HS		B2	House
HB24/05/031	Millisle and Ballycopeland Presbyterian Church Ballywalter Road, Ballymacruise, Millisle, Newtownards, Co. Down BT22 2HS		B2	Church

Listed Buildings within Donaghadee area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/06/001	Donaghadee (Cof I) parish church Church Place, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DB		B+	Church
HB24/06/002	Tower on The Motte off Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Tower
HB24/06/003	Manor Farm 106 Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0ED		B2	Outbuildings
HB24/06/007	31 New Road Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DR		B1	House
HB24/06/008 A	33 New Road Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PY		B2	House
HB24/06/008 B	35 New Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PY		B2	House
HB24/06/009	37 New Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DU		B2	House
HB24/06/013	16-16a Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	
HB24/06/016 A	24 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DS		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/016 B	26 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DT		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/016 C	28 Warren Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DT		B2	Hotel - Terrace
HB24/06/016 D	30 Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DS		B2	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/06/019 A	53 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	Hotel - Terrace
HB24/06/019 B	55 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House
HB24/06/019 C	57 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/019 D	59 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/019 E	61 Warren Road (former light house keepers' dwellings) Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PQ		B2	House - Terrace
HB24/06/025	71 Newtownards Road, Ballyfotherley, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PT		B1	House
HB24/06/027	55 Hogstown Road, Ballyfotherly, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	House
HB24/06/031	Herdstown House, 11 Hogstown Road, Herdstown, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0NL		B1	House
HB24/06/034	Light House, Mew Island, Mark, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B	Light House/ Navigation
HB24/06/036	Methodist Church 2 Moat Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0DA		B2	Church
HB24/06/038	The Stone House 93 Warren Road, Portavoe, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0PJ		B1	House
HB24/06/039 A	12 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/06/039 B	14 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/06/039 C	16 New Road, Donaghadee, County Down BT21 0DR		B1	House - Terrace
HB24/07/002	19 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/003	First Presbyterian Church High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	Church
HB24/07/004	Former Town Hall 24 High Street, Donaghadee Co Down		B+	Office
HB24/07/005	23-25 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HH		B2	Office
HB24/07/006	36 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	House
HB24/07/008 A	59 High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/008 B	61 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	House
HB24/07/009 A	The Manor House High Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		A	House
HB24/07/009 B	Manor House NW extension Manor House, High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Outbuildings
HB24/07/013 A	15 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HD		B1	House
HB24/07/013 B	17 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down BT21 0HD		B1	Shop
HB24/07/014	19 Bow Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/015	Old Market House (& Court House) New Street, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	Shop
HB24/07/016	12 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	School
HB24/07/018 A	25 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	House
HB24/07/019	28 The Parade, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB24/07/021	Harbour House South End, South Pier, Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/022	The Harbour, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	Harbour/ Pier
HB24/07/023	Light House The Harbour (South pier), Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	Light House/ Navigation Mark
HB24/07/024	Former Admiral Leslie Hall 2 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Church
HB24/07/025	Prospect House 4 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/026	Rosebank, 8 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B+	House
HB24/07/027	Railway overbridge (to The Commons) (off Millisle Road), Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Bridge
HB24/07/029	24 Killaughey Road (off Cannyreagh Road), Cannyreagh, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	House
HB24/07/032	Erin Lodge, Rosepark Avenue [off Killaughey Road], Donaghadee, Co Down		B1	House
HB24/07/033	[Former railway] bridge, Killaughey Road, Donaghadee, Co Down		B2	Bridge
HB24/07/044	Ballyvester House, 84 Ballyvester Road, Ballyvester, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B+	House
HB24/07/055	Water Tower, Hunt's Park (off Killaughey Road), Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Water Works Structures
HB24/07/057	Ulster Bank, 30 New Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Bank
HB24/07/058	Ballyvester School, 244 Killaughey Road, Ballyvester, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	School
HB24/07/059	'Grace Neill's Bar', 33 High Street, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B2	Public House
HB24/07/060	Masonic Hall, 1 Millisle Road / 2 Killaughey Road, Donaghadee, Co. Down		B1	Hall

Listed Buildings within Holywood area

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/19/002 A	118-120 High Street, Holywood, County Down BT18 9HW		B1	Shop
HB23/19/002 C	122 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HW		B1	House
HB23/19/006 A	140 High Street, Holywood, County Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 B	142 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 C	144 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 D	146 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/006 E	148 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/19/006 F	150 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HS		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/19/007	St Helen's House, 155 High Street, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9LG		B1	House
HB23/19/009	St Colmcille's Tower & Spire, 2a My Lady's Mile, Holywood, Co Down BT18 9EW		B2	Church
HB23/19/011	1 Ean Hill, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	House

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/20/002	Withers and Henderson Memorial, High Street, Hollywood, County Down		B2	Memorial
HB23/20/005 A	4 High Street, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9AZ		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/005 B	Rollo House, 6 High Street, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9AZ		B2	Office
HB23/20/010	First Hollywood Non-Subscribing, Presbyterian Church, High Street, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9AQ		B1	Church
HB23/20/012	High Street Presbyterian Church, High Street, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9AE		B2	Church
HB23/20/013	Public Library (Former Lower Sullivan School), High Street, Hollywood, Co. Down		B	Library
HB23/20/014	First Hollywood Presbyterian Church, 7 Bangor Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B2	Church
HB23/20/016 A	Martello House, 13 Bangor Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B1	House
HB23/20/016 B	Clifden House, 15 Bangor Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 0NU		B1	House
HB23/20/017 A	4 Tudor Park, Hollywood, Co Down BT19 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/017 B	3 Tudor Park, Hollywood, Co Down BT19 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/018 A	Tudor Hall, 5 Tudor Park, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/018 B	Tudor House, 6 Tudor Park, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/019 A	2 Tudor Park, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/019 B	1 Tudor Park, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 0NX		B1	House
HB23/20/020 A	1 Stewart's Place, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9DX		B2	House
HB23/20/020 B	3 Stewart's Place, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9DX		B1	Church
HB23/20/022 A	20 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	House
HB23/20/022 B	22 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/022 C	24 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/022 D	26 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/023 A	28 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/023 B	30 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office - Terrace
HB23/20/023 C	32 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	
HB23/20/024	33 Shore Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9HX		B2	Office
HB23/20/030	Orange Hall, Redburn Square, Hollywood, Co. Down		B1	Hall
HB23/20/033 A	1 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 B	2 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 C	3 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/033 D	4 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 A	5 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 B	6 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 C	7 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/034 D	8 The Crescent, Hollywood, County Down BT18 9AY		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/038	Parochial Hall, Church Road, Hollywood, Co. Down		B	Hall

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/20/039 A	Hollywood Parish Church of Ireland, 71 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B+	Church
HB23/20/039 B	Hollywood Parish Centre, 71 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	Hall
HB23/20/040 A	80 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 B	82 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 C	84 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 D	86 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 E	88 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/040 F	90 Church Road, Hollywood, Co Down BT18 9BX		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/041	St. Philip & St. James Parish Hall, 92 Church Road, Hollywood, Co. Down BT18 9BX (AKA Hollywood Old School)		B1	Hall
HB23/20/050 A	5 Demesne Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9DQ		B2	House
HB23/20/050 B	7 Demesne Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9DQ		B2	House
HB23/20/056 A	33 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/056 B	35 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/057 A	39 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/057 B	41 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/057 C	43 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 A	1 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Hollywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 B	2 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BE		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 C	3 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Hollywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/058 D	4 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, Hollywood, County Down, BT18 9BE		B1	House - Terrace
HB23/20/060 A	61 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/060 B	63 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BD		B2	House
HB23/20/061	20 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/063	79 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/065 A	1 Ardmore Terrace, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 B	2 Ardmore Terrace, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 C	3 Ardmore Terrace, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 D	4 Ardmore Terrace, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	House - Terrace
HB23/20/065 E	5 Ardmore Terrace, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/065 F	6 Ardmore Terrace, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/065 G	7 Ardmore Terrace, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BH		B2	
HB23/20/066 A	93 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/066 B	95 Victoria Road, Hollywood, Co. Down, BT18 9BG		B1	House
HB23/20/067 A	85 Victoria Road, Hollywood, County Down, BT18 9BG		B2	House
HB23/20/071	The Former Post Office, 43 High St., Hollywood, Co. Down		B1	Office

HB Ref No	Address	Survey 1	Survey 2	Current Use
HB23/20/072	134 Church Road, Holywood, Co. Down		B1	House
HB23/20/073	Johnny the Jig, High Street, Holywood, County Down		B2	Memorial
HB23/20/082	McCammon Memorial Masonic Hall, 11 Sullivan Place, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9JF		B2	Hall
HB23/20/085	23 Church Avenue, Holywood, Co Down, BT18 9BJ		B2	House

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the planning budget that will be provided to Ards and North Down District Council.

(AQW 43317/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is estimated that the cost of providing the planning function in Ards and North Down District Council during 2015-16 will be £1.487m. My Department has reviewed historic data in relation to Planning Income and has estimated that the Council will receive at least £816k in income from the planning function during 2015-16. My Department is therefore providing £671k of funding to Ards and North Down Council to fund the difference.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to list the buildings in Bangor with listed status.

(AQW 43318/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Based upon the 1974 ward boundaries – which is how the department holds such records – there are 149 buildings in Bangor with listed status. A list of these buildings, which has been produced from the Northern Ireland Buildings Database, has been placed in the Assembly Library.

You will be aware, however, that there have been boundary changes since 1974, and - as such - the figures should not be taken as definitive in relation to the current boundaries. The wards showing within the Bangor inset, and used to provide the detail of this answer, are as follows:

- Groomsport
- Churchill
- Ballyholme
- Ballymagee
- Bangor Harbour
- Conlig
- Bangor Castle
- Whitehill
- Rathgael
- Clondeboye
- Silverstream
- Spring Hill
- Bryansburn
- Princetown
- Crawfordsburn
- Craigavad
- Loughview
- Cultra
- Holywood Demesne
- Holywood Priory

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how many agricultural regulations are currently in force.

(AQW 43319/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are eight Regulations, as listed below, directly related to agriculture for which the Department of the Environment has specific responsibility. The DOE also has responsibility for other wider environmental legislation of which the agricultural industry must also meet the requirements. A list and guidance on wider environmental legislation and farmers obligations can be found on the NetRegs website of environmental legislation at the following address:

http://www.netregs.org.uk/business_sectors/agriculture.aspx

- 1 The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013;
- 2 The Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995;
- 3 The Historic Monuments (Class Consents) Order (Northern Ireland) 2001;
- 4 The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014;
- 5 The Phosphorus (Use in Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014;
- 6 The Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1990
- 7 The Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998;
- 8 The Water Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

NIEA is also a Competent Control Authority under The Common Agricultural Policy Direct Payments and Support Schemes (Cross Compliance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the historical significance of Crevenish Castle near Kesh, Co. Fermanagh; (ii) the investments made by the NIEA to protect the castle; (iii) the protection in place; (iv) what responsibility the NIEA have for the upkeep and promotion of the castle; (v) whether this facility is open and accessible to members of the public; (vi) what efforts his Department intends to make to increase public awareness of the castle through directional

signage; and (vii) what efforts his Department intends to make to increase public understanding of the historical significance of the castle through interpretive panels and signage at the castle.

(AQW 43335/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

(i) Historical Significance

Crevenish Castle is an important ruined plantation period house on the edge of Lough Erne. It was built by Captain Thomas Blennerhassett, an English soldier and planter who was granted the lands here, between 1614-1623, and is most likely located on the site of a much earlier fortification. Crevenish is an important surviving example of manor houses from this period. The castle had an associated bawn and a chapel with burying ground. In 1641 the castle was inhabited by Deborah Blennerhasset and her husband Ruairi Maguire. Just prior to the rebellion of 1641, Maguire sought to massacre many of Fermanagh's leading gentry families by inviting them to a banquet in the castle, but the plot was exposed. It was Ruairi Maguire who was to start the rebellion a month later with the burning of the village of Lisnarick. As the castle was in rebel hands from the outset, it was not destroyed during the rebellion. However, it was described as being in a poor condition in the 1660s when it was re-occupied by the Blennerhasset family. Excavations in advance of works for the caravan park revealed a lime kiln which was believed to have been used in the castle's construction.

(ii) Investments

A programme of remedial conservation work, costing £135,689.49 was carried out by the Department's Direct Labour Organisation from April 2006 to September 2008. This work was undertaken as the castle was deemed to be at risk of structural failure and a potential safety risk. NIEA has the statutory power to undertake such works, through the provisions of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995, where a site is deemed to be at imminent risk. NIEA continues to monitor the condition of the site through cyclical inspections.

(iii) Protection

The site is a Scheduled Historic Monument, afforded statutory protection under Article 3 of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995. Scheduled historic monuments are for the most part in private ownership, as is the case with Crevenish Castle. There are 1,973 scheduled monuments throughout Northern Ireland, and they are important and often very visible elements of the historic landscape. As a scheduled monument the site also has recognition as a site of national/regional significance under the provisions of planning policy. As noted above, Crevenish castle is also protected through the planning process, with the Historic Environment Division of the Department's Northern Ireland Environment Agency being consulted by planners on development proposals there. This expert consultation advice has led to previous proposals being amended, so as to be more sympathetic to the castle and its setting.

(iv) Responsibility

The Department has a regulatory responsibility in relation to Crevenish Castle, controlling activities which would affect the scheduled area of the castle. As with other scheduled monuments the Department, through NIEA, monitors the condition of the castle through cyclical inspections. The responsibility for upkeep is primarily that of the owner, although from time to time the Department may enter management agreements with owners to carry out certain works such as conservation. As noted above with the remedial works undertaken in 2006-2008, the Department also has the statutory authority to conduct emergency works to safeguard a scheduled monument. The Department holds publicly available information on the castle, which can be accessed either online or by accessing the Monuments and Buildings Record. The Department does not, as a matter of course, routinely promote scheduled sites that are in private ownership. Rather, officials advise owners, such as councils, who wish to promote their heritage sites.

(v) Access

As the castle is in private ownership, anyone seeking to access the site would be advised to contact the owner in advance. The fact that a monument is scheduled does not automatically grant a right of public access. The Department does, from time to time, enter into work with authorities and groups who are interested in achieving public access, and who have the consent of the landowner. In these cases our input is centred on ensuring that any proposed access arrangements are implemented in a manner that maintains the historic integrity of the monument.

(vi) Directional Signage

The erection of directional signage to Crevenish Castle would be a matter for discussion between the landowner and DRD. The Department does not normally request the provision of directional signage to historic monuments, that are not in its direct management.

(vii) Interpretive signage

The Department may, through a management agreement with an owner or occupier of a site, assist in the provision of interpretative signage. However, there are no plans at present to erect interpretive panels or signage at Crevenish Castle.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) what factors are taken into consideration by Enforcement Officers within Planning Service on whether or not action is expedient; (ii) the number of investigations by the Enforcement Section since 01/04/2011 where it was found that development was carried out without planning permission or where there

was a failure to comply with any condition or limitation subject to which planning permission has been granted; and (iii) the number of these which were found not to be expedient to progress

(AQW 43337/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) Under Article 68 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (as amended) the Department has a general discretion to take enforcement action against a breach of planning control when it regards it as expedient to do so, having regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. Material planning considerations can cover a very wide range of planning matters and enforcement officers will consider each case on its own particular merits.

Enforcement officers are also guided by the Department's policy approach to Enforcement as set out in Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS 9) 'The Enforcement of Planning Control' published in March 2000. In considering whether it is expedient to take enforcement action, officers will consider the following factors:

- A) Whether the breach of planning control would be clearly contrary to policy or unacceptably affect public amenity or the existing use of land and buildings that merit protection in the public interest;
- B) The extent of the breach. Enforcement action must be commensurate with the breach. For example it will usually be inappropriate to issue an enforcement notice for an insignificant or technical breach. Conversely where the breach results or is likely to result in harm to public amenity then it is usual to initiate enforcement action promptly;
- C) The willingness of the offender(s) to remedy the breach of control voluntarily. Where initial attempts by the Department fail to persuade the offender(s) to remedy the breach voluntarily it may be necessary to move to formal action to avoid protracted negotiations and delays;
- D) The statutory time limits. With some exceptions, there is generally a 5 year time limit in which to take enforcement action. Where unlawful developments are close to these time limits enforcement officers will consider whether it is expedient to pursue the case.
- (ii) A total of 7942 enforcement cases were opened by DOE Planning between 01/04/2011 and 31/09/2014, where it was alleged that development was carried out without planning permission or where there was a failure to comply with any condition or limitation subject to which planning permission had been granted.
- (iii) Of these 7942 cases, 1757 were closed because it was not expedient to progress.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the total number of Assembly questions answered by his Department in relation to all aspects of the taxi industry; (ii) a breakdown by constituency of the questions tabled in relation to all aspects of the taxi industry; and (iii) the financial cost incurred by the Department in answering these questions, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 43340/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) My Department has answered 451 Assembly Questions in relation to the taxi industry since February 2011.
- (ii) The breakdown by constituency is only available for approximately 68% of Assembly Questions tabled, due to the way the information has been recorded historically. The information available (for the 68% of Assembly Questions) is set out in the attached Table and shows figures for constituencies of the MLAs who have tabled Questions.
- (iii) The amount of staff time to prepare and answer the questions cannot be readily separated from their other day to day work and thus this time has not been costed separately.

Table A

Constituency	Number of Aqs
East Antrim	2
East Belfast	21
East Londonderry	14
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	149
Foyle	5
Lagan Valley	4
Mid Ulster	1
Newry and Armagh	2
North Antrim	14

Constituency	Number of AQs
North Belfast	4
North Down	72
South Antrim	9
South Belfast	1
South Down	6
Strangford	0
Upper Bann	0
West Belfast	4
West Tyrone	0

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Minister for Regional Development regarding whether an 'all in or all out' policy for taxis in bus lanes is necessary to avoid confusion amongst consumers, visitors, tourists and enforcement agencies.

(AQW 43341/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Whilst the taxi reform programme is within the remit of my Department, decisions in relation to which vehicles are permitted to use bus lanes are for the Minister for Regional Development.

I met with Minister Kennedy to discuss taxi reform and the related issue of bus lanes on 17 December 2013. I understand that Minister Kennedy is waiting until the completion of the legislative process specifying the new taxi licensing regime before he takes a final view on which taxis, if any, are allowed to travel in bus lanes.

At the meeting with Minister Kennedy I expressed my preference for only wheelchair accessible taxis being permitted to use bus lanes, as this will maintain the incentive for some drivers to purchase wheelchair accessible taxis.

I have not had any discussions in relation to taxis in bus lanes with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment or the Minister of Justice.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding whether an 'all in or all out' policy for taxis in bus lanes is necessary to avoid confusion amongst consumers, visitors, tourists and enforcement agencies.

(AQW 43343/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Whilst the taxi reform programme is within the remit of my Department, decisions in relation to which vehicles are permitted to use bus lanes are for the Minister for Regional Development.

I met with Minister Kennedy to discuss taxi reform and the related issue of bus lanes on 17 December 2013. I understand that Minister Kennedy is waiting until the completion of the legislative process specifying the new taxi licensing regime before he takes a final view on which taxis, if any, are allowed to travel in bus lanes.

At the meeting with Minister Kennedy I expressed my preference for only wheelchair accessible taxis being permitted to use bus lanes, as this will maintain the incentive for some drivers to purchase wheelchair accessible taxis.

I have not had any discussions in relation to taxis in bus lanes with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment or the Minister of Justice.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Minister of Justice regarding whether an 'all in or all out' policy for taxis in bus lanes is necessary to avoid confusion amongst consumers, visitors, tourists and enforcement agencies.

(AQW 43344/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Whilst the taxi reform programme is within the remit of my Department, decisions in relation to which vehicles are permitted to use bus lanes are for the Minister for Regional Development.

I met with Minister Kennedy to discuss taxi reform and the related issue of bus lanes on 17 December 2013. I understand that Minister Kennedy is waiting until the completion of the legislative process specifying the new taxi licensing regime before he takes a final view on which taxis, if any, are allowed to travel in bus lanes.

At the meeting with Minister Kennedy I expressed my preference for only wheelchair accessible taxis being permitted to use bus lanes, as this will maintain the incentive for some drivers to purchase wheelchair accessible taxis.

I have not had any discussions in relation to taxis in bus lanes with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment or the Minister of Justice.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to list the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department or its arm's-length bodies since 2011; and to detail the amount received in each case.

(AQW 43370/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The table below details the funding awarded by my Department to community and voluntary groups in North Down since 2011. No funding has been provided by arm's-length bodies.

Group Funded	Amount Awarded £
British Trust for Ornithology	18,207
Camphill Community Glencraig	12,956
Conservation Volunteers	35,212
Copeland Bird Observatory	94,351
FABB(For a better Bangor)	3,000
Girlguiding Ulster	126,125
Millisle Youth Forum	22,687
National Trust	26,640
Natural Copeland	20,847
North Down Community Network	8,320
Ulster Wildlife Trust	18,828
Woodland Trust	401,957
Total Funding Awarded	789,130

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment why there have been no refurbishment grants approved by the Historic Monuments Branch for listed buildings in Northern Ireland in the last twelve months; and to detail when they will be resumed.

(AQW 43375/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is not the case that no grants have been approved in the last twelve months. Taking this timescale as the 2014-15 financial year, offers totalling £1,720K have been approved for the conservation/refurbishment of listed buildings.

However, given the significantly reduced budget for the Department for next year, difficult decisions will need to be taken on the future availability of funding. The Department is currently working through the final detail on allocations and when these have been finalised, officials will inform all relevant individuals and groups of the final position.

It is not the case that all owners are prevented from commencing work on a project, until a grant has been agreed. There is no onus on an owner to apply for listed building grant-aid, and - providing all of the necessary planning related approvals are in place - they may choose to proceed, without applying for grant-aid. Where an owner has applied for grant-aid, then it is the policy that no work may start until permission to proceed is given, and the project must comply with the department's Schedule of Requirements (SoR). Should an owner choose to proceed without such approval, then it is at their risk, and any works carried out - prior to approval being secured - become ineligible for grant-aid. This is a control mechanism that has been in place since 1999, resulting from recommendations within an Internal Audit report. There are no plans to review the policy at this time.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will consider reviewing the policy of the Historic Monuments Branch that prevents owners from starting refurbishments projects until a grant has been agreed.

(AQW 43376/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is not the case that no grants have been approved in the last twelve months. Taking this timescale as the 2014-15 financial year, offers totaling £1,720K have been approved for the conservation/refurbishment of listed buildings.

However, given the significantly reduced budget for the Department for next year, difficult decisions will need to be taken on the future availability of funding. The Department is currently working through the final detail on allocations and when these have been finalised, officials will inform all relevant individuals and groups of the final position.

It is not the case that all owners are prevented from commencing work on a project, until a grant has been agreed. There is no onus on an owner to apply for listed building grant-aid, and - providing all of the necessary planning related approvals are in place - they may choose to proceed, without applying for grant-aid. Where an owner has applied for grant-aid, then it is the policy that no work may start until permission to proceed is given, and the project must comply with the department's Schedule of Requirements (SoR). Should an owner choose to proceed without such approval, then it is at their risk, and any works carried out - prior to approval being secured - become ineligible for grant-aid. This is a control mechanism that has

been in place since 1999, resulting from recommendations within an Internal Audit report. There are no plans to review the policy at this time.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to list the invasive alien animal and plant species recorded in Northern Ireland. (AQW 43388/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are currently 50 recorded Invasive Alien Species in Northern Ireland. These are listed in the attached Annex A.

Annex A

Freshwater

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Bloody red shrimp – crustacean | ■ New Zealand Pigmyweed – plant |
| ■ Canadian Waterweed – plant | ■ Nuttall's Water-Weed – plant |
| ■ Fringed Water-Lily – plant | ■ Parrot's Feather – plant |
| ■ Curly Waterweed – plant | ■ Red-eared slider – turtle |
| ■ Floating Pennywort – plant | ■ Roach – fish |
| ■ Goldfish – fish | ■ Zebra Mussel - mollusc |

Terrestrial

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ■ American Mink - mammal | ■ Grey Squirrel - mammal |
| ■ American skunk cabbage - plant | ■ Harlequin Ladybird - invertebrate |
| ■ Australian flatworm - invertebrate | ■ Horse chestnut leaf miner - invertebrate |
| ■ Buff-Tailed Bumble Bee - insect | ■ Hottentot-Fig - plant |
| ■ Brown Hare - mammal | ■ House Mouse - mammal |
| ■ Brown Rat - mammal | ■ Indian (Himalayan) Balsam - plant |
| ■ Canada Goose - bird | ■ Japanese Knotweed - plant |
| ■ Cherry Laurel - plant | ■ New Zealand Flatworm - invertebrate |
| ■ Cherry Laurel - plant | ■ Pirri-Pirri bur - plant |
| ■ Chinese Muntjac - mammal - deer | ■ Rhododendron - plant |
| ■ Common Cord-Grass - plant | ■ Ring-Necked Parakeet - bird |
| ■ Fallow Deer - mammal | ■ Roe Deer - mammal |
| ■ Feral Ferret - mammal | ■ Ruddy Duck - bird |
| ■ Giant Hogweed - plant | ■ Sea buckthorn - plant |
| ■ Giant Knotweed - plant | ■ Ship Rat - mammal |
| ■ Giant Rhubarb - plant | ■ Sika Deer – mammal |

Marine

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Carpet Sea Squirt – marine animal | ■ Pacific oyster – bivalve |
| ■ Japanese kelp – seaweed | ■ Slipper Limpet – mollusc |
| ■ Undaria pinnatifida – seaweed | ■ Wireweed/Japanese seaweed |

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what his Department is doing to control invasive alien animal and plant species. (AQW 43389/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department of the Environment has developed an Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Northern Ireland (2013-2016). The objectives of the Strategy are to minimise the risk of invasive alien species entering and becoming established in Northern Ireland and to reduce the risks associated with their spread.

My Department is developing mechanisms for detection, surveillance and responding to threats posed by both new and established invasive alien species, while effective mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and recording Invasive Alien Species have been produced and activated. This has been achieved through the creation of an Invasive Species Ireland website on an all island approach which has a dedicated species recording system. With the evidence collated the two governments can form a coherent approach to control of Invasive Alien Species by establishing an early warning system, and providing guidance for the most effective management techniques for the eradication/control of certain invasive alien species.

New EU Regulations ((EU) No 1143/2014) for control of Invasive Alien Species came into effect in January 2015. My Department has been liaising with the UK and Irish Governments to ensure that when the legislation is transposed for Northern Ireland it will be an effective instrument to control Invasive Alien Species.

My Department has supported many significant projects in relation to control of Invasive Alien Species. In conjunction with Queens University Belfast (QUB) we supported a £2.6 million Interreg iv project - Controlling Priority Invasive Species and Restoring Native Biodiversity (CIRB) project which targeted invasive species such as Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed,

Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron. The project was carried out on trial River Catchments in Northern Ireland including the Newry Canal/Clanry River in the South East and the River Faughan in the North West.

The NIEA Alien Invasive Species Team has supported the Conservation Volunteers (TCV) in the Upper Ballinamallard River Project for various Riparian Alien Invasive Species interventions, and The Lough Erne Invasive Species Group which have been involved in control of water ways for Alien Invasive Species in Fermanagh.

My Department has, since 2012, promoted the 'check clean dry campaign' targeting marinas and anglers and the 'be plant wise' campaign to raise awareness of the impact ornamental pond plants can have on our native biodiversity if they escape into the natural environment.

The NGOs Challenge Fund, has disbursed £358,613 from the Carrier Bag Levy in respect of 58 Invasive Alien Species control projects. These projects have collectively had a positive impact on controlling Invasive Alien Species across Northern Ireland.

Through the local Universities my Department is funding various academic research projects such as "Invasion ecology: inter-specific interactions between non-native European hares on native Irish hares" at Queen's University Belfast, and the University of Ulster is currently undertaking a study entitled "Morphodynamics of Tidal Flats and Ongoing Investigations in Strangford Lough" and various other academic studies that will assist the Department in the management of *Spartina anglica*, an invasive species of our tidal estuaries.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to list the Areas of Special Scientific Interest. (AQW 43390/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) are declared under the Environment (NI) Order 2002, and earlier under the Nature Conservation and Amenity lands (NI) Order 1985.

A total of 376 ASSIs have been declared to date and these are listed in the attached Annex.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest in Northern Ireland

■ Aghabrack	■ Bardahessiagh	■ Carn/Glenshane Pass
■ Aghanloo Wood	■ Baronscourt	■ Carneal
■ Aghnadarragh	■ Beagh Big	■ Carnmore
■ Altikeeragh	■ Bellanaleck	■ Carrickarade
■ Altmover Glen	■ Belvoir	■ Carrickastickan
■ Annachullion Lough	■ Benburb	■ Carrickbrawn
■ Annacramph Meadows	■ Benburb - Milltown	■ Carrowcarlin
■ Annaghagh Bog	■ Big Dog Scarps and Lakes	■ Cashel Loughs
■ Aughnadarragh Lough	■ Binevenagh	■ Cashel Rock
■ Ballagh	■ Black Bog	■ Castle Coole
■ Ballybannan	■ Black Burn	■ Castle Enigan
■ Ballycam	■ Black Lough	■ Castle Point
■ Ballycarry	■ Black Lough	■ Castle River Valley
■ Ballycastle Coalfield	■ Blackslee	■ Castletown
■ Ballygalley Head	■ Blaeberry Island Bog	■ Castlewellan Lake
■ Ballygill North	■ Boho	■ Cavan
■ Ballykilbeg	■ Bonds Glen	■ Church Bay
■ Ballyknock	■ Bovevagh	■ Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River
■ Ballymacaldrack	■ Braade	■ Clarehill
■ Ballymacallion	■ Brackagh Bog	■ Cleggan Valley
■ Ballymacombs More	■ Breen Wood	■ Clermont & Anglesey Mountain
■ Ballymacormick Point	■ Brockagh Quarry	■ Cloghastucan
■ Ballynagross Lower	■ Brookend	■ Cloghcor Lough
■ Ballynahone Bog	■ Burdautien Lough	■ Cloghfin Port
■ Ballynanaghten	■ Butterlope Glen	■ Cloghinny
■ Ballypalady	■ Caldanagh Bog	■ Conagher
■ Ballyquintin Point	■ Caledon and Tynan	■ Coolcran
■ Ballyrisk More	■ Cam Lough	■ Coolnasillagh
■ Ballysudden	■ Camlough Quarry	■ Copeland Islands
■ Banagher	■ Capecastle	■ Copeland Reservoir
■ Banagher Glen	■ Carey Valley	■ Corbally
■ Bann Estuary	■ Carlingford Lough	

- Corbylin Wood
- Corraslough Point
- Craighulliar
- Craigantlet Woods
- Craigs
- Cranny Bogs
- Cranny Falls
- Croagh Bog
- Crockaghole Wood
- Crockanaver
- Crossbane Lough
- Cruninish Island
- Cuilcagh Mountain
- Cullentra Lough
- Culnafay
- Curran Bog
- Dead Island Bog
- Dernish Island
- Deroran Bog
- Derrycloony Lough
- Derryleckagh
- Derryvore
- Devenish Island
- Dromore
- Dromore Big
- Drumacrittin Lough
- Drumarg
- Drumbally Hill
- Drumbegger
- Drumcarn
- Drumcrow
- Drumcully
- Drumharvey
- Drumlea and Mullan Woods
- Drumlisaleen
- Drumlougher Lough
- Drummahon
- Drummond Quarry
- Drumowen
- Dunloy Bog
- Dunnaree Hill
- Eastern Mournes
- Edenaclogh Wood
- Ederney Quarry
- Errigal Glen
- Ervey Wood
- Essan Burn and Mullyfamore
- Fair Head and Murlough Bay
- Fairy Water Bogs
- Fardross Stream
- Fardrum & Roosky Turloughs
- Fathom Upper
- Feystown
- Finn Floods
- Florence Court
- Frevagh
- Frosses Bog
- Fymore Lough
- Galboly
- Garron Plateau
- Garry Bog
- Garry Bog Part II
- Garvros
- Giant's Causeway and Dunseverick
- Garryford
- Glen Burn
- Glen East
- Glenariff
- Glenariff Glen
- Glenarm Woods
- Glenarm Woods Part 2
- Glenballyemon River
- Glendesha
- Glenmore Wood
- Glennasheever
- Gortalughany
- Gortcorbies
- Gortnagory
- Grange Wood
- Gravel Ridge Island
- Greenan
- Greenan Lough
- Ground Bridge
- Gruggandoo
- Hare Island
- Heron and Carrigullian Loughs
- Hollymount
- Horse Island
- Inishrook
- Inner Belfast Lough
- Keadew
- Kilbroney River
- Kilcoan
- Kilkeel Steps
- Killard
- Killeter Forest Bogs and Lakes
- Killough Bay and Strand Lough
- Killymackan Lough
- Kilnameel
- Kilroosky Lough
- Kiltubbrid Loughs
- Kinramer South
- Kirlish
- Knock Dhu and Sallagh Braes
- Knockadoo Wood
- Knockballymore Lough
- Knocknacloy
- Knocknashangan
- Knockninny Hill
- Lackan Bog
- Largaliny
- Largy Quarry
- Larkhill
- Larne Lough
- Leathemstown
- Lemnalary
- Lenaghan Wood
- Lergan
- Levallymore
- Limehill Farm
- Linford
- Lisdoo
- Lislea
- Lisnaragh
- Little Deer Park
- Little River
- Lough Alaban
- Lough Aleater
- Lough Anierin
- Lough Beg
- Lough Corr
- Lough Corry
- Lough Cowey
- Lough Doo
- Lough Formal
- Lough Foyle
- Lough Gullion
- Lough Lark
- Lough Macrory
- Lough McCall
- Lough Melvin
- Lough na blaney bane
- Lough Naman Bog and Lake
- Lough Navar Scarps and Lakes
- Lough Neagh
- Lough Scolban
- Loughaveely
- Loughermore Mountain
- Loughkeelan
- Loughmoney
- Lower Creevagh
- Lurgan Lough
- Lurgan River Wood
- Lurgylea
- Maghaberry

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ■ Magheramenagh | ■ Rathlin Island - Kebble | ■ Tanderagee |
| ■ Magilligan | ■ Rathsherry | ■ Tardree Quarry |
| ■ Makenny | ■ Rehaghy Wood | ■ Tattenamona Bog |
| ■ Marlbank | ■ River Faughan and Tributaries | ■ Teal Lough and Slaghtfreeden Bogs |
| ■ McKean's Moss | ■ River Foyle and Tributaries | ■ Teal Lough Part II |
| ■ McKean's Moss Part II | ■ River Roe and Tributaries | ■ Tedd |
| ■ Mill Lough | ■ Roeveagh | ■ Tempo River |
| ■ Minnis | ■ Ross | ■ The Cliffs of Magho |
| ■ Monawilkin | ■ Rostrevor Wood | ■ The Gobbins |
| ■ Moneendogue | ■ Round Lough & Lough Fadda | ■ The Maidens |
| ■ Moneygal Bog | ■ Runkerry | ■ Tievebulliagh |
| ■ Moneygal Bog Part II | ■ Rushy Hill | ■ Tieveshilly |
| ■ Moneystaghan Bog | ■ Samuel's Port | ■ Tircreven |
| ■ Moninea Bog | ■ Sandy Braes | ■ Tonnagh Beg Bog |
| ■ Montiaghs Moss | ■ Scawt Hill | ■ Tonnagh Quarry |
| ■ Mountfield Quarry | ■ Scrabo | ■ Toome |
| ■ Mourne Coast | ■ Scraghy | ■ Torr Head |
| ■ Moyrourkan Lough | ■ Scribbagh | ■ Tow River Wood |
| ■ Mullaghbane | ■ Selshion | ■ Tower More |
| ■ Mullaghcarn | ■ Shane's Castle | ■ Tullanaguiggy |
| ■ Mullynaskeagh | ■ Sheep Island | ■ Tully Bog |
| ■ Murlough | ■ Sheepland Coast | ■ Tully Hill |
| ■ Murrins | ■ Shimna River | ■ Tullyard |
| ■ Ness Wood | ■ Silverbrook Wood | ■ Tullybrick Lough |
| ■ Newlands | ■ Slieve Beagh | ■ Tullyratty |
| ■ North Woodburn Glen | ■ Slieve Gullion | ■ Tullysrnadeega |
| ■ North Woodburn Reservoir | ■ Slieveanorra and Croaghan | ■ Turmennan |
| ■ Outer Ards | ■ Slievenacloy | ■ Tyrella and Minerstown |
| ■ Outer Belfast Lough | ■ Sloughan and Willmount Glens | ■ Upper Ballinderry River |
| ■ Owenkillew and Glenelly Woods | ■ Smulgedon | ■ Upper Lough Erne - Belleisle |
| ■ Owenkillew River | ■ South Woodburn | ■ Upper Lough Erne - Crom |
| ■ Paris Island Big | ■ Sruhanleanantaway Burn | ■ Upper Lough Erne - Galloon |
| ■ Peatlands Park | ■ St John's Point | ■ Upper Lough Erne - Trannish |
| ■ Pettigoe Plateau | ■ Strabane Glen | ■ Waterloo |
| ■ Portballintrae | ■ Straduff | ■ West Fermanagh Scarplands |
| ■ Portmore Lough | ■ Straghans Lough | ■ Western Mournes & Kilfeaghan Upper |
| ■ Portmuck | ■ Straidkilly Wood | ■ White Park Bay |
| ■ Portrush West Strand | ■ Stranacally | ■ White Rocks |
| ■ Prolusk | ■ Strangford Lough (Part 1) | ■ White Water River |
| ■ Quoile | ■ Strangford Lough (Part 2) | ■ Whitespots |
| ■ Ramore Head and The Skerries | ■ Strangford Lough (Part 3) | ■ Wolf Island Bog |
| ■ Rathlin Island - Coast | ■ Summerhill Lough | ■ Woodgrange |

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to list the Protected Peatlands sites. (AQW 43391/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department would consider the term peatland to include fen, blanket bog, lowland raised bog and a number of other specialist habitats.

A number of measures are used by the Department for the protection of peatland sites that are of particular nature conservation value. These include Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) declared under the Environment (NI) Order 2002, and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) that are designated in accordance with the EC Habitats Directive.

In addition, peatland habitat form part of a number of areas that have been classified as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds under the EC Birds Directive and this habitat type is, consequently, afforded statutory protection.

ASSIs are used to underpin both SACs and SPAs. There are, therefore, coincident and overlapping boundaries on the sites listed in the attached Annex which have peatland habitat.

Protected Peatland Sites In Northern Ireland - March 2015

The Department would consider the term peatland to include fen, blanket bog, lowland raised bog and a number of other specialist habitats. The following is a list of protected areas within Northern Ireland supporting peatland habitats.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| ■ Antrim Hills | ■ Magheraveely Marl Loughs |
| ■ Ballynahone Bog | ■ Main Valley Bogs |
| ■ Black Bog | ■ Moneygal Bog |
| ■ Carn/Glenshane | ■ Moninea Bog |
| ■ Cranny Bogs | ■ Peatlands Park |
| ■ Cuilcagh Mountain | ■ Pettigoe Plateau |
| ■ Curran Bog | ■ Slieve Beagh |
| ■ Dead Island Bog | ■ Slieve Gullion |
| ■ Deroran Bog | ■ Teal Lough |
| ■ Derryleckagh | ■ Tonnagh Beg Bog |
| ■ Fairy Water Bogs | ■ Tully Bog |
| ■ Garron Plateau | ■ Turmennan |
| ■ Garry Bog | ■ Wolf Island Bog |
| ■ Lecale Fens | |

Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ■ Annaghagh Bog | ■ Knock Dhu and Sallagh Braes |
| ■ Aughnadarragh Lough | ■ Lackan Bog |
| ■ Ballybannan | ■ Lough Alaban |
| ■ Ballykilbeg | ■ Lough Corr |
| ■ Ballynagross Lower | ■ Lough Gullion |
| ■ Big Dog Scarps and Lakes | ■ Lough McCall |
| ■ Black Lough (Down) | ■ Lough na blaney bane |
| ■ Black Lough (Tyrone) | ■ Lough Naman Bog and Lake |
| ■ Blaeberry Island Bog | ■ Lough Navar Scarps and Lakes |
| ■ Brackagh Bog | ■ Loughaveeley |
| ■ Carey Valley | ■ Lurgan Lough |
| ■ Cashel Loughs | ■ Marlbank |
| ■ Castle Enigan | ■ McKean's Moss |
| ■ Croagh Bog | ■ McKean's Moss Part II |
| ■ Crossbane Lough | ■ Moneystaghan Bog |
| ■ Cullentra Lough | ■ Moyrourkan Lough |
| ■ Derrycloony Lough | ■ Mullaghcarn |
| ■ Derryvore | ■ Murrins |
| ■ Drumcarn | ■ Peatlands Park |
| ■ Drumcrow | ■ Prolusk |
| ■ Drumlougher Lough | ■ Rathlin Island - Ballycarry |
| ■ Essan Burn and Mullyfamore | ■ Rathlin Island – Kebble |
| ■ Fair Head and Murlough Bay | ■ Round Lough and Lough Fadda |
| ■ Fymore Lough | ■ Selshion |
| ■ Glennasheever | ■ Sheepland Coast |
| ■ Greenan Lough | ■ Slieveanorra and Croaghan |
| ■ Heron and Carrigullian Loughs | ■ Straghans Lough |
| ■ Killeter Forest Bogs and Lakes | ■ Tattenamona |
| ■ Kiltubbrid Loughs | ■ Tullybrick Lough |

- Western Mournes

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the legislation that protects archaeological sites.
(AQW 43393/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The key statutory controls for terrestrial and freshwater archaeological sites and objects in Northern Ireland and also for those in our marine and intertidal areas are:

- The Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995;
- The Treasure Act 1996;
- The Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003
- The Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, as amended;
- The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011;
- Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (NI) 2015
- The Protection of Wrecks Act 1973;
- The Protection of Military Remains Act 1986;
- The Merchant Shipping Act 1995;
- The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009; and
- The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.

Additional considerations:

At international level, standards for archaeological protection, conservation and recording, both on land and underwater, are set out in the European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage 1992 (also known as the Valletta Convention). Guidance documents such as Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage (PPS6) provide the current commitment of the Department to abide by the aspirations of the Valletta Convention during the planning process. The Department's archaeologists have commented on - and contributed to - the new planning guidance that is planned to supersede PPS6.

The legal framework relating to the marine environment is set out by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Article 303 (para 1) of UNCLOS states that signatories 'have a duty to protect objects of an archaeological and historical nature found at sea and shall co-operate for this purpose'. Whilst the UK has not currently ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001 it has, however, publicly recognised the Annex or 'Rules' of the Convention as being 'best practice' for archaeology.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment whether Planning Service classifies tight sandstone and shale layers as unconventional resources in the consideration of drilling applications, such as the one at Ballinlea.
(AQW 43402/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The classification of underground resources is not a matter for DOE Planning Service. My Department is led by the advice provided by DETI Geological Survey who have the remit and expertise to classify the underground strata and resource potential.

Based on discussions and advice from DETI, DOE Planning would not categorise the reservoir that forms the target of the proposed Ballinlea No.2 exploration well as an unconventional resource.

Application E/2013/0093/F is an application for an exploratory borehole. Planning officials have rigorously examined the application and the proposed processes involved. Based on discussions and advice from statutory bodies, they are content that the application is classified as conventional exploration.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment whether Planning Service defines that unconventional gas includes shale gas, coal bed methane and underground coal gasification.
(AQW 43403/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Unconventional gas resources include tight gas, coal bed methane, shale gas, and gas hydrates.

Underground coal gasification is the process of producing synthesis gas (also referred to as syngas) by the partial combustion of coal by the injection of oxygen and steam into a coal seam. Such a process would not be regulated under the Petroleum (Production) Act (Northern Ireland) 1964 because in this Act:

“petroleum” includes any mineral oil or relative hydrocarbon and natural gas existing in its natural condition in strata but does not include coal...’.

Underground coal gasification has not been carried out in the UK but would most likely be regulated under coal mining legislation.

DOE Planning is not in receipt of any planning application for unconventional oil/gas exploration or extraction.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the environmental impact of illegal fuel laundering plants toxic waste pollution; and the cost to the public purse of cleaning up the polluted areas.

(AQW 43413/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is difficult to quantify the extent of environmental harm caused by illegal fuel laundering, as it is clandestine in nature. However, we do know that substantial quantities of liquid waste residue (often acidic), are generated during the fuel laundering process. Almost invariably this fuel and the associated wastes will be handled in entirely inadequate premises where no thought or care has been given to the containment of spills, and where spills and pollution therefore could readily occur.

Solid waste residue (e.g. chicken/cat litter or Fuller's earth clay) tends to be moved from the laundering plants and dumped in multiple sites in relatively small quantities (2-3 tonnes). Given the volume dumped, it can run off into and damage our water courses and seep into arable land. Acid and hydrocarbon waste in rivers will alter the quality of the water and kill its plant and animal life.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is responsible for investigating fuel fraud including fuel laundering. As part of this work HMRC cleans any sites that it uncovers and as such HMRC holds the information on the cost per incident.

In June 2012, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) introduced a Flytipping Partnership Pilot Project with councils. Under this Project, councils could refer certain cases of flytipping, including those involving fuel laundered waste, to NIEA for investigation and/or clean up from land in their area. From June 2012 to December 2014, NIEA cleared 340 incidents of flytipped fuel laundered waste, involving over 2657 tonnes of material at a cost of over £960,340.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the discussions, including the outcomes, he has had with the Minister of Justice regarding illegal fuel laundering plants.

(AQW 43414/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Minister Ford and I have met twice, in June and December of 2013, to discuss the issue of illegal fuel laundering. These meetings focused on developing stronger inter-agency working in order to deter, detect and frustrate those who illegally deposit hazardous fuel laundering waste residue.

It is important to point out that the investigation and disruption of illegal fuel laundering plants are the responsibility of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). HMRC is a Whitehall-based non-ministerial government department.

DOE's involvement in this issue focuses on the by-product of the fuel laundering process which is hazardous waste and if not properly disposed of can pollute our environment.

Since these meetings, co-operation between the partner agencies of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) has developed and is now achieving tangible results. Joint PSNI and NIEA operations have recently resulted in arrests of suspects in connection with fuel laundered waste. In December 2014, NIEA secured a conviction in one of a number of FLW-related waste cases it is progressing.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of the Environment how much his Department, in conjunction with local councils, has spent on clearing toxic waste from illegal fuel laundering sites since 2010.

(AQO 7734/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are responsible for investigating fuel fraud, including fuel laundering throughout the United Kingdom. As part of this work HMRC clean any sites that they uncover. Therefore HMRC hold the information on the costs involved from clearing fuel laundered waste from illegal fuel laundering sites.

Up to June 2012 local councils undertook the cost of removing fuel laundered waste from land in their area. In June 2012, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) introduced a Flytipping Partnership Pilot Project with councils. Under this Project, Councils could refer certain cases of flytipping, including those involving fuel laundered waste, to NIEA for investigation and/or clean up from land in their area. From June 2012 to December 2014, NIEA cleared 340 incidents of flytipped fuel laundered waste, involving over 2657 tonnes of material at a cost of £960,340.95.

NIEA officers are continuing to work with their partners in the Organised Crime Task Force to tackle fuel laundering and the waste generated from fuel laundering. Working with their colleagues in HMRC and the PSNI, NIEA aims to deter, disrupt and, where appropriate, prosecute offenders where sufficient evidence can be found.

NIEA currently has a number of cases ongoing, some of which are at an advanced stage, in relation to fuel laundering waste. More recently two joint NIEA/PSNI cases have resulted in suspects being arrested and charged with offences relating to fuel laundered waste. Another offender was fined £7,500 and given a suspended sentence in December 2014.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment what is the cost of a PSV test for a (i) taxi; and (ii) bus.

(AQW 43434/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Fees for the annual vehicle test for taxis and buses are set out below. Omnibus fees vary by classification of the vehicle, prescribed for by Public Service Vehicle Regulations (NI) 1985.

Public Service Vehicles	Full test £	Retest £
Taxis	138.50	19.50
Omnibus Class I,II & III	90.50	19.50
Omnibus Class IA	102.50	19.50
Omnibus Class IIA	115.00	32.00
Omnibus Class IIIA	127.00	44.00
All categories of Class A test failing on a road worthiness item		18.50

Information about tests fees for motor vehicles, goods vehicles and public service vehicles 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/mot-test-fees.htm>

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 38686/11-15, (i) whether Mid and East Antrim Council is also taking on responsibility to carry out the reviews of all extant permissions as required by the Habitats Regulations; (ii) what percentage of habitats assessments will be undertaken by this new shared service; and (iii) what assurances he give that the Department will allocate the appropriate budget and resources.

(AQW 43440/11-15)

Mr Durkan: From April 2015, councils will be responsible for reviewing all relevant extant permissions under the Habitats Regulations. As the Shared Environmental Service established within the Mid and East Antrim Council is providing a service for the new councils, it will assist them in this task.

All Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRAs) required under the Regulations will be carried out by the Shared Environmental Service on behalf of the eleven councils where a planning application falls to those councils to determine. Where an application falls to the Department to determine, responsibility for any associated assessment under the Habitats Regulations will remain with the Department.

My Department is committed to ensuring that the transferring DOE functions are fit for purpose and adequately resourced to ensure the success of the Planning & HRA functions following reform. Despite significant reductions in my Department's budget for next year, I have ring fenced the funding transferring along with the functions from my Department to Local Government and no cuts have been applied to DOE's element of the Transfer of Functions Grant. Working closely with the Council, my Department has identified the future staff requirement in the new shared service, and funding for the full cost of the staff transferring plus associated overheads shall pass to Mid & East Antrim Council to fund HRA activities.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department is collating evidence around the negative impact of the HGV Road User Levy on cross border trade and business within the island of Ireland; and to list the businesses his Department is consulting.

(AQW 43451/11-15)

Mr Durkan: When the HGV levy was debated in the Assembly I indicated that the Department for Transport had given their commitment that they would consider taking mitigating action if there was evidence that the levy was causing an adverse economic impact on this island. I in turn committed that my Department would monitor the situation and revert to DfT should evidence of such impact be found.

Initially, I had hoped that we could work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, utilising their ongoing research into economic pressures on businesses. However, DETI's research is unlikely to be an appropriate mechanism as it is not working to a sufficient granularity to identify the costs of the levy. Instead, my officials are working with in-house economists to determine appropriate data and data gathering requirements; this will include consideration of how we should engage with industry sectors or individual businesses to quantify impact on the economy.

In parallel with the work of the economists, my officials are monitoring HGV levy compliance levels. The most recent data from the Driver and Vehicle Agency indicates that compliance is around 50%. As levels of compliance increase, this may assist us in identifying if there are particular economic pressures and hence where economic impact is likely to be found.

Given the low cost of the levy as a percentage of vehicle running costs, it is likely that it will take some time to identify specific impacts on the economy, and to quantify them sufficiently to present evidence to DfT.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of (i) authorised; and (ii) unauthorised Traveller sites that have been set up in each council in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43465/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department does not maintain records of traveller sites. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has responsibility for Traveller housing issues and will assess the distinctive needs of Travellers as part of NIHE local housing needs assessments.

I can however advise that between April 2011/12 and September 2014/15 the Department approved 2 planning applications for Traveller sites, both within the Craigavon Council area, one approved 24 September 2012 the other 25 February 2013.

I can also advise that from between April 2011/12 and September 2014/15, 2 enforcement cases were opened relating to Traveller sites, 1 case in Lisburn Council area which was closed 17 December 2013 by reason that there was no breach of planning control and the other in Newtownabbey Council area which was closed 02 August 2012 by that there was no breach of planning control.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he will be taking to advise local councils of the recent ruling by the English High Court in favour of Harlow Council and Essex County Council protecting 454 pieces of land across their area from illegal encampments, the first multiple injunction of this type granted.

(AQW 43467/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The interim injunction granted on 3rd March 2015 to Harlow Council and Essex County Council was in consequence of persistent illegal activity relating to encampments in their area. The injunction was taken out under powers provided in English local government and planning legislation.

In Northern Ireland responsibility for the provision of accommodation for Travellers rests with the Department for Social Development and involves the Housing Executive (NIHE) and Registered Housing Associations. The PSNI also have powers to act against illegal activity under the Unauthorised Encampments (NI) Order 2006. Given these provisions and the range of measures available in Northern Ireland it may not be necessary to use the equivalent injunctive powers under NI planning legislation.

However, as this is an interim injunction my advice to councils in Northern Ireland would be to await the outcome of the final injunction hearing.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will collaborate with the Department of Finance and Personnel to provide advice and assistance to applicants to ensure Sustainable Development will be adequately addressed in the application and project delivery stage within the Peace IV and INTERREG VA programmes.

(AQW 43473/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I recently publicly welcomed the significant funding, €82m including match funding, to be allocated to the environment through the INTERREG VA programme and the very positive role my officials have played in the development of the environmental aspects of the programme.

On the wider PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes, my officials continue to work with the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) on preparations for the application and project delivery stage. Most recently my officials have been contributing to draft guidance on Project Business Plans, including the framing of selection criteria to demonstrate that applications contribute to sustainable development.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 42530/11-15, and in the interest of clarity, to confirm (i) that planning applications A/2007/0488/F, A/2007/0530/F and A/2013/0400/F meet the relevant thresholds/criteria of an urban development project as specified in Schedule 2.10(b) of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 and 2012, and as such, require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening; (ii) his Department has no discretion to negate the need for EIA screening if the thresholds set out in Schedule 2.10(b) are met; and (iii) why he previously advised under AQW 40835/11-15 that these applications do not fall within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations.

(AQW 43505/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has previously advised in AQW 40835/11-15 its position in relation to the EIA screening on the three applications listed above. The Department's published supplementary planning guidance, Development Control Advice Note 10 Environmental Impact Assessment, sets out the advice in terms of interpretation of the legislation on receipt of an application. All applications are considered and screened on a case by case basis.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the cost of protecting archaeological sites.

(AQW 43506/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department of the Environment primarily protects archaeological sites in Northern Ireland through the work of the Historic Monuments Unit (HMU). I have enclosed here, at Appendix 1, the HMU budget for the last three financial years. I would ask you to note that these costs will include everything on which HMU expends funding. This will range from items such as staff salaries to an archaeological excavation or management agreement at an archaeological site; it also includes accommodation and associated costs. Please note that officials from DOE: Planning also contribute to the protection of archaeological sites through their work in the development planning process, as do other officials across departments whose work is involved in development and land-use change. This is, however, part of a wider range of duties, and the specific costs of protecting archaeological sites is not recorded as a separate figure.

Appendix 1

- NIEA: Historic Monuments Unit Expenditure

- 2012-2013 Financial Year - £4.914m actual spend, comprising £4,180,886 current spend and £733,503 capital spend.
- 2013-2014 Financial Year - £4.407m actual spend, comprising £4,027,199 current spend and £380,199 capital spend.
- 2014-2015 Financial Year - £3.832m budget, comprising £3,832,000 current budget and £1,103,400 capital budget.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to list all conservation sites.

(AQW 43508/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department applies a range of designations to sites or areas for the protection and management of features of natural, historic or architectural importance.

For nature or landscape value, these include Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar Sites, Areas of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest. The Department also owns and manages a number of country parks and nature reserves.

For historic or architectural value, these include State Care Monuments and Designated Conservation Areas.

These conservation sites are all listed in the attached Annex.

Annex A

List of Conservation Sites in Northern Ireland

Special Areas of Conservation

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Aughnadarragh | ■ Garron Plateau | ■ Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay |
| ■ Ballykilbeg | ■ Garry Bog | ■ Red Bay |
| ■ Ballynahone Bog | ■ Hollymount | ■ River Faughan and Tributaries |
| ■ Bann Estuary | ■ Largalanny | ■ River Foyle and Tributaries |
| ■ Binevenagh | ■ Lecale Fens | ■ River Roe and Tributaries |
| ■ Black Bog | ■ Lough Melvin | ■ Rostrevor Wood |
| ■ Breen Wood | ■ Magheraveely Marl Loughs | ■ Skerries and Causeway |
| ■ Carn/ Glenshane Pass | ■ Magilligan | ■ Slieve Beagh |
| ■ Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River | ■ Maidens | ■ Slieve Gullion |
| ■ Cranny | ■ Main Valley Bogs | ■ Strangford Lough |
| ■ Bogs | ■ Moneygal Bog | ■ Teal Lough |
| ■ Cuilcagh Mountain | ■ Moninea Bog | ■ The Maidens |
| ■ Curran Bog | ■ Montaighs Moss | ■ Tonnagh Beg bog |
| ■ Dead Island Bog | ■ Murlough | ■ Tully Bog |
| ■ Deroran Bog | ■ North Antrim Coast | ■ Turmennan |
| ■ Derryleckagh | ■ Owenkillew River | ■ Upper Ballinderry River |
| ■ Eastern Mournes | ■ Peatlands Park | ■ Upper Lough Erne |
| ■ Fairy Water Bogs | ■ Pettigoe Plateau | ■ West Fermanagh Scarplands |
| ■ Fardrum and Roosky Turlough | ■ Rathlin Island | ■ Wolf Island Bog |

Special Protection Areas

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| ■ Antrim Hills | ■ Larne Lough | ■ Sheep Island |
| ■ Belfast Lough | ■ Lough Foyle | ■ Slieve Beagh – Mullaghfad-Lisnaskea |
| ■ Belfast Lough – Open Water | ■ Lough Neagh | ■ Strangford Lough |
| ■ Carlingford Lough | ■ Outer Ards | ■ Upper Lough Erne |
| ■ Copeland Islands | ■ Pettigoe | |
| ■ Killough Harbour | ■ Rathlin | |

RAMSAR Sites

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| ■ Ballynahone Bog | ■ Garron Plateau | ■ Pettigoe Plateau |
| ■ Belfast Lough | ■ Garry Bog | ■ Slieve Beagh |
| ■ Black Bog | ■ Killough Bay | ■ Strangford Lough |
| ■ Carlingford Lough | ■ Larne Lough | ■ Teal Lough |
| ■ Cuilcagh Mountain | ■ Lough Foyle | ■ Turmennan |
| ■ Fairy Water Bogs | ■ Lough Neagh and Lough Beg | ■ Upper Lough Erne |
| ■ Fardrum and Roosky Turloughs | ■ Magheraveely Marl Loughs | |
| | ■ Outer Ards | |

Areas of Special Scientific Interest in Northern Ireland

■ Ardglass	■ Breen Wood	■ Crockaghole Wood
■ Aghabrack	■ Brockagh Quarry	■ Crockanaver
■ Aghanloo Wood	■ Brookend	■ Crossbane Lough
■ Aghnadarragh	■ Burdautien Lough	■ Cruninish Island
■ Altikeeragh	■ Butterlope Glen	■ Cuilcagh Mountain
■ Altmore Glen	■ Caldanagh Bog	■ Cullentra Lough
■ Annachullion Lough	■ Caledon and Tynan	■ Culnafay
■ Annacramph Meadows	■ Cam Lough	■ Curran Bog
■ Annaghagh Bog	■ Camlough Quarry	■ Dead Island Bog
■ Aughnadarragh Lough	■ Capecastle	■ Dernish Island
■ Ballagh	■ Carey Valley	■ Deroran Bog
■ Ballybannan	■ Carlingford Lough	■ Derrycloony Lough
■ Ballycam	■ Carn/Glenshane Pass	■ Derryleckagh
■ Ballycarry	■ Carneal	■ Derryvore
■ Ballycastle Coalfield	■ Carnmore	■ Devenish Island
■ Ballygalley Head	■ Carrickarade	■ Dromore
■ Ballygill North	■ Carrickastickan	■ Dromore Big
■ Ballykilbeg	■ Carrickbrawn	■ Drumacritin Lough
■ Ballyknock	■ Carrowcarlin	■ Drumarg
■ Ballymacaldrack	■ Cashel Loughs	■ Drumbally Hill
■ Ballymacallion	■ Cashel Rock	■ Drumbegger
■ Ballymacombs More	■ Castle Coole	■ Drumcarn
■ Ballymacormick Point	■ Castle Enigan	■ Drumcrow
■ Ballynagross Lower	■ Castle Point	■ Drumcully
■ Ballynahone Bog	■ Castle River Valley	■ Drumharvey
■ Ballynanaghten	■ Castletown	■ Drumlea and Mullan Woods
■ Ballypalady	■ Castlewellan Lake	■ Drumlisaleen
■ Ballyquintin Point	■ Cavan	■ Drumlougher Lough
■ Ballyrisk More	■ Church Bay	■ Drummahon
■ Ballysudden	■ Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River	■ Drummond Quarry
■ Banagher	■ Clarehill	■ Drumowen
■ Banagher Glen	■ Cleggan Valley	■ Dunloy Bog
■ Bann Estuary	■ Clermont & Anglesey Mountain	■ Dunnaree Hill
■ Bardahessiagh	■ Cloghastucan	■ Eastern Mourne
■ Baronscourt	■ Cloghcor Lough	■ Edenaclogh Wood
■ Beagh Big	■ Cloghfin Port	■ Ederney Quarry
■ Bellanaleck	■ Cloghinny	■ Errigal Glen
■ Belvoir	■ Conagher	■ Ervey Wood
■ Benburb	■ Coolcran	■ Essan Burn and Mullyfamore
■ Benburb - Milltown	■ Coolnasillagh	■ Fair Head and Murlough Bay
■ Big Dog Scarps and Lakes	■ Copeland Islands	■ Fairy Water Bogs
■ Binevenagh	■ Copeland Reservoir	■ Fardross Stream
■ Black Bog	■ Corbally	■ Fardrum & Roosky Turloughs
■ Black Burn	■ Corbylin Wood	■ Fathom Upper
■ Black Lough	■ Corraslough Point	■ Feystown
■ Blackslee	■ Craigahulliar	■ Finn Floods
■ Blaeberry Island Bog	■ Craigantlet Woods	■ Florence Court
■ Boho	■ Craigs	■ Frevagh
■ Bonds Glen	■ Cranny Bogs	■ Frosses Bog
■ Bovevagh	■ Cranny Falls	■ Fymore Lough
■ Braade	■ Croagh Bog	■ Galboly
■ Brackagh Bog		■ Garron Plateau

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Garry Bog | ■ Lackan Bog | ■ Mill Lough |
| ■ Garry Bog Part II | ■ Largalinn | ■ Minnis |
| ■ Garvros | ■ Largy Quarry | ■ Monawilkin |
| ■ Giant's Causeway and Dunseverick | ■ Larkhill | ■ Moneendogue |
| ■ Glarryford | ■ Larne Lough | ■ Moneygal Bog |
| ■ Glen Burn | ■ Leathemstown | ■ Moneygal Bog Part II |
| ■ Glen East | ■ Lemnalary | ■ Moneystaghan Bog |
| ■ Glenariff | ■ Lenaghan Wood | ■ Moninea Bog |
| ■ Glenariff Glen | ■ Lergan | ■ Montiaghs Moss |
| ■ Glenarm Woods | ■ Levallymore | ■ Mountfield Quarry |
| ■ Glenarm Woods Part 2 | ■ Limehill Farm | ■ Mourne Coast |
| ■ Glenballyemon River | ■ Lincford | ■ Moyrourkan Lough |
| ■ Glen Burn | ■ Lisdo | ■ Mullaghbane |
| ■ Glendesha | ■ Lislea | ■ Mullaghcarn |
| ■ Glenmore Wood | ■ Lisnaragh | ■ Mullynaskeagh |
| ■ Glennasheevar | ■ Little Deer Park | ■ Murlough |
| ■ Gortalughany | ■ Little River | ■ Murrins |
| ■ Gortcorbies | ■ Lough Alaban | ■ Ness Wood |
| ■ Gortnagory | ■ Lough Aleater | ■ Newlands |
| ■ Grange Wood | ■ Lough Anierin | ■ North Woodburn Glen |
| ■ Gravel Ridge Island | ■ Lough Beg | ■ North Woodburn Reservoir |
| ■ Greenan | ■ Lough Corr | ■ Outer Ards |
| ■ Greenan Lough | ■ Lough Corry | ■ Outer Belfast Lough |
| ■ Ground Bridge | ■ Lough Cowey | ■ Owenkillew and Glenelly Woods |
| ■ Gruggandoo | ■ Lough Doo | ■ Owenkillew River |
| ■ Hare Island | ■ Lough Formal | ■ Paris Island Big |
| ■ Heron and Carrigullian Loughs | ■ Lough Foyle | ■ Peatlands Park |
| ■ Hollymount | ■ Lough Gullion | ■ Pettigoe Plateau |
| ■ Horse Island | ■ Lough Lark | ■ Portballintrae |
| ■ Inishrook | ■ Lough Macrory | ■ Portmore Lough |
| ■ Inner Belfast Lough | ■ Lough McCall | ■ Portmuck |
| ■ Keadew | ■ Lough Melvin | ■ Portrush West Strand |
| ■ Kilbroney River | ■ Lough na blaney bane | ■ Prolusk |
| ■ Kilcoan | ■ Lough Naman Bog and Lake | ■ Quoile |
| ■ Kilkeel Steps | ■ Lough Navar Scarps and Lakes | ■ Ramore Head and The Skerries |
| ■ Killard | ■ Lough Neagh | ■ Rathlin Island - Coast |
| ■ Killeter Forest Bogs and Lakes | ■ Lough Scolban | ■ Rathlin Island - Kebble |
| ■ Killough Bay and Strand Lough | ■ Loughaveely | ■ Rathsherry |
| ■ Killymackan Lough | ■ Loughermore Mountain | ■ Rehaghy Wood |
| ■ Kilnameel | ■ Loughkeelan | ■ River Faughan and Tributaries |
| ■ Kilroosky Lough | ■ Loughmoney | ■ River Foyle and Tributaries |
| ■ Kiltubbrid Loughs | ■ Lower Creevagh | ■ River Roe and Tributaries |
| ■ Kinramer South | ■ Lurgan Lough | ■ Roeveagh |
| ■ Kirlish | ■ Lurgan River Wood | ■ Ross |
| ■ Knock Dhu and Sallagh Braes | ■ Lurgylea | ■ Rostrevor Wood |
| ■ Knockadoo Wood | ■ Maghaberry | ■ Round Lough & Lough Fadda |
| ■ Knockballymore Lough | ■ Magheramenagh | ■ Runkerry |
| ■ Knocknacloy | ■ Magilligan | ■ Rushy Hill |
| ■ Knocknashangan | ■ Makenny | ■ Samuel's Port |
| ■ Knockninny Hill | ■ Marbank | ■ Sandy Braes |
| | ■ McKean's Moss | ■ Scawt Hill |
| | ■ McKean's Moss Part II | |

- Scrabo
- Scraghy
- Scribbagh
- Selshion
- Shane's Castle
- Sheep Island
- Sheepland Coast
- Shimna River
- Silverbrook Wood
- Slieve Beagh
- Slieve Gullion
- Slieveanorra and Croaghan
- Slievenacloy
- Sloughan and Willmount Glens
- Smulgedon
- South Woodburn Reservoir
- Sruhanleanantawey Burn
- St John's Point
- Strabane Glen
- Straduff
- Straghans Lough
- Straidkilly Wood
- Stranacally
- Strangford Lough (Part 1)
- Strangford Lough (Part 2)
- Strangford Lough (Part 3)
- Summerhill Lough
- Tanderagee
- Tardree Quarry
- Tattenamona Bog
- Teal Lough and Slaghtfreeden Bogs
- Teal Lough Part II
- Tedd
- Tempo River
- The Cliffs of Magho
- The Gobbins
- The Maidens
- Tievebulliagh
- Tieveshilly
- Tircreven
- Tonnagh Beg Bog
- Tonnagh Quarry
- Toome
- Torr Head
- Tow River Wood
- Tower More
- Tullanaguiggy
- Tully Bog
- Tully Hill
- Tullyard
- Tullybrick Lough
- Tullyratty
- Tullysranadeega
- Tullysranadeega Turmennan
- Tyrella and Minerstown
- Upper Ballinderry River
- Upper Lough Erne - Belleisle
- Upper Lough Erne - Crom
- Upper Lough Erne - Galloon
- Upper Lough Erne - Trannish
- Waterloo
- West Fermanagh Scarplands
- Western Mournes & Kilfeaghan Upper
- White Park Bay
- White Rocks
- White Water River
- Whitespots
- Wolf Island Bog
- Woodgrange

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Antrim Coast and Glens AONB
- Binevenagh AONB
- Causeway Coast AONB
- Lagan Valley AONB
- Mourne AONB
- Ring of Gullion AONB
- Sperrin AONB
- Strangford and Lecale AONB

Site of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCI)

Acravalley, Moyle District

- Aghabrack, Limavady
- Aghadavoyle Ponds, Newry & Mourne
- Aghanloo, Limavady
- Aghenagerragh River Bog, Ballymoney Borough
- Aghmakane Fen South, Newry & Mourne
- Aghmakane Fen West, Newry & Mourne
- Aghmakane Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Agivey Bridge, Coleraine
- Alexandra Park, Belfast
- Ally Lough, Moyle District
- Altagoan River, Magherafelt
- Altahullion Burn, Limavady
- Altalacky River, Magherafelt
- Altataunaghranny Burn Woodland, Moyle District
- Altcattan Glen, Limavady
- Altgal Burn, Moyle District
- Altifiren Glen, Moyle District
- Altmore Burn, Magherafelt
- Altmore Burn, Moyle District
- Altnadua Lake, Ards & Down
- Altnadua Lake, Down
- Altnadua Lough, Banbridge
- Altnahinch, Ballymoney Borough
- Anglesey Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Annacramph, Armagh
- Annaghavoggy, Magherafelt
- Annaghfad Bog, Magherafelt
- Annaghgad Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Annaghloughan Bog, Dungannon
- Annaghmore Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Annaghnaboe, Dungannon
- Annaghroe - Annacramp, Dungannon
- Annahunshigo, Banbridge
- Annalong River, Newry & Mourne
- Antrim Coast (Black Head to Whitehead), Carrickfergus
- Ardboley, Carrickfergus
- Ardclinis, Moyle District
- Ardglass - Cloghan Head, Ards & Down
- Ardglass - Ringfad Point, Ards & Down
- Ardglass - Ringfad Point, Ards & Down
- Ardglass Bay, Ards & Down
- Ardglass Bay, Ards & Down
- Ardglass, Banbridge
- Ardglass, Down
- Ardmeen Fen, Ards & Down
- Ardnally Scout Centre, Castlereagh
- Ardpatrick Lough, Cookstown
- Argory Mosses, Armagh
- Ashfield Mountain Bar, Dungannon
- Attical Moraine Complex,

- Newry & Mourne
- Aughadanove, Newry & Mourne
- Aughanduff Lower Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Aughanduff Upper Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Aughangurgan Lough, Armagh
- Augher Lough, Dungannon
- Aughnagon Quarry, Newry & Mourne
- Avish, Limavady
- Bairds Brae, Wetland, Newtownabbey
- Ballagh Lough, Dungannon
- Ballintate Wood, Newry & Mourne
- Ballintoy Carrick-na-ford, Moyle District
- Ballyalloy Lough, Ards & Down
- Ballybeg Fen, Ards & Down
- Ballyberidagh Glen, Moyle District
- Ballycarn Glen, Lisburn
- Ballycarngannon Road, Lisburn
- Ballycarry, Moyle District
- Ballycastle Beach, Moyle District
- Ballycastle Coast, Moyle District
- Ballyconagan, Moyle District
- Ballycraig Rock, Ballymoney Borough
- Ballycreen Lough, Lisburn
- Ballycrune Lough, Lisburn
- Ballydrain Lake, Belfast
- Ballydugan Lake, Ards & Down
- Ballyyemon River, Moyle District
- Ballyyemon Wood, Moyle District
- Ballygallum Ponds, Ards & Down
- Ballygomartin River, Glencairn, Belfast
- Ballygomartin Sill, Belfast
- Ballygowan Meadow, Lisburn
- Ballygrainey Dismantled Railway, North Down
- Ballyhackett, Coleraine
- Ballyharry, Ards & Down
- Ballykelly Glen, Limavady
- Ballykelly Moraine, Limavady
- Ballylntagh Pond Carr, Lisburn
- Ballylough grasslands, Ards & Down
- Ballymacashen Bog, Ards & Down
- Ballymacdermot Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Ballymacombs More, Magherafelt
- Ballymacormick Point ASSI, North Down
- Ballymacricket, Lisburn
- Ballymaganlis Wood, Banbridge
- Ballymagreehan Quarry, Banbridge
- Ballymartin Moraine, Newry & Mourne
- Ballymartin Water Below Roughfort Bridge, Newtownabbey
- Ballymenagh Fen, Ards & Down
- Ballymenoch Park, North Down
- Ballymiscaw, Belfast
- Ballymoneymore, Lisburn
- Ballymullholland, Limavady
- Ballynagarrick, Lisburn
- Ballynagor, Ballymoney Borough
- Ballynalargy Ponds, Lisburn
- Ballynamona Bog, Magherafelt
- Ballypalady, Antrim & Newtownabbey
- Ballyrainey, Ards & Down
- Ballyratahan, Ballymoney Borough
- Ballyrisk More, Limavady
- Ballyroney Lake, Banbridge
- Ballysallagh Fen, Banbridge
- Ballysallagh Reservoir, North Down
- Ballyvaston, Ards & Down
- Ballyveagh Beg, Newry & Mourne
- Ballyveely Bog, Ballymoney Borough
- Ballyvoy Plantation, Newtownabbey
- Ballywindelland Lower, Coleraine
- Barnettts Demesne, Belfast
- Barony Glen (subsumed within Mullaghmore), Magherafelt
- Barony Glen, Limavady
- Beaghs, Moyle District
- Beechill Rd South, Castlereagh
- Beechwood, Banbridge
- Begny Lake, Banbridge
- Begny Lough, Lisburn
- Belfast Harbour estate (North Down), North Down
- Belfast Harbour Estate, Belfast
- Belfast Hills - Divis/Ligoniel, Belfast
- Belfast Hills - Squires Hill, Belfast
- Belfast Hills - White Mountain, Lisburn
- Bellevue Bridge, Belfast
- Bellevue, Belfast
- Bellisle, Ballymoney Borough
- Belmont Glen, Belfast
- Belvedere, Lisburn
- Belvoir, Castlereagh Belfast
- Benady Glen, Limavady
- Benbradagh Bog, Limavady
- Benbradagh West, Limavady
- Benburb/ Milltown, Armagh
- Benburb/Milltown, Armagh & Dungannon
- Bentra Wood, Carrickfergus
- Bernish Rock, Newry & Mourne
- Bessbrook, Newry & Mourne
- Betty's Hill Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Between M5 & Railway, Belfast Newtownabbey
- Black Bog, Banbridge
- Black Head, Carrickfergus
- Black Hill, Newry & Mourne
- Black Lough (Cormullagh), Dungannon
- Black Lough, Ballymoney Borough
- Black Lough, Magherafelt
- Blackhill, North Down
- Bladon Park, Belfast
- Blue Road Bog, Banbridge
- Bog Meadows, M1/ Falls Rd, Belfast
- Boghill, Newtownabbey
- Bohill grasslands, Ards & Down
- Boleran Bridge, Coleraine
- Boomers Reservoir, Lisburn
- Bovagh Woods, Coleraine

- Bovolcan, Lisburn
- Bow Lough, Ards & Down
- Boyd's Bog, Ballymoney Borough
- Bracaghreilly, Magherafelt
- Brantry Lough, Dungannon
- Breckenhill & Drumdarragh, Newtownabbey
- Broadwater, Lisburn
- Broadwater/Friars Glen, Lisburn
- Brockaboy, Coleraine Borough
- Brockagh Wood, Coleraine
- Brookmount Glen, Newtownabbey
- Broughmore, Moyle District
- Brown Hill, Limavady
- Brown Moss - Quarterlands, Lisburn
- Budore Bridge, Lisburn
- Bunarilla, Newry & Mourne
- Burnquarter Bog, Ballymoney Borough
- Burren Lough, Lisburn
- Burren Lowlands, Newry & Mourne
- Burren North, Lisburn
- Bushfoot Dunes, Moyle District
- Cabra Road, Lisburn
- Cah, Coleraine
- Cairn Wood and Reservoir, North Down
- Cairnshill, Castlereagh
- Caledon Estate Lough, Dungannon
- Cam Lough Quarry, Newry & Mourne
- Cam Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Camlough Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Campbell College and Ormiston, Belfast
- Campbells' Hill, Lisburn
- Canal Wood, Newry & Mourne
- Capecastle Quarry, Moyle District
- Cappagh Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Cappagh Lough Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Cappagh Quarry, Dungannon
- Carey Valley Grasslands, Moyle District
- Carey Valley, Moyle District
- Cargygray to Firbank, Lisburn
- Carn Hill, Newtownabbey
- Carnagal, Ballymoney Borough
- Carnagh Lake & Forest, Armagh
- Carnalea glen and slopes, North Down
- Carnally Fen North, Newry & Mourne
- Carnally Fen South, Newry & Mourne
- Carnally Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Carnamoney, Magherafelt
- Carnanbane, Limavady
- Carnaneigh Point, Moyle District
- Carnbane Wood, Newry & Mourne
- Carncullagh, Ballymoney Borough
- Carndaisy Glen, Magherafelt
- Carneety, Coleraine
- Carnfin / Cahery Woodland, Limavady
- Carnganamuck Quarry, Armagh
- Carnlougherin Rd., Lisburn
- Carnmoney Hill, Newtownabbey
- Carnmoney Plug, Newtownabbey
- Carntogher, Magherafelt
- Carr's Glen, Belfast
- Carran Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Carranroe Burn, Coleraine
- Carrick Lough, Dungannon
- Carrick Rocks, Limavady
- Carrickastickan Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Carrickavoy Lough, Dungannon
- Carrickbawn Wood, Newry & Mourne
- Carrickbawn, Newry & Mourne
- Carrickbroad, Newry & Mourne
- Carrickfergus Castle, Carrickfergus
- Carricklongfield Quarry, Dungannon
- Carrickmacstay, Newry & Mourne
- Carrickmannan Lough, Ards & Down
- Carrigans Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Carrigatuke Fen, Armagh
- Carrogs SLNCI, Newry & Mourne
- Carrowmeenagh Bog, Magherafelt
- Carryhugh Fen, Armagh
- Cashel, Newry & Mourne
- Cassy Water, Newry & Mourne
- Castle Dillon Lake, Armagh
- Castle Dobbs, Carrickfergus
- Castle Espie, Ards & Down
- Castle River Woodland, Limavady
- Castlemahon Fen, Ards & Down
- Castlequarter Lakes, Ballymoney Borough
- Castlerock Golf Course
- Castlewellan Lake, Ards & Down
- Causeway End East, Lisburn
- Causeway End West, Lisburn
- Cave Hill - Collin Ward, Belfast Newtownabbey
- Cave House, Moyle District
- Charley's Hill, Magherafelt
- Chinauley Woods, Banbridge
- Church Bay raised beach complex, Moyle District
- Church Quarter and Mullindress, Moyle District
- Clady Burn, Moyle District
- Clandeboye Avenue, North Down
- Clandeboye Estate, North Down
- Claragh Lough, Ards & Down
- Clare Bog, Craigavon
- Clare Glen Woodland, Armagh
- Clarehill Quarry, Lisburn
- Clarkill, Newry & Mourne
- Clay Lake, Armagh
- Clea Lakes, Ards & Down
- Clement Wilson Park, Belfast
- Cloane Wood, Magherafelt
- Cloghastucan, Moyle District
- Cloghinny, Newry & Mourne
- Cloghoge, Newry & Mourne
- Clonalig Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Clontanagullion Lough, Lisburn

- Clontygora, Newry & Mourne
- Clooney, Magherafelt
- Cloonty Bog, Ballymoney; Moyle
- Cloughfin Wood, Magherafelt
- Cluntagh Lough, Lisburn
- Coalisland Brick Pit, Dungannon
- Coalisland Sand Pit, Dungannon
- Coast N & S of Cloghan Point, Carrickfergus
- Cole Bridge Stream, Dungannon
- Colebreene Wood, Ballymoney; Coleraine
- Collin Glen - Hammills Bottom, Lisburn Belfast
- Collin Glen, Lisburn Belfast
- Collin House, Lisburn
- Commons Hall Road, Newry & Mourne
- Conway Lane, Aberdelghy, Lisburn
- Cool Wood, Moyle District
- Coolmaghra, Moyle District
- Coolnasillagh Grassland, Coleraine
- Coolnasillagh, Magherafelt
- Coolranny, Moyle District
- Cooper Wetland, Lisburn
- Copeland Reservoir, Carrickfergus
- Corbet Fen, Banbridge
- Corbet Lough, Banbridge
- Cornahove Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Corry's Glen (Including Homra House), Lisburn
- Crab Lough, Coleraine
- Craig Hill Quarry, Ballyclare, Newtownabbey
- Craig Hill Quarry, Newtownabbey
- Craigagh Wood, Moyle District
- Craigall Rocks, Coleraine
- Craigantlet Woods SLNCI, Castlereagh Belfast Ards
- Craigantlet Woods, Ards & Down
- Craigavon Lake North, Craigavon
- Craignahaltora, Magherafelt
- Craigs Upper Grasslands, Ballymoney Borough
- Craneystown, Lisburn
- Cranfield Moraine*, Newry & Mourne
- Crans Lough, Dungannon
- Crawfordsburn, North Down
- Creenkill Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Creeve, Newry & Mourne
- Cregagh Glen and Lisnabreeny, Castlereagh
- Cregagh Glen, Castlereagh
- Creggan Bane Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Creighton's Green Reservoir, North Down
- Creighton's Wood, Magherafelt
- Crew Burn, Lisburn
- Crilly House Quarry, Dungannon
- Croaghan Bog, Ballymoney; Moyle
- Crockcor, Magherafelt
- Croft Burn, North Down
- Cromore Marsh, Coleraine
- Crooked Road (Slieve Gullion), Newry & Mourne
- Croreagh Quarry, Newry & Mourne
- Crosslieve Pond Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Crosslieve, Newry & Mourne
- Crossmaglen Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Crossmaglen North Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Crow Glen, Belfast
- Crumlin Road /Upper Hightown Road, Belfast
- Culbane Bog, Ballymoney Borough
- Cullion Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Cully Water / Ummercam River, Newry & Mourne
- Cullyhanna Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Culnaman, Coleraine
- Cunningburn, Ards & Down
- Curdian, Magherafelt
- Curly River, Limavady
- Curraghlane, Limavady
- Cushendun Bay, Moyle District
- Cushendun Caves, Moyle District
- Cushendun Quarry, Moyle District
- Cushenilt, Moyle District
- Cushleake Mountain, Moyle District
- Cuttyshane Bog, Ards & Down
- Daisy Hill Wood, Newry & Mourne
- Dalway's Barn, Carrickfergus
- Damolly, Newry & Mourne
- Danes Cast Fen, Banbridge
- Darkley Reservoir, Armagh
- Deadwall Plantation, Lisburn
- Decoy Plantation, Moyle District
- Deer Park Wood, Limavady Borough
- Dernaflaw sand pit, Limavady
- Derryclooney Lough, Dungannon
- Derryhubbert/Derrydry, Dungannon
- Derryiagh Glen, Lisburn
- Derrykeeran, Craigavon
- Derrykillultagh, Lisburn
- Derrylane, Limavady
- Derryleckagh Lake, Newry & Mourne
- Derrymore (subsumed within Moneyneany), Magherafelt
- Derrynaflaw grasslands, Limavady
- Derrynoyd Bridge, Magherafelt
- Derrynoyd Wood, Magherafelt
- Derryore, Dungannon
- Derryvane North, Craigavon
- Derryvane South, Craigavon
- Dismantled railway at Kingsbog Crossing, Newtownabbey
- Doagh River, Morley Bridge, Newtownabbey
- Doey Plantation Grassland, Moyle District
- Dogleap, Limavady
- Donaghaguy Reservoir, Newry & Mourne
- Donald's Hill, Limavady
- Doonfin, Moyle District
- Dorsy Hearty Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Dorsy, Newry & Mourne
- Doughery Water, Moyle District
- Downpatrick Marshes, Ards & Down
- Downpatrick Marshes, Ards & Down

- Drenagh Lake, Limavady
- Drin Wood, Banbridge
- Dromantine College, Newry & Mourne
- Dromore Road, Magherafelt
- Dromore Wood, Coleraine
- Drumack Bog, Ballymoney Borough
- Drumacullin Blanket Bog, Moyle District
- Drumadreen, Limavady
- Drumagully, Coleraine
- Drumantine Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Drumaran Lake, Banbridge
- Drumard Water, Magherafelt
- Drumard, Magherafelt
- Drumarg, Armagh
- Drumbally Hill, Magherafelt
- Drumbo Glen, Lisburn
- Drumbolcan, Ballymoney Borough
- Drumboy Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Drumbroneth Fen, Banbridge
- Drumcroon Rd, Coleraine
- Drumderg River (subsumed within Moneyneany), Magherafelt
- Drumfresky Wood, Moyle District
- Drumgooland Lake, Ards & Down
- Drumiller, Banbridge
- Drumilly, Newry & Mourne
- Drumimerick Hill, Magherafelt
- Drumintee, Newry & Mourne
- Drumlamph (Annaghaboggy), Magherafelt
- Drumlamph Road, Magherafelt
- Drumlamph Wood, Magherafelt
- Drumlough Fen, Lisburn
- Drummackavale lough, Newry & Mourne
- Drummilt Railway - Lough Gilly & Danes Lough, Armagh
- Drummilt Railway - Lough Gilly & Danes Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Drummond Quarry, Dungannon
- Drumsurn, Limavady
- Dublin Road Bridge, Newry & Mourne
- Duburren Pastures, Newry & Mourne
- Dumb and Bow Loughs, Lisburn
- Dunalis Reservoir, Coleraine
- Duncan's Dam, Lisburn
- Dundonald Old Railway Line, Castlereagh
- Dunfinn, Moyle District
- Dunlogan/Owenbeg River, Magherafelt
- Dunloy Grassland, Ballymoney Borough
- Dunluce - Ballintrae, Coleraine
- Dunmurray Schools, Belfast
- Dunnavenney Bridge Bog, Coleraine
- Eagles Rock, Cookstown
- Eden Hill, Magherafelt
- Eden Lodge, Limavady
- Edenderry to Giants Ring, Lisburn Belfast
- Edenderry Wood, Banbridge
- Edenfore, Dungannon
- Edith of Lorne's Glen, North Down
- Englishtown, Coleraine
- Errigal Glen, Coleraine
- Escort Port, Moyle District
- Eshwary Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Eskragh Lough, Dungannon
- Evishanoran, Cookstown
- Fallaghearn, Dungannon
- Fallylea, Magherafelt
- Farlow Wood, Limavady
- Farranlester, Coleraine
- Farrell's Fort, Lisburn
- Fathom Lower woods and grasslands, Newry & Mourne
- Faughanvale, Limavady
- Favour Royal, Dungannon
- Fintona Outwash, Dungannon
- Flagstaff, Newry & Mourne
- Flood Plain around Eel Weir, Belfast Lisburn
- Forster Green Hopsital, Castlereagh
- Foughilletra East, Newry & Mourne
- Foughilletra Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Foughilletra Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Foy More, Craigavon
- Friary Lough, Dungannon
- Frosses North, Ballymoney Borough
- Fruitfield Delta, Limavady
- Fury River, Dungannon
- Galboly Woodland, Moyle District
- Gall Bog, Banbridge
- Galwally, Belfast
- Gargarry Fen, Banbridge
- Gargarry Fen, Down
- Garry Lower, Ballymoney Borough
- Garvagh Lough, Newry & Mourne
- General's Bridge, Limavady
- Gentle Owens Lake, Armagh
- Gettistown, Coleraine
- Ghann River, Newry & Mourne
- Gibson's Wood & Fen, Banbridge
- Glas na Bradan, Newtownabbey
- Glas-Na-Bradán, Newtownabbey
- Glass Moss, Banbridge
- Glassaneeran Bog, Moyle District
- Glassdrumman Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Glassdrumman Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Glassdrumman, Newry & Mourne
- Glebe House, Rathmullan, Ards & Down
- Glebe Rd. Carr, Lisburn
- Glen Lyon, North Down
- Glen River, Dunmurry, Lisburn
- Glanaan, Moyle District
- Glenariff Cliff, Moyle District
- Glenariff Waterfalls, Moyle District
- Glenavy River at Glenavy, Lisburn
- Glenavy River South Bank, Lisburn
- Glenavy/Kiltullagh Road junction, Lisburn
- Glenburn, Lisburn
- Glendesha, Newry & Mourne
- Glendun, Moyle District
- Glenganagh Estate, North Down
- Glenshesk Valley, Moyle District
- Glenshesk Wood, Moyle

District	■ Hollywood Reservoirs, North Down	■ Knockagh - Dorisland, Carrickfergus Newtownabbey
■ Glenullin Bog, Coleraine	■ Hulls Glen, Lisburn	■ Knockantern, Coleraine
■ Glenviggan Bog, Magherafelt	■ Hunshigo Lake, Banbridge	■ Knockany Road, Ballycarnannon, Lisburn
■ Glenviggan Wood, Magherafelt	■ Huntly Plantation and Havlock Woods, Banbridge	■ Knockavrinan Bridge, Ballymoney Borough
■ Golan Little, Dungannon	■ Hyde Park Dam, Newtownabbey	■ Knockbane Bog, Armagh
■ Golden Glen, Ards & Down	■ Iniscarn, Magherafelt	■ Knockbreckan Glen, Castlereagh
■ Golden Glen, Ards & Down	■ Inishargy Bog, Ards & Down	■ Knockmore East, Lisburn
■ Goragh Wood, Newry & Mourne	■ Inishfree Farm, Moyle District	■ Knocknacarry, Moyle District
■ Goraghwood Quarry, Newry & Mourne	■ Interlaken, Castlereagh	■ Knocknagore Fen, Craigavon
■ Gortgonny, Moyle District	■ Inverary, Belfast	■ Knocknagore Fen, Lawrencetown, Banbridge
■ Gortmacrane, Coleraine	■ Islandboy South, Moyle District	■ Knocknoger, Coleraine
■ Gortmore Moss, Cookstown	■ Islandderry Lough, Banbridge	■ Knocksoghey, Moyle District
■ Gosford Forest Park, Armagh	■ Jointure Bay Stream, Carrickfergus	■ Knocksticken, Ards & Down
■ Granaghan Glen, Magherafelt	■ Jonesborough, Newry & Mourne	■ Ladies Drive to Westland Wood, North Down
■ Grange Fault, Cookstown	■ Katesbridge, Banbridge	■ Ladybrook, Belfast
■ Grange, Coleraine Borough	■ Kathleen's Lough, Coleraine	■ Lagan at Hilden, Lisburn
■ Grange, Cookstown	■ Kedew, Dungannon	■ Lagan at Lambeg, Lisburn
■ Granite View, Newry & Mourne	■ Keenaght Water, Magherafelt	■ Lagan Meadows, Belfast
■ Gransha Fen, Castlereagh	■ Keeran Moss, Carrickfergus	■ Lagmore, Lisburn
■ Gransha, Newry & Mourne	■ Kernan Lake, Banbridge	■ Lambeg East, Lisburn
■ Great Dam, Ards & Down	■ Kilbroney Park, Newry & Mourne	■ Larchfield Estate, Lisburn
■ Greenaghan, Moyle District	■ Kilbroney River, Newry & Mourne	■ Larrys Brae Dunloy, Ballymoney Borough
■ Greenan Wood, Newry & Mourne	■ Kilgreel House, Newtownabbey	■ Lecale Coast, Ards & Down
■ Gregstown, Ards & Down	■ Killeen Fen North, Newry & Mourne	■ Leckpatrick Point, Moyle District
■ Gregstown, Ards & Down	■ Killelagh Lough, Magherafelt	■ Legananam Pot, Limavady
■ Greysteel Beg, Limavady	■ Killen Vale, Moyle District	■ Legavallon Quarry, Coleraine
■ Groganstown Quarry, Lisburn	■ Killey Bridge, Cookstown	■ Legavannon Pot East Grassland, Limavady
■ Grounds at Stramillis and Riddel Hall, Belfast	■ Killinure Rd., Castlereagh	■ Legavannon Pot West Grassland, Limavady Borough
■ Grove River Wood, Coleraine	■ Killycolpy Wood, Cookstown	■ Lenadoon dam, Belfast
■ Gruggandoo, Newry & Mourne	■ Killycreen North, Ballymoney Borough	■ Lessans Cottage, Ards & Down
■ Hawthorn Hill Upper, Newry & Mourne	■ Killymoon Estate Wood, Cookstown	■ Levallymore Grassland, Newry & Mourne
■ Hawthorn Hill, Newry & Mourne	■ Killynether Wood, Ards & Down	■ Leverogue Carr, Lisburn
■ Heathmount Bog, Magherafelt	■ Kilrea Dam, Coleraine	■ Lifeboat House, Moyle District
■ Hillfoot Glen, Castlereagh	■ Kilroot stream, Carrickfergus	■ Ligoniel Village, Belfast
■ Hillfoot Scrub, Castlereagh	■ Kiltonga, Ards & Down	■ Limekiln Rd., Lisburn
■ Hillhead House, Newtownabbey	■ Kiltybane Lough, Newry & Mourne	■ Lisamry Lough, Newry & Mourne
■ Hillsborough Dromore old railway line, Lisburn	■ Kinkeel Lough, Moyle District	■ Lisboy, Dungannon
■ Hillsborough Old Rd., Lisburn	■ Kinramer North, Moyle District	■ Lislaban, Ballymoney Borough
■ Hillsborough park lake, Lisburn	■ Kirkhill Bog, Ballymoney Borough	■ Lisleitrim Lough, Newry & Mourne
■ Hillsborough Road Wetlands and Scrub, Castlereagh	■ Kirley/Lisnamuck, Magherafelt	■ Lisnatrunk, Lisburn
■ Hogg's, Lisburn	■ Knockaduff, Coleraine	■ Lissan Water, Cookstown
■ Hollyhill Wood, Magherafelt		

- Lissan Wood, Cookstown
- Lissue Childrens Hospital, Lisburn
- Long Mountain Bogs, Ballymoney Borough
- Longfield Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Longfield Road, Newry & Mourne
- Lough Aghera, Lisburn
- Lough Alina, Newry & Mourne
- Lough Beg (Mullanakil), Magherafelt
- Lough Beg (Newferry), Magherafelt
- Lough Brickland, Banbridge
- Lough Cowey, Ards & Down
- Lough Erne, Lisburn
- Lough Fadda, Dungannon
- Lough Fea Blanket Bog, Cookstown
- Lough Fea, Cookstown
- Lough Galboly, Moyle District
- Lough Gunnell, Dungannon
- Lough Money, Ards & Down
- Lough More, Dungannon
- Lough Moss, Banbridge
- Lough Moss, Castlereagh
- Lough Mourne, Carrickfergus
- Lough na blaney bane, Dungannon
- Lough Ouske, Magherafelt
- Lough Patrick, Magherafelt
- Lough Patrick, Newry & Mourne
- Lough Road Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Lough Ross, Newry & Mourne
- Lough Shark, Armagh
- Lough Shark, Banbridge
- Loughan Bay, Moyle District
- Loughan Woodland, Moyle District
- Loughareema, Moyle District
- Loughbrickland House, Banbridge
- Loughermore Mountain, Limavady
- Loughgall Lake, Armagh
- Loughinisland, Ards & Down
- Loughnafanogy, Moyle District
- Loughnashade, Armagh
- Loughran's Lane, Banbridge
- Lower Braniel Rd, Castlereagh
- Lower Carrs Glen, Belfast
- Lower Drummans, Limavady
- Lower Kiltinny, Coleraine
- Lurgan Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Lurgan Park Lake, Craigavon
- Magheracranmoney Wood, Ards & Down
- Magheralave 1, Lisburn
- Magheralave 2, Lisburn
- Maginnis Villas, Newry & Mourne
- Mallaboy Grassland, Ballymoney Borough
- Marlacoo Lake, Armagh
- McAuley's Lake, Ards & Down
- McCallen's Town, Magherafelt
- McCollum's Hill South, Ballymoney Borough
- McKeown's Plantation, Lisburn
- McNally's Burn, Magherafelt
- Milford Cutting, Armagh
- Mill Pond (Shrigley), Ards & Down
- Mill Road Quarry, Castlereagh
- Milltown Cemetery, Belfast
- Milltown Church, Lisburn
- Milltown Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Minnowburn, Castlereagh Lisburn
- Moira Demesne, Lisburn
- Moneybroom Wood, Lisburn
- Moneycarragh, Ards & Down
- Moneymore Deltas (see new polygon map no 54), Magherafelt
- Moneymore Deltas incorporating Quilly Glen & Re, Magherafelt
- Moneyneany incorporating Drumderg River & Derry, Magherafelt
- Moneyneany, Magherafelt
- Moneyrannel, Limavady
- Moneystaghan Bog, Magherafelt
- Monlough Road West Fen and Wetlands, Castlereagh
- Monlough Road West Fen and Wetlands, CAstlereagh
- Monlough, Castlereagh
- Moss Road Bogs, Lisburn
- Mourne Park, Newry & Mourne
- Mowillin South West, Armagh
- Mowillin South, Armagh
- Moyagoney Bog, Magherafelt
- Moyan Road, Ballymoney Borough
- Moyard, Castlereagh
- Moyarget Lower, Moyle District
- Moyesset, Magherafelt
- Moyola River, Magherafelt
- Moyola/Waterfoot, Magherafelt
- Mulkeeragh Wood, Limavady
- Mullabrack Fen, Banbridge
- Mullaghbane Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Mullaghbane, Newry & Mourne
- Mullaghdrin Hill, Lisburn
- Mullaghdroolly, Dungannon
- Mullaghglass Quarry, Lisburn
- Mullaghmore (see new polygon map no 61), Magherafelt
- Mullaghmore Complex, Limavady Borough
- Mullaghmore incorporating Barony Glen, Magherafelt
- Mullartown Moraine, Newry & Mourne
- Mullycar Lough, Dungannon
- Mullygruen Lough, Dungannon
- Murlough Bay, Moyle District
- Murlough Fairhead composite, Moyle District
- Narrow Water Forest, Newry & Mourne
- Navan Fort, Armagh
- North Stonyford, Lisburn
- North Woodburn reservoir, Carrickfergus
- Nutgrove Wood, Magherafelt
- O'Neill Road, Newtownabbey
- Oakfield, Carrickfergus
- Oakhill, Limavady Borough
- Old Pier Grassland, Moyle District
- Old Warren, Lisburn
- Oughtmore Mountain, Cookstown
- Outlack Bog, Armagh
- Ovil, Limavady
- Owenbeg, Limavady
- Owenreagh, Magherafelt
- Park Bog, Banbridge
- Park Road West, Newtownabbey

- Parknamoney Wood, Cookstown
- Plaister Quarry, Dungannon
- Pollramer Lake, Ards & Down
- Port Obe, Moyle District
- Port Vinegar, Moyle District
- Portavoe Reservoir, Ards & Down
- Portavoe Reservoir, North Down & Ards
- Portmore Lough, Around ASSI, Lisburn
- Portrush Golf Links, Coleraine
- Portstewart - Portrush cliff series, Coleraine
- Portstewart Golf Links, Coleraine
- Portstewart Old Golf links, Coleraine
- Portulla Wood, Ards & Down
- Purdy's Burn, Castlereagh/ Lisburn
- Purdysburn Hospital, Castlereagh
- Quarry at Mounteagle Glen, Lisburn
- Quarterlands Road East, Lisburn
- Quaw Burn, Ballymoney Borough
- Quilly Glen (subsumed within Moneymore Deltas), Magherafelt
- Rathfriland, Banbridge
- Rathgael, North Down
- Rathmullan Point, Ards & Down
- Ravellea, Dungannon
- Ravernet River at Legacurry, Lisburn
- Ravernet River at Sprucefield, Lisburn
- Ravernet River, Drumra Hill, Lisburn
- Rea Hill, Newtownabbey
- Red Arch, Moyle District
- Redburn, North Down
- Rehaghy Wood, Dungannon
- Retreat, Moyle District
- Reubens Glen (subsumed within Moneymore Deltas), Magherafelt
- River Main Bog, Ballymoney Borough
- River Roe, Limavady
- Rock Port, Moyle District
- Rockport Coast & St. Columbanus, North Down
- Rocky Mountain, Newry & Mourne
- Rosemount, Ards & Down
- Rostrevor River, Newry & Mourne
- Roughan Lough, Dungannon
- Round Lough, Dungannon
- Rowantree Moss, Banbridge
- Royal Belfast Golf Club and Camphill, North Down
- Rushyhill, Lisburn
- Rusky Cottage Woods, Cookstown
- Sandelford Bridge, Coleraine
- Sandy Port, Ards & Down
- Saugh Island, Ballymoney Borough
- Scarva Pond, Banbridge
- School Lane, Craneystown, Lisburn
- Seaford Lakes, Ards & Down
- Seeconnell, Ards & Down
- Seymour Hill, Lisburn
- Shague Hill, Ards & Down
- Shannaghan Hill, Banbridge
- Sheep Walk Road, Lisburn
- Sheeptown Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Sheetrim Lough, Newry & Mourne
- Shimna & Trassey Rivers, Ards & Down
- Shimna & Trassey Rivers, Ards & Down
- Silverbridge Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park, Belfast
- Skea Bog, Dungannon
- Skillyskolban Lake and Big Bog, Banbridge
- Slatmore Quarry, Dungannon
- Sleivegullion Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Slieve Croob, Ards & Down
- Slieve Croob, Banbridge
- Slieve Croob, Down
- Slieve Gallion, Cookstown
- Slieve Gallion, Magherafelt
- Slieveanorra Moor, Ballymoney; Moyle
- Slievenaboley Road, Banbridge
- Slievenacappel, Newry & Mourne
- Slievenacloy margins, Lisburn
- Slievenagravery, Lisburn
- Slievenagriddle, Ards & Down
- Slimero Mountain Wet Grassland, Carrickfergus
- Slimero, Carrickfergus
- Somerset Ponds, Coleraine
- South Down Coast, Newry & Mourne
- South Lifeboat House, Moyle District
- South of M1 Roundabout, Junction 1, Belfast
- South Woodburn, Carrickfergus
- Spelga Dam Stream, Newry & Mourne
- Spelga dam, Newry & Mourne
- Spincha Burn, Limavady
- Springfield Pond / Highfield Glen, Belfast
- Springhill Wood, Cookstown
- Sruhanleanantaway Burn, Magherafelt
- St John's Point, Ards & Down
- St Pious Hill, Newry & Mourne
- Standing Stones Hill, Lisburn
- Stoneyfaul East, Newtownabbey
- Stoneyford Reservoir, Lisburn
- Stonyford River, Lisburn
- Stormont, Belfast
- Straidhill Plantation, Newtownabbey
- Stricklands Glen, North Down
- Stuart Hall, Cookstown
- Summer Hill, Lisburn
- Tamary, Newry & Mourne
- Tamnaghbane, Newry & Mourne
- Tamney, Limavady
- Tavnaghboy, Moyle District
- Tavnaghorna Wood, Moyle District
- Teal Lough, Magherafelt
- Teer, Newry & Mourne
- The Glen Rath, Lisburn
- The Island (Dreenan) N Bog, Magherafelt
- The Island (Dreenan) S Bog, Magherafelt
- The Isles, Ballymoney Borough
- The Rock, Ballymoney Borough
- The Rough Hills, Coleraine

- The Temple, Lisburn
- Three mile water, Newtownabbey
- Throne Woodland, Belfast
- Tievecrom, Newry & Mourne
- Tildarg dam, Newtownabbey
- Tillysburn, Belfast
- Tintagh, Magherafelt
- Tircar Stream, Dungannon
- Tircreven Burn, Limavady
- Tirkane Sweat House, Magherafelt
- Tirnaskea Wood, Cookstown
- Toberbilly - Moyle, Moyle District
- Tornamoney grassland, Moyle District
- Torrent River, Dungannon
- Tully sand pit, Limavady
- Tullybrick Lough, Armagh
- Tullybrick, Magherafelt
- Tullydonnell Grassland, Newry & Mourne
- Tullygiven Hill, Dungannon
- Tullykeeran, Magherafelt
- Tullylagan Manor Wood, Cookstown
- Tullynagee, Ards & Down
- Tullynawood Lake, Armagh
- Tullyratty, Ards & Down
- Tullyree, Ards & Down
- Tynan Abbey Lake, Armagh
- Tyranee, Magherafelt
- Ulster Folk and Transport Museum & Cultra Glen, North Down
- Umbra, Limavady
- Ummeracam, Newry & Mourne
- UNNAMED, Armagh
- Upper Burren Lake and Fen, Newry & Mourne
- Upper Forth River, Belfast
- Upperland, Magherafelt
- Upperlands Island Dam, Magherafelt
- Ushet, Moyle District
- Waterworks Park, Belfast
- West of Mutton Burn, Carrickfergus
- Western Mourne Habitat & Geology, Newry & Mourne
- White Head, Carrickfergus
- White Lough, Dungannon
- White Water River, Newry & Mourne
- Whitehill, Ballymoney
- Whitespots, Ards & Down
- Willowbrook, Newtownabbey
- Willy's Wood Island, Ards & Down
- Wood Burn, Limavady
- Woodburn, Carrickfergus
- Woodland West of Black Hill, Carrickfergus Larne
- Woods at Glenmachan, Belfast
- Wright's McKee's & Henney, Lisburn
- Yate's Corner, Castlereagh
- Yates Corner, Ards & Down

Parks and open spaces owned by the DOE and maintained by NIEA

- Country Parks
- Castle Archdale Country Park
- Crawfordsburn Country Park
- Ness Country Park
- Peatlands Park
- Redburn Country Park
- Roe Valley Country Park
- Scrabo Country Park

Nature Reserves

- Altikeeragh
- Ballyquintin Point
- Banagher Glen
- Belshaw's Quarry
- Binevenagh
- Blacker's Rock: Brookend, Kell's Point, Killycolpy, Killywoolaghan & Sheeky's Wood
- Boorin
- Brackagh Bog
- Caldanagh Bog
- Cloghy Rocks & Granagh Bay (part)
- Crossmurrin & Killykeeghan
- Derryleckagh
- Dunloy Bog
- Fairy Water Bog (Claragh Bog)
- Garry Bog (part)
- Hanging Rock (Marlbank)
- Kebble, Kinramer N & S (Rathlin)
- Killard
- Lough Naman Bog
- Lusty Beg Island
- Meenadoan
- Montiaghs Moss
- Mullenakill & Annagarriff (Peatlands Park)
- Ness & Ervey Woods (Ness Country Park)
- Portrush Nature Reserve
- Quoile Pondage
- Reilly & Gole Woods & Inishfendra (Crom)
- The Murrins
- Tolan's Point
- Tullywannia
- Turmennan Fen
- Turmoyra Marsh

Miscellaneous Open Spaces

- Lands at Upper Dunmurry Lan
- Inishmacsaint (Lower Lough Erne)
- Inish Davar (Lower Lough Erne)

State Care Monuments

Co Antrim

- Ballylumford Dolmen
- Craigs, The Broad Stone
- Craigs Dolmen
- Dooley's Cairn
- Duncarbit Standing Stones
- Lissanduff Earthworks
- Ossian's Grave
- Antrim Round Tower
- Armoy Round Tower
- Ballywee Early Christian Settlement
- Coshkib Rath Pair: The Twin

Towers	■ Carrickfergus Town Walls	■ Slieve Gullion South Cairn
■ Drumnadrough Rath	■ Carrickfergus Gasworks	■ Slieve Gullion North Cairn
■ Lissue Rath	■ Dalway's Bawn	■ Eglisk Crosses
■ Spring Farm Rath	■ Moira Station and Signal Box	■ Killevy Churches
■ Bonamargy Friary	■ Co Armagh	■ Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone
■ Carrickfergus Castle	■ Annaghmare Cairn	■ Lisbanemore Cashel
■ Castle Lug	■ Ballykeel Dolmen and Cairn	■ Lisdoon Cashel
■ Cranfield Church	■ Ballymacdermot Cairn	■ Lisnaminsty Rath
■ Dunluce Castle	■ Clonlum North Cairn	■ Tynan Village Cross
■ Harryville Motte and Bailey	■ Clonlum South Cairn	■ Armagh Friary
■ Kinbane Castle	■ Clontygora Cairn	■ Moyry Castle
■ Layd Church	■ Haughey's Fort	■ Castledillon Obelisk
■ Muckamore Priory	■ The King's Stables	■ North Meridian Markers
■ Olderfleet Castle	■ Navan Fort	

Co Down

■ Annadorn Dolmen	■ St. John's Point Church	■ Newtownards Priory
■ Audleystown Cairn	■ Woodgrange Rath and Tower House	■ Portaferry Castle
■ Ballynoe 'Stone Circle'		■ Quoile Castle
■ Dunnaman Court Tomb	■ Ardtole Church	■ Ringhaddy Castle
■ Giant's Ring	■ Audley's Castle	■ Ringhaddy Church
■ Goward Dolmen	■ Clough Castle	■ Shandon Park Mound
■ Kilfeaghan Portal Tomb	■ Cowd Castle	■ Sketrick Castle
■ Legananny Dolmen	■ Downpatrick, the Mound of Down	■ Strangford Castle
■ Millin Bay Cairn	■ Dromore Motte	■ Tullynakill Church
■ Scrabo Hillfort & Tower	■ Dundrum Castle	■ Ballycopeland Windmill
■ Derry Churches	■ Duneight Motte and Bailey	■ Grey Point Fort
■ Dromore Cross	■ Greencastle	■ Hillsborough Fort
■ Drumadonnell Cross	■ Grey Abbey	■ Hillsborough Courthouse (Market House)
■ Drumena Cashel and Souterrain	■ Hollywood Motte	■ Hillsborough: Richhill Gates
■ Lisnagade Fort	■ Inch Abbey	■ Kirkistown Castle
■ Lisnavaragh Fort	■ Jordan's Castle	■ Shaw's Bridge
■ Maghera Church and Round Tower	■ Kilclief Castle	■ Struell Bath Houses and Wells
■ Nendrum Ecclesiastical Site	■ Loughlinisland Churches	■ The White House, Ballyspurge
■ Raholp Church	■ Mahee Castle	
■ Rough Fort	■ Movilla Abbey	
	■ Narrow Water Castle	

Co Fermanagh

■ Aghanaglack Dual Court Tomb	■ Inishmacsaint Church and Cross	■ Monea Castle
■ Drumskinny Stone Circle, Cairn and Alignment	■ White Island Church and Figures	■ Old Castle Archdale
■ Aghalurcher Church	■ Castle Balfour	■ Portora Castle
■ Devenish Ecclesiastical Site	■ Enniskillen Castle	■ Tully Castle

Co Londonderry

■ Ballybriest Dual Court Tomb: Carnanbane	■ Mobuy 'Standing Stone'	■ Bovevagh Church
■ Ballybriest Wedge Tomb	■ Mullaboy Standing Stone	■ Church Island, Lough Beg
■ Ballygroll Prehistoric Landscape	■ Tamnyrankin Court Tomb	■ Drum Fort, also known as Larry's Fort
■ Ervey Portal Tomb	■ Tirnony Dolmen	■ Dunalis Souterrain
■ Knockoneill Court Tomb	■ Ballintemple Bullaun Stone	■ Dungiven Priory
	■ Ballynascreen Church	■ Gortycavan Mound
	■ Banagher Church	

- Inishrush Crannóg
- Maghera Church
- Mill Loughan Mound
- Mountsandel Fort
- O’Cahan’s Castle
- Tullyheran Fort
- Bellaghy Bawn
- Brackfield Bawn
- Derry’s Walls
- Magilligan Martello Tower
- Tirkane Sweat House

Co Tyrone

- Balix Lower Court Tomb: The White Rocks
- Ballywholan Dual Court Tomb: Carnagat
- Ballywholan Portal Tomb: Carnfadrig
- Beaghmore Stone Circles, Cairns and Alignments
- Berrysfort Standing Stone
- Churchtown Wedge Tomb: Todd’s Den
- Churchtown Portal Tomb: Druid’s Altar
- Clogher Hillfort: Rathmore
- Copney Stone Circles
- Cregganconroe Court Tomb
- Creggandevesky Court Tomb
- Dampfcloy Megalithic
- Structure
- Glenknock or Cloghogle Portal Tomb: Druid’s Altar
- Grange Standing Stone
- Grange Standing Stone Pair
- Killucan Wedge Tomb: Carnanbane
- Killucan Long Cairn: Killucan
- Knockmany Passage Tomb: Annia’s Cove
- Lisky Court Tomb: Giant’s Grave
- Tattykeel Standing Stone
- Ardboe Cross and Abbey
- Donaghmore Cross
- Drumgormal Bivallate Rath
- Dungororan Rath
- Errigal Keerogue Cross and Church
- Killyliss Rath
- Tullaghoge Fort
- Harry Avery’s Castle
- Magheraglass Church
- Mountjoy Castle
- Benburb or Wingfield’s Castle
- Castle Caulfield
- Derryloran Church
- Moy Gates and Screen
- Newtownstewart Castle
- Reaskcor Tree-Ring
- Reaskmore Penal Altar Site
- Ralignaman Women’s Graveyard
- Roughan Castle
- Carricknahaltora

List of All Conservation Areas (Planning Service)

- Adelaide Park Conservation Area, Belfast
- Antrim Town Centre Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Ardglass Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Armagh Conservation Area, Co. Armagh
- Ballycastle Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Ballymoney Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Belfast City Centre Conservation Area
- Bessbrook Conservation Area Co. Armagh
- Bushmills Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Caledon Conservation Area, Co. Tyrone
- Carnlough Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Carrickfergus Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Castlewellan Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Cushendall Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Cushendun Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Cyprus Avenue Conservation Area, Belfast
- Donaghadee Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Downpatrick Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Draperstown Conservation Area, Co. Derry/Londonderry
- Dromore Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Enniskillen Conservation Area Co. Fermanagh
- Glenarm Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Gracehill Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Hillsborough Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Hollywood Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Killough Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Killyleagh Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Kings Road Conservation Area, Belfast
- Knockdene Conservation Area, Belfast
- Linen Conservation Area, Belfast
- Lisburn Conservation Area, Co. Antrim
- Lisnaskea Conservation Area Co. Fermanagh
- Clarendon Street Conservation Area, Derry/Londonderry
- Historic City Conservation Area, Derry/Londonderry
- Magee Conservation Area, Derry/Londonderry
- Loughall Conservation Area, Co. Armagh
- Lurgan Conservation Area, Co. Armagh
- Malone Conservation Area, Belfast
- Malone Park Conservation Area, Belfast
- McMaster Street Conservation Area, Belfast
- Merville Garden Village Conservation Area, Newtownabbey
- Moira Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Moneymore Conservation Area, Co. Derry/Londonderry
- Moy Conservation Area, Co. Tyrone
- Newry Conservation Area, Co. Down
- Newtownstewart Conservation Area, Co.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tyrone ■ Northland Conservation Area, Dungannon ■ Omagh Conservation Area, Co. Tyrone ■ Portaferry Conservation Area, Co. Down ■ Queen's Conservation Area, Belfast | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Randalstown Conservation Area, Co. Antrim ■ Richhill Conservation Area, Co. Armagh ■ Rostrevor Conservation Area, Co. Down ■ Saintfield Conservation Area, Co. Down ■ Sion Mills Conservation Area, Co. Tyrone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Somerton Road Conservation Area, Belfast ■ Strangford Conservation Area, Co. Down ■ Stranmillis Conservation Area, Belfast ■ The Cathedral Conservation Area, Belfast ■ Whitehead Conservation Area, Co. Antrim |
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Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of previous inaccuracies and discrepancies, and following the collapse of proposed initiatives with the Single Tier Taxi Act, whether he will now review the legal position on taxi provision at Kingspan Stadium.

(AQW 43554/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I refer the member to my answer to AQW 28485/11-15; I am of the view that the advice issued by my Department on this matter remains pertinent and appropriate.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what performance indicator controls have been agreed for the new councils.

(AQW 43555/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 confers on councils a new duty of performance improvement from 1st April 2015. The Act sets out the framework for the operation of council performance improvement. The eleven new councils will be obliged to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. My Department will provide statutory guidance to assist councils to comply with performance improvement duties under the Act. This guidance has been drafted following consultation with the Local Government Auditor and councils.

The Act also provides the Department with powers to specify by Order factors of performance (performance indicators) against which a council's performance will be measured, the purpose being to improve service delivery for the benefit of citizens. My Department will make legislation under Section 89 of the Act, to specify performance indicators and standards for the functions of economic development, planning and waste management.

The Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Order (NI) 2015 will be supported by statutory guidance issued under powers contained in Section 111 of the Act, to enable councils to make arrangements for the collection and reporting of the specified performance indicators and standards.

Consultation on the Order and the associated guidance took place between 23 December 2014 and 2 March 2015 and the responses are currently being considered

The provisions of the Order will only apply for the 2015-16 financial year in the first instance. Limiting the application to the first year of the new councils' operation provides the flexibility to adjust the performance indicators and standards to take account of the potential for changes as a result of the future PfG and to incorporate learning from the first year of operation. My Department will introduce a further Local Government Performance Order for 2016/17 and subsequent years as required.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 43001/11-15, how many vehicles used for school transport services have been found to be in use, despite being prohibited due to not being roadworthy.

(AQW 43569/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There have been no vehicles detected being used to provide school transport services in breach of a prohibition issued for not being roadworthy.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 36324/11-15, whether he has any concerns as to the accuracy of the independent environmental audit reports given that these sites now form part of the Mobouy Road illegal landfill; and whether his Department undertook any checks on the accuracy of these independent environmental audit reports.

(AQW 43580/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department is satisfied that the audits carried out at Campsie Sand and Gravel Ltd, Mobouy Road, Campsie in March 2006, May 2008 and June 2010 were correctly carried out by accredited companies. On each occasion an improvement notice was raised as a result of the audit. A DOE verification check was also carried out in October 2007.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 36323/11-15, to confirm that the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme certificate granted for the Mobouy Road extraction was limited to planning approvals A/1993/0302 and A/1998/0662 and did not relate to, or facilitate, the claiming of tax rebates for unauthorised extraction from any of the retrospective planning applications which have recently been refused planning permission.

(AQW 43581/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme certificate issued to Campsie Sand & Gravel Ltd for their sand and gravel site at Mobuoy Road, Campsie was with regard to the planning approvals, A/1993/0302 and A/1998/0662, and the associated land. The Department has not been made aware of any levy credit claims for extraction from other areas using this certificate.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to hold an urgent investigation into how a political party was permitted to hold a political function, at Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council-owned property of The Hill of the O'Neill - Ranfurly Arts and Visitors Centre, in contravention of the local government policy about the use of council-owned and staffed facilities for use by individual political parties for launches, meetings, or similar; (ii) whether the original policy has been reviewed and amended; (iii) if so, what consultation was carried out prior to the amendments; and (iv) whether the policy is now void.

(AQW 43675/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The policy on the use of council property, by individuals or groups for any purpose, is a matter for each individual district council, as an independent legal entity. In developing its policy, a district council must ensure that proposed uses of its property are not prohibited by any legislative provision. The Council must also have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations, as required by section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

In these circumstances it would not be appropriate for the Department to seek to arrange an investigation into the actions of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council that you have identified.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment whether planning application E/2013/0093/F has been refused.

(AQW 43901/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My officials received a number of calls on Wednesday 18 March, indicating that application E/2013/0093/f – Ballinlea appeared on the planning portal marked as “deemed refused”.

Upon investigation this update has been identified as a computer error and the information removed accordingly.

I can confirm that the application is a live planning application and no decision has been made on the application at this time.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 41412/11-15, (i) whether the private sector adheres to the adult ASD care pathway and the NICE guidelines, and if that assessment will therefore be accepted or the Health and Social Care Trust team reassess even if the private sector adheres to the above; and (ii) whether this refers to the original assessment and assessment for services.

(AQW 43278/11-15)

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I cannot comment on private sector practices and diagnosis for ASD. However,

as advised in AQW 41412/11-15, the HSC will consider the independent sector diagnosis as part of the HSC assessment if it has kept in line with the regional pathway diagnostic standards and those outlined in NICE Guideline 142. This refers to both assessment for diagnosis and for services.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the engagement he has had with the Fire Brigades Union regarding the Fire Service budget; and what risks were outlined to him regarding a budget cut.

(AQW 43321/11-15)

Mr Wells: I met with local officials of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on 19 January 2015.

This was a frank and useful engagement with FBU representatives setting out their concerns regarding the potential impact of any reduction to NIFRS budget.

I reminded FBU that NIFRS' savings proposals must be prioritised on the basis of those that minimise the impact on service delivery. Any changes to service delivery must ensure the continued safety of both the public and the firefighters' who deliver the service.

Changes to service delivery will require consideration of public consultation by NIFRS. Final agreement to the NIFRS savings proposals will be on the basis of evidence-based reforms. Proposals will also be subject to consultation processes, as appropriate.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what procedures are in place should a patient wish to complain about treatment received in a hospital.

(AQW 43387/11-15)

Mr Wells: The HSC Complaints Procedure: Standards and Guidelines for Resolution and Learning; details the procedures for members of the public should they wish to make a complaint about treatment they have received in any hospital setting

that has been funded by the HSC service. The procedures also detail the standards that must be adhered to by those staff handling, investigating and responding to a complaint. The Procedures are available via the following link: -

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc_complaints_revised_standards_and_guidelines_for_resolution_and_learning_updated_february_2015_-2.pdf

A patient can make a complaint to any member of staff involved in their care or treatment. Front-line staff may either resolve the complaint "on the spot" or pass it to the designated Complaints Manager. The procedures aim to encourage speedy and effective local resolution of complaints as close to their source of origin as possible.

The complaints process should be open and transparent with appropriate advice and support available to anyone who makes a complaint.

HSC organisations also promote the use of independent advice and advocacy services. Independent advice and support is available from the Patient and Client Council (PCC) to service users making, or intending to make, a complaint.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the introduction of a Health and Social Care feedback system similar to that which already exists elsewhere in the National Health Service.

(AQW 43425/11-15)

Mr Wells: Monitoring the patient and client experience is an effective way of driving improvements in the quality of our services.

I have asked my officials to review the current arrangements and to develop a framework for the Patient Experience that sits within the Strategy for Quality in NI (Quality 2020). The framework will be cognizant of information and recommendations made from local and national inquiries into patient experience and based on the best available evidence.

The introduction of a Health and Social Care feedback system similar to that which already exists elsewhere in the National Health Service will be considered in the development of the Framework.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the development and introduction of an advice and information portal.

(AQW 43426/11-15)

Mr Wells: Transforming Your Care highlighted the opportunities that technology offered to assist people to make the correct care choices by providing information on prevention, signs and symptoms, investigation and treatment of a range of conditions and self-management of illness.

Currently the Public Health Agency and Health & Social Care Board are working with NI Direct to enhance existing online information and advice services. This includes provision of:

- A directory of mental health services for members of the public, scheduled to be added to the NI Direct Health & Wellbeing page during March 2015.
- Development of information resources such as 'Health Conditions A –Z', and 'Live Well' advice and guidance.

Alongside the advice and information portal the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board make extensive use of social media to promote health campaigns such as "Choose Well".

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail whether the temporary measures taken by each Health and Social Care Trust's contingency plan in 2014/15 will be made permanent for 2015/16.

(AQW 43442/11-15)

Mr Wells: Financial planning for 2015/16 is still ongoing and the Trusts continue to work with the HSCB to identify the potential savings opportunities which could be achieved in 2015/16. Trusts' savings proposals are to be considered by the Trusts' Boards shortly and then submitted to the HSCB. Whilst no detail can be provided until proposals have been considered, relevant savings proposals will be subject to consultation, as appropriate.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to his recent statement on Paediatric Cardiac Services, whether the investment set aside for more diagnostic centres will go ahead.

(AQW 43453/11-15)

Mr Wells: In my statement on 3 March 2015, I updated the Assembly on my earlier request for detailed investment proposals to be brought forward which would further develop a cardiology centre of excellence at the Belfast Trust and strengthen the Northern Ireland cardiology network, as vital elements of the overall network.

I also confirmed the availability of a total of £1.2m to invest in the implementation of the new service model, which would involve, as part of those proposals, enhancing the ability to diagnose congenital cardiac conditions throughout Northern Ireland.

One of the functions of the NI Congenital Heart Service Implementation Group which I have established will be to identify the resource requirements for the Belfast cardiology hub and Northern Ireland cardiology network, in line with the IWG report. I therefore expect to be in a position to provide more information about where that investment will specifically be required once that Implementation Group has had ample opportunity to consider this in detail.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the benefits of creating a cancer drugs fund.

(AQW 43454/11-15)

Mr Wells: Specialist drugs are used to treat a large number of serious conditions other than cancer. The current proposals to strengthen the Individual Funding Request Process, which are out for public consultation, would address access to those specialist drugs not routinely commissioned in NI for all patients rather than focusing on one distinct group to the disadvantage of the rest.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) average; (ii) minimum; and (iii) maximum duration of home help care visits to sick and elderly patients in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 43470/11-15)

Mr Wells: It is assumed that the terms home help and home care in these questions relate to domiciliary care.

Each client is assessed with regard to the domiciliary support required and the duration of domiciliary care visits vary dependent on the outcome of each individual assessment.

Information on the average, minimum and maximum duration of domiciliary care visits is not collected centrally and was requested from the five HSC Trusts.

Belfast HSC Trust

Each service user is assessed individually with regard to the domiciliary supports required. For the statutory homecare service and non statutory domiciliary care service, the number of visits and duration of calls is determined on the outcome of this assessment and varies for each service user. Based on the needs of each service user, which could include meals provision, personal care, support with medication and domestic tasks, a total number of hours of care to be provided during a week is allocated based on the following durations; 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes and 1 hour. The records for individual service users are not recorded in such a way to enable an average duration of visit to be extracted.

Northern HSC Trust

The allocation of domiciliary care visits are based on the assessed need of the client. Five minute check calls can be made to clients to reheat their cook chill meals and to make sure client doors are locked.

At 16th March 2015, the minimum duration of a visit was 5 minutes. For clients aged under 65, the maximum was 720 minutes (12 hours) and the average was 42 minutes and 40 seconds. For clients aged 65 and over, the maximum was 615 minutes (10 hours 15 minutes) and the average was 30 minutes and 3 seconds.

South Eastern HSC Trust

Each service user is assessed using the Northern Ireland Single Assessment Tool (NISAT). The number of calls and call duration depends on the outcome of their individual assessment. Call duration times range from 15 minutes to 60 minutes and may involve one or two Care Workers depending on needs. There are currently over 4,000 older service users receiving on average approximately 11 hours of domiciliary care per week.

Southern HSC Trust

The duration of each visit varies depending on the needs of the client, the particular reason for the visit and practical or personal care to be delivered. These can range from short interventions for example assisting with taking medication to longer visits for personal care and indeed overnight visits where families need support with "night sits" (Personal & Practical, Day Sit, Night Sit).

Between 27th February to 5th March 2015 and across all programmes of care, the minimum duration of a visit was 10 minutes, the maximum was 1380 minutes per day (23 hours), and the average was 109 minutes (1 hour 49 minutes) per client per day.

Western HSC Trust

The average homecare duration is 32 minutes, the minimum 10 minutes and the maximum 3 hours.

Information on the number of people receiving domiciliary care annually is not collected centrally. However, information on the number of persons receiving domiciliary care in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust during a survey week in September in each of the last three years is detailed below:

HSC Trust	Clients Receiving Domiciliary Care during a survey week in September in		
	2012	2013	2014
Belfast	6,363	6,671	6,221
Northern	4,623	4,778	4,760
South Eastern	4,544	4,715	4,865
Southern	4,389	4,461	4,291

HSC Trust	Clients Receiving Domiciliary Care during a survey week in September in		
	2012	2013	2014
Western	4,215	4,705	4,052
Northern Ireland	24,134	25,330	24,189

Source: CC7b community information return

This information is published annually in the 'Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland' bulletin which can be found on the DHSSPS website at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/socialcare/domiciliary-care.htm>

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to ensure the recently issued National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines on a minimum duration of 30 minutes for home help care visits to elderly and sick patients is followed uniformly across Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43471/11-15)

Mr Wells: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence draft guideline 'Home Care: Delivering Personal Care and Practical Support to Older People Living in their Own Homes' was issued for consultation on 5 March 2015. The consultation period will run until 16 April 2015 and it is anticipated that the final guidance will be published in August 2015.

The guidance has been developed by the NICE Collaborating Centre for Social Care and will be issued as social care guidance. The Department's existing agreement with NICE does not include social care guidance and, therefore, the Department does not review social care guidance for formal endorsement at this time.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have received home care visits in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43472/11-15)

Mr Wells: It is assumed that the terms home help and home care in these questions relate to domiciliary care.

Each client is assessed with regard to the domiciliary support required and the duration of domiciliary care visits vary dependent on the outcome of each individual assessment.

Information on the average, minimum and maximum duration of domiciliary care visits is not collected centrally and was requested from the five HSC Trusts.

Belfast HSC Trust

Each service user is assessed individually with regard to the domiciliary supports required. For the statutory homecare service and non statutory domiciliary care service, the number of visits and duration of calls is determined on the outcome of this assessment and varies for each service user. Based on the needs of each service user, which could include meals provision, personal care, support with medication and domestic tasks, a total number of hours of care to be provided during a week is allocated based on the following durations; 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes and 1 hour. The records for individual service users are not recorded in such a way to enable an average duration of visit to be extracted.

Northern HSC Trust

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South Eastern HSC Trust

Each service user is assessed using the Northern Ireland Single Assessment Tool (NISAT). The number of calls and call duration depends on the outcome of their individual assessment. Call duration times range from 15 minutes to 60 minutes and may involve one or two Care Workers depending on needs. There are currently over 4,000 older service users receiving on average approximately 11 hours of domiciliary care per week.

Southern HSC Trust

The duration of each visit varies depending on the needs of the client, the particular reason for the visit and practical or personal care to be delivered. These can range from short interventions for example assisting with taking medication to longer visits for personal care and indeed overnight visits where families need support with "night sits" (Personal & Practical, Day Sit, Night Sit).

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Source: CC7b community information return

This information is published annually in the 'Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland' bulletin which can be found on the DHSSPS website at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/socialcare/domiciliary-care.htm>

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the neurosurgery waiting targets at the Royal Victoria Hospital; and how many patients the Consultant Neurosurgeon has appointments with each week. **(AQW 43475/11-15)**

Mr Wells: The 2014/15 Ministerial target for outpatient waiting times states that, from April 2014, at least 80% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 15 weeks.

The average number of new outpatient consultations with neurosurgeons at the Royal Victoria Hospital is 37 per week. The average number of review patients seen is 51 per week.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current response time to a cardiac arrest in the Glens and Coast Road area. **(AQW 43484/11-15)**

Mr Wells: Information on cardiac arrest response times for the Northern Local Commissioning Group (LCG) is detailed in the table below, for the period 1st March 2014 to 13th March 2015.

Northern LCG	Category of Call			Total
	A		B	
	Purple	Red		
Responses to Potential Cardiac Arrest Patients	7	440	110	557
Average Response Time (HH:MM:SS)	00:11:49	00:09:32	00:10:11	

Source: NIAS

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additions have been made to the provision of health services in the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine to enhance delivery and sustain its future. **(AQW 43498/11-15)**

Mr Wells: The Northern Trust's model for services in Causeway and the Glens area is based around an acute hospital in Coleraine with an Emergency Department and supporting clinical services, a well-developed intermediate care service and community teams evenly distributed across the area.

In January, the Trust made a number of new, clinical appointments for the Causeway Hospital. The permanent appointments include consultants in surgery, gastroenterology, respiratory, obstetrics and gynaecology and a consultant physician in internal medicine. A joint post with Altnagelvin Hospital, that of a consultant cardiologist, is also in the process of being recruited.

The Trust is also recruiting a further three posts; Consultant in Emergency Medicine, Consultant Physician in General Medicine/Care of the Elderly and Consultant Physician with an interest in respiratory medicine and these remain in process.

The Trust views the hospital as a key asset in delivering integrated services, not just in the Causeway and Glens area but also further afield.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the fine received by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust for the illegal closure of Bangor GP Ward.

(AQW 43510/11-15)

Mr Wells: No fine was received by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the Court's ruling regarding this case.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown on the number of district nurses employed in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 43528/11-15)

Mr Wells: I refer the Member to the combined answer given to AQWs 43546 and 43547.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the proposed pharmaceutical clinical effectiveness plan, what assurances his Department can give that safeguards will be in place to ensure that patients will not be adversely affected in the prescription of generic drugs or switching to other therapeutic medicines.

(AQW 43529/11-15)

Mr Wells: It is the policy of my Department that generic medicines should be prescribed in preference to branded products in all circumstances where it is appropriate to do so. The Health and Social Care Board has developed guidance which provides prescribers with examples of medicines which are unsuitable for generic prescribing. The Board has also developed patient information leaflets and posters on generics to ensure that patients understand the reasons for their use.

Switching to other therapeutic medicines is only recommended after full consideration of the impact on patients, with consideration being given to the effectiveness and safety of treatments alongside patient factors e.g. convenience and adherence to treatment. Where switching to other therapeutic medicines is promoted by the Board, a Standard Operating Procedure is developed. These are used to ensure switches are carried out safely by outlining the steps process which is followed for making the switch, ensuring unsuitable patients are excluded, GP authorisation is received and that patients are informed and followed up.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42800/11-15, to detail the number of district nurses in each of the four Agenda for Change bands referred to hold a post-registration specialist practice district nursing qualification.

(AQW 43546/11-15)

Mr Wells: This information is not centrally held by DHSSPS, therefore the Health and Social Care Trusts have provided the number (headcount and whole-time equivalent [WTE]) of qualified nurses working in their District Nursing teams, shown in the tables below. Trusts have provided the current position, rather than that described in the 2014 Workforce Census. Further, the figures below have been obtained from the service areas within the Trusts, and so will exclude members of staff classed as District Nurses by the Census but who may not work within 'core' District Nursing teams.

Belfast HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	122	7	101.52	4.2
Band 6	79	64	69.93	59.2
Band 7	11	11	11.0	11.0
Band 8A	0	0	0.0	0.0

These figures relate to agreed Core District Nursing staff only within the Belfast Trust.

Northern HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	141	3	121.58	3.0
Band 6	22	22	19.70	19.70
Band 7	15	15	13.50	13.50
Band 8A	1	1	1.0	1.0

South Eastern HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	157	8	104.1	6.3
Band 6	45	42	41.99	41.99
Band 7	2	2	2.0	2.0
Band 8A	0	0	0.0	0.0

Southern HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	113	0	87.70	0.0
Band 6	58	58	48.18	48.18
Band 7	8	8	8.00	8.00

The Southern Trust has included all qualified nursing staff from their District Nursing service, including Twilight Nurses and excluding Treatment Room nurses.

Western HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	114	13	85.36	11.47
Band 6	0	0	0.0	0.0
Band 7	35	35	31.4	31.4
Band 8A	4	4	3.0	3.0

These figures relate to Core District Nursing staff only within the Western Trust.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42800/11-15, to detail (i) the number of district nurses each Health and Social Care Trust has employed at each of four Agenda for Change Bands; and (ii) how many in each Trust area hold a post-registration specialist practice district nursing qualification. (AQW 43547/11-15)

Mr Wells: This information is not centrally held by DHSSPS, therefore the Health and Social Care Trusts have provided the number (headcount and whole-time equivalent [WTE]) of qualified nurses working in their District Nursing teams, shown in the tables below. Trusts have provided the current position, rather than that described in the 2014 Workforce Census. Further,

the figures below have been obtained from the service areas within the Trusts, and so will exclude members of staff classed as District Nurses by the Census but who may not work within 'core' District Nursing teams.

Belfast HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	122	7	101.52	4.2
Band 6	79	64	69.93	59.2
Band 7	11	11	11.0	11.0
Band 8A	0	0	0.0	0.0

These figures relate to agreed Core District Nursing staff only within the Belfast Trust.

Northern HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	141	3	121.58	3.0
Band 6	22	22	19.70	19.70
Band 7	15	15	13.50	13.50
Band 8A	1	1	1.0	1.0

South Eastern HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	157	8	104.1	6.3
Band 6	45	42	41.99	41.99
Band 7	2	2	2.0	2.0
Band 8A	0	0	0.0	0.0

Southern HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	113	0	87.70	0.0
Band 6	58	58	48.18	48.18
Band 7	8	8	8.00	8.00

The Southern Trust has included all qualified nursing staff from their District Nursing service, including Twilight Nurses and excluding Treatment Room nurses.

Western HSC Trust

AfC Band	Headcount		Whole-time Equivalent	
	Total	Of which: Headcount with specialist District Nurse qualification	Total	Of which: WTE with specialist District Nurse qualification
Band 5	114	13	85.36	11.47
Band 6	0	0	0.0	0.0
Band 7	35	35	31.4	31.4
Band 8A	4	4	3.0	3.0

These figures relate to Core District Nursing staff only within the Western Trust.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of hours of domiciliary care for the 2014/15 financial year that (i) each Health and Social Care Trust predicted they would need; and (ii) were commissioned by each Local Commissioning Group.

(AQW 43548/11-15)

Mr Wells: The number of domiciliary care hours that each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust predicted they would need is not held by my Department and was therefore requested from the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). Their response can be found below:

The projections of HSC Trust outturn in 2014/15 given in Table 1 below are adjusted month by month and funding provision adjusted as necessary by the HSCB.

Table 1

HSC Trust	HSC Trust projections (adjusted to Hours Delivered)
Belfast	2,314,207
Northern	2,459,072
South Eastern	2,625,388
Southern	2,698,746
Western	2,067,908

Source: Health and Social Care (HSC) Board

The number of domiciliary care hours commissioned by each Local Commissioning Group is not held by my Department however the number of hours provided by HSC Trusts during a survey week in 2014 is available and can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of Domiciliary Care Contact Hours Provided 14th – 20th September 2014 by HSC Trust

HSC Trust	Domiciliary Care Contact Hours Provided
Belfast	41,341
Northern	51,778
South Eastern	62,190
Southern	50,426
Western	45,063

Source: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dcs-adults-ni-14.pdf>

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether Health Service patients can avail of early embryo visibility assessment; and to provide a rationale for this policy.

(AQW 43549/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has recently reviewed the policy that was constraining the Regional Fertility Centre from allowing patients to avail of Early Embryo Visibility Assessment (EEVA). I am pleased to tell you that the relevant Departmental guidance is to be temporarily relaxed to allow publicly funded patients to access EEVA on a fee basis should they wish to avail of it. However, due to overall funding constraints we are unable to publicly fund this element of IVF services at present.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43014/11-15 and given his statement that "There is no reason to provide access to student loan arrangements for nursing and midwifery students", to outline what level of income a nursing or midwifery student receives through (i) non-means tested bursaries; and (ii) means tested allowances and to detail the qualification criteria.

(AQW 43550/11-15)

Mr Wells: The non-means tested bursary awarded to all nursing and midwifery students who have secured a commissioned place at university is paid at the rate of £6055 pa for those who commenced their course prior to September 2012; and at the rate of £5165 for those who commenced their course after September 2012.

Students who have children also receive the parents' learning allowance of £1125 pa automatically.

Other allowances are available, according to circumstances, where a student has financial dependents and provides the supporting evidence required. For students who commenced their course prior to September 2012 these allowances amount to £2275 pa for the spouse or first child; and £540 pa for each subsequent child. The allowances are £2389 pa for the spouse or first child; and £567 pa for each subsequent child for students who commenced their course after September 2012.

For a student who is a lone parent, or whose spouse/ partner has no income, there is no qualifying income threshold. Means testing, based on income and the number of children, applies where a student has a spouse / partner with income. In general, the level of income needs to be below £7000 to qualify, though the greater the number of children the greater the chance of qualifying.

Childcare costs of a maximum of £1245 per academic year are also payable.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department or its arm's-length bodies since 2011; and the amount received in each case.

(AQW 43557/11-15)

Mr Wells: The table below shows those organisations based in the parliamentary constituency of North Down that have received funding since 2011/12.

Actual funding committed into the area will be higher than that recorded as voluntary and community organisations based outside North Down also deliver services for the population there.

Organisations	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Accept Care	15,000		15,000	15,000
Age North Down and Ards	28,542	28,542	28,542	28,542
Agenda	26,450	26,450	26,450	27,304
Ballydrain Harriers				5,000
Bangor Disabled Christian Fellowship	1,516			
Bangor Senior Gateway Club		9,500		
Barnardos Northern Ireland	234,791	234,791	264,791	264,791
Bryson Care - Bangor Surestart				4,500
Citizens Advice Bureau	90,360	90,360	80,360	29,500
Croft Community		99,089	76,326	76,326
Cruse Bereavement Care	26,909	26,909	30,202	30,202
Cruse ND&A	14,637	14,637	22,937	22,608
Donaghadee Arthritis Care	875	16,500	1,500	1,500
Fold Housing	112,982	217,491	217,491	214,102
Gateway Club		12,000		
Glencraig				104,942
Growing Connections NI	4,110			
Hollywood Family Trust	32,934	38,682	35,334	39,157
Homestart - North Down	72,542	87,542	70,903	70,324
Kilcooley Allotments		19,302	24,380	15,255
Kilcooley Community Forum			10,000	

Organisations	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Kilcooley Womens Centre	3,180	39,500	36,000	36,129
NI Institute for the Disabled			405,804	405,804
North Down & Ards Womens Aid	13,526	49,690	49,980	64,979
North Down Community Network	36,952	36,952	36,952	38,142
North Down Community Network and Breezemount Community Association	1,849			
North Down YMCA	44,765	29,404	29,494	29,220
Northern Community Leisure Trust			19,500	22,833
Positive Futures	664,887	1,379,303	1,579,384	1,579,384
Prospects	154,759			
Saturday Fellowship			2,600	2,600
Surestart	11,152			
Volunteer Now North Down and Ards	65,285			
Wider Vision	5,500	3,500	3,500	3,500
Grand Total	1,663,503	2,460,145	3,067,431	3,131,644

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42847/11-15, whether this funding will be ring-fenced for the financial year 2015/16.

(AQW 43562/11-15)

Mr Wells: The £2 million allocated to specialist Eating Disorder Services is recurrent funding and will continue in 2015/16.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department will be effected by a two thirds reduction in funding for Early Years services which include initiatives to address physical and emotional health of children and their families.

(AQW 43563/11-15)

Mr Wells: All Executive Ministers are having to make difficult funding decisions in difficult financial circumstances. It would not be appropriate for me to second guess decision-making by the Minister of Education or any other Executive Minister.

In terms of our mutual early years commitments, my Department is working with collaboratively with the Department of Education and three other departments to deliver a range of new early intervention projects under the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP). The EITP is underpinned by a £30 million Fund. The Fund is made up of contributions from the Delivering Social Change Programme, all five participating government departments and private philanthropy. The Programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland by embedding early intervention approaches in a transformative way in services for children and families, including services to address children's physical and emotional health.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the individual who is awaiting trial for alleged assault on a patient in Muckamore Hospital and ill-treatment of the patient, is back at work and not under suspension.

(AQW 43565/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has advised that it is unable to comment on any individual circumstances.

However, in addressing any staff management and/or disciplinary issue it has stated that its paramount consideration is the health, safety and welfare of its patients and service users.

It is the policy of the Trust to investigate and take appropriate action when complaints against staff are made in respect of their patient care duties; and to fully cooperate with, and take advice from, the PSNI on the timing and appropriateness of any internal processes. The Trust's disciplinary policy permits the Trust to proceed with internal disciplinary action in situations where a criminal case is pending. The outcome of any subsequent criminal proceedings is considered in respect of what impact it may have on an individual's contract of employment.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why were internal disciplinary proceedings against the individual, in respect of alleged assault on and ill-treatment of a patient in Muckamore Hospital, concluded in advance of the outcome of pending criminal proceedings.

(AQW 43566/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has advised that it is unable to comment on any individual circumstances.

However, in addressing any staff management and/or disciplinary issue it has stated that its paramount consideration is the health, safety and welfare of its patients and service users.

It is the policy of the Trust to investigate and take appropriate action when complaints against staff are made in respect of their patient care duties; and to fully cooperate with, and take advice from, the PSNI on the timing and appropriateness of any internal processes. The Trust's disciplinary policy permits the Trust to proceed with internal disciplinary action in situations where a criminal case is pending. The outcome of any subsequent criminal proceedings is considered in respect of what impact it may have on an individual's contract of employment.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42882/11-15, if he will now address the question of whether he acknowledges that any proposed closure, even temporary, requires consultation; and whether his Department is now committed to respecting this practice.

(AQW 43568/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department reissued its 2012 guidance on Change or Withdrawal of Services on 27 November 2014, with an additional paragraph providing advice on consultation in circumstances where this has not been possible in advance of a change or withdrawal of service (both temporary and permanent). This guidance assists Trusts in considering whether public consultation, is required in relation to any proposals to change or withdraw services. The guidance also states that where changes are temporary in nature and may be considered as part of the day to day management of services and non-contentious, the requirements for consultation and referral to the Department do not apply.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount spent on agency nurses in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43571/11-15)

Mr Wells: The table below details the expenditure on Nursing Agency staff for the period 2009/10 -2013/14.

Agency Staff – Nursing £s

Year	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
09/10	*6,066,000	*540,199	*3,303,414	1,185,710	*1,268,818	12,305,407
10/11	*2,818,000	612,964	*3,398,887	452,734	*1,525,742	8,808,327
11/12	*3,114,000	836,225	2,031,664	263,240	*2,070,303	8,315,432
12/13	*3,742,000	1,078,594	2,768,074	672,111	*1,591,350	9,852,129
13/14	5,326,064	1,153,486	2,187,685	232,546	*2,224,631	11,124,413

Source: Trust Finance Returns except those marked *, which have been recently sourced from the HSC Trusts.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what are the projected savings that the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust will make as a result of falling fuel prices in 2015/16.

(AQW 43593/11-15)

Mr Wells: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust estimates that £150,000 in savings from lower fuel costs could be achieved in 2015/16.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following his announcement that smoking will not be permitted in the grounds of any hospital from March 2016, what affect this announcement will have on in-patients at mental health facilities.

(AQW 43624/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Smoking (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 requires that premises are smokefree if they are open to the public and/or used as a place of work. In-patient mental health facilities were granted a temporary exemption from the Order until 30 April 2008. From that date, these premises have been required to be smokefree.

Smokefree hospital sites, including external grounds, are being introduced in order to provide a better quality environment for all patients, staff and visitors. The Western Health and Social Care Trust was the first to introduce a complete ban on smoking on hospital grounds. The Western Trust model will be adopted by all HSC Trusts as they move towards a complete ban on smoking by March 2016. This means that in-patients at mental health facilities will not be able to smoke in hospital grounds.

It is estimated that smoking prevalence amongst adults with mental illness is around 70%, which is over three times the Northern Ireland average. Consequently, people with mental health conditions suffer disproportionately higher rates of physical illness as a result of tobacco addiction. In-patients are entitled to the same opportunities and support to quit smoking as other smokers.

The Western Trust's smokefree policy recognises the need to take account of the complexity of the care needs of people with mental health problems. Effective implementation of the smokefree campuses policy for the remaining Trusts will require staff training and the development of clear protocols for action to ensure that all in-patients are treated in a compassionate and supportive manner, and offered assistance to comply with the new smokefree policy.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the ambulance response times in Magherafelt District Council Area within the last three years.

(AQW 43632/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department's current performance target for ambulance response times is that 72.5% of all Category A (life-threatening) calls are responded to within eight minutes, with no less than 67.5% in any Local Commissioning Group (LCG). Information on the performance against this target is detailed in the table below for each of the last three years (2011/12 – 2013/14) (AQW 43632/11-15 and AQW 43633/11-15).

Percentage of Category A (Life threatening) Calls Responded to Within Eight Minutes, by Local Commissioning Group (2011/12 – 2013/14)

Local Commissioning Group	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Belfast	87.2%	81.7%	81.1%
Northern	64.4%	61.3%	59.9%
South Eastern	68.0%	62.3%	62.3%
Southern	67.7%	63.2%	62.7%
Western	70.0%	66.7%	66.6%
Northern Ireland	72.7%	68.3%	67.6%

Source: NIAS

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the ambulance response times in Cookstown District Council area within the last three years.

(AQW 43633/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department's current performance target for ambulance response times is that 72.5% of all Category A (life-threatening) calls are responded to within eight minutes, with no less than 67.5% in any Local Commissioning Group (LCG). Information on the performance against this target is detailed in the table below for each of the last three years (2011/12 – 2013/14) (AQW 43632/11-15 and AQW 43633/11-15).

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Southern	67.7%	63.2%	62.7%
Western	70.0%	66.7%	66.6%
Northern Ireland	72.7%	68.3%	67.6%

Source: NIAS

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the process, within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, by which a Social Worker assesses and determines the care needs of individuals; and for his assessment of the efficiency of administering these assessments.

(AQW 43652/11-15)

Mr Wells: When an individual is referred to a Health and Social Care Trust for an assessment of care needs, this is undertaken by a social worker to determine the nature and extent of those needs.

Every assessment is based on the individual's needs and circumstances and length of assessment can vary depending on complexity.

Assessments of needs are undertaken in consultation with the service user, other professionals who may have information to contribute to the process and other family members who may be involved in meeting the individual's care needs.

To assist the determination of the level of need and how they can best be met, social workers may use specialist assessment tools. Ultimately a social worker exercises a professional judgement based on all information gathered and their professional knowledge and experience to assess an individual's needs and how those needs can best be met.

Information gathered for the purposes of assessment is recorded in established regional formats for NISAT and UNOCINI or other specialist assessment frameworks dependent upon the needs of the individual.

The development of electronic formats for UNOCINI and NISAT is intended to deliver improved efficiency in assessment practice in the future.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of applied behavioural analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis.

(AQW 43655/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on his Permanent Secretary's review into the administrative structures within the Health and Social Care system.

(AQW 43659/11-15)

Mr Wells: Work on the review is ongoing, and inputs from each of the Arms Length Bodies have now been received and are being analysed.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the Public Health Agency procures services for suicide prevention within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 43663/11-15)

Mr Wells: Suicide prevention funding covers regional programmes, that are available to all citizens in Northern Ireland, and local community-led programmes. Regional programmes include Lifeline, the Self Harm Registry, and public information campaigns. Local programmes are delivered by community and voluntary groups and include services such as counselling, alternative therapies, bereavement support, crisis de-escalation, mental health promotion, and signposting to statutory mental health services.

Community funding is divided between recurrent and relatively small scale non-recurrent allocations. Recurrent funding is allocated on a capitation basis to the five Trust localities. Non-recurrent funding is targeted at areas which experience disproportionately higher rates of suicide and is allocated annually based on prevalence rates within parliamentary constituencies.

To date, the Public Health Agency has rolled forward year-on-year the existing contracts with community and voluntary organisations. However, since these services were initially commissioned, the strategic context and number of service providers in the field of suicide prevention has changed. In order to respond to this changing environment and enable all service providers to bid in an open and transparent manner, the Agency has now commenced phased implementation of a new competitive tendering process for community-based services. Phase one (open at present) covers the procurement of community-based psychological intervention for people who self-harm, support for vulnerable groups through a grants programme, and suicide awareness training programmes.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's plans to tackle obesity, particularly in areas of multiple deprivation.

(AQW 43664/11-15)

Mr Wells: The current Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland, entitled A Fitter Future For All, clearly recognises the links between deprivation and inequalities and the prevalence of obesity. While taking a population wide approach, the Framework seeks to focus particular action in areas of deprivation.

In its role in driving forward the implementation of the framework, and particularly in the context of addressing disadvantage and deprivation, the Public Health Agency explicitly focuses on those communities in greatest need and experiencing the sharpest inequalities. It has invested significantly in supporting communities and building capacity at a local level to ensure their active participation and engagement in promoting positive health and wellbeing and tackling health inequalities.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis.

(AQW 43668/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behaviour Analysis in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43740/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis which his Department have consulted and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis In Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43744/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to his departmental budget, following each incident of so called 'punishment shootings'.

(AQW 43750/11-15)

Mr Wells: Health and Social Care Trusts financial systems are not able to readily identify the costs associated with so called "punishment shootings".

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behaviour Analysis.

(AQW 43751/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of applied behavioural analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43752/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

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Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have recently been consulted; and if so, what assessment has been made of existing international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43758/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

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Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42377/11-15, whether Derry will be included as an Early Intervention service given the levels of child poverty.

(AQW 43763/11-15)

Mr Wells: As previously indicated in the response to AQW 41553/11-15, the actual location of each Early Intervention Service will be decided by the Outcomes Group for the area. Each decision will be subject to equality impact screening and assessment, where required. In the Western Health and Social Care Trust area, the location of the Early Intervention Service will be decided by the Western Outcomes Group, which is a partnership of statutory, voluntary and community sectors organisations delivering services to children, young people and families in that area.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a target to deal with substance misuse will be contained in the new commissioning plan.

(AQW 43764/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health and Social Care Commissioning Plan Direction (Northern Ireland) 2015 contains the following target in relation to substance misuse:

During 2015/16, the HSC should build on existing service developments to work towards the provision of seven day integrated and co-ordinated substance misuse liaison services in appropriate acute hospital settings undertaking regionally agreed Structured Brief Advice or Intervention Programmes.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis.

(AQW 43772/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of full time equivalents of (i) agency nurses; and (ii) other agency staff employed, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43780/11-15)

Mr Wells: Due to the highly flexible nature of agency employment, agency staff are not routinely held on the Trusts' Human Resources, Payroll, Travel and Subsistence system (HRPTS). As working hours can vary enormously from week to week, it is not possible to record a whole-time equivalent (WTE) figure to assess level of contribution. However, the level of use of agency staff is routinely recorded in terms of cost. I refer the Member to the answer to AQW 43781 for an assessment of this expenditure in each of the last five years.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQO 7792/11-15, to detail (i) when he is planning to implement the findings of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority report published in October 2013; and (ii) where funds are available, for his assessment of whether there should be an increase in the number of consultants in Genitourinary Medicine Clinics to maintain parity with England and Wales.

(AQW 43788/11-15)

Mr Wells: A Regional Specialist Sexual Health Trust Liaison Group has been established. This Group will bring together clinicians and management from genitourinary medicine, sexual and reproductive health services, integrated care, primary care and the Health and Social Care Board to take forward the recommendations of the RQIA report. There has been significant progress in every trust in terms of implementing the recommendations. The future pace of implementation and any increase in the number of consultants will, as with other service developments, be dependent on further funding becoming available.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 40642/11-15, to detail the Health and Social Care Trust's policy on having a family/relative representative being present during a controlled wheelchair reassessment.

(AQW 43789/11-15)

Mr Wells: I refer the member to the responses provided by the five Health and Social Care Trusts which are attached at Annex A.

DHSSPS AQW 43789/11-15 Annex A

Western HSC Trust

- (i) During a wheelchair assessment or reassessment, all clients are entitled, with the consent of the client, to have their next of kin, family member, carer or relative present.
- (ii) Due to the personal nature of some of the required components of a wheelchair assessment, for example, access to toileting, personal care, pressure management and postural assessment, it may not be appropriate to have anyone other than the client's immediate family/carer present.
- (iii) Where perceptual or cognitive assessment is required for the assessment of powered mobility, a non-distractive environment is required therefore in this regard client representation may be requested to be kept to a minimum for this element of the assessment.

Southern HSC Trust

- (i) Trust staff seek the verbal consent of the user, to establish whether they are happy for a person to be present.

Belfast HSC Trust

- (i) When any wheelchair assessment is undertaken, the patient is welcome to have either a carer, or any member of their family present. They are also welcome to have a friend present if they wish.
- (ii) In many cases, patients are accompanied in order to assist with their care needs during assessment.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

- (i) The Northern Trust Occupational Therapy Service does not have a formal documented policy in relation to having a family/relative representative being present during a powered wheelchair assessment.
- (ii) Each assessment is dealt with on an individual basis, taking account of the appropriateness of the request. This is very dependent on the type of assessment being carried out, the capacity of the service user, the need for the family member(s) to be in attendance and the number of family members requesting to be present.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

- (i) The Regional Wheelchair criteria advises that for EPIOC (controlled wheelchair) assessments, the client's Occupational Therapist is required to be present and that any relative or carer can attend.
- (ii) The Occupational Therapy Code of Ethic states that the Occupational Therapist must work in partnership with service user/carer throughout the care process, respecting their choices and wishes and act in the best interests of the service users at all times.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43352/11-15, to detail the dental treatments that are not available under the Health Service.

(AQW 43791/11-15)

Mr Wells: There are more than 400 dental treatments available under the Health Service, provided to patients according to clinical need, it is not possible to detail the treatments that are not available. The range of items of dental treatment which a General Dental Practitioner (GDP) can provide under Health Service arrangements, are contained in the Statement of Dental Remuneration which is circulated to all dentists providing Health Service treatments. Health Service dental arrangements require GDPs to provide dental care and treatment that is necessary to secure and maintain oral health and the range of treatments listed is extensive enough to allow for different treatment options to be available to patients.

Patients also have the opportunity to choose to have dental treatment provided privately. Some patients may also choose to have certain treatments undertaken for personal or cosmetic reasons and it is entirely appropriate that that these are not provided from within Health Service resources.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that there is a shortage of consultants in the Paediatric Gastroenterology Department in the Royal Victoria Hospital, what immediate measures will he take to ensure that children are not adversely affected and receive treatment within the current performance targets for waiting times.

(AQW 43798/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Belfast Trust is in the process of appointing a locum for the consultant who is currently on leave of absence and is in discussion with the Health and Social Care Board regarding an increase in the number of theatre lists to reduce waiting times for patients.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the future of Downe Hospital. (AQW 43800/11-15)

Mr Wells: During a recent debate in the Assembly, when the future of the Downe Hospital was discussed, I referred to the assurances I have received from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust that the Downe Hospital will continue to play a vibrant and vital role in the acute network which will deliver essential hospital services now and in the future. I am strongly of the view that the Downe Hospital is crucial to the local community and that it will continue to be a key component of healthcare provision in that area.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department. (AQW 43821/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally. (AQW 43822/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally. (AQW 43829/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43830/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43832/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of international standards of Applied Behaviour Analysis training in Northern Ireland; and to detail what consideration has been given to supporting this approach as part of the Autism Strategy.

(AQW 43833/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such an assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the community and voluntary sector organisations that have participated in developing both the Autism Strategy and Action Plan; and for his assessment of the importance of these organisations in supporting people with autism.

(AQW 43836/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Autism Strategy (2013-2020) and Action Plan (2013-2016) was developed through a process of collaborative and consultative working between people with autism, their families and carers, representatives from all NI government departments and a number of community and voluntary sector organisations.

The community and voluntary sector organisations who participated in this development via the Autism Strategy Project Board and/or responded to the consultation were: ASD Support Group NI; ASK about Autism; Autism NI; Autism Initiatives NI; Autism Network NI; Barnardo's NI; Children's Law Centre; Disability Action; Early Years – The Organisation for Young People; Kaleidoscope NI; MENCAP; National Autistic Society NI; NI Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders; Parents Autism Lobby; and SOLAS Special Needs Charity for NI and Victim Support NI. Respondents to the consultation are listed at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/autism-strategy-consultation-feedback.pdf>.

I readily acknowledge the positive role of voluntary and community organisations in supporting people with autism and their families. Such work is vital in complementing statutory services delivered by professionals and support staff in health and social care, and also that provided by other government departments and their agencies.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43842/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Douglas asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43845/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43862/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42778/11-15, to detail the reasons for referral.

(AQW 43879/11-15)

Mr Wells: I would refer you to AQW 42778/11-15. As noted, it is not possible to provide the reason for referral as this information is not collected centrally. As such, the information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many hospital admissions in North Antrim were as a result of accidents in the home in 2014.

(AQW 43896/11-15)

Mr Wells: The number of hospital admissions of those resident in the North Antrim Assembly Area due to an accident in the home during 2013/14 is detailed by HSC Trust below. It should be noted that information relating to the 2014 year is provisional and, as such, has not been provided.

HSC Trust	Admissions
Belfast	47
Northern	142
South Eastern	16
Western	33
Northern Ireland	238

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Notes:

Admissions should not be used as a proxy for individuals since the same person may be admitted to hospital more than once within a given period.

Accidents in the home were defined using the following International Classification of Disease (revision 10) codes, searched for in any of 17 diagnosis fields.

- W00 - W45 (subgroup .0)
- W49 - W60 (subgroup .0)
- W64 - W70 (subgroup .0)
- W73 - W81 (subgroup .0)
- W83 - W94 (subgroup .0)
- W99.0
- X01.0
- X03.0
- X05 - X06 (subgroup .0)
- X10 - X54 (subgroup .0)
- X57 - X59 (subgroup .0)

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for the number of (i) carers; and (ii) carers assessments, in each Health and Social Care Trust area in 2014.

(AQW 43917/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (i) Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts do not hold figures on the total number of carers in Northern Ireland.

However, the 2011 Household Census contained a question related to carers. There a person was defined as a carer if they gave help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems related to old age. These figures are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Carers at 27th March 2011 by HSC Trust Area

HSC Trust Area	No. of Carers
Belfast	42,913
Northern	53,507
South Eastern	44,460
Southern	40,607
Western	32,493

HSC Trust Area	No. of Carers
Total	213,980

Source: 2011 Northern Ireland Household Census

Please note that a number of these carers may not qualify for a carers assessment under the terms of the Carers and Direct Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 2002. Under this Act HSC Trusts have a duty to inform carers, aged 16 or over, of their statutory right to an assessment of their ability to provide care and continue to provide care where they provide or intend to provide a substantial amount of care on a regular basis for another individual aged 18 or over. HSC Trusts must also be satisfied that the person cared for is someone for whom they may provide or arrange for the provision of personal social services.

- (ii) Figures for the number of completed carers' assessments in each HSC Trust area are detailed in Table 2. Information on carers' assessments is published on the Departments website in 'Quarterly Carers' Statistics for Northern Ireland'. The latest publication can be found at the following link:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/socialcare/carers-assessments-and-reassessments.htm>

Table 2: Completed carers' assessments during 2014 (January – December) by HSC Trust area

HSC Trust Area	No. of Completed Carers Assessments
Belfast	1,042
Northern	1,395
South Eastern	651
Southern	911
Western	495
Total	4,494

Source: Community Information Branch Return CA1

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43928/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

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Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43937/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assessment has been made by his Department of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43945/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the high number of children with contraceptive implants provided through the Health Service, for his assessment of the current arrangements and whether parental consent is in place.

(AQW 43972/11-15)

Mr Wells: The provision of contraception services for young people by Health and Social Care operates within the law, and under specific guidelines and safeguarding procedures. Health professionals use the "Fraser Guidelines" to determine whether young people under the age of 16 are to be given contraception. Each case is assessed on its own merits and the requirements set out in the Fraser Guidelines must be met.

The "Fraser" requirements applying in these circumstances are that the young person: understands the professional's advice; cannot be persuaded to inform their parents; is likely to have sexual intercourse with or without contraception; and will likely suffer adverse physical or mental health unless they receive contraceptive treatment. In addition, the health professional must be convinced that the young person's best interests require them to receive contraceptive advice or treatment with or without parental consent.

NICE clinical guidance on Long-acting reversible contraception recommends that healthcare professionals should be aware of the law relating to the provision of advice and contraception for young people and child protection issues and the Fraser guidelines should be considered when providing contraception for women younger than 16 years. The guidance also advises that if the patient is under 16, their family or carers should also be given information and support to help the child or young person to make decisions about their treatment.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the position of transitional arrangements for current recipients of the Independent Living Fund.

(AQW 44024/11-15)

Mr Wells: I am currently considering a proposed way forward on the ILF and I plan to announce my decision shortly on how best ILF users in Northern Ireland will be supported following the closure of the Fund in June 2015. I remain mindful that in particular ILF users, their families and carers want to hear my decision at the very earliest opportunity.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what age-appropriate respite provision is available in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, particularly in the Dungannon area, for post-19 Special Education Needs, that caters for young people with nursing needs and non-nursing needs.

(AQW 44029/11-15)

Mr Wells: At present the Southern Health and Social Care Trust provide bed-based respite care primarily through Woodlawn House in Dungannon, which is an 8 bedroom respite facility catering for individuals with complex health and/or behavioural needs.

The Trust also commission additional beds from the private sector within the Armagh and Dungannon area. Short breaks in the form of weekend breaks are provided by the Trust through its contract with Enable.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the reasons for the delay in opening the critical care unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast; and when it is expected to open.

(AQW 44121/11-15)

Mr Wells: Corrosion was detected in the closed water system of the new Critical Care building in October 2012, approximately one month prior to the planned handover, which resulted in the contractor replacing all five closed water systems.

This was an extensive and complex replacement which once completed required all systems within the building to undergo technical re-commissioning. This technical re-commissioning period is nearing completion and the Trust expects the building to be handed over to the Trust in April 2015.

Following clinical commissioning the Trust plans to phase services into the building with the Emergency Department moving by July 2015.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the delay in the opening of the critical care unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.

(AQW 44131/11-15)

Mr Wells: Corrosion was detected in the closed water system of the new Critical Care building in October 2012, approximately one month prior to the planned handover, which resulted in the contractor replacing all five closed water systems.

This was an extensive and complex replacement which once completed required all systems within the building to undergo technical re-commissioning. This technical re-commissioning period is nearing completion and the Trust expects the building to be handed over to the Trust in April 2015.

Following clinical commissioning the Trust plans to phase services into the building with the Emergency Department moving by July 2015.

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW/42558/11-15, what action has been taken in respect of Francis Mitchell being permitted to return to a neighbourhood in Omagh with children and young people nearby; and what occurred in respect of Vidmantas Jokubauskis in Fivemiletown whilst they awaited sentencing and were permitted to reside close to the victim and other children.

(AQW 43327/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): My answer to AQW/41455/11-15 sets out the detail of action taken in respect of Vidmantas Jokubauskis whilst he was on bail awaiting sentencing. Francis Mitchell is also subject to court bail. The relevant criminal justice agencies are aware of the cases and appropriate risk management measures were taken.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42558/11-15, whether any challenges or difficulties would be faced in introducing and enforcing Sarah's Law.

(AQW 43461/11-15)

Mr Ford: The PSNI has made the Department aware that there could be potential difficulties in making changes to the current system of disclosure, including problems arising through loss of control of such information. As well as possible risk to the safety of individual offenders, there may be an increased risk of attacks on other individuals as a result of misinformation, and, of more general importance, a decrease in the overall effectiveness of the agencies' efforts to maximise public protection, as offenders go to ground and fail to comply with arrangements to manage the risk they pose.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42558/11-15, to provide, or place in the Assembly Library, a copy of the policy on the existing disclosure process.

(AQW 43462/11-15)

Mr Ford: As stated in my reply to AQW/43435/11-15, disclosure of information to third parties about an individual sex offender or violent offender managed under the PPANI arrangements is covered within section 6 of the Guidance to Agencies on Public Protection Arrangements (PPANI) available at:

<http://www.dojni.gov.uk/guidance-to-agencies-on-public-protection-arrangements-ppani>; and in Section 21 of the PPANI Manual of Practice available at: http://www.publicprotectionni.com/index.php/publications/view/manualof_practice_2012.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to detail the legal costs of the recent court case involving Jamie Bryson.

(AQW 43500/11-15)

Mr Ford: This case has just been heard and sentencing has not yet taken place. To date no claims for payment have been received by the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission.

It is estimated that the cost of the solicitor will total £1,440 and the cost of junior counsel will total £1,440.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42558/11-15, given that residents and parents in Dromore, County Down made enquiries under the existing disclosure procedures and were not notified or had verification of an alleged convicted paedophile being resident in the area, how these existing procedures are sufficient.

(AQW 43512/11-15)

Mr Ford: The procedures regarding disclosure, as outlined in the Guidance to Agencies on Public Protection Arrangements (PPANI) and the PPANI Manual of Practice, were not invoked as there were no circumstances present which would have given rise to the need for disclosure to be considered.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42558/11-15, to outline the services provided and available under current sex offender disclosure procedures and the agencies responsible for the service provision.

(AQW 43540/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the reply I gave to his earlier question, AQW/43435/11-15.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42764/11-15, how this complies with sex offender disclosure.

(AQW 43541/11-15)

Mr Ford: The procedures for disclosure of information to third parties is as indicated in section 6 of the Guidance to Agencies on the Public Protection Arrangements, as outlined in my reply to AQW/43462/11-15.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42558/11-15, how long has the existing disclosure process been in place; and to detail any amendments that have been made, including the year of amendment.

(AQW 43543/11-15)

Mr Ford: Controlled disclosure of information to third parties in order to protect the public has always been a normal part of police operating procedures. The current disclosure process in relation to information to third parties about an individual sex offender or violent offender whose risk is managed under the PPANI arrangements has been in place since the PPANI arrangements were introduced in October 2008. Guidance to agencies on the new arrangements was published on 6 October 2008 which included policy on disclosure. Revised guidance was published in August 2011, as referred to in my answer to AQW 43462/11-15.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department, or its arm's-length bodies, since 2011; and the amount of funding received in each case.

(AQW 43556/11-15)

Mr Ford: The amount of funding received by community and voluntary groups in North Down from the Department of Justice, including its Agencies and its arm's-length bodies, for completed financial years since 2011 is shown below:

2011/12

Community / Voluntary Group	£
Age Concern North Down	300
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	18,000
Bangor Elim Church	800
Bloomfield Community Association	8,500
Conservation Volunteers NI	14,392
Forum for Action on Substance Abuse – Bangor	2,500
Millisle Youth Forum	2,266
OXFAM	500
Rathgael Gymnastics & Trampoline Club	5,000
Rathgill Community Association	2,500
Whitehill Community Association	254
Total	55,012

2012/13

Community / Voluntary Group	£
Agenda (Age Concern)	1,000
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	14,000

Community / Voluntary Group	£
Bloomfield Community Association	6,500
Clandeboye Village Community Association	1,500
Conservation Volunteers NI	20,299
Crown Jesus	500
Forum for Action on Substance Abuse – Bangor	1,500
Growing Connections	1,498
North Down YMCA	1,500
OXFAM	4,500
Redburn Youth Club	218
Simon Community	500
The Warehouse	1,500
Youth Intervention Project, North Down PCSP	10,000
Total	65,015

2013/14

Community / Voluntary Group	£
Abbey Amateur Boxing Club	1,450
Assisi Animal Sanctuary	10,000
Bangor Abbey Boxing Academy	500
Breezemount Community Association	1,450
Conservation Volunteers NI	15,000
Forum for Action on Substance Abuse - Bangor	1,500
Millisle Youth Forum	1,500
North Down & Ards Women's Aid	3,000
OXFAM	3,000
Redburn Loughview Community Forum	1,247
Redburn Youth Club	846
Total	39,493

Other voluntary and community groups receive funding for Northern Ireland wide services. Some of these services may be available in North Down.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43175/11-15 in relation to the safety recommendations contained within the Steele Report and the requirement for the separation of paramilitary prisoners as necessary in the interest of safety, whether separated prisoners are identified as political prisoners or of elevated status, or anything else other than prisoners either sentenced or remand, within the penal system.

(AQW 43620/11-15)

Mr Ford: In line with the recommendations contained within the Steele Report, those prisoners approved for separation are identified as Separated Republican or Separated Loyalist Prisoners. Beyond that they are not identified as anything other than either sentenced prisoners or remand prisoners.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43061/11-15 (i) when the review is due to commence; (ii) whether there will be terms of reference; and (iii) whether the current risk assessment will be included with a view to strengthening criteria therein.

(AQW 43621/11-15)

Mr Ford: The timeline and terms of reference for the review into the approach to temporary release will be developed prior to the review. The current risk assessment tool will be considered within the scope of the review.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Justice what impact the cuts to legal aid will have on Voluntary Sector Organisations who may now face an increase in clients seeking their services.

(AQW 43649/11-15)

Mr Ford: The impact of the removal of any case types from the scope of Civil Legal Aid will be monitored by my Department on an ongoing basis. In developing final proposals, my officials will discuss the impact with the appropriate sectors and Regulatory Impact Assessments will also be undertaken where appropriate. I anticipate that any increase in workload for the advice sector will be very small.

The agenda setting document for the Access to Justice Review Part II outlined a review of the provision of advice looking at the experience in Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions. It is expected that this review will report by summer 2015 and this will aid the consideration of how funding is provided in this area in the future.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of individual cases in the Londonderry area, which required support through legal aid in order to access justice, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43653/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission's case management system cannot isolate cases in the Londonderry area without a manual trawl of all the Certificates issued. Information in the form requested is therefore not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42286/11-15, why on 30 January 2014, a member of departmental staff, parking in a disabled parking bay at Dungannon courthouse with no blue badge displayed, refused to move following challenge from several G4S employees; and whether he will conduct an investigation into this matter.

(AQW 43678/11-15)

Mr Ford: The official concerned visited Dungannon Courthouse unannounced on 30 January 2015 to G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd (G4S). The official deliberately parked in one of the disabled bays in front of the G4S sangar to monitor their response. At that time the car park was half empty and as courts had finished for the day it was agreed with G4S that the official did not need to move their car. Other disabled parking spaces were unoccupied. I am content that there is no merit in further investigating this matter.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42971/11-15, whether he will take representations from non-governmental organisations' experts about reviewing the Supporting Prisoners at Risk process and addressing suicide prevention in prisons.

(AQW 43725/11-15)

Mr Ford: A review of the current SPAR process is underway. This review considers the need for tailored, individualised support. During this process, non-governmental organisations' representations will be welcomed.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43060/11-15, how much has been claimed in legal aid for representation at fine default reviews, broken down by court division.

(AQW 43727/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested is not readily available from the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission's case management system.

Information obtained from the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service has identified that 1,482 court records relating to 868 cases would have to be manually extracted and reviewed to respond to this question. Information in the form requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the three sex offenders whose whereabouts are unknown, (i) whether any of them are subject to arrest or bench warrants; (ii) whether they are facing charges within the court system or have existing convictions; and (iii) whether they are categorised as dangerous.

(AQW 43728/11-15)

Mr Ford: All three were convicted of sexual offences and were not assessed as dangerous by the sentencing court. No arrest or bench warrant is required as they can be arrested, without warrant, and prosecuted for failure to comply with notification requirements under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how much funding the Policing Board receives from his Department.

(AQW 43730/11-15)

Mr Ford: In 2014/15 the Policing Board received a total cash budget of £6,941,000. This is broken down into £6,814,000 unringfenced resource DEL and £127,000 capital DEL.

In 2015/16 they will receive a total cash budget of £6,304,000. This includes £6,254,000 unringfenced resource DEL and £50,000 capital DEL.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the running costs of the Courts Fund Office in each of the last three years. (AQW 43863/11-15)

Mr Ford: The running costs of the Court Funds Office in each of the last three financial years are:

2011/12	£1,042,490
2012/13	£1,034,054
2013/14	£998,859

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Justice how much money the Courts Fund Office invested on behalf of clients in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43864/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total value of funds invested on behalf of clients at the end of each of the last three financial years was:

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
£287.1m	£292.7m	£300.4m

The return on investments at the end of each of the last three financial years was:

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
£17.0m	£17.8m	£2.6m

These figures include gains/losses on the valuation of investments at the end of each financial year, and income from dividends and interest earned on the investments.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Justice how much the Courts Fund Office made in investments for clients in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43865/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total value of funds invested on behalf of clients at the end of each of the last three financial years was:

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
£287.1m	£292.7m	£300.4m

The return on investments at the end of each of the last three financial years was:

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
£17.0m	£17.8m	£2.6m

These figures include gains/losses on the valuation of investments at the end of each financial year, and income from dividends and interest earned on the investments.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to police pensions reform, what consideration has been given to permitting officers to retire at 55 years old without penalty, but within the current cost ceiling.

(AQW 43913/11-15)

Mr Ford: The retirement age for police officers was established in the Public Service Pensions Act 2014 (the Act). The Act is explicit in relation to police pension age. At no time during the passage of Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014, was a provision permitting police officers to retire at 55 years old (without penalty but within the current cost ceiling) proposed by any Assembly member, individual officer, or representative of the police service.

Such a change may result in breach of the cost cap and introduce different terms and conditions to those in other jurisdictions. This could prevent police officers moving between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, both in temporary support of colleagues and on a permanent basis, at all levels. Interoperability is key to the provision of policing in Northern Ireland.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how reoffending rates compare to other jurisdictions in the (i) UK; and (ii) Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 44127/11-15)

Mr Ford: The latest reoffending rate for Northern Ireland is 19% based on the 2011/12 cohort.

It is not accurate to compare this rate to those of other jurisdictions in the UK or the Republic of Ireland. This is because underlying differences in the respective criminal justice systems and the resulting offending related characteristics of those included in the reoffending analysis, mean that like for like comparisons cannot be made. Any direct comparison of available information would therefore, at present, be misleading.

Work is underway on a project to generate cross-jurisdictional comparisons for reoffending.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice what steps are being taken to address the backlog of Access NI checks faced by the PSNI.

(AQW 44159/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of AccessNI checks pending with the police changes on a daily basis. However as of 25th March, the position is as set out in the table below:

Number of days checks outstanding	Number of checks outstanding
Less than 25 days ¹	1,333
Between 25 and 39 days	61
Between 40 and 59 days	91
Over 60 days	7982
Total	2,283

- 1 AccessNI expects the majority of these checks to be returned within 18/19 days of referral to PSNI.
- 2 This figure includes 23 cases where PSNI are in direct contact with the applicant about the specific reason for delay.

There is regular contact between AccessNI and PSNI staff to review progress and backlogs. PSNI have a recovery plan in place with steps being taken to reduce the number of outstanding cases, including the deployment of additional staff. However, these staff will require time to be trained in the correct assessment of information for disclosure purposes and therefore it will be several months before the backlog can be reduced significantly. AccessNI will continue to work with PSNI and to monitor the situation.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice how many access NI checks are pending with the PSNI.

(AQW 44160/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of AccessNI checks pending with the police changes on a daily basis. However as of 25th March, the position is as set out in the table below:

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Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice how long it is expected to take to clear the backlog of Access NI applications.

(AQW 44161/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of AccessNI checks pending with the police changes on a daily basis. However as of 25th March, the position is as set out in the table below:

Number of days checks outstanding	Number of checks outstanding
Less than 25 days ¹	1,333
Between 25 and 39 days	61
Between 40 and 59 days	91
Over 60 days	7982

Number of days checks outstanding	Number of checks outstanding
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There is regular contact between AccessNI and PSNI staff to review progress and backlogs. PSNI have a recovery plan in place with steps being taken to reduce the number of outstanding cases, including the deployment of additional staff. However, these staff will require time to be trained in the correct assessment of information for disclosure purposes and therefore it will be several months before the backlog can be reduced significantly. AccessNI will continue to work with PSNI and to monitor the situation.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Justice to outline the responses received from district councils to the consultation on the appointment of independent members to the Policing Board.
(AQW 44162/11-15)

Mr Ford: I consulted the 26 councils and the 11 new councils in relation to proposals for the appointment of independent members to the Policing Board.

Consultees were asked to comment on two specific issues – the introduction of a rolling appointment model for independent members and a revised remuneration package. Four replies were received from councils.

In relation to the first issue, three of the four councils expressed a preference for independent members being appointed at the same time as the political members, in 2016. On the issue of remuneration, three of the four councils agreed with the proposal that the level of remuneration paid to independent members, should be reduced. One council declined to comment on this issue.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the findings of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee report in relation to the on-the-runs scheme.
(AQW 44164/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have noted the Committee's findings. Like the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, my sympathies lie with the victims and their relatives; they have not been served well by HM Government.

As I previously made clear, responsibility for the "on-the-runs" scheme was not transferred to my Department at the point at which justice was devolved.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Justice to outline the responses, other than those from district councils, to his consultation on the appointment of independent members on to the Policing Board.
(AQW 44177/11-15)

Mr Ford: I consulted with the First and deputy First Minister; 26 district councils; 11 new councils; the Commissioner for Public Appointments; the Justice Committee; PSNI; Police Ombudsman; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary; the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland, and the Equality Commission.

Consultees were asked to comment on two specific issues – the introduction of a rolling appointment model for independent members and a revised remuneration package.

A total of 12 responses were received, four of which were from district councils. Of the remaining eight, in relation to the first issue, four respondents favoured the proposal to introduce a rolling appointment model for independent members. Four expressed a preference for independent members being appointed at the same time as the political members, in 2016. On the issue of remuneration, seven were in favour of some reduction in the level of remuneration paid to independent members, with one declining to comment on this issue.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development how much compensation has been paid for damage caused to vehicles by road defects in Upper Bann, within the last three years.
(AQW 42115/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): The NICS accounting system does not hold information relating to the type of defect, or the nature of the incident, that caused vehicle damage; nor does the accounting system record payments by constituency area. The number of claims received and the number paid, in full or in part, for the Craigavon and Banbridge Section Office areas are as follows:

	Craigavon		Banbridge	
	Received	Settled	Received	Settled
2013/2014	51	18	45	22
2012/2013	44	21	30	13
2011/2012	52	50	44	31
2010/2011	97	37	55	29
2009/2010	58	9	62	29

The number of claims in which compensation was paid in any specific year does not necessarily relate to the claims received in that year, as there may be a time delay between the date a claim is received and the date it is settled.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will introduce legislation to place a 20mph speed limit in the vicinity of lit or operational school crossing signs which have been installed through the safer routes to school programme.

(AQW 42469/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In June 2014, my Department introduced a new policy on the installation of a variety of road safety measures at schools where excessive speed has been identified as a problem. This followed the success of pilot part-time 20mph limits.

In determining whether a school could be considered for road safety improvements, a number of factors such as collision history, traffic speed and volume as well as the existence of footways, cycle lanes, controlled crossings, parking facilities and street lighting are taken into account.

Schools that have been treated with Road Safety improvement measures, including safer routes to schools measures, within the previous 5 years will not be considered for further measures.

Given the above, we will see an increase in the number of schools where a scheme involving part-time 20mph speed limits is implemented.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to introducing a tracking system on Translink buses and trains to allow service users to access online the location of vehicles in real-time to improve the ability of passengers to find out if their service is running late.

(AQW 42749/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Railways currently track the movement of all trains via its signalling system which provides real time information for all stations. It can be accessed via www.journeycheck.com/nirailways

Translink currently provide roadside real time predictions on the next bus information on main Metro corridors in Belfast.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many claims have been taken against his Department over the last three financial years, for damage to cars driving over road calming measures.

(AQW 42897/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of vehicle damage claims made against my Department as a result of damage caused to cars driving over road calming measures, for each of the last three full financial years, are as follows:

Year	Vehicle Damage claims as a result of road calming measures
2011/12	8
2012/13	7
2013/14	6

Not all claims are successful, my Department would only pay out on a claim if the traffic calming ramp was defective. Installation and Maintenance of Crash Barriers

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's policy for the installation and maintenance of crash barriers.

(AQW 42952/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are three main reasons why my Department installs crash barriers, also known as safety barriers:

- to minimise injuries to the occupant of vehicles which leave the carriageway;
- to provide protection to third parties; and

- to protect property or equipment.

When determining the provision of safety barriers, my Department uses the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Standard TD19/06, a UK-wide standard. This requires the assessment of risk at any given location through a Road Restraint Risk Assessment Process (RRRAP). The RRRAP has not been developed to assess the risk from roadside hazards for low speed and/or low flow roads, and in these situations application of an appropriate risk-based approach is recommended by the Standard.

An internal procedure is in place which prioritises the provision of safety barriers at locations where there is a perceived hazard. The overall assessment incorporates various factors including the collision history, hazard type, road category, traffic speed, site characteristics, speed safety, and practicality.

A detailed inspection of all existing safety barriers is carried out on a rolling 5-year programme. A rolling 2-year inspection programme is required on Motorways and Trunk Road Dual Carriageways with traffic flow exceeding 20,000 vehicles per day. This inspection data is used to assess the barrier's condition, leading to a priority ranking for repair, replacement or potentially removal.

My Department also carries out regular inspections of all public roads and footways to ensure that essential response maintenance is identified and completed as necessary. During these inspections all roads related defects are noted, including defective or damaged safety barriers. The frequency of these inspections depends on the type of road and the volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Town centres and major traffic routes are inspected monthly, while all other roads are inspected at either two or four monthly intervals.

I have commissioned an independent review which will assess whether the overall processes followed by my Department are in line with national guidance.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Penalty Charge Notices were issued in (i) Coleraine; (ii) Limavady; (iii) Portstewart; (iv) Portrush; and (v) Dungiven, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43088/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the numbers of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in each of the towns, in the last 3 calendar years, are set out in the table below:

Year	Number of PCN's Issued				
	Coleraine	Limavady	Portstewart	Portrush	Dungiven
2012	3,440	1,268	344	530	6
2013	4,621	1,134	371	454	4
2014	4,213	1,055	349	461	8

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the amount of money paid into pension funds for senior management of Translink, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43114/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below provides details on the amount of money paid into pension funds in respect of the Senior Management Team of Translink, in each of the last five years.

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Amount	£146,954	£97,716	£102,388	£107,214	£115,119

The amount for 2009/10 included an element relating to performance-related pay that was absent in subsequent years.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development what value of construction work, to be funded from the resource budget, his Department will start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43134/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise that £12.8m, funded from the resource budget, has been identified to be spent on construction work starting in the 2015/16 financial year. However, I would also advise that as the business areas within my Department are still working on the detail of their budget allocations this figure is subject to change.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how much has been spent to date on residents' parking schemes; (ii) to list the schemes and how each scheme is progressing; and (iii) for his Department's forecast of the net cost of establishing a new residents' parking scheme.

(AQW 43214/11-15)

Mr Kennedy:

- Since 2005, my Department has spent approximately £303,000 on consultancy costs associated with residents' parking schemes. This estimate includes the design and development of the schemes and the cost of the various consultation

exercises with the residents. TransportNI staff costs are not included in this amount, as details cannot be readily extracted from overall staff cost figures.

- ii. Details of the schemes and progress made are set out below:

Barrack Street, Belfast

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2008 and 2009, however, there was insufficient local support to allow a scheme to proceed. Some discussions have taken place in the intervening period with the St Mary's Resident's Association and with local elected representatives in an attempt to progress a scheme, however, to date, this has not been successful.

Brown's Square, Belfast

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2008 and 2009, however, there was insufficient local support to allow a scheme to proceed. At the time public representatives advised officials that the community was strongly opposed to a scheme.

Donegall Pass, Belfast

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2008, 2009 and 2013/14, however, there was insufficient local support to allow a scheme to proceed. Some discussions have taken place in the intervening period with the Donegall Pass Community Association and locally elected representatives in an attempt to progress a scheme however, to date, this has not been successful.

Lower Malone, Belfast

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2012 and the community was supportive of the proposed scheme. The scheme was subsequently formally advertised in October 2014. A number of objections have been received and officials are currently meeting with objectors.

Rugby Road/ College Park Avenue, Belfast

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2013 and the community was supportive of the proposed scheme. The scheme was subsequently formally advertised in October 2014. A number of objections have been received and officials are currently meeting with objectors.

Sandy Row, Belfast

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2008, 2009 and 2014, however, there was insufficient local support to allow a scheme to proceed. Some discussions have taken place in the intervening period with the Sandy Row Community Forum and locally elected representatives in an attempt to progress a scheme, however, to date, this has not been successful.

Stranmillis, Belfast

Since 2010, officials have been working with the Stranmillis Residents' Association and a number of local business owners (who subsequently became members of the Stranmillis Business Association). Unfortunately, both associations have been unable to agree about the format of a scheme. Some discussions have taken place with both associations and with locally elected representatives in an attempt to progress a scheme, however, to date, this has not been successful.

The Markets (East and West), Belfast

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2008 and 2009, however, there was insufficient local support to allow a scheme to proceed. Some discussions have taken place in the intervening period with the Markets Development Association and locally elected representatives in an attempt to progress a scheme, however, to date, this has not been successful.

Clarke Court and Massereene Street, Antrim

Consultation letters issued to residents on 9 March 2015. A Notice of Intention is due to be published 17 March 2015, inviting comments/objections to proposals.

Rossville Street, Londonderry

Officials informally consulted with the community in 2010 and the community was supportive of the proposed scheme. The scheme was subsequently designed in detail and is nearing completion, with an expectation that formal consultation will commence in April 2015.

- (iii) As no two schemes are the same, it would not be possible to provide a meaningful forecast of the net cost of establishing a typical residents' parking scheme.

If we look at two of the first tranche of schemes Lower Malone and Antrim, the Lower Malone scheme will cater for 1,100 residences, extend over 2,500 metres of road and provide 540 parking bays; while the Antrim scheme will cater for 37 residents, impact on under 200m of road and will provide 49 parking bays. Consequently, there will be a marked difference in the cost of delivering each scheme in terms of design costs and provision of infrastructure, which is mainly

traffic signs, road markings and ticket machines. Lower Malone will also attract a higher cost in terms of handling the issuing of a greater number of permits.

Offset against the cost of providing a scheme would be any income or revenue realised through the issue of permits or any ticketed/pay and display parking in the areas concerned. However, there are again marked differences between the two schemes mentioned above. Some revenue should be realised for the Lower Malone scheme from the issue of permits to residents and from the ticketed parking element of the scheme, whereas there will be limited income from Antrim as the residents' permits will be issued free of charge and there is no ticketed parking.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what is his Department's target timeframe for the establishment of a residents' parking scheme; and how long it has taken to progress each scheme currently under consideration by his Department. **(AQW 43215/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: The timeframe for implementing a residents' parking scheme very much depends on its scale and complexity, the time it takes to progress the legislation, including consultation with users, and the level of local support and/or objection.

My officials have been working with the local residents' associations in the Lower Malone and Rugby Road/College Park Avenue areas of Belfast since 2010 and 2012 respectively. Officials carried out a formal consultation on the implementation of Residents' Parking Schemes in both areas between 29 October and 19 November 2014. During this time they received a number of objections and representations on the two proposals. Officials are currently considering and dealing with the issues raised and plan to have met with all of the objectors by the end of March 2015. However, they cannot complete the remaining part of the legislative process for either scheme until the issues raised have been fully considered and dealt with. The earliest a scheme could be implemented on the ground in these areas would be within the 2015/2016 financial year, although this is very much dependent upon there being a positive outcome to the consultation process.

The proposed scheme for the Rossville Street area in Londonderry is expected to go through to the formal consultation stage in April of this year.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how much compensation has been paid for damage caused to vehicles by road defects in North Down, in each of the last three years. **(AQW 43265/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: The NICS accounting system does not hold information relating to the type of defect, nor the nature of the incident that caused vehicle damage, nor does the accounting system record payments by constituency area. The number of claims received and the numbers paid out in full or in part are as follows:

	North Down TNI Section Office	
	Received	Settled
2009/2010	35	9
2010/2011	43	32
2011/2012	21	19
2012/2013	28	3
2013/2014	12	13

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development at what stage Transport NI can penalize a contractor for failure to meet its contractual obligations. **(AQW 43304/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: Penalty clauses are used to deter parties from breaching a contract. These clauses are not included in UK Government contracts, as they are seen as disproportionate and unenforceable under common law. My Department's TransportNI has adopted the UK approach.

However, liquidated damages clauses are included in UK and TransportNI contracts and are applied when contractor performance gives rise to delay to completion of contracts. In such circumstances a sum of money, representing a pre-estimate of the damages suffered by my Department as a result of delay, is deducted from contractor's payments.

The Department of Finance and Personnel's Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) has issued guidance in recognition of the potential consequences of repeated failure on behalf of contractors and the duty on Departments to safeguard the taxpayers' money. Departments may regard such repeated failure as grave misconduct.

Continued poor performance cannot be ignored and those with responsibility for contract management should, through increased monitoring and management, work with the contractor in order to ensure that contract requirements are met. CPD's guidance states that a contractor should be regularly advised and formally notified of any failure to deliver on contract performance and given an opportunity to improve. When a contractor continues to fail to deliver on key contract requirements, then the matter can be escalated to the senior management of the Centre of Procurement Expertise to issue a final formal notification.

The application of CPD's guidance may ultimately lead to the issue of a Certificate of Unsatisfactory Performance and termination of the contract following repeated poor performance by the contractor. This certificate will also result in the contractor being excluded from all procurement competitions being undertaken for a period of twelve months from the date of issue of the certificate.

Although my Department's TransportNI does not have contracts with utility contractors, it monitors the quality of utility reinstatements at various stages, during and after reinstatement work. Where more than 10% of the sample inspections of a utility's works in a three month period reveal a reinstatement defect, an Improvement Notice can be issued which can result in higher levels of inspections, carried out at an additional cost to the contractor. Prior to issuing an Improvement Notice my Department will, over a three month period, work with the utility company to improve performance by requesting a defect joint inspection for every reinstatement defect identified during that period.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development what type of penalties Transport NI can include in contracts for major road work schemes.

(AQW 43305/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Penalty clauses are used to deter parties from breaching a contract. These clauses are not included in UK Government contracts as they are considered to be disproportionate and unenforceable under common law. My Department's TransportNI has adopted the UK approach.

However, liquidated damages clauses are included in UK and TransportNI contracts and are applied when contractor performance gives rise to delay in the completion of contracts. In such circumstances a sum of money, representing a pre-estimate of the damages suffered by my Department as a result of the delay, is deducted from contractor's payments.

There are other forms of performance management systems incorporated in TransportNI major roads contracts, including the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects. On both PPP contracts payment to the contractor is through a system of Availability Payments. Where lanes are closed for a period of time or the road is not maintained to a contractually agreed standard, payment for that section is reduced as it has not been made fully available. This incentivises the contractor to maximise availability and maintain the road to the contractual standards.

The PPP contracts also include a Penalty Point regime where the contractor may be awarded Penalty Points for breaches of the contractual requirements. When the Penalty Points awarded reach contractually defined levels, my Department can issue a Warning Notice, put in place Increased Monitoring of the contractor or it can lead to an Event of Default. Under the PPP Contracts, the contractor shall compensate my Department for all costs incurred by it as a result of Increased Monitoring. Where an Event of Default occurs, my Department can take certain remedies, which can include suspending payment to the contractor, suspending the contractor or terminating the contract.

Performance Bonds are regularly included in contracts and these require the contractors to provide a form of guarantee of completion of the works. They provide a means of insuring my Department against the risk of a contractor failing to fulfil their contractual obligations.

For all contracts, following repeated poor performance by the contractor, application of a Departmental protocol, a procedure open to all NICS Departments, may ultimately lead to the issue of a Certificate of Unsatisfactory Performance and termination of the contract. This certificate will also result in the contractor being excluded from all procurement competitions being undertaken for a period of twelve months from the date of issue of the certificate.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the actions taken by his Department during this financial year to bring unadopted developments in Fermanagh up to adoption standards; and what unadopted developments in Fermanagh his Department intends to bring up to adoption standard in 2015/16.

(AQW 43323/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has adopted the following developments within the Fermanagh District Council area during the 2014/15 financial year:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Beechwood, Lisnaskea | ■ Grove Heights, Ardvarney Road, Ederney |
| ■ Spring Meadow, Derrylin | ■ Drumkeen Court Phase 1, Ederney |
| ■ Phoenix Manor, Belleek. | ■ Irvinestown Road, Cherrymount, Enniskillen |
| ■ Ashgrove Derrychara Park, Enniskillen | ■ 48-50 Main Street Lisbellaw |
| ■ Galliagh Shore Phase 1, Rossory Church Road, Enniskillen | ■ The Paddocks, Belcoo |
| | ■ Majors Bridge Development, Lisnaskea |

The majority of these developments were adopted following successful liaison with the developers but the developments at Beechwood, Lisnaskea; Spring Meadow, Derrylin and Phoenix Manor, Belleek required enforcement action by my Department.

Northern Ireland Water has confirmed that during this financial year it has been in ongoing contact with the successors and assignees of developments where the sewers are unadopted and the original developer is no longer trading. Quarterly meetings continue to be held with my Department to discuss and agree how some of these developments can be progressed towards adoption, including, where appropriate, the use of enforcement powers.

It is not possible at this stage to predict what developments will be adopted during 2015/16 as this will depend on how successful discussions with developers are throughout the year. It is considered the first and best approach is to work closely with developers in order to complete developments, and my officials will continue to do so and encourage developers to fulfil their obligations and complete developments to allow adoption to take place.

It is accepted that in some cases, enforcement action will be required but it is not possible at this time to state where this course of action will be required.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his Department is taking to deal with the sewage problems in the unadopted development of Galliagh Shore, Enniskillen.

(AQW 43324/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Galliagh Shore development was constructed in two phases. The gravity sewers in Galliagh Shore Phase 1 have been adopted, however the sewerage system in Phase 2 of the development is served by a waste water pumping station and remains unadopted.

Correspondence with the residents in the unadopted part of the development has been ongoing since 2012. NI Water has advised them that while the Developer commenced the process for entering into an Article 161 Agreement for the future adoption of the development sewerage system, he was unable to complete the process and did not enter into an agreement nor put the associated bond security in place. NI Water has therefore neither obligation nor responsibility at this time to adopt the drainage system, nor to bring it up to the adoptable standard. The Developer is no longer trading and the site is in the responsibility of a Fixed Charge Receiver.

NI Water has advised the residents that they could make an application for the adoption of an existing sewerage system but they would be liable for all costs in bringing the sewers and associated waste water pumping station to the specified adoption standard before NI Water could adopt. The residents have not taken up this offer.

Following correspondence with the Consumer Council NI on 10 December 2014, NI Water moved without prejudice to carry out emergency works to the Galliagh Shore sewerage system and left the system operational on 12 December 2014.

The sewers and waste water pumping station remain unadopted and private, and responsibility for the development sewerage system lies with the current owners / trustees i.e. the Bank. The trustees appointed a Building Surveyor in mid-2014 to assess the remedial works required to bring the drainage system to an adoptable standard and while NI Water fully co-operated in the preparation of schedules of work and estimated costs there has been no further contact from either party.

To start trying to address the legacy of sites with unadopted substandard sewers, I have included a priority in the PC15 Social and Environmental Guidance that NI Water should commence a prioritised long-term programme to upgrade and adopt private sewerage infrastructure. It is likely that initially this programme would focus on sites already connected to NI Water's public sewerage network. My Department previously submitted funding bids during Monitoring rounds to address the shortfall on this, and other similar developments, however these bids were unsuccessful. Further funding bids to address these issues will be made in future monitoring rounds.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration his Department has given to reducing the speed limit at schools in rural locations.

(AQW 43361/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department takes the safety of children on their journeys to and from schools very seriously and has implemented a significant number of safety schemes, many through the Safer Routes to Schools programme introduced in 2005. These schemes used engineering measures to warn drivers of the presence of pupils and to reduce vehicle speeds.

It is recognised that children attending rural schools may be exposed to greater risk of traffic travelling at higher speeds. In response to this, my Department piloted the concept of part-time, enforceable 20mph speed limits during the starting and finishing times at three schools. These trials have proved to be very successful in reducing speeds during their operational periods and have now been adopted as a major part of the Department's policy for road safety measures at rural schools. However, further roll out of these part-time speed limits is subject to available funding.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) to detail the funding provided by his Department to each of the eleven Rural Community Transport Partnerships during the 2013/14 financial year to provide Dial a Lift services; (ii) for a breakdown of the eleven Rural Community Transport Partnerships expenditure on (a) office staffing and administration; (b) rent; (c) overheads; and (d) operational costs such as drivers; (iii) to detail the number of Dial a Lift passenger trips provided by each partnership during the year; and (iv) how funding is apportioned between the partnerships.

(AQW 43362/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During the 2013/14 financial year, my Department made available, a total of £3,475,719.70 to 8 Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP's) to facilitate the 11 areas supported from Rural Transport Fund. The Table below provides a breakdown of funding and number of trips provided by each partnership for 2013/14 period together with the % of associated staff costs. The average mileage per trip per RCTP is also provided.

Funding & Trips 2013/14

Partnerships	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip
CDM	£564,284.74	47.6%	56,335	12.4
Down	£439,843.16	53.1%	13,084	24.4
Easilink	£534,627.42	49.6%	38,587	9.5
Fermanagh	£517,469.24	46.8%	33,344	13.8
Lagan Valley	£209,358.78	45.7%	6,512	13.3
North Coast	£605,224.00	45.5%	47,296	10.6
South Antrim	£212,665.39	40.1%	14,021	13.9
Southern (includes Armagh, DART, Newry)	£392,246.97	45.0%	34,788	18.4
Totals	£3,475,719.70	47.2%	243,967	13.4

The remaining information requested is not available in the format requested, as each of the RCTP'S report and detail this information differently in their accounts. A standardised approach to accounts will be introduced for 2015/16. Copies of all accounts for the RCTP'S are available from Companies House.

In regard to (iv), funding was allocated taking account of requirement set out in each Business plan and the financial position of each RCTP.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he intends to take to stop illegal parking by public hire taxis in the 24 hour bus lane on the Albert Bridge Road outside Central Station.

(AQW 43379/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The issue of taxi enforcement for illegal parking has proven to be a difficult problem to resolve. The Parking Enforcement Protocol, that Traffic Attendants (TAs) must comply with, compels them to afford the driver of a vehicle, if present, the opportunity to drive away before a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) can be issued. As taxis usually have their drivers in them when waiting for fares, it is very seldom that a TA will actually get the opportunity to issue a PCN to a taxi. At the location in question I can confirm that since 1 January 2015, traffic attendants have visited this location 105 times and recorded 50 vehicle registration numbers of offending vehicles with all 50 vehicles driving away before a PCN could be issued.

Consequently no PCNs have been issued to date, for the reasons outlined above. However, proposals to introduce Moving Traffic Offences later this year include plans to place a camera in East Bridge Street near to Central Station, which will look for unauthorised vehicles in the bus lane, and it is anticipated this should help resolve the issue of taxis entering and stopping in the bus lane. In the meantime my Department, in conjunction with its parking enforcement contractor, will continue to visit this location with a view to taking enforcement action, as necessary.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many single carriage rural roads have had their maximum speed limits reduced in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43392/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of single carriageway roads, which have had their maximum speed limit reduced in the last three years, are shown in the table below:

Financial Year	Number of Roads to Have their Maximum Speed Limit Reduced
2012/13	53
2013/14	27
2014/15	24

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to reduce maximum speed limits on single carriage rural roads.

(AQW 43394/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The speed limits for all A Class and major B Class roads are currently being assessed in line with my Department's speed management policy guidelines. When this exercise is completed and the results have been analysed, reductions in the speed limit on some of the roads assessed may be implemented where it is deemed appropriate.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many street lights in North Down have been repaired or replaced since 1 January 2015.

(AQW 43395/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: 612 street lights have been repaired in the North Down area since 1 January 2015. None have been replaced during that period.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how the additional funding awarded to his Department in the Monitoring Round for street light repairs has been distributed; and how much has been spent to date.

(AQW 43396/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department received an additional allocation of £2million for street lighting repairs, in the January Monitoring Round. Details of the allocations to each of the TransportNI Divisions are shown in the table below:

TransportNI Division	Northern	Eastern	Southern	Western	Total
Allocation	£600,000	£600,000	£200,000	£600,000	£2,000,000

TransportNI Southern Division received a smaller allocation as it has a larger internal street lighting workforce and therefore requires less funding to pay for repairs undertaken by external contractors.

Expenditure on street lighting maintenance in the current financial year, including electrical inspection and testing activities, amounted to almost £3.4million up to the end of February 2015.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development which roads in North Down have had their maximum speed limit reduced in the last three years.

(AQW 43397/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Two roads in the North Down area have had their maximum speed limit reduced in the last financial year (2014/15):

- Green Road, Bangor over a stretch of approximately 60m; and
- Ballycrochan Road, Bangor over a stretch of approximately 230m.

This was a reduction from the national speed limit (60mph) to 30mph over the distance affected, in association with ongoing development and an extension to the series of street lights in the area.

No other roads in the North Down area have had their speed limit reduced within the last three years.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development what position his Department takes on Public Hire Taxis parking outside official ranks in Belfast; and how 'over-ranking' is policed.

(AQW 43398/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Public Hire taxis outside taxi ranks are subject to normal parking enforcement procedures.

Whilst my Department does not have the statutory power to enforce "over-ranking" at taxi ranks, it has the authority to enforce parking restrictions, which are marked by signage and road markings.

NSL Traffic Attendants routinely patrol most streets in Belfast City Centre and will issue a Penalty Charge Notice to any vehicle parked in contravention of a restriction.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development whether an 'all in or all out' policy for taxis in bus lanes is necessary to avoid confusion amongst consumers.

(AQW 43399/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's current approach to bus lane access is based on the way taxis are licensed to operate. Taxis licensed for hire directly 'on street' in Belfast are 'permitted' to use bus lanes. The access afforded to these 'permitted' taxis enables them to pick up passengers in the intended way on all routes.

Taxis licensed to be either pre-booked, picked up at a depot, and not permitted to pick up fares within a five mile radius of Belfast, are not permitted access to bus lanes. Not having access to bus lanes has no significant impact on the way these taxis pick up passengers.

While the approach is well understood by the taxi industry, I do appreciate why there may be some confusion for passengers who just want to hail a taxi. This confusion, I believe, mainly arises from the current licensing arrangements rather than bus lane access arrangements.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development why some staff at Transport NI's Limavady depot have been placed on restricted duties.

(AQW 43419/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are currently 5 operatives in TransportNI's Limavady depot working on restricted duties. Staff may require to be placed on restricted duties following medical assessments by my Department's medical advisory services, NICS Occupational Health Service (OHS), or on advice from an individual's GP followed by an OHS assessment. These work adjustments are necessary to protect the welfare and health & safety of staff.

Management endeavour, as far as is practicable, to accommodate staff with restrictions depending on the range and availability of work.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many traffic wardens were on duty on Wednesday 4 March 2015 in Fivemiletown; (ii) how many are usually on duty mid-week in Fivemiletown; and (iii) if there is a difference, to outline the reasons.

(AQW 43437/11-15)

Mr Kennedy:

- (i) Four Traffic Attendants were on duty in Fivemiletown on Wednesday 4 March 2015.
- (ii) Generally, two Traffic Attendants patrol the streets in Fivemiletown with parking restrictions 2 or 3 times per week.
- (iii) My officials have confirmed that NSL inadvertently assigned four Traffic Attendants to patrol Fivemiletown on 4 March 2015.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Regional Development what budget has been set aside in the next financial year for (i) gully cleaning; (ii) road marking; and (iii) street lighting in each TransportNI division.

(AQW 43452/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is facing a £60 million Resource budgetary pressure for 2015/16, more than half of which will fall to TransportNI. This budget pressure will create an immediate impact on the delivery of routine maintenance services such as gully cleaning, road marking and street light repairs, together with road and footway patching winter service, grass cutting and the maintenance of traffic signals.

The budget allocation that is currently available to TransportNI is only sufficient to cover our fixed costs, such as PPP payments and staff costs, energy bills for street lighting and traffic signals and statutory inspection and testing of street lighting installations.

No budget is available to allocate to external contractors to carry out gully cleaning, road marking, street light repairs and other routine maintenance activities from 1 April 2015.

Consequently, my Department will not be able to employ external contractors to undertake these routine activities beyond 31 March 2015.

I am likely to authorise a very limited amount of work by my internal workforce to provide a skeleton routine maintenance service until June 2015. However, can I make it clear that I am doing so at risk, as I cannot allow road safety related maintenance to be stopped.

In 2015/16 TransportNI will be entirely dependent upon funding allocations from monitoring rounds to deliver the full range of maintenance activities beyond June 2015, including those provided by our internal workforce.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A8 upgrade scheme, including an expected date for completion.

(AQW 43496/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Construction of the £130 million, 14 km-long A8 dualling scheme is progressing very well and is approximately 95 per cent complete.

To date, all eight of the bridges on the scheme are now substantially complete, with six open to traffic. In addition, the contractor has also laid over 270,000 tonnes of the 300,000 tonnes of bituminous material required for the scheme.

The contract completion date for the opening of the new dual carriageway is the end of May 2015, however, landscaping work will continue until December 2015.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has had any discussions on the designating of the hard shoulder of the M2, from Sandyknowes to Greencastle, as a bus lane with traffic merging at Bellevue Bridge for 100 yards to accommodate the lower part of the bridge structure.

(AQW 43499/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In general, bus lanes are provided to reduce journey times and improve reliability for bus passengers, and to help make public transport an attractive alternative to travel by private car, particularly at peak times.

In 2008, a hard shoulder bus lane was provided on the M2 at Sandyknowes roundabout to allow buses to avoid the peak time congestion, however, since the third lane was provided on the citybound carriageway from Sandyknowes, the congestion has

dissipated and buses rarely need to avail of this facility. This being the case, my Department is not proposing to introduce any other bus measures on the stretch of the M2 from Sandyknowes to Greencastle junction.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the total receipts from Penalty Charge Notices; and (ii) the number and value of Penalty Charge Notices unpaid, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43501/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The information requested is set out in the table below:

Year	PCN Income (£)	PCNs Outstanding (No.)	Value of PCNs Outstanding (£)
2011-2012	3,843,785	6,930	633,289
2012-2013	4,271,524	7,677	955,495
2013-2014	4,624,187	9,272	1,224,665

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what will be the impact on Translink passenger numbers of the increase in fares.

(AQW 43507/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is too soon to indicate what the impact of the fare increase on Translink's passenger journeys will be but it will continue to monitor trends over the coming months.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 29985/11-15, AQW 37272/11-15, AQW 42595/11-15, why a pilot parking scheme for residents at Rossville Street in Derry has not been introduced as initially anticipated.

(AQW 43513/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The draft legislation for the Rossville Street Residents' Parking Scheme in Londonderry is now completed. Following some minor changes to the scheme proposals, the formal consultation period will commence in April 2015.

The timeline for delivery of the scheme will be dependent upon the outcome of the consultation exercise and nature of any objections received. In the absence of any significant objections, the implementation process to deliver the scheme could commence in spring 2015.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the expenditure on capital projects and maintenance in (i) Magherafelt; (ii) Cookstown; and (iii) Dungannon District Council area, in the last three years.

(AQW 43516/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of Capital and Resource expenditure on the road network by my Department's TransportNI, in the last three years, in the respective council areas are shown in the table below:

District Council	Financial Year 2011/12 (£K)			Financial Year 2012/13 (£K)			Financial Year 2013/14 (£K)		
	Capital	Main-tenance	Total	Capital	Main-tenance	Total	Capital	Main-tenance	Total
Magherafelt	3,216	2,207	5,423	2,432	1,707	4,139	4,698	1,536	6,234
Cookstown	3,778	2,109	5,887	3,274	1,632	4,906	3,929	1,730	5,658
Dungannon	7,573	3,290	10,863	15,487	3,441	18,928	7,422	2,880	10,302
Overall Totals	14,567	7,606	22,173	21,193	6,780	27,973	16,049	6,146	22,195

Northern Ireland Water (NIW) does not maintain expenditure information by District Council areas. The capital works figures in the following table are actual accruals, however, the operational capital and maintenance figures are based on an estimate of the costs of Wastewater Treatment Works within the areas based on location codes.

District Council	2011/12* £K	2012/13 £K	2013/14 £K
Magherafelt			
Capital Works	5,100	3,300	2,700
Operational Capital	-	-	60

District Council	2011/12* £K	2012/13 £K	2013/14 £K
Maintenance	140	140	140
Cookstown			
Capital Works	4,000	3,900	2,400
Operational Capital	30	30	20
Maintenance	100	110	120
Dungannon			
Capital Works	6,000	1,600	5,700
Operational Capital	190	190	40
Maintenance	-	-	260
Total	15,560	9,270	11,440

* 2011/12 Estimate based on 2012/13 spend

In terms of costs on NIW's networks, these are not delimited in a consistent manner with the council area and therefore it is not possible to estimate costs directly associated with the networks.

Information in respect of Translink is provided in the table below:

Project Description	Total Spend 2011/12 £K	Total Spend 2012/13 £K	Total Spend 2013/14 £K
Dungannon, Cookstown & Magherafelt			
Replacement Storage Tanks at Dungannon	65	12	
Dungannon Entrance & Exit Refurbishment	2		
CCTV at Dungannon		27	5
Replacement Photocopier at Magherafelt		2	
Total	67	41	5

These areas also derive benefit from Translink bus purchases, which is capital expenditure.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what impact the increase in rail fares will have on passenger numbers.

(AQW 43531/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is too soon to indicate what the impact of the fare increase on Northern Ireland Railways' passenger journeys will be but it will continue to monitor trends over the coming months.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passengers used Translink bus services over the last three financial years.

(AQW 43532/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below details passenger journeys on Translink Bus Services over the last three years as recorded in the Translink Annual Accounts. The figures include the Metro, Ulsterbus and Goldline services.

Year	Translink Bus Services
2011/12	66.5 m
2012/13	66.9 m
2013/14	66.9 m

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much revenue was generated by passengers using Translink bus services over the last three financial years.

(AQW 43533/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below details how much revenue was generated by passengers using bus services over the last three financial years:

	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000
Revenue Generated on Bus Services	120,392	123,960	125,411

N.B. The above includes income from concessionary fares and schools but excludes private hire and tours.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much revenue was generated by passengers using Translink rail services over the last three financial years.

(AQW 43534/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below details how much revenue was generated by passengers using Translink rail services over the last three financial years:

	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000
Revenue Generated on Rail Services	32,868	35,738	41,313

N.B. The above includes income from concessionary fares and schools but excludes private hire and tours.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what are the projected savings that Translink will make as a result of falling fuel prices.

(AQW 43535/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise you that Translink has a 'fuel forward purchasing' arrangement in place for most of its required volume of fuel, for 2015/16 and 2016/17. The current fall in the cost of fuel will be reflected in fuel costs incurred by Translink beyond those timeframes.

Translink engages in fuel forward purchasing in order to provide certainty around its fuel costs, as part of its corporate planning process, and to prevent both it and its customers from being exposed to sudden significant increases in fuel prices.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) organisations that have received sponsorship from Translink in each of the last three years; and (ii) amount of cash, or other, sponsorship allocated to each organisation in each year.

(AQW 43537/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below details the organisations that have received sponsorship from Translink in each of the last three years and the amount of cash, or other, sponsorship allocated to each organisation in each year.

Organisation/Activity	Sponsorship		
	2012	2013	2014
Belfast City Council Metro Monster Mash	£5k cash plus In kind shuttle bus provision	£5k cash plus In kind shuttle bus provision	£5k cash plus In kind shuttle bus provision
Northern Ireland Local Government Association - Ulster in Bloom	£4.5k cash plus in kind cost of events (Approx. 15k in kind to manage associated events)	£4.5k cash plus in kind cost of events (Approx. £15k in kind to manage associated events)	£4.5k cash plus in kind cost of events (Approx. £15k in kind to deliver associated events)
NIABF Anti-Bullying Initiative	£5k cash & in kind travel & marketing	In kind bus travel & marketing support	£5k cash/ in kind bus travel & marketing
Ulster Cup (DOE)	In kind support for prize giving event and PR	In kind support for prize giving event and PR	In kind support for prize giving event and PR
South Eastern Education & Library Board Awards	£2k cash	£2k cash	£2k cash
Woman of the Year Awards – Belfast Telegraph	£2.8k cash	-	-
Tidy NI Eco Schools	£6k cash plus in kind travel, awards event & marketing support	£6k cash plus in kind travel prizes, awards event & marketing support	£6k cash plus in kind travel prizes, awards event & marketing support

Organisation/Activity	Sponsorship		
	2012	2013	2014
East Side Arts Festival	£2k cash / in kind marketing support	£2k cash / in kind marketing support	£2k cash / in kind marketing support
Ulster Youth Choir	£3k cash / and in kind bus provision and marketing support	£3k cash /in kind marketing /bus	-
Diabetes UK NI – Translink Charity Partner	In kind support through a range of employee / public events	-	-
Clandeboye Festival	In kind shuttle bus £180	-	-
Festival of Fools	£3k cash / in kind marketing support	£4.5k cash / in kind marketing support	£4.5k cash / in kind marketing support
Larne Alive Halloween	In kind bus travel	-	-
Whitehead Festivals	£1k cash	£1k cash	£1k cash
Festival of Marching Bands	£2.5k cash	£2.5k cash	£2.5k cash
Samaritans 'We're in Your Corner'	In kind marketing support	-	-
Taste NI	£2k cash / in kind marketing support	-	-
U105 Boogie Bus	In kind bus provision	In kind bus provision	-
NI Quality Awards	£5k cash	-	-
Music Theatre for Youth	£1.5k / in-kind Marketing support	-	-
Derry City Council – Clipper Round the World Race	£2k cash / in kind shuttle bus provision & in kind marketing support	-	-
Belfast City Marathon	£5k in kind - bus travel / in kind Marketing/PR support	£5k in kind - bus travel	£7k in kind - bus travel
Féile	£5.6k cash plus in kind travel & marketing support	£6k cash plus in kind travel & marketing support	£6k cash plus in kind travel & marketing support
Macmillan Cancer Care – Translink Charity Partner	-	In kind support through a range of employee / public events	In kind support through a range of employee / public events
Business in the Community	-	£16k cash (Awards sponsor/ Group Chief Executive in role of NI Biodiversity Champion of the Year)	£6k cash
CAFRE-Greenmount College	-	£300 cash	£300 cash
Whitehead Safety project	-	In-kind PR Support	-
Castlerock Rail Fest	-	£1,007 cash /in kind marketing /travel	-
Short Strand Mural Project - East Belfast Partnership	-	£500 for artistic materials	-
11:18 Live Theatre Train Company	-	£4k / in-kind marketing support	-
Derry~Londonderry City of Culture	-	£55k (£35k in kind bus travel plus £20k in kind for PR/marketing and in station advertising space)	-

Organisation/Activity	Sponsorship		
	2012	2013	2014
Newcastle Arts Festival	-	In kind marketing support	In kind marketing support
One City, One Book	-	In kind marketing support	In kind marketing support
CS Lewis Festival	-	In kind marketing support	In kind marketing support
NI Food & Drink Show	-	In kind marketing support	-
Cahoots Arts	-	-	£6.5k cash / in kind travel and marketing support
Ulster Rugby	-	-	£10.5k
RDS Craft Fair	-	-	In kind marketing support
NIEA Santa Crawfordsburn Community event	-	-	£1k cash / in kind marketing support
Festival of Flight, Newcastle	-	-	In kind travel & marketing support
Belfast Mela	-	-	In kind marketing support
Culture Night	-	-	£2.5k cash / in kind marketing and travel
Hilden Beer & Music Festival	-	-	In kind marketing support
Action for Hearing Loss	-	-	In kind marketing support
Templepatrick Association	-	-	In kind marketing support
Castlerock Walking fest	-	-	In kind bus shuttle / marketing support

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42814/11-15, whether two thirds of staff surveyed felt that the systems for promotion and development are not fair to all employees; and to provide the information on survey satisfaction in relation to internal vacancies filled exclusively on ability and qualification.

(AQW 43564/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: 56% of NI Water employees (715) responded to the employee satisfaction survey in 2013. 33% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'The systems for promotion and development are fair to all employees', while 66% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Regarding the query on 'internal vacancies filled exclusively on ability and qualification', this matter was not addressed within the survey therefore NI Water are unable to provide any information on this.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development why the agreed protocols, on obtaining information between his Department and the Consumer Council, failed over the recent fare increases for Translink.

(AQW 43594/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: On this occasion, the protocol was only partially followed because the impact of budget cuts to Translink's financial position in the current financial year was such that it needed to take immediate action to address these even ahead of the corporate planning process for 2015-16.

This was an exceptional circumstance and as soon as the decision to announce the fare increase was made, steps were taken to ensure that the Consumer Council was alerted in advance of the announcement.

I had a positive meeting with the Interim Chief Executive of the Consumer Council on 19 January to explain the context and reasons for the announcement. Prior to this, my officials also met with the Council on 16 December 2014 and there has been further engagement between Translink and Consumer Council since that meeting.

I can assure the member that the protocol will be an important consideration moving forward in relation to any future proposed fare increases by Translink.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what capital projects are proposed by Translink for the next financial year.

(AQW 43595/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following the budget outcome officials in my Department are currently in discussions with Translink about its Corporate Plan for 2015/16, which will incorporate its Capital Plan for next year and specifies the projects Translink can take forward.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what capital projects are proposed by NI Railways for the next financial year.

(AQW 43596/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following the budget outcome officials in my Department are currently in discussions with Translink about its Corporate Plan for 2015/16, which will incorporate its Capital Plan for next year and details projects Translink can take forward.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 41963/11-15, (i) when NI Water decided to plan and manage embedded contractors using work instructions; (ii) why this decision was taken; (iii) who recommended this course of action; and (iv) by whom was it approved.

(AQW 43598/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water has advised that (i) it initiated its Mobile Work Management (MWM) System in November 2008. The system, which enables individual work orders to be allocated to crews via Field Devices (known as Toughbooks) was introduced for NI Water frontline employees and relevant Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) contractor employees engaged directly via C058, C056, C057 and C071 contracts. It is not possible to identify the specific date when the decision was made to include this group, however it is estimated that this would have been taken some time prior to November 2008. (ii) this group of contractor employees received their work instructions directly from NI Water M&E staff prior to the introduction of MWM and it was therefore considered expedient to provide an allocation of work through MWM, i.e. the same operating model which was to be applied to NI Water's existing M&E frontline employees. (iii) Although no specific correspondence is available, it is understood that this decision was recommended at the time by the Head of M&E Services and; (iv) approved by NI Water's Director of Operations.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 41960/11-15 and AQW 41963/11-15, to detail the differences between provision of work instruction and provision of direct instruction.

(AQW 43599/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following the introduction of the NI Water Mobile Work Management System, direct instructions associated with the nature of individual jobs were replaced by an automated system which enabled work instructions to be forwarded to individuals via a Field Device (also known as Toughbooks). These were introduced for NI Water frontline employees and relevant Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) contractor employees engaged directly via C058 and C071 contracts.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42058/11-15, whether any of the companies involved in the C071 and C058 contracts breached any of the terms and conditions of the contracts; and if so, what was the nature of the breach and the impact on the contract.

(AQW 43600/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water is not aware of any breaches of either the C058 or the C071 contract.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42142/11-15, (i) how many embedded contractors engaged under contract C071 did NI Water in-source under the TUPE regulations 1981 during the duration, or at the end, of that contract; (ii) what were the reasons for this TUPE transfer; (iii) who recommended this transfer; and (iv) who approved this transfer.

(AQW 43601/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water has advised that (i) Six contractor employees were engaged under the C071 contract; (ii) In-sourcing was carried out to address any future potential conflict of interest associated with some of the work activities being undertaken by these individuals if they were to continue to be engaged via the existing contract arrangements at that time; (iii) The recommendation was initiated by NI Water's Head of Corporate Governance and Head of Mechanical and Electrical Services; and (iv) The recommendation was approved by NI Water's Executive Committee.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 41960/11-15, (i) how many people were engaged for 12 consecutive months or more under C058; (ii) what companies were involved; and (iii) why this was deemed necessary.

(AQW 43602/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water has advised that: (i) this information is not available to the company. Because questions (ii) and (iii) are linked to question (i) it is not possible to provide a response.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the head of his Department's Shareholder Unit is currently in post; and if not, why this is the case.

(AQW 43625/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Director of Water Policy and Shareholder Division was suspended from duty on 21 October 2014.

The post is currently filled on an interim basis by means of an internal temporary promotion.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development when the survey was carried out for the crossing on the Cookstown Road, Moneymore close to the junction with Ministers Walk.

(AQW 43634/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following a request from Cookstown District Council for the provision of a controlled crossing at Cookstown Road in Moneymore, a pedestrian crossing survey was undertaken at the site in November 2011. Although the survey concluded that pedestrian volumes did not warrant the provision of a controlled crossing, numbers were sufficient to justify the provision of a pedestrian refuge island. I am therefore pleased to be able to confirm that construction of the island was completed on 6 March 2015.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans there are to assess the roads infrastructure in the Portrush area in advance of the anticipated 2019 Open Golf Championship being held in the area.

(AQW 43643/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I welcome the award of the Open Championship to the Royal Portrush Golf Club and acknowledge the important role that infrastructure plays in facilitating such a tournament.

I am sure you will agree that infrastructure improvements, such as the A26 Ballee scheme at Ballymena, the A2 Broadbridge dualling at Londonderry and, more locally, recent improvements at the Lodge Road roundabout and Ring Road in Coleraine have provided improved links to Portrush. The A26 Frosses Road dualling between Glarryford junction and the A44 Drones Road should also be completed in advance of the Open.

I can assure you my officials will be involved in the off-course delivery of the event in conjunction with the event promoters, members from relevant Government Departments and Public Service Bodies to ensure effective co-ordination of the wider event planning.

You will be aware that the Irish Open was held in Portrush in 2012. My Department played a significant role assisting with the development of a Traffic Management Plan for the event. By common consent, the travel arrangements put in place worked very well for the duration of the event with most visitors availing of public transport, or using the temporary park and ride sites. As a result of these measures, there were no significant issues relating to event traffic.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department, or its arm's-length bodies, since 2011; and the amount of funding received in each case.

(AQW 43646/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department funds the Down District Accessible Transport Operator to provide transport services in rural areas to its members who are socially isolated throughout its operational area which includes North Down.

It also funds Shopmobility Bangor which provides equipment to anyone with mobility restrictions to help them get around shops, leisure and commercial facilities in the area.

The amount of funding received since 2011 to date for the two schemes in North Down is detailed in the table below.

Year	Rural Transport Funding for Down District Accessible Transport	Shopmobility Bangor
2011-12	£490,619	£0.00
2012-13	£443,314	£15,000
2013-14	£439,843	£15,000
2014-15	£428,303	£11,000
Total	£1,802,079	£41,000

Disability Action, which operates Transport Services throughout Northern Ireland, provides the Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS) in urban areas for people with disabilities or for those who find it difficult using mainstream public transport. As funding cannot be broken down on a regional basis no separate figures are available. However £2.9M was awarded in 2014/15 to cover the whole of Northern Ireland.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 43062/11-15, whether these announcements were (a) part of the original terms of the contract or (b) added at a later a date; and if added later, to detail (i) whether this was at the suggestion of Translink or the taxi operator, (ii) whether this is now a Translink endorsed or preferred service; and (iii) whether contracts such as these can be altered, following award, to encompass additional advertising features.

(AQW 43680/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that announcements were not specified in the taxi contract terms and conditions. They were introduced at the inception of the contract by way of good business practice and to ensure its customer information on train provides the highest possible customer care.

It does not constitute a preferred service, but a tendered contracted service, and will be subject to retender.

Translink advises that any contract can be altered subject to mutual agreement.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development how many employees in his Department have retired since April 2010; and how many are due to retire by April 2018.

(AQW 43691/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Since 1 April 2010, a total of 285 staff in my Department have retired. This figure includes a number of ill-health and voluntary early retirements. A further 98 staff partially retired during this period as a transition to full retirement through job reshaping.

In the absence of a default age of retirement, it is not possible to project with any accuracy the number of staff due to retire on age grounds by April 2018.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the impact that cuts to core funding for community transport services will have on the most vulnerable in society.

(AQW 43696/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been working intensively with officials to determine how best to spend the limited resources that are available to me. My Department delivers key water, transport and road services. The population relies on our services 24 hours a day. However, I am facing £60million of pressures for next year and the scale of reduction required to meet that cannot be delivered without an impact on core services.

Where I fully support and acknowledge the valuable services provided by all community transport service providers, there will however be a reduction in the level of funding available. I have tried to minimise this.

My Department will be working with the service providers to explore ways of delivering the service in a more cost efficient manner and will seek to minimise the impact on the end user.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development for a breakdown, by organisation, of the funding for community transport in each of the last three years; and for his assessment of how this funding has been distributed.

(AQW 43698/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department funds a grouping of eight Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTP). The funding for the last 3 years 2012-15 is broken down by each Partnership and is detailed in the table in Annex A.

Funding is allocated taking account of the requirements set out in each of their business plans and the financial position and costs of each RCTP.

Please note that the funding analysis statistics are not yet available for 2014/15.

Rural Community Transport Partnership (RCTP)	2012/13				2013/14				2014/15	Total funding for last 3 years
	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip	Funding	
CDM	£623,266	49.9%	48134	10.14	£564,285	47.6%	56,335	12.4	£591,526	£1,779,077
Down District CT	£443,314	49.1%	9915	29.34	£439,843	53.1%	13,084	24.4	£428,303	£1,311,460
Easilink (Strabane & Omagh)	£483,207	48.4%	36620	9.93	£534,627	49.6%	38,587	9.5	£521,679	£1,539,513
Fermanagh CT	£453,977	42.7%	31576	14.23	£517,469	46.8%	33,344	13.8	£575,248	£1,546,694
Lagan Valley (Lisburn)	£153,963	48.7%	5787	13.46	£209,359	45.7%	6,512	13.3	£195,639	£558,961

Rural Community Transport Partnership (RCTP)	2012/13				2013/14				2014/15	Total funding for last 3 years
	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip	Funding	% staff costs to total costs	Trips	Avg Mileage per trip	Funding	
North Coast CT	£554,219	49.4%	40205	10.20	£605,224	45.5%	47,296	10.6	£660,717	£1,820,160
South Antrim CT	£153,963	51.3%	12126	11.28	£212,665	40.1%	14,021	13.9	£213,763	£580,391
Southern – Armagh, Lurgan, Newry & Mourne	£385,771	48.3%	30207	15.14	£392,247	45.0%	34,788	18.4	£440,642	£1,218,660
RCTP Totals	£3,251,680	48.6%	214570	12.46	£3,475,719	47.2%	243,967	13.4	£3,627,517	£10,354,916

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42445/11-15, to detail the bridges in Bangor that are designated or recognised by his Department.

(AQW 43710/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is responsible for maintenance of the following bridge structures within the Bangor Town limits, details of which are recorded within the Roads Service Bridge Management System (RSBMS).

Only those bridges with a span of 1.8m or greater or, in the case of culverts, where they are greater than 1.8m in diameter, are included:

Bridge No:	Bridge Name:
90318	Brunswick Road
90319	Bangor Flyover
90320	Crawfordsburn Road
90325	Hawe Road
90327	Ballycrochan Road
90582	Bangor Harbour Bridge
90606	Ashley Drive
90607	Groomsport Road
90608	Donaghadee Road
90609	East Circular Road Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether Beechfield Drive in Donaghadee will be included in any planned road resurfacing schemes.

(AQW 43718/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would remind the Member that information on completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in my Department'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.drndi.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information.htm

Budgets and programmes for future years have still to be agreed, however, when finalised, details will also be published on the afore-mentioned website.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many apprenticeship places will be available with Translink in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43719/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In light of current internal restructuring, Translink has advised that it has not as yet forecast any apprentice placements for 2015/16.

Translink will keep the situation under review, depending on the outcome of the above-mentioned restructuring.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many apprenticeship places will be available with NI Water in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43722/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There will be a total of 15 Apprentice placements across the company during 2015/16. This figure includes 10 Apprentices appointed during 2014/15 alongside 5 new Apprentices who will be appointed during 2015/16.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many apprenticeship places will be available with NI Railways in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43720/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In light of current internal restructuring, Translink has advised that it has not as yet forecast any apprentice placements for 2015/16.

Translink will keep the situation under review, depending on the outcome of the above-mentioned restructuring.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed sewerage schemes for (i) Clanabogan; (ii) Tattyreagh; and (iii) Eskra in the Omagh district.

(AQW 43732/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In relation to (i) Clanabogan, no formal request has been received for a first time sewerage system in this area. However, a request has been received from a public representative for a meeting to discuss the scope for one. A provisional date for the meeting was offered in mid-April and has yet to be agreed. Regarding (ii) Tattyreagh, in response to a recent requisition notice application for a first time service facility in the area, NI Water carried out a technical and economical appraisal study in order to assess the options, costs and viability of providing a sewage system at this location. A 'Conditional Acceptance' letter was issued to the applicant on 9 January 2015 and NI Water is presently awaiting a further response. (iii) NI Water does not currently hold a request for a first time sewerage system in the Eskra area.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what savings will be made from the cuts to bus routes proposed by Translink.

(AQW 43807/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink will need to make efficiencies in administration and overhead costs, to reduce the frequency of some bus services and reduce its workforce. A public consultation on this process is therefore now in place and details can be found on Translink's website, www.translink.co.uk.

Until this process has been concluded and the responses analysed and considered Translink are not in a position to say exactly how much savings will be made.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the proposed changes to the 3C and 303A services on the Bangor and Donaghadee bus routes; and the estimated savings that will be made as a result of these changes.

(AQW 43814/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink will need to make efficiencies in administration and overhead costs, to reduce the frequency of some services and reduce its workforce. A public consultation on this process is therefore now in place and details can be found on Translink's website, www.translink.co.uk.

Until this process has been concluded and the responses analysed and considered Translink are not in a position to comment on any changes or quantify potential savings on specified routes.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on postage in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 43844/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In the last two Financial Years my Department has spent the following amounts on postage:

Year	Spend (£000's)
2012/13	210
2013/14	202

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the current work on the dualling of the A26 at Glarryford is due to be completed, within budget, by the summer of 2017.

(AQO 7847/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department awarded the contract for the A26 Dualling scheme to the BAM/McCann consortium on 21 October 2014 and the contract start date was 19 January 2015.

Since then BAM/McCann has been carrying out design work, site investigation and site mobilisation.

I can confirm that a programme of works has been agreed with the contractor which envisages completion by the summer of 2017.

The total project costs are estimated to be in the region of £55 million and I can assure the Member that TransportNI's project team will be working closely with the contractor for the duration of the scheme to ensure it is delivered to programme and within budget.

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the budget allocations for gully cleaning, road marks and street lighting in each of the four divisions of TransportNI in 2015/16.

(AQO 7848/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is facing a £60 million Resource budget pressure in 2015/16, more than half of which will fall to TransportNI. This budget pressure will create an immediate impact on the delivery of routine maintenance services such as gully cleaning, road marking and street light repairs, together with road and footway patching, winter service, grass cutting and the maintenance of traffic signals.

The budget allocation that is currently available to TransportNI is only sufficient to cover its fixed costs, such as PPP payments and staff costs; energy bills for street lighting and traffic signals; and statutory inspection and testing of street lighting installations.

No budget is available to allocate to external contractors to carry out gully cleaning, road marking, street light repairs and other routine maintenance activities from 1 April 2015. Consequently, my Department will not be able to employ external contractors to undertake these routine activities beyond 31 March 2015.

I am likely to authorise a very limited amount of work by my internal workforce to provide a skeletal routine maintenance service until June 2015. However, can I make it clear that I am doing so at risk, as I cannot allow road safety related maintenance to be stopped.

In 2015/16 TransportNI will be entirely dependent upon funding allocations from monitoring rounds to deliver the full range of maintenance activities beyond June 2015, including those provided by our internal workforce.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the Department for Transport's Go Ultra Low City Scheme.

(AQO 7850/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Go Ultra Low Cities scheme, funded by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV), is an opportunity for Cities or Regions to cultivate a regional, national and international reputation for their uptake of ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs).

An amount of £35 million is being made available for 2-4 Cities (Regions) to put in place measures that will increase uptake of ULEVs, improve air quality and allow successful bidders to show that they are an exemplar region for innovation in electric vehicle usage.

My Department, with the support of the Department of the Environment (DOE) and Belfast City Council (BCC), has registered an interest in participating in the scheme and developed a bid to access part of this funding.

I am very pleased to announce that the bid was successful at the screening phase and my Department and partner organisations from the Public and Private sector have been invited to develop formal proposals, which will be considered in competition with eleven other major Cities or Regions in the United Kingdom.

Final bids are to be submitted to OLEV by 31 August 2015, with the winning Cities/Regions to be announced in September or October this year.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Special Adviser has resigned following the announcement of his candidacy in the forthcoming Westminster election; and if so, on what date his resignation was tendered.

(AQW 44083/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As a result of his selection on 13 March as a candidate at the forthcoming Parliamentary General Election, my Special Adviser has resigned his appointment. His resignation is effective from that date.

Mr Givan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the Knockmore/Prince William Road infrastructure improvements that have to be implemented through an agreement with developers related to the LD1 Development.

(AQO 7855/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: You will recall my meeting with you and the Environment Minister, Mr Mark Durkan MLA, on 8 December 2014, to discuss concerns about delays in compliance with an Article 40 planning agreement associated with the LD1 housing development in Lisburn.

I can confirm that a further meeting took place in January 2015 between the Developer's agent and my officials to discuss the necessary improvements to various junctions in connection with the LD1 development.

The Developer's agent subsequently presented proposals for the junction improvements in February 2015, including the junction of Knockmore Road/Prince William Road. Officials replied formally to these proposals on 13 March 2015 and are awaiting feedback with the objective of achieving the best possible solution.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development how many snowploughs and gritters are owned by his Department. (AQO 7856/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department currently has 166 gritting vehicles in service, which includes 31 reserves.

In 2014, my Department procured 52 new gritters to replace 49 older vehicles, which are now going through the disposal process. These new vehicles were brought into the fleet for the 2014/15 winter service season.

My Department currently owns 240 vehicle mount snowploughs which can be fitted onto gritters and other vehicles.

Ms Fearon asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the deployment of snowploughs and gritters for yellow, orange and red snow warning alerts.

(AQO 7857/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: TransportNI utilises a specialist Met office forecast for winter service OpenRoad. This system is specifically designed to provide TransportNI with a more specialist and detailed forecast over and above that supplied by the general public weather service system which utilises the yellow, orange and red snow warning alerts

During normal winter service, TransportNI salts the main through routes that carry more than 1,500 vehicles per day and, in exceptional circumstances, roads with difficult topography carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles per day. Gritters and snow ploughs are based at strategic locations across Northern Ireland to provide the most effective operational response across the salted network.

TransportNI has snow contingency plans which are implemented during periods of heavy and prolonged snowfall. During snow events, gritters are fitted with snow ploughs and all efforts are initially directed to clearing snow from motorways and the trunk roads, before moving to other main roads and the busiest urban link roads. This operation continues until all roads are cleared.

If conditions across Northern Ireland are such that some regions are clear and others require further treatment, then it is possible to redeploy resources across TransportNI divisions. Arrangements are also in place in all Divisions to bring in farmers/contractors to help clear snow from local roads.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the recent appointment of a contractor, to outline the timeline for the development of the Magherafelt bypass.

(AQO 7858/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department awarded the contract for the A31 Magherafelt Bypass to the BAM/McCann consortium on 18 February 2015.

Since then BAM/McCann have commenced detailed design of the works and it is expected that construction works will commence in April 2015. The contract period is 20 months and it is anticipated the new road will be available to traffic in late 2016.

The total project cost is estimated to be in the region of £35 million.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the transport of heavy goods from Mid Ulster to Northern Ireland's port facilities.

(AQO 7859/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am aware of some issues arising from the movement of abnormal loads from the Mid Ulster area to ports at Belfast and Warrenpoint.

The movement of abnormal loads on the road network needs to be carefully managed so that large and heavy vehicles only use those parts of the network that can safely accommodate them. Legislation requires that vehicles and load movements that exceed standard dimensions (i.e. abnormal loads) need to be pre-notified to the Department, Police Service Northern Ireland and, in some cases, the Department of the Environment.

The proposed route of an abnormal load is checked to ensure that bridges to be crossed can support the load or, are high enough to let the load pass underneath. If the most direct route is unsuitable then an alternative route will be used.

You will be aware that I have asked officials to review the information currently held regarding the load carrying capacity of some of the structures on the motorway network, to ensure the suitability of the Special Types General Order range of vehicles to pass over the structures is accurately reflected.

This work is currently being progressed.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the budget allocations for road maintenance in each of the four divisions of TransportNI in 2015/16.

(AQO 7860/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is facing a £60 million Resource budgetary pressure for 2015/16, more than half of which will fall to TransportNI. This budget pressure will create an immediate impact on the delivery of routine maintenance services such as gully cleaning, road marking and street light repairs, together with road and footway patching winter service, grass cutting and the maintenance of traffic signals.

The budget allocation that is currently available to TransportNI is only sufficient to cover our fixed costs, such as PPP payments and staff costs, energy bills for street lighting and traffic signals and statutory inspection and testing of street lighting installations.

No budget is available to allocate to external contractors to carry out gully cleaning, road marking, street light repairs and other routine maintenance activities from 1 April 2015.

Consequently, my Department will not be able to employ external contractors to undertake these routine activities beyond 31 March 2015.

I am likely to authorise a very limited amount of work by to my internal workforce to provide a skeletal routine maintenance service until June 2015. However, can I make it clear that I am doing so at risk, as I cannot allow road safety related maintenance to be stopped.

In 2015/16 TransportNI will be entirely dependent upon funding allocations from monitoring rounds to deliver the full range of maintenance activities beyond June 2015, including those provided by our internal workforce.

Department for Social Development

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the current average cost of an appeal against a benefits related decision issued by the Social Security Agency.

(AQW 41422/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): This information cannot be provided in the format requested. Resources are allocated across a wide range of benefit appeals and a number of variables influence the costs depending also on the benefit decision being appealed.

The table below sets out the actual expenditure within The Appeals Service and the total number of appeals processed and disposed of within the last financial year.

Annual Spend 2013 - 14	Appeals processed and disposed of
£8,860,000	22,392

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many claims have been made against the Housing Executive for substandard cavity wall insulation.

(AQW 42899/11-15)

Mr Storey: This information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive has advised that this information is not routinely collected. The Housing Executive further advises that claims may be registered as "Dampness" which is a symptom with a number of causes and at the time of registration the actual cause would not be known. A search of the claims registered on the Housing Executive system, revealed 200 claims under the heading of "Dampness". However, the causes of "Dampness" would include failure of the damp proof course, general household condensation, failure/absence of insulation, rising damp, penetrating damp etc.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to list the Public Sector Groups and Voluntary and Community Sector Groups that have participatory roles on the Joint Forum; and to detail the activity of Concordat Action Teams to date.

(AQW 43141/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Joint Forum is made up of the Public Sector Group (PSG) and the Voluntary and Community Panel Group (VS Panel).

The PSG consists of representatives from each Government Department and two officials from local government representing the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

The VS Panel consists of representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations. Membership to the Panel is through a process managed by the Northern Ireland Council for Community Action reflecting a cross-section of representation from the Sector.

Details of public and voluntary and community sector membership are attached at Annex A.

As Minister for Social Development I formally present a report to my Executive and Assembly colleagues each year on issues impacting on the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). This report contains information on the work of the Concordat's

Commitment Action Teams (CATs) who research and make recommendation for improvement. Details on each CAT activity are shown at Annex B.

Annex A

Group Membership of the Joint Forum

Public Sector Group

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Department of Agriculture and Rural Development | ■ Department of Finance and Personnel |
| ■ Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure | ■ Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety |
| ■ Department of Education | ■ Department of Justice |
| ■ Department for Employment and Learning | ■ Department for Regional Development |
| ■ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment | ■ Department for Social Development |
| ■ Department of the Environment | ■ Office of the First and deputy First Minister |

Voluntary Sector Panel

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Age NI | ■ Northern Ireland Youth Forum |
| ■ Carers NI | ■ Rural Community Network |
| ■ Churches' Community Work Alliance NI | ■ Sandy Row Community Forum |
| ■ Disability Action | ■ Save the Children |
| ■ East Belfast Community Development Agency | ■ Victim Support |
| ■ Gingerbread NI | ■ Voluntary Arts Ireland |
| ■ North West Community Network | ■ Women's Resource and Development Agency |
| ■ Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action | ■ World Wildlife Fund |
| ■ Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network | |

Commitment Action Team (Cat) Update

Annex B

Influence and Examine the Impact of Government Policy CAT

The objective of this CAT was to identify how stakeholders could more effectively engage with policy makers at an early stage of development. A key success of this CAT has been the agreement from the Permanent Secretaries Group that Departmental representatives will now provide details of new and policies due for revision to the Joint Forum. This process has now been mainstreamed into the work of the Joint Forum under 'Policy Discussion'.

Concordat Compliance Monitoring CAT

Concordat Compliance Monitoring is a process to assess the level of understanding, and degree of implementation of the Concordat within Government and the VCS.

Progress has been made through a pilot assessment of a government policy to test its validity and a wider-scale pilot is planned to be undertaken to fully validate the form before roll-out across the public sector.

Addressing Bureaucracy in Grant Administration to the Voluntary and Community Sector CAT

This CAT investigated excessive bureaucratic working practices in grant funding to the VCS. The scope of the project was expanded to include a response to recommendations arising from Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)³ and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)⁴ reports on reducing bureaucracy in public funding to the VCS and to improve working relationships between public bodies and the Sector.

The resultant "Addressing Bureaucracy" report identified nineteen recommendations on reducing bureaucratic working practices in administering grant funding. These have been incorporated into a Code of Practice and a Financial Systems and Controls Assessment (FSCA) process which will be applicable to all central government funders within Northern Ireland.

Outcomes-Focused Approach to Funding CAT

The Joint Forum is currently monitoring the development and implementation of the 'NI Inspiring Impact Programme' which is being delivered by Building Change Trust (BCT).

Five impact practice projects are being supported which are planned to enable Government and statutory bodies to apply an outcome-focused approach to grant funding in the future.

3 Northern Ireland Audit Office "Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector" (2010)

4 Public Accounts Committee "Report on Creating Effective Partnerships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector" (2012)

Communications CAT

This CAT has resulted in the development of a 'Joint Forum Portal' which details the work being undertaken, membership of the Public Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector groups and Joint Forum publications. Work continues on other communication issues.

Structural Reform CAT

The Structural Reform team has been stood down following mainstreaming and completion of its 3 objectives:

- To present to the NI Executive and Assembly a yearly report from the Joint Forum through the DSD Minister on issues impacting on the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- To review the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Joint Forum to reflect the agreement within the Concordat and emerging public sector structures and responsibilities.
- To explore and develop processes whereby Concordat non-compliance can be addressed.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42574/11-15, if the Savills' appraisal was submitted to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board at its meeting on 15 December 2010, to detail the content of the report relating to Rinmore that was submitted to the meeting on 16 December 2009; and what action was taken on foot of same. **(AQW 43345/11-15)**

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised as follows:

The Economic Appraisal carried out by Savills was submitted to the Board at its meeting on 15 December 2010. The paper presented to the Board on 16 December 2009 was called Small Scale Stock Transfers – General Policy and Specific Case Study and it contained:

- A summary of existing Board policy in relation to stock transfer;
- Brief comments on the lessons learned from previous transfers;
- The background to the proposed Rinmore pilot transfer proposal;
- A summary of the issues to be considered in stock transfer;
- The proposed process that the Housing Executive would follow in taking forward the Rinmore pilot.

Following this, the Housing Executive initiated further exploratory work with North & West Housing (now known as Apex Housing).

A brief was issued to North & West Housing on 21 January 2010, setting out the specification of improvement works needed and the conditions under which a transfer, if approved, would take place and inviting the housing association to submit its proposals. A paper on North & West Housing's response and a number of associated issues was then presented to the Housing Executive's Board in May 2010. Further Board papers followed in May, June and July addressing a number of issues raised by the Board in regard to the transfer proposal. In November 2010 the Board approved the initiation of formal consultation with the tenants on the transfer proposal having been informed that DFP approval had been secured for the Economic Appraisal for the Rinmore pilot scheme.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister for Social Development how much money has been spent on the three blocks of flats in Corrib Avenue, West Belfast over the last ten years, in terms of (a) maintenance; (b) general upkeep; (c) planned schemes; and (d) environmental schemes.

(AQW 43359/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that in relation to: (a) maintenance; and (b) general upkeep, they have spent a total of £84,000 over the last ten years. This is in addition to costs associated with change of tenancies and ongoing routine repairs which relate specifically to their everyday landlord responsibilities and which are difficult to quantify.

In relation to: (c) planned schemes, the Housing Executive advises that they have spent £128,000 during the last ten years as follows: -

■	2012	Kitchen Replacement Scheme	£72,000
■	2012	Gas Heating Installation	£21,000
■	2013	Provision of Fire Safety Doors	£35,000

Finally, in relation to: (d) environmental schemes, the Housing Executive has confirmed that whilst there have been no actual environmental improvement schemes, work was carried out last year to create defensible space around the blocks by removing pathways, fitting additional gates/railings and door entry systems. This work was completed through response maintenance and is included within the £84,000 figure mentioned at (a) and (b) above.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to list the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department or its arm's-length bodies since 2011; and to detail the amount received in each case. **(AQW 43371/11-15)**

Mr Storey: Detail of the community and voluntary groups in North Down which have received funding from the Department for Social Development since 2011 to date is provided in the following table:

Group	Total (£)
Adult Supported Living	8,000
Age Concern	163,000
Autism Initiatives	317,000
Belfast Central Mission	922,000
Bangor Abbey Drama Club	1,886
Bangor Drama Club	1,000
Camphill Trust	489,000
Clandeboyne Village Association	1,250
Donaghadee Lifeboat	475
Fibromyalgia Support North Down & Ards	1,886
Growing Connections N1	4,797
Hollywood Family Trust	247,144
Hollywood Shared Town	500
Kilcooley Community Action Group	650
Kilcooley Community Forum	289,845
Kilcooley Womens Centre	121,363
Kilcooley Womens Education & Development Group	177,216
Link Family and Community Centre	278
Mencap	783
Millisle Community Association	8,417
Millisle Youth Forum	5,000
North Down & Ards Road Safety Committee	2,774
North Down & Ards Womens Aid	997
North Down Community Network	277,156
North Down YMCA	203,193
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health	2,246
Northern Ireland Institute for the Disabled	1,166
Positive Futures	1,899
Praxis Care Group	1,363
Prospects	525
Rathgill Community Association	292,966
Redburn Youth Group	1,500
Redburn/Loughview Community Forum	53,447
Samaritans Bangor & North Down	3,000
Simon Community	1,525
The Croft Community	1,206
The Link Family and Community Centre	48,520
The Square Centre	1,000

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 41798/11-15, when the Savills appraisal commissioned.

(AQW 43407/11-15)

Mr Storey: Savills were instructed to carry out an Options Appraisal exercise in a letter dated 10th August 2009.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Rinmore Pilot was actively pursued before the pilot scheme was approved by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board.

(AQW 43408/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that prior to the Board approving the stock transfer, the Housing Executive and the Department explored the feasibility of the transfer. The Housing Executive and the Department also worked at that time to gather preliminary information for the Board.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Northern Ireland House Executive Board deferred the Rinmore Pilot in December 2009 until specific areas of concern were addressed; and if so, to detail how and when they were addressed.

(AQW 43409/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the Board did defer the Rinmore pilot in December 2009 as they had specific concerns with the paper which was presented at that time. These concerns were addressed through further papers to Board meeting in May, June and July 2010. In November 2010 the Board approved the initiation of formal consultation with the tenants on the transfer proposal.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what budget is available for the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

(AQW 43480/11-15)

Mr Storey: The budget for the Affordable Warmth Scheme for 2015/2016 is £16.5 million.

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.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any plans for new build social housing in each of district council area of Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon over the next five years; and to detail how many have been built in the same areas over the last five years.

(AQW 43521/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) is approved on a three year basis and therefore the figures provided below show future social housing provision from 2015/16 – 2017/18.

Social Housing Development Programme for 2015/16 – 2017/18

On-site year	Magherafelt	Cookstown	Dungannon	Total
2015/16	0	0	65	65
2016/17	0	0	89	89
2017/18	20	0	81	101
Totals	20	0	235	255

Number of completions over the last five years

Completion Year	Magherafelt	Cookstown	Dungannon	Total
2009/10	6	9	139	154
2010/11	23	9	10	42
2011/12	1	1	25	27
2012/13	30	0	26	56
2013/14	20	0	73	93
Totals	80	19	273	372

Completions during 2014/15 and planned completions for 2015/16 and 2016/17

Completion Year	Magherafelt	Cookstown	Dungannon	Total
2014/15	40	0	88	128
2015/16	23	11	38	72
2016/17	13	58	0	71
Totals	76	69	126	271

Please be advised that schemes can be lost or slip to future programme years for a variety of reasons, such as failure to achieve planning permission. Schemes can also be added in-year through Existing Satisfactory or Off-the-Shelf purchases. Further schemes may also be added through subsequent programme formulations/housing association bidding rounds.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42926/11-15, whether any energy efficiency measures have been installed under the Affordable Warmth Scheme.
(AQW 43525/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department has been piloting Affordable Warmth since 2012. Since then, 1,281 homes have benefitted from the provision of energy efficiency measures.

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Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the anticipated impact of budgetary cuts in 2015/16 on his Department's Small Grants Volunteering Scheme and Laganside/Belfast City Centre Events Grant.
(AQW 43567/11-15)

Mr Storey: It is my expectation that there will be a Volunteering Small Grants scheme in 2015/2016. Regarding the Laganside/Belfast City Centre Events grant, I am still considering options on the allocation of my budget and will make an announcement in due course.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Capital Build project for Coleraine Rural Urban Network in Coleraine Town Centre will be completed by August 2015.
(AQW 43590/11-15)

Mr Storey: Coleraine Rural Urban Network project has been awarded funding from the Modernisation Fund Capital Programme for the development of a multi- purpose community hub in Coleraine Town Centre. The estimated completion date for this project remains August 2015.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development what plans there are for the promotion of the Affordable Warmth Scheme to potential beneficiaries after 1 April 2015.
(AQW 43591/11-15)

Mr Storey: Research commissioned by my Department in 2011 identified 33, 499 homes which were in extreme fuel poverty, that is, they need to spend 25% or more of their income to adequately light and heat their home. My Department has worked with the University of Ulster to identify households considered to be most at risk of fuel poverty. This information has been provided to local councils who are targeting those households starting with the areas of highest priority. The Affordable Warmth Scheme is a targeted scheme and local Councils, working in partnership with the Housing Executive, will visit homes most at risk of fuel poverty and deliver energy efficiency improvements. This direct targeted approach will assist those households most affected by fuel poverty.

Further information about the Affordable Warmth Scheme is available on www.nidirect.gov.uk/affordable-warmth-grant-scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how he will emphasis to councils the importance of Neighbourhood Renewal, Areas at Risk and Small Pockets of Deprivation funding when responsibility transfers to councils.
(AQW 43597/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department's programmes, such as Neighbourhood Renewal, Areas at Risk and Small Pockets of Deprivation will come to an end when regeneration powers are extended to Local Government. Thereafter it will be for Councils to decide how best to address the needs of their areas through their respective Community Plans.

Councils will be required to have regard for the Urban Regeneration and Community Development Framework. However there is no obligation on Councils to deliver programmes or support any groups, including those currently delivered through the Neighbourhood Renewal, Areas at Risk or Small Pockets of Deprivation programmes, in the same way that my Department currently does.

Whilst recognising the value and contribution of such programmes, my Department is fully supportive of the aims of the Reform of Local Government Programme which places responsibility for decisions on local regeneration and community development within Local Government structures.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Social Development, given that disability benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance, are not means-tested, to explain the rationale behind the Test of Resources for Disabled Facilities Grants.
(AQW 43604/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Disabled Facilities Grant is available to help improve the home of a person with a disability, and is initially based on an Occupational Therapist referral. Owner occupiers, landlords and private tenants can get assistance to carry out adaptations, providing there is a person with a disability living in the house. As such unlike disability benefits, Disabled Facilities Grants are not always payable directly to the disabled person.

The test of resources applies to applications from owner-occupiers, tenants and landlords except where the disabled person for whose benefit the works are being carried out is a "non-dependant" adult. In this case, the test is applied to that person. Where the disabled person is a child or young person, the parents or guardians are exempt from the means test.

The total amount of grant assistance awarded by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is based on the approved cost of the work and the applicant's financial circumstances.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development how many people were listed on the housing waiting list, in each of the last twelve months, with Rathcoole, North Belfast as an area of choice.
(AQW 43609/11-15)

Mr Storey: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive collates information for the waiting list on a quarterly basis. They have therefore provided the table attached which details the waiting list for Rathcoole (including the number of applicants in housing stress) at the end of each quarter over the past twelve months.

	March 2014	June 2014	September 2014	December 2014
Total Waiting List	434	407	408	396
Applicants in Housing Stress	235	215	217	206

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of properties in Rathcoole, North Belfast which are owned by (i) the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and (ii) a registered Housing Association.
(AQW 43611/11-15)

Mr Storey: In relation to (i) the Housing Executive has advised they have 1,063 properties in Rathcoole; and in relation to (ii) three Housing Associations have advised they have 156 properties in Rathcoole.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of lettable voids in Rathcoole, North Belfast on a month by month basis over the last twelve months.
(AQW 43612/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has provided the table attached which details the number of lettable voids in Rathcoole over the twelve month period March 2014 to February 2015.

Month	No. of Lettable Voids
March 2014	5
April 2014	3
May 2014	3
June 2014	3
July 2014	11
August 2014	3
September 2014	5
October 2014	8
November 2014	4
December 2014	4
January 2015	6

Month	No. of Lettable Voids
February 2015	2

A Housing Association had one property void for two weeks (21 July 2014 to 3 August 2014) in the same twelve month period.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development how many employees in his Department have retired since April 2010; and how many are due to retire by April 2018.

(AQW 43692/11-15)

Mr Storey: The number of DSD employees who have retired since April 2010 is 377. It is not possible to provide a projection of how many employees are due to retire by April 2018 as there is no longer a compulsory retirement age in the NICS.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail any departmental plans for the regeneration of Linenhall Street, Ballymoney.

(AQW 43701/11-15)

Mr Storey: In January 2014 my Department published a Masterplan for Ballymoney town centre which set out the regeneration initiatives that would assist with the long-term sustainable development of the town. The Masterplan identified the Linenhall quarter, which includes Linenhall Street, as a key development opportunity within the town centre and recommended a range of potential uses for this area such as residential, commercial, leisure and public space.

Since the publication of the Masterplan my Department has provided funding for a revitalisation scheme which is aimed at improving the appearance of properties within the town centre.

My Department will continue to work in partnership with the new Causeway Coast and Glens Council to take forward regeneration initiatives until April 2016 when urban regeneration powers and associated budgets will transfer to the new council.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department would consider a Specialised Vehicle Fund, such as the fund administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

(AQW 43736/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Specialised Vehicle Fund is administered by the independent charity Motability on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. This fund is administered on a UK wide basis. Information on matters relating to this fund can be obtained from Motability by writing to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, Essex, CM19 5PX.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have received help through the Motability Scheme to access a (i) car; (ii) powered wheelchair; and (iii) mobility scooter, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43737/11-15)

Mr Storey: The information requested is not available. The Motability Scheme, whereby people who receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance may exchange all or part of their allowance in return for a car, is administered by the independent charity Motability. Information on administrative matters relating to the scheme can be obtained by writing to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, Essex, CM19 5PX.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 43109/11-15, whether the Committee for Social Development has been made aware of the error in the briefing paper supplied.

(AQW 43753/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Committee for Social Development has been made aware of the error in the briefing paper.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development whether he is aware of the concerns of residents of Kernan Gardens, Portadown at the proposal of his Department to sell a plot of land in the vicinity of their homes; and to detail (i) how much he expects the land to raise; (ii) how he proposes to address concerns that an ancient fort was once located on the site; and (iii) how he plans to address the concern of residents.

(AQW 43760/11-15)

Mr Storey: Issues relating to Kernan Gardens have been raised with the Department on a number of occasions. The answers to the specific questions are as follows:

- (i) The site is currently valued at £30k - £40k and will not be sold for below this valuation.
- (ii) The area thought to be of historical interest has deliberately been excluded from the area offered for sale.
- (iii) Should a Planning application be made for the site, the Planning authority will, as a matter of course, invite input from local residents and consider objections to any proposal before making a decision.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of postage to his Department, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 43767/11-15)

Mr Storey: The information requested is shown in the table below.

	2013-14	2014-15*
Postage Costs	£2,122,478	£1,878,924

* The figure for 2014-15 is up to the 17 March 2015

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42928/11-15, to detail (i) whether the Service Level Agreement specifies a minimum of 1,000 completed surveys per council area; and (ii) whether he is concerned that out of 11,000 surveys only 2,041 have been completed.

(AQW 43784/11-15)

Mr Storey:

- (i) The Service Level Agreement signed by each of the existing 26 councils requires each council to refer a minimum of 1,000 completed surveys to the Housing Executive annually.
- (ii) The Warm Homes Scheme has been my Department's main energy efficiency improvement scheme for the 2014/15 year. The Affordable Warmth Scheme was introduced on 15 September 2014 before the Warm Homes Scheme ended to allow the new process to embed and will be fully operational by April 2015. Councils have an annual target to collectively deliver at least 11,000 completed surveys to the Housing Executive. I will continue to monitor the progress of the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42928/11-15, whether the Service Level Agreement stipulates a timeframe in which completed surveys should be assessed for eligibility.

(AQW 43786/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Affordable Warmth Scheme Service Level Agreement is between the Councils and my Department. The Service Level Agreement does not need to include a timeframe as the Councils are not responsible for assessing householder eligibility for the scheme. Assessment of eligibility for the scheme is the responsibility of the Housing Executive.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Social Development whether private landlords currently registering under the Landlord Registration Scheme will face a fine if they declare being an active landlord prior to 25 February 2015.

(AQW 43802/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Landlord Registration Regulations (2014) came into effect in February 2014 and required all those letting property in Northern Ireland under a private tenancy to register, either at the commencement of a new tenancy or by 25th February 2015. As such, if a landlord did not have a new tenancy in the period February 2014 – 24th February 2015, they were not required to register until the 25th February 2015 deadline.

Council environmental health officers are responsible for the enforcement of regulations covering the private rented sector. My Department will continue to work with local councils to publicise and enforce the Landlord Registration Scheme to improve co-operation further.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the estimated number of active private landlords not yet registered under the Landlord Registration Scheme.

(AQW 43825/11-15)

Mr Storey: At 19 March 2015 over 39,000 landlords have registered and provided details of over 84,000 private tenancies. I assess this as a positive indication that the majority of landlords are cooperating with the Landlord Registration Scheme. According to the 2011 Census, there were approximately 95,000 private tenancies. Based on these proportions, we estimate that approximately 12% of landlords are still required to register.

My Department will continue to work with local councils to publicise and enforce the Landlord Registration Scheme to improve co-operation further.

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.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Social Development for a breakdown of the number of people in each constituency in receipt of (i) Housing Benefit; (ii) Disability Living Allowance; (iii) Job Seeker's Allowance; (iv) Income Support; (v) Carer's Allowance; and (vi) Child Benefit.

(AQW 43861/11-15)

Mr Storey: The information requested is not available in the form requested as I am unable to provide figures for Child Benefit which is administered by HM Revenue and Customs, and figures for Housing Benefit, which is administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, is only available by Council Area. The information on Housing Benefit broken down by Council Area is set out in Table 1 below. Table 2 sets out the information requested for Disability Living Allowance, Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Carers Allowance which are administered by the Social Security Agency. The Figures provided in both Tables is based on the information available at November 2014.

Table 1

Council Area Local Government District (LGD)	Housing Benefit claims
Belfast LGD	41,200
North Down LGD	4,861
Newtownards LGD	5,928
Castlereagh LGD	4,069
Lisburn LGD	9,312
Down LGD	5,769
Banbridge LGD	3,086
Newry LGD	7,758
Armagh LGD	3,710
Craigavon LGD	8,269
Dungannon LGD	3,874
Fermanagh LGD	4,484
Omagh LGD	4,376
Cookstown LGD	2,376
Ballymena LGD	4,740
Antrim LGD	3,590
Newtownabbey LGD	6,213
Carrickfergus LGD	3,022
Larne LGD	2,644
Ballycastle LGD	1,563
Ballymoney LGD	2,444
Coleraine LGD	5,441
Derry LGD	16,386
Limavady LGD	3,230
Magherafelt LGD	2,661
Strabane LGD	4,610
Totals	165,616

Table 2

Constituency	Disability Living Allowance	Jobseeker's Allowance	Income Support	Carer's Allowance
Belfast East	9,530	2,370	1,830	1,810
Belfast North	15,870	4,380	3,950	3,260
Belfast South	9,020	2,570	1,670	1,530
Belfast West	18,230	4,080	4,880	4,210
East Antrim	8,060	1,790	1,370	1,530

Constituency	Disability Living Allowance	Jobseeker's Allowance	Income Support	Carer's Allowance
East Londonderry	9,460	2,760	2,020	2,240
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	9,510	2,110	1,420	1,880
Foyle	14,580	5,070	3,600	3,210
Lagan Valley	8,480	1,760	1,340	1,590
Mid Ulster	11,160	1,760	1,810	2,490
Newry And Armagh	12,950	2,940	2,380	2,870
North Antrim	9,440	2,240	1,740	1,980
North Down	6,870	1,760	980	1,150
South Antrim	8,830	1,630	1,370	1,610
South Down	11,920	2,510	1,930	2,620
Strangford	8,220	2,060	1,320	1,710
Upper Bann	13,590	2,950	2,330	2,730
West Tyrone	13,780	2,970	2,180	2,670
Unknown	2,710	690	820	700
Total	202,210	48,390	38,930	41,780

* Figures rounded to the nearest 10, totals may not sum due to rounding

The information provided is an Official Statistic. The Production and dissemination of all such Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42909/11-15, to detail the setting up and running costs of the accredited courses for private landlords.
(AQW 43871/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is a professional membership body and a private entity.

As such the Department does not hold detail of the set up or running costs of the accredited courses for private landlords.

However, in 2012 the Department provided £10,000 to CIH to sponsor 50 places at no cost to the person enrolling for the qualification.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the size of the dwellings that will be completed in North Down in each of the next two years.
(AQW 43923/11-15)

Mr Storey: The table overleaf outlines the size of new social housing dwellings programmed for complete in 2015/16 and 2016/17, in the North Down Constituency.

Expected completion year	One bedroom	Two bedroom	Three bedroom	Four bedroom	Total	Supported Housing
2015/16	0	18	25	1	44	19
2016/17	3	61	7	0	71	24
Total	3	79	32	1	115	43

Please be advised that this information may be subject to change as schemes programmed to start in a given year can slip to future programme years e.g. because of delays securing Planning permission. Further schemes can also be added in-year through new housing association bids or Existing Satisfactory/Off-the-Shelf purchases. Schemes expected to complete in later years may complete earlier than scheduled.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Social Development how many social housing units (i) were planned to be built; and (ii) were completed in West Belfast in the each of the last five years.
(AQW 43934/11-15)

Mr Storey: The number of social housing units planned and completed in West Belfast Parliamentary Constituency, are as follows:

Year	Total programmed starts (gross)	Total actual starts	Total anticipated completions	Total actual completions
2010/11	391	203	119	65
2011/12	554	186	207	121
2012/13	693	162	414	176
2013/14	412	228	241	343
2014/15	536	210 (est.)	214	198 (est.)
Totals	2586	989 (est.)	1195	903 (est.)

Please be advised that gross programme figures reflect the fact that the SHDP always includes an element of over-programming i.e. more schemes are programmed in a given year, because it is expected that some may slip.

The numbers of completions are based on information provided by housing associations regarding the estimated duration of the works. Completions can slip to subsequent programme years.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development what rights an estranged partner, who leaves their family home whilst in receipt of benefits, has to continue claiming those, or new, benefits.

(AQW 43946/11-15)

Mr Storey: When an estranged partner who is receipt of benefit leaves their family home, they must report the change in their circumstances to the relevant benefit branch. Whether or not they can retain their entitlement to benefit after a change in their circumstances is dependent upon them being able to continue to meet the conditionality for that benefit.

The individual also has the right to apply for other benefits and this will be assessed against their circumstance at the time of application.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 41125/11-15, with which groups in the community and voluntary sector did he consult in order to develop the code of practice; and to detail a date for its launch.

(AQW 44007/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Code of Practice for Reducing Bureaucracy in Grant Funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector is an internal administrative document for use by Government Departments their Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies.

The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) participated in the project structure to help inform the emerging code. Whilst no specific date has been set for its launch (work on the code is being finalised) this is now expected to take place around May 2015.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any plans for new build social housing in Fermanagh District Council over the next five years; and to detail how many houses have been built in the last five years.

(AQW 44023/11-15)

Mr Storey: Please be advised that with the exception of a single dwelling at Lisolvan Park, Brookeborough, which is due to start on-site in 2015/16, there are no new build social housing schemes programmed in the Fermanagh District Council as part of the 2015/16 – 2017/18 Social Housing Development Programme.

However, there are 47 units currently on-site which are due to complete in 2015/16. (34 general needs at Drumawill and 13 units for young people leaving care, both to be delivered by Apex Housing Association)

The information below outlines social housing completions in the Fermanagh District Council area for the Period 2010/11 – 2014/15.

Completion Year	Number of Units
2010/11	33
2011/12	39
2012/13	15
2013/14	4
2014/15	25
Total	116

Please be advised that schemes can be added in-year through Existing Satisfactory or Off-the-Shelf purchases. Further schemes may also be added through subsequent programme formulations/housing association bidding rounds.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to Welfare Reform negotiations, what measures, including enhanced childcare for working parents, are being discussed which will support people returning to work.

(AQW 44028/11-15)

Mr Storey: Whilst the ongoing Welfare Reform negotiations are not specifically focussed on measures which will support people to return to work, Universal Credit makes provision, including enhanced childcare provisions for working parents, to make it simpler to move into and remain in employment.

In particular, support for the costs of childcare will be available to all lone parents and couples, where both members are in work regardless of the numbers of hours worked. This compares favourably with the current support offered via the Tax Credit system whereby couples can only claim help with childcare costs where one or both work at least 16 hours per week.

Under Universal Credit, there will also be an increase to the amount allowed for childcare costs of up to 85% from 2016. Again, this compares favourably with the current situation whereby working parents may only claim up to 70% of child care costs via the Tax Credit system.

Universal Credit will also offer a simpler system for all claimants as it will replace some benefits as well as tax credits thus making it easier for people returning to work to claim according to their circumstances. Treatment of earnings will also be more generous under Universal Credit than at present with earnings disregards which will reflect circumstances to a greater extent than now and a single taper rate of 65% at which benefit will be reduced to take account of earnings.

At Budget 2013, the Government announced the introduction of a new scheme, Tax-Free Childcare, designed to provide financial support to help working families with the cost of childcare. The scheme will be based on a system of childcare accounts. The Government will automatically top up amounts in the account at a rate of 20p for every 80p paid in by the parent up to £2000 per year.

More recently the Government has doubled the maximum amount that parents of disabled children will be able to receive to help to pay for their childcare costs, from £2,000 to £4,000 per child per year.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Agnew asked the Assembly Commission if consideration has been given to money from Members contributions be divested from fossil fuels.

(AQW 43792/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Members Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) is a trust-based occupational pension scheme. Five Members are appointed by resolution of the Assembly to act as Trustees. The Trustees are responsible for administering the Pension Fund in accordance with the scheme rules, the law as it relates to pensions, tax and trust matters and pensions regulatory guidance.

The Trustees appoint an Investment Manager to invest the pension fund in accordance with the Statement of Investment Principles which is available on the Pension Scheme page of the Assembly website at

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/your-mlas/members-pension-scheme/statement-of-investment-principles/>.

The Statement of Investment Principles and the appointment of the Investment Manager is a matter for the Pension Trustees. If you wish to contact the Trustees regarding this matter, please do so by contacting the HR Pensions Team.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 3 April 2015

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the full time equivalent number of staff in (i) their Department; and (ii) each of their Department's arm's-length bodies, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 38697/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):

- (i) Information on Departmental staffing, published annually by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, is as follows:

	1/4/2010	1/4/2011	1/4/2012	1/4/2013	1/4/2014
Staff in Department -full time equivalent	369	324	323	352	349

More recently, the Department has taken on additional responsibility for a number of Executive priority areas including;

- the development and implementation of Together: Building a United Community;
- The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry;
- Investment of the Social Protection Fund and the Social Investment Fund; and
- Implementation of a Childcare Strategy.

Additional resources including staffing were requested and approved in order to take this work forward.

It is also important to recognise that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister covers a wide range of functions, many of them conferred on it by statute, including sponsorship of 13 Arm's Length Bodies and that much of our work facilitates the business of other Ministers and their departments.

- (ii) Information on staffing in arms length bodies:

	1/4/2010	1/4/2011	1/4/2012	1/4/2013	1/4/2014
Office of the Attorney General	12	15	15	15	14
Planning & Water Appeals Commissions	39.4	37.1	37.3	35.56	35.56
Commission for Victims & Survivors	14	14	14	8	11
Victims & Survivors Service	-	-	13.4	25.69	40
Community Relations Council	51	53	51	40	25
NI Memorial Fund	6	6	6	3	-
Commissioner for Public Appointments	4.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
NI Judicial Appointments Commission	16.6	17.1	16.64	14.64	12.23
Equality Commission NI	125	117	116	110	110
Commissioner for Older People	-	1	1	6	12
Commissioner for Children & Young People	26	24.5	23.5	23.5	24.5
Strategic Investment Board	33	34	44	63	73
Illex Urban Regeneration Company	23	24	25	31	27.5
Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation	-	-	-	14	13
Economic Research Institute NI	13	12	-	-	-

Mr A Maginness asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the report from the Victims' Commissioner into proposals for a pension for people severely injured during the Troubles has not been made available to victims' groups and the wider public, despite it being submitted in June 2014.

(AQW 39138/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Proposals put forward by former Commissioner Stone in June 2014 are currently under consideration. Discussions are ongoing between Departmental officials and the Commission for Victims and Survivors on the details. The report will be published in due course.

Mr Attwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the number of staff at each grade currently employed by their Department; and (ii) the number staff at each grade employed by their Department at the restoration of devolution in 2007.

(AQW 39530/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:

Grade (includes analogous grades)	Staff in post March 2015	Staff in post May 2007
Senior Civil Service (Grade 5 and above)	24	26
Senior Principal (Grade 6)	2	4
Principal (Grade 7)	50	43
Deputy Principal	83	61
Staff Officer	70	83
Executive Officer 1	29	37
Executive Officer 2	47	55
Administrative Officer	53	67
Administrative Assistant	9	31
Total	367	407

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Racial Equality Unit is working with community leaders in areas where recent racially motivated attacks have been most prevalent.

(AQW 40306/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Racially motivated attacks are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Tackling hate crime and reducing the harm it causes continues to be a key priority for the Executive.

The Racial Equality Unit works with groups and community leaders to support communities in welcoming new arrivals and supporting the new arrivals themselves.

Mr Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much has been (i) spent; and (ii) allocated on the Social Investment Fund since 2011; and how much of the original £80m allocation remains available.

(AQW 41166/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: To date the Social Investment Fund has committed approximately £50 million to 33 projects.

This represents 62.5% of the total funding identified for the Social Investment Fund. Some spend will occur this financial year linked to the delivery of these projects. Work is continuing on achieving expenditure approval for the remaining projects which are within the allocations of each zone.

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will answer AQW 32003/11-15.

(AQW 42958/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We would refer the member to the answer to AQW 32003/11-15 which was provided on 18 March.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on plans to establish a compact civic advisory panel, as envisaged during the Stormont House Agreement discussions.

(AQW 43004/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The arrangements for taking forward the commitment in the Stormont House Agreement relating to the establishment of a compact civic advisory panel are currently being considered by Executive party leaders.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether powers of community planning, as transferred to the new council structures, will create space for a Civic Forum, as outlined in Strand One of the Good Friday Agreement. (AQW 43006/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Civic Forum referred to in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement was given a statutory basis by section 56 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 with a remit of providing views to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on social, economic and cultural matters. The Forum operated between 2000 and 2002. It was not reconvened when devolution was restored in 2007.

The purpose of the community planning process set out in Part 10 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 is to identify long-term objectives for improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of a local government district and for how the district can contribute to achieving sustainable development in Northern Ireland, together with actions and functions necessary to meet those objectives. The objectives of the community planning process are substantially different from those of the former Civic Forum.

The Stormont House Agreement provides for the establishment of a compact civic advisory panel as the new model for civic engagement on key social, cultural and economic issues and to advise the Executive.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of a Civic Forum as a realistic mechanism for promoting the views of, and engaging with, civic society. (AQW 43008/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A civic advisory panel, as proposed in the Stormont House Agreement, is intended to provide a basis for engaging with civil society on key social, cultural and economic issues and to advise the Executive.

Mr Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the procedures and practices in place to ensure that public money made available to community groups is not for a duplication of services provided by the voluntary and volunteers sector. (AQW 43039/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has guidance notes in place which stipulate that a project will not be funded if it duplicates activity for which the group is already receiving funding from another source.

When making its decisions, the Selection Committee will seek to avoid funding projects which duplicate work already being undertaken by others. Application forms require applicants to indicate what funding, if any, is being sought for their prospective projects from sources other than OFMDFM.

The conditions of grant award state that duplicate funding should not be sought from any other agency or funding body in respect of the project. They also ask groups to either confirm to the Department that no other funding has been received or applied for in respect of their project; or to detail what other funding is in place for the project.

Mr Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of recommendations contained in the report produced by the Commissioner for Public Appointments entitled Guardian of the Public Appointment Process which have been deemed to be (i) short term; (ii) medium term; and (iii) long term in terms of priority for implementation. (AQW 43040/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: This response assumes that the report referred to is "Under-representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland", published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments in January 2014. This report contained 26 recommendations.

OFMDFM officials assessed the feasibility of achieving the Commissioner's recommendations and reported to the Permanent Secretaries Group in June 2014. All 26 recommendations were deemed achievable, within a range of timescales.

Of the 26 recommendations, 11 were deemed to be already actioned or achievable in the short-term; 4 were given a medium-term timescale; and 9 would take longer, due to the need for Executive approval. The remaining 2 actions are for the Commissioner himself to lead on.

These timescales were not based on a priority basis, but on the fact that many of the recommendations were already being achieved through work across NICS departments or could be achieved within a short timeframe, building on work already in place. Other recommendations are linked to the Commissioner's proposed new policy on public appointments, or to an improved evidence-base of information on public appointments, and will take longer to achieve.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Racial Equality Strategy and a timescale for its publication.

(AQW 43053/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following a public consultation officials are finalising their work on analysing the responses received. The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister received a briefing from officials on the consultation response on the 18 March.

Officials are also working on potential further engagement sessions with the Sector.

Publication will follow once the Strategy is considered to be sufficiently robust to deliver on the needs identified in the consultation exercise and elsewhere.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the Department that will have responsibility for (i) the Children's Commission; and (ii) the Human Rights Commission, under the proposals to reduce the number of Departments.

(AQW 43150/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following Executive consideration, decisions on the future reduction in the number of Departments and the allocation of departmental functions were announced in a Ministerial statement to the Assembly on 2 March 2015.

This stated that, in addition to its existing responsibilities, the Department of Education would have responsibility for a range of children's services, including the current policy responsibilities of OFMDFM for the Childcare Strategy and for children and young people. The latter includes sponsorship of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. However, the appointment of the Commissioner for Children and Young People will remain our responsibility acting jointly.

The Human Rights Commission is not a devolved body and is sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office. It, therefore, does not form part of the restructuring plans.

Mr Hazzard asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps are being taken to extend the Delivering Social Change Signature Project to improve literacy and numeracy in schools, that was launched in 2013.

(AQW 43247/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Delivering Social Change Improving Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme is a two year programme scheduled to finish at the end of June 2015. We are currently considering the future of the programme.

Mr Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what proportion of Assembly Written Questions have been answered on time by their Department in each of the last four years.

(AQW 43374/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:

Assembly Session	% of Assembly Written Questions answered on time
Sept 2011 to July 2012	42.6
Sept 2012 to July 2013	32.7
Sept 2013 to July 2014	23.2
Sept 2014 to Feb 2015	14.6

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the rationale behind the reallocation of policy responsibility for Older People to the new Health Department, given the breadth of non-health related issues which affect Older People.

(AQW 43429/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister exercised responsibility for the central development and co-ordination of policy in relation to a wide range of specific groups within society. However, we consider that there is no compelling reason why this function cannot also be performed effectively by another Department and, in the case of older people, by the proposed Department of Health which already has a major interest in their well-being. All relevant Departments will, of course, continue to contribute, as now, to the development of policy in this area. We believe that this will ensure better alignment of departmental policies and associated strategies, such as active aging with the strategic framework for public health which seeks to enable and support people in achieving their full health and well-being potential.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the annual report on the delivery of the Disability Strategy for 2013/2014 will be made available.

(AQW 43432/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The first annual report on the delivery of the Executive's Disability Strategy, setting out the actions that all departments have undertaken, is currently being finalised.

It is anticipated that, subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive approval, the report will be published in the near future.

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when Northern Ireland will be included as a signatory to the European Convention on Local Self Government.

(AQW 43573/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: As the ratification of European Charters, including the European Charter on Local Self-Government, is not a devolved matter, this is an issue for the Westminster Government.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many wind farm planning applications for output of 5KW and above have been determined by the Planning Appeals Commission; and with what outcomes, in each year since 2007.

(AQW 43629/11-15)

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.

Mr McKinney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AWQ 42082/11-15, to detail the reasons for the delay in adopting a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43657/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: As outlined in the response to AQW 42082/11-15, the development of a Bill of Rights is an excepted matter and is, therefore, the responsibility of the UK Government.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the funding allocated to the Minority Ethnic Development Fund in 2013/14; and for a breakdown of its distribution.

(AQW 43700/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: £1.2m was allocated to the Minority Ethnic Development Fund in 2013/14. Letters of Offer were issued to the organisations in the table below.

2013-14	
ACSONI - (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
An Munia Tober- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Armagh Travellers Support Group- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
ArtsEkta - (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
ArtsEkta - (Tier 1)	£15,000.00
Ballymena Inter Ethnic Forum Tier 2	£45,000.00
Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum Tier 1	£3,670.00
Ballymoney Community Resource Centre- (Tier 2)	£44,292.52
Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Belfast Islamic Centre- (Tier 2)	£14,975.00
Bryson Intercultural- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Chinese Welfare Association - (Recruitment Costs)	£1,500.00
Chinese Welfare Association- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Connect NICEM (Tier 1)	£15,000.00
Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Craigavon Intercultural Programme - (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Dialogue for diversity(Tier 1)	£3,573.65
EMBRACE- (Tier 2)	£44,386.36
GEMS NI- (Tier 2)	£27,985.74

2013-14	
Homeplus NI- (Tier 2)	£44,996.99
NICEM (Tier 1)	£15,000.00
NICEM North West (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
NICEM (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
NICRAS (Tier 2)	£39,722.81
North Down YMCA- (Tier 2)	£20,076.00
North Down YMCA - (Recruitment Costs)	£545.00
North West Migrants Forum - (Tier 2)	£1,139.10
Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group - (Tier 2)	£44,984.50
South Belfast Roundtable (Tier 1)	£10,125.00
South Belfast Roundtable (Tier 2)	£43,122.00
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (Tier 1)	£2,300.00
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (Tier 3)	£75,000.00
The Welcome Project- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Wah Hep Chinese Community Association- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the amount of money made available out of Rural Development Funds in each of the last ten years; and the amount allocated to Dungiven during this period.

(AQW 43795/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The amount of Rural Development Programme funding awarded in each of the last 10 years, including funding awarded to the Dungiven electoral ward is as follows.

Financial year	Total RDP Funding awarded	Funding awarded to Dungiven area
2005/06	54,842,723	1,409,814
2006/07	60,875,714	1,729,973
2007/08	65,362,729	3,202,376
2008/09	62,508,695	2,981,890
2009/10	75,139,955	2,242,199
2010/11	71,398,918	2,768,809
2011/12	81,629,690	2,631,066
2012/13	94,066,205	2,567,142
2013/14	71,717,687	2,810,285
2014/15 (to date)	46,730,980	1,800,231

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the review of the Animal Welfare Act makes any recommendations on the maximum sentence for animal cruelty.

(AQW 43820/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I wrote to all MLAs on 25 February 2015, to inform them that the Interim Report of the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 had been produced and was available on my Department's website along with the associated consultation documents. The Interim Report details the progress to date and sets out the emerging thinking and recommendations.

The Review has put forward 43 recommendations for consideration, these are detailed throughout the Interim Report under four themes, Sentencing, Delivery Structures, Working Together and Serving the Public and are summarised at Annex A to the Report.

The first recommendation is for the Department to consider increasing the maximum sentence on conviction of the more serious summary offences from six months to twelve months imprisonment and increasing the fine from £5,000 to £20,000; and in the case of indictable offences considers increasing the maximum prison sentence from two to five years.

In my letter I advised that the Review will take account of any views on the Interim Report and any new evidence it receives through the consultation process which runs until 23 April 2015. I would encourage those with an interest in animal welfare to submit their views.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much her Department has spent on postage in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 43909/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total spend incurred by the Department in relation to postage, in the last 2 financial years, can be summarised as follows:

■	2012/13	£576,588.57
■	2013/14	£459,736.63
■	Total	£1,036,325.20

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether decisions on the water levels of Lough Erne are taken solely in consideration of flood prevention and drainage, or whether input from statutory agencies, such as Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries and the NIEA as well as non-governmental agencies such as the Erne Rivers Trust are taken into consideration when making a decision.

(AQW 44021/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Operational decisions on the management of water levels on Lough Erne are taken in line with an agreement made in 1950, when the River Erne was harnessed for hydroelectric power generation. Such decisions are predominately based on flood prevention and drainage, however the wider needs of other stakeholders were considered in the formulation of this agreement.

In recent years the Lough Erne Management Committee has provided the forum for others to be involved with the water level management approach.

As I indicated in my response to AQW42150/11-15, work associated with the Ministerial Taskforce review of the 2009 Fermanagh flooding, confirms that the current approach remains the best compromise, given the competing needs of some of the user groups.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she plans to extend the deadline for Basic Payment Scheme applications, as now permitted by the EU Commission; and whether an extension would impact on payment dates.

(AQW 44075/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: On 31 March 2015, I announced my decision not to extend the deadline for the submission of Single Application Forms which includes applications to the Basic Payment Scheme.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what legislation her Department plans to bring forward in the remainder of the current mandate.

(AQW 44126/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I plan to bring forward two Bills in the remainder of the current mandate, a Fisheries Bill (in conjunction with my colleague the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure), and a Rural Proofing Bill.

The Fisheries Bill will amend legislation to modernise sea-fisheries enforcement powers, enable more efficient implementation of European legislation, create a national system for administrative penalties and update and modernise aquaculture licensing in line with elsewhere in Ireland.

The Rural Proofing Bill will make statutory provision to enhance the existing rural proofing process. It will introduce a statutory duty on all Departments and local councils to consider the needs of rural dwellers when developing and implementing government policies and strategies and delivering public services.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the anticipated make up of the Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee, including the methodology being utilised to ensure that all communities are represented on an equal basis.

(AQW 44145/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee has 24 members representing 18 organisations. Organisations were invited to participate based on their interest and contribution to the three main programme objectives of competitiveness, environment and rural development. Seven members represent competitiveness, five members represent the environment and six members represent rural development. In addition a further six members are cross-cutting, including councillors from the five main political parties and an equality organisation. Member organisations were asked to take into

account the Section 75 balance when nominating their representatives. The Terms of Reference for the Monitoring Committee allows for the membership to be kept under review. I want to ensure that the Committee continues to operate effectively and provide balanced representation across rural development interests in the north throughout the period of the next RDP.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been invested in East Antrim since 2007 in (i) Single Farm Payments; (ii) Rural Development funding; (iii) forestry grants; and (iv) other funding.
(AQW 44146/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

Year	Amount (£)	(i) Single Farm Payments	(ii) Rural Development funding	(iii) Forestry Grants	(iv) Other funding
2007/08	11,090,335	8,839,093	294,412	16,623	1,940,207
2008/09	11,503,195	9,333,797	548,260	17,182	1,603,956
2009/10	12,705,988	10,930,028	321,504	13,222	1,441,234
2010/11	12,946,094	9,617,872	1,392,673	43,299	1,892,250
2011/12	12,828,405	9,664,052	1,112,809	38,072	2,013,472
2012/13	14,218,712	9,605,340	2,990,975	79,306	1,543,092
2013/14	14,294,035	10,228,570	2,133,653	35,024	1,896,787
2014/15	13,553,599	9,474,204	2,351,031	112,668	1,615,696
Totals	103,140,363	77,692,956	11,145,317	355,397	13,946,694

The table below provides details of the funding invested in East Antrim since 2007:-

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an outline of the capacity building infrastructure that her Department will provide to beneficiaries of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme.
(AQW 44231/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As part of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme, my Department will establish a rural network for the north of Ireland, which will bring together organisations and administrations with an interest in rural development. Networking activities will include informing potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities and increasing their involvement in rural development. The network will be run by a support unit who will provide training and networking for Local Action Groups and set up groups to engage with beneficiaries on specific themes. The network support unit will also help with capacity building by gathering and disseminating examples of good practice in rural development. My officials are currently working on setting up the network.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, given the number of successful prosecutions being brought, whether she will reform the Welfare of Animals Act 2011.
(AQW 44350/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I welcome the number of successful prosecutions secured under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. Cases prosecuted on behalf of my Department in relation to farmed animals from April 2012 to date, have resulted in 14 convictions. During the same period, Councils have successfully prosecuted 27 cases following investigations concerning non-farmed animals. The penalties imposed by the courts have included custodial sentences, suspended sentences and, importantly, bans on keeping animals.

Prosecution, however, is not the only means of enforcement available under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. Depending on the nature of the case being investigated, it may be more appropriate to provide advice or issue a legally binding Improvement Notice in order to safeguard the welfare of the animal(s) concerned.

Following a Private Members' Motion in the Assembly on 31 March 2014, I established a Review of the Implementation of the legislation.

I wrote to all MLAs, on 25 February 2015, to inform them that the Interim Report of that Review had been produced and was available on my Department's website along with the associated consultation documents. The Interim Report details the progress to date and sets out the emerging thinking and recommendations.

The Review has put forward 43 recommendations for consideration, under four themes, Sentencing, Delivery Structures, Working Together and Serving the Public.

The first recommendation is for my Department to consider increasing the maximum sentence on conviction for the more serious summary offences from six months to twelve months imprisonment and increasing the fine from £5,000 to £20,000; and in the case of indictable offences, to consider increasing the maximum prison sentence from two to five years.

In my letter, I advised that the Review will take account of any views on the Interim Report and any new evidence it receives through the consultation process which runs until 23 April 2015. I would encourage those with an interest in animal welfare to submit their views.

When I receive the Final Report of the Review later this year, I will consider the recommendations made.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a breakdown of the funding awarded to marching bands by the (i) Arts Council; and (ii) Ulster Scots Agency, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43734/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): AQW 43734/11-15

My Department has funded marching bands through a number of sources in the last three years.

The Arts Council has awarded the following funding to marching bands through the Musical Instruments for Bands scheme:

Year	Amount Awarded
2012/13	£202,691
2013/14	£205,555
2014/15	£104,415
Total	£512,661

The same amount of funding was made available in 2014/15 as in previous years. The lower amount awarded by the Arts Council in 2014/15 is a reflection of the number of eligible applications received and not a reduction in the fund.

The Ulster-Scots Agency (the Agency) has awarded the following funding to marching bands for music and dance tuition and summer schools:

Year*	Amount Awarded
2012	£226,128.45 + €5,940.44
2013	£185,545.36 + €7,653.63
2014	£119,968.57 + €7,328.50
Total	£531,642.38 + €20,922.57

* The Agency's financial year operates from January-December, therefore grant information is also provided in calendar years.

** The Agency provides grants to organisations in the South of Ireland, and therefore a proportion of the funding is provided in Euros.

The Agency has sent out letters of offer for 2015 to 47 bands in the north for musical tuition totalling £89,938.62; and to one band based in Donegal for €2496. No actual funding has been paid to date as the invoices will not be received until after April.

In addition, funding amounting to £7k has been provided by Foras na Gaelige to Acadamh Ceoil Chaoimhín Uí Dhochartaigh, Doire, to work with a local Bands Forum. The project will enable adults from a Protestant / Unionist / Loyalist background in the North West area, who have not had an opportunity to learn Irish, to undertake an Irish course and take part in talks, discussions and events concerning the history of the language and in particular its relationship to the Protestant community.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether any groups from within the Ulster Scots community has brought forward plans seeking her support for a Liofa-type project.

(AQW 43738/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: No individual group from within the Ulster-Scots community has brought forward plans seeking my support for a Liofa-type project. However, led by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) Ulster-Scots Academy, work is progressing well to scope and develop proposals for a four to five year language and culture development initiative for Ulster Scots, with strong community and lifelong learning elements. All main sector bodies, including the MAG Ulster-Scots Academy and Ulster-Scots Agency, are participating in the work on a collaborative basis. A draft report, which is being finalised, will include an initiative programme, along with costings, delivery mechanisms, programme management arrangements and funding options. Departmental officials are currently drafting a business case, which will provide the basis of a bid for additional funding.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure which libraries in North Belfast have been protected from cuts; and what services and support they provide.

(AQW 43741/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The importance that I place on the Public Library Service is reflected by my decision, in a challenging financial environment, to offer some degree of protection to the Libraries NI budget to ensure that no branch libraries, including those in North Belfast, will be required to close in the current or next financial year. I believe that public libraries play an essential role within communities, especially in socially deprived areas. They therefore need to be protected as far as possible.

Libraries in North Belfast provide a wide range of services and support to the local community. In light of the in-year budget reductions, their focus has been on maintaining core services including the delivery of participation and outreach programmes such as Rhythm and Rhyme for pre-school children, class visits, IT sessions to support digital inclusion and Storytime reading. These libraries also continue to provide free internet access either through on site public access computers or free WiFi for users with their own devices.

In addition, and in order to help deliver on my priority of Promoting Equality and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion, three Libraries NI Project Support Officers are assisting libraries in North Belfast to undertake outreach work in local communities most affected by social disadvantage and deprivation.

Libraries NI is also currently reviewing existing library opening hours to enable the organisation to live within budget in 2015/16. A further purpose of the review is to help ensure that all libraries, including those in North Belfast, remain sustainable and can maintain a similar range of services and support to that currently provided to the community.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department is supporting the needs of children with disabilities from low income families to access and utilise sports facilities.

(AQW 43834/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Under the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986, the provision of leisure facilities and services for all communities, including children with disabilities from low income families, rests in the first instance with District Councils. While the pricing and charging policies for leisure services is purely a matter for each Council, Sport NI works closely with Councils to provide support around the development of leisure facilities and services.

Currently, Sport NI is working with the new District Councils to develop a Sports Facilities Strategy and eleven associated Area Reports for each Council. These Area Reports will take account of existing facilities and the need for new or improved facilities in each Council area. Disabled access will also be considered as part of this work.

Other support being provided by Sport NI for children with disabilities and their families include work with Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) to open up opportunities around outdoor facilities. Examples include: -

- As part of the 'Active Outdoors - Get Outdoor Weekend' Sport NI supported the provision of 80 free of charge events at a range of family-friendly venues/sports throughout NI, many of which were suitable for people with a disability.
- Sport NI also enabled ORNI to develop a project with Autism NI to provide free of charge surfing lessons to young people with autism. As a result of this, ORNI has also provided subsidised coach education programmes for providers/instructors in paddlesports and climbing to improve understanding of how these activities can be made more inclusive for people with a disability.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many Freedom of Information requests her Department has received in each of the the last two financial years; and to detail the cost to process these requests over that time.

(AQW 43839/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The information requested is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports which are on the basis of calendar years, not financial years. The reports can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

The Member should note that the annual report for 2014 is not yet published, however statistics for 2014 are provided up to and including the 3rd quarter only. Figures for 2014 cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2014 FOI Annual Report.

I have provided figures below for the last 2 calendar years.

Calendar Year	Number of Requests Received
2013	579
2014	584 (yet to be validated)

Information detailing the cost of processing requests is not collected by my Department and therefore cannot be provided.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support she will offer to disability sports clubs affected by the cuts to SportNI.

(AQW 43895/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department, through Sport NI, has invested just over £7.5 million in disability sports over the last three financial years, covering the financial period 2011/12 to 2013/14. This funding was provided to the organisations that offer support to disability groups and clubs from throughout the north of Ireland which include Disability Sport NI, Special Olympics and a number of District Councils.

It is regretful that budget cuts are being faced by everyone, including those organisations that support disability sports clubs. There are a number of interventions being taken forward by Sport NI to try to mitigate against these cuts.

For example, Sport NI's small grants programme, Active Awards for Sport, which opened in March 2015, identifies people with a disability as a priority group and disability sports clubs may be eligible to apply for assistance. In addition, Sport NI has agreed targets with the 11 new District Councils on delivering participation in sport for people with a disability through Sport NI's Active Communities programme.

Sport NI has also recently confirmed investment of approximately £392,000 in Disability Sport NI, to enable the delivery of an Active Clubs project in the period 2014-2018.

Sport NI will also continue to work with, and support, a number of high performance athletes with disabilities.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much her Department has spent on postage in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 43908/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The following amounts were spent on postage in 2012-13 and 2013-14:

Financial Year	Amount (£)
2012-13	20,771
2013-14	33,702

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the funding paid to St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club since 2009 by her Department or Sport NI.

(AQW 43949/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: From 2009/10 to date, Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, provided total funding of £28,615 to St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club as detailed below:

Year	Programme	Project Type	Paid Amount
2010/11	Sport Matters: Capital and Equipment Programme	Capital Works	£19,075
2009/10	Awards For Sport	Sports Equipment	£755
2009/10	Awards For Sport	Sports Equipment	£8,785
Total			£28,615

The Sport Matters: Capital and Equipment Programme award was for equipment and minor capital works. Of the £19,075 amount invested, £7,670.20 related to minor capital works and £11,404.80 related to equipment which can be relocated to new premises.

Under the Boxing Investment Programme, Sport NI supported the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) to appoint a Club Development Manager whose aim was to help clubs build capacity, improve governance and help access funding. I understand that the Club Development Manager has provided advice to St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club in relation to the Boxing Investment Programme and its relocation to new premises.

Under the first strand of the Boxing Investment Programme, £169,821.57 was paid to the IABA for the supply of equipment to 94 boxing clubs affiliated to the IABA. St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club received equipment valued at £1,835.34 under this element of the Programme.

St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club has received an indicative award of £56,077 from the £2.52 million Lottery funding allocated for the Capital Works element of Boxing Investment Programme. The Club is currently engaged with an appointed design team, to draft its stage one plans.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether the Chief Executive of Sport NI is still discharging her duties; and if not, why this is the case.

(AQW 43950/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Staff of Sport NI are employed by the Board of Sport NI. It is not appropriate for me as Minister to comment on confidential employment matters.

I can however advise that Sport NI has confirmed that its Chief Executive has not left the organisation.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether any members of St. Paul's Gaelic Athletic Club who are employed by Sport NI have been involved in funding allocations to the Club or its affiliated Boxing Club.

(AQW 43951/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI has advised that none of its employees, who are either members of St Paul's Gaelic Athletic Club, or have links to it, have been involved in funding allocations to that club, or to St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how soccer clubs can help ensure that grass-roots support and development is being considered as part of a long-term sub-regional soccer strategy.

(AQW 43987/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Engagement with key bodies, such as the IFA, DCAL, Councils, local Community Groups etc is key to ensuring that grass-roots support and development is being considered as part of a long-term Sub Regional Soccer Strategy.

The IFA consulted with the wider football family when developing the IFA Facilities Strategy. This strategy is the basis on which the forthcoming Sub Regional Programme will be developed by DCAL.

The Sub Regional Programme will be taken forward through a formal consultation process giving the wider football family an opportunity to shape the development of the Sub Regional Programme.

Based on the need identified in the Executive's March 2012 paper a number of high level objectives have been identified for the Sub Regional Programme, including:

"To contribute to achieving the increased participation levels anticipated in Sports Matters and to wider government policies and initiatives through health benefits, infrastructure development, neighbourhood renewal, social inclusion and the promotion of a cohesive and socially inclusive society".

This objective highlights the need for grassroots support and development for all Sub Regional projects. Potential applicants will be required to demonstrate their commitment to grass root development, through a Sports Development Plan, which will clearly illustrate how their proposed project will increase grassroots participation and local support for the project.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure which libraries in North Down have been protected from cuts; and to list the services they provide.

(AQW 43990/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The importance that I place on the Public Library Service is reflected by my decision, in a challenging financial environment, to offer some degree of protection to the Libraries NI budget to ensure that no branch libraries, including those in North Down (Bangor and Holywood), will be required to close in the current or next financial year. I believe that public libraries play an essential role within communities, especially in socially deprived areas. They therefore need to be protected as far as possible.

The Bangor and Holywood libraries provide a wide range of services and support to the local community. In light of the in-year budget reductions, their focus has been on maintaining core services including the delivery of participation and outreach programmes such as Rhythm and Rhyme for pre-school children, class visits, IT sessions to support digital inclusion and Storytime reading. These libraries also continue to provide free internet access either through on site public access computers or free WiFi for users with their own devices. A full list of the services provided is available on the Libraries NI website at the following links:

- <http://www.librariesni.org.uk/Libraries/Pages/Bangor-Carnegie-Library.aspx>
- <http://www.librariesni.org.uk/Libraries/Pages/Holywood-Library.aspx>

Libraries NI is also currently reviewing existing library opening hours to enable the organisation to live within budget in 2015/16. A further purpose of the review is to help ensure that all libraries, including those in North Down, remain sustainable and can maintain a similar range of services and support to that currently provided to the community.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions she has had, or plans to have, with the organisers of the Belfast Festival at Queens on sourcing new funding for the festival.

(AQW 43994/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: This is a challenging time for my Department and the arts sector as a whole as all service areas across my Department and its Arms Length Bodies have been affected by budget reductions.

It is regrettable that the Festival's long-standing relationship with Queen's has come to an end. I understand that the remaining funders, including the Arts Council, had an initial meeting on 23 March 2015 to discuss the options for the future shape of this well-established international and cultural festival and that further stakeholder meetings are intended.

My department and I will continue to work with the stakeholders to offer what assistance we can.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update of the events to commemorate the 700th Anniversary of Edward Bruce's arrival.

(AQW 44020/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Ulster-Scots Agency is currently working with Mid and East Antrim Council and NIEA on plans to deliver a Bruce 700 Weekend on 30th and 31st May to mark the 700th Anniversary of the arrival of Edward Bruce in 1315. A bid for funding towards this event is currently being considered by Mid and East Antrim Council. The Ulster-Scots Agency has also submitted an application to the Tourism NI Events Sponsorship Scheme for this event, which is currently being assessed.

The Ulster-Scots Agency and the MAG Ulster-Scots Academy are partnering with Trinity College Dublin to deliver a symposium on Medieval History on 18th and 19th September which will focus on the Bruce campaign in Ireland as well as looking at other connections between Scotland and Ireland in the period.

The Ulster-Scots Agency/MAG Ulster-Scots Academy exhibition on Robert and Edward the Bruce is currently in Ballyhackamore Library. It will then travel to Kells and Connor Library (April) and Ballymena Central Library (May). The exhibition has already been in the Lisburn Road and Shankill Road Libraries.

The Ulster-Scots Agency will also be supporting two Primary School Twinning Projects between schools in Ulster and Scotland with a Bruce 700 theme. The first of these will take place in May, the second in September. The local schools involved will be Oaklands Primary School in Carrickfergus and Larne and Inver Primary School in Larne.

The Ulster-Scots Agency will also be delivering two school drama projects on the Bruce 700 theme: one focused on Primary Schools, which it hopes to deliver in a number of NIEA owned castles; and the other focused on Post Primary Schools, which will be more focused on student performance and will take place in schools.

PRONI in conjunction with MAG Ulster-Scots Academy, the Ulster-Scots Agency and the Ulster-Scots Community Network are hosting a series of lectures at PRONI and the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre, Corn Exchange, one of which will take place on 27 May on the subject of Edward Bruce.

Libraries NI will be holding a number of events to commemorate the 700th Anniversary of Edward Bruce's arrival. The following events/ exhibitions have been arranged:

May 11th: Ballymena Central Library- Talk about Edward Bruce by William Roulston from the Ulster Historical Foundation.

May 21st: Newry City Library - Talk by Eoghan O'Coinn 'Edward Bruce-friend or foe?'

Booklists produced by the Ulster-Scots Agency will be available at all of the events.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 43577/11-15, whether she has sought, or is in receipt of, European funding to support the work of the research station.

(AQW 44101/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department is not directly in receipt of European funding to support the work carried out at Bushmills Salmon Research Station.

However, the scientific research work carried out at Bushmills Salmon Research Station is undertaken by the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI). AFBI conducts programmes of fish monitoring on site that are eligible for EU subsidy through the Fisheries Data Collection Framework Programme (DCF). AFBI reports to the EU on this work, through the UK DCF secretariat.

AFBI provides an agreed level of scientific services to DCAL each year through an agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA). AFBI will, with prior agreement with DCAL, seek to add value to core SLA work areas by bidding into EU and other research funds which recognise DCAL funding of AFBI programmes as eligible match funding.

AFBI will credit any EU funding received in year to the overall SLA funding and reduce the payment required from DCAL accordingly, enabling AFBI to deliver crucial scientific programmes for DCAL.

Mr McCausland asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what funding was allocated by her Department and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to the Temple artwork in Londonderry.

(AQW 44102/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department awarded £67,200 and the Arts Council awarded £100,000 of Lottery funding to Artichoke Trust for the Temple artwork.

Department of Education

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Education whether there are any schemes for adults contained within the Delivering Social Change Signature Programme of Improving Literacy and Numeracy.

(AQW 42615/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The Delivering Social Change improving Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme is targeted at Key Stage Two primary school pupils and post-primary pupils taking GCSEs in English and maths. It also provides employment opportunities for recent graduate teachers to enable the support to pupils. It does not provide any schemes for improving adults' literacy and numeracy.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education, pursuant AQW 41211/11-15, whether the results have been published; and if not, when he intends to do so.

(AQW 43151/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The survey is part of ongoing work within the auspices of the NSMC in education sector format. There are no immediate plans to publish the results but work is ongoing in relation to the development of cross border provision where there is community interest and demand.

My previous answer indicated that work in relation to St Mary's Brollagh and education providers in Donegal was an example of cross border co-operation looking at how education services can be co-ordinated for the benefit of citizens and pupils north and south. This work is at an exploratory stage and I await the delivery of a report from the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools and the Western Education and Library Board with interest.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what procedures are in place in each Education and Library Board to consider private assessments provided by parents of children who may require a statutory assessment of their Special Educational Needs.

(AQW 43478/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There is agreed regional guidance applied by all Education and Library Boards (ELBs) regarding private assessments provided by parents. This guidance is underpinned by the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs which states in paragraph 3.55 that "The Educational Psychologist from whom psychological advice is sought must be employed by the Board, or engaged by it for the purpose" and in paragraph 3.57 that this Educational Psychologist "...should also be asked by the Board to consider any advice which parents may submit independently from a fully qualified educational psychologist." Therefore while the ELBs will take account of a private educational psychologists report, it cannot be used instead of advice provided by the psychologist employed or engaged by the relevant ELB. This approach ensures equity of access to educational psychology services for all pupils.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department, or its arm's-length bodies, since 2011; and the amount of funding received in each case.

(AQW 43645/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not directly fund community and voluntary groups.

The community and voluntary groups that received funding via the Department's arm's length bodies are detailed in the table below.

Community/Voluntary Groups	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
Bangor Sea Cadets	2,951	2,451	3,926	0
N Down YMCA	56,535	66,527	85,776	93,290
St Comgall's Parish Youth Group	59,733	57,342	44,727	53,376
Hollywood Family Trust	27,013	35,239	41,959	53,330
Inclusion Team	0	0	8,717	8,051
Army Cadet Force Holywood	0	945	0	0
11th Bangor Boys' Brigade	1,120	1,320	820	0
129th Holywood Methodist Girls' Brigade Company	0	0	495	0
10th Bangor Boys' Brigade	1,120	945	495	495
11th Bangor Boys' Brigade	0	0	0	820
11th Bangor Scouts	795	0	0	0
12th Bangor Boys' Brigade	1,120	1,320	820	495
12th Bangor Guides	795	945	495	495
12th Bangor Scouts	1,770	1,320	1,090	1,370
12th Down Scout Group Scouting Ireland	0	945	495	371
13th Bangor Boys' Brigade	0	945	495	495
14th Bangor Boys' Brigade	795	945	495	495
14th Bangor Guide Unit	0	1,320	495	820
14th Down Scout Group	0	945	495	495

Community/Voluntary Groups	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
1st Ballygilbert Girl Guides	795	945	495	495
1st Ballygilbert Boys' Brigade	795	0	0	0
1st Bangor Boys' Brigade	1,490	1,640	495	820
1st Bangor Girls' Brigade	795	945	495	495
1st Groomsport Rainbows, Brownies & Guides	795	0	0	0
129th Hollywood Methodist Girls' Brigade Company	0	0	0	495
1st Hollywood Girls' Brigade 50th NI	795	1,320	820	820
1st Hollywood Scout Group	1,490	945	1,090	1,090
1st Hollywood Youth Group	1,770	1,640	1,370	1,370
297th NI West Presbyterian Girls' Brigade	795	0	495	495
2nd Hollywood Scout Group	1,770	1,640	1,370	1,370
3rd Bangor Scouts	1,120	945	820	820
3rd Hollywood Boys' Brigade	795	945	0	0
48th St Andrew's NI Girls' Brigade	795	945	495	495
4th Bangor Scouts	1,120	1,320	820	820
5th Bangor Boys' Brigade	1,120	945	495	0
62nd Hamilton Road Girls' Brigade	795	945	495	495
6th Bangor Scout Group	0	945	495	495
7th Bangor Scout Group	0	1,320	820	495
825 (Bangor) Squadron Air Training Corps	0	1,320	615	820
8th Bangor Guides, Brownies & Rainbows	795	945	495	495
9th Bangor Scouts	1,120	1,320	495	820
Ballycrochan Baptist Campaigners	795	945	495	495
Ballygrainey Youth Council	1,490	1,320	1,090	1,090
Ballyholme Crusaders	795	1,320	820	495
Ballyholme Parish Youth	1,120	1,320	820	0
Ballyholme Presbyterian Church Youth Council	1,490	1,320	820	820
Ballymiscaw Young Farmers Club	795	0	0	0
Bangor Abbey Youth Council	1,490	1,320	1,090	820
Bangor Army Cadet Force	0	945	495	0
Bangor Elim Church Campaigners	1,120	0	0	0
Bangor Elim Church Youth Council	0	1,640	1,370	1,370
Bangor Elim Youth Fellowship	1,490	0	0	0
Bangor Fire Cadets	795	0	495	495
Bangor Free Methodist Campaigners	795	945	495	495
Bangor Sea Cadets	0	0	0	1,090
Bangor Senior Gateway Club	0	945	495	371
Carnalea Methodist Girls' Brigade	795	793	520	0
Carnalea Methodist Youth Club	795	945	0	0
Carnalea Methodist Youth Council	0	0	0	820
Christ Church Primacy Girls' Brigade	795	945	495	495

Community/Voluntary Groups	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
Christ Church Primacy Youth Club	795	945	0	0
Conlig Presbyterian Girls' Brigade	0	945	495	495
Gransha Army Cadet Force	0	945	495	0
Groomsport Youth Club	795	945	0	0
Hamilton Road Baptist Church Youth	1,770	1,640	495	615
Hamilton Road Methodist Church Youth Council	1,490	1,640	1,090	1,090
Hollywood 2178 ATC	795	945	495	0
Hollywood Army Cadet Force	0	0	495	495
Hollywood Friends of Guiding	1,490	1,320	820	820
Hollywood Methodist Girls' Brigade	795	945	0	0
Kilcooley Community Action Youth Group	0	945	1,370	1,090
Kings Church Bangor Youth Group	0	0	0	820
Kings Youth Council	1,490	0	1,090	0
Lisnabreen Youth Council	0	945	615	820
North Down Athletic (Junior,Social,Recreation) Club	1,120	1,640	1,370	1,370
Northern Ireland Fire Cadets Bangor	0	645	0	0
Rathgill Youth Group	1,093	1,320	0	0
Redburn Youth Group	795	0	0	0
S.A.F.E. Nights	795	0	0	0
St Andrew's Youth Club (Fellowship)	0	945	0	0
St Colmcille's Youth Group	0	945	495	495
St Comgall's Brigin	795	945	495	495
Sullivan Upper Army Cadet Force	0	945	0	0
Towerview Primary School Youth Club	795	0	495	495
Towerview Youth Group	795	945	0	495
Trinity Presbyterian Church Youth Council	1,770	2,570	1,090	820
West Presbyterian Girls' Brigade	0	945	0	0
Ballygowan Community Playgroup	29,088	38,546	40,386	33,319
Bees Nees	44,278	42,771	39,135	33,319
Chuckles Playgroup	35,306	29,915	28,771	29,356
Happy Feet Pre-School	0	0	0	9,365
Hundred Acre Wood	58,876	55,577	57,720	48,987
Jiminy Crickets	14,790	25,850	28,413	23,053
Kilmood Playgroup	44,278	45,318	41,458	35,300
Little Doves Community Playgroup	41,533	41,979	32,881	22,332
Movilla Abbey Playgroup	44,278	44,195	44,854	37,461
Play-Away	42,448	44,997	42,888	35,120
St Finian's Playgroup	37,941	36,269	39,671	31,698
The Playcentre at Manor Court	44,278	44,045	45,926	32,058
Toddle-In Playgroup	40,872	41,832	39,135	32,958
Ballywalter Playgroup	60,213	57,519	60,758	49,708

Community/Voluntary Groups	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
Carrowdore Early Years Centre	43,694	43,241	41,280	32,598
Chirpy Chicks Playgroup	24,317	29,645	27,144	19,271
Portaferry Playgroup	28,284	18,837	20,729	18,190
Ballyholme Presbyterian Playgroup	42,575	43,575	44,675	36,921
Bangor Abbey	39,390	44,997	45,569	39,421
Little Acorns Playgroup	56,211	57,989	58,971	47,546
Ballycrochan Playgroup	59,224	66,234	68,621	53,130
Bangor West Nursey Playgroup	41,220	45,318	46,462	37,461
Bright Sparks Pre-School Playgroup	36,645	34,391	35,740	27,375
Crawfordsburn Playgroup	28,633	32,018	26,072	21,792
Early Days Playgroup	40,872	41,832	42,888	34,579
Groomsport Playgroup	44,122	4,124	45,747	37,461
Tiddliwinks Playgroup	41,330	41,832	45,390	35,660
Glencraig Integrated Pre-School	44,278	45,318	46,462	37,461
Little Bunnies	0	0	0	10,806
Redburn Community Playgroup	20,960	27,598	29,843	9,185
Tiggers Palace	42,589	27,314	23,231	23,192
Whitehill Community Association	0	0	9,950	10,590
Kilcooley Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership	0	0	31,150	37,510
Conlig Community Association	0	0	9,480	0
Beechfield Residents Association and Donaghadee Commerce and Development Group	0	0	0	8,120
Down BEP Careers Convention	7,000	5,000	0	0
Cregagh Youth Centre & St Comgall's Youth Club	3,500	0	0	0
Ards Arena and St Comgall's Youth Club	0	2,385	0	0
Girl Guiding Ulster Headquarters	40,000	50,000	47,500	45,000

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the attendance rates of pupils in each primary school in North Down, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 43654/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is detailed in the table overleaf.

Attendance rate in North Down primary schools, 2011/12-2013/14

School Name	% of half days attended		
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Ballyvester Primary School	96.1	96.0	96.5
Hollywood Primary School	95.3	96.1	95.2
Crawfordsburn Primary School	95.6	95.1	95.7
Ballyholme Primary School	96.5	96.2	96.8
Donaghadee Primary School	95.2	95.3	95.7
Clandeboy Primary School	91.8	92.5	93.4
Millisle Primary School	94.6	95.4	95.7
Bloomfield Primary School	93.6	92.7	94.0

School Name	% of half days attended		
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Grange Park Primary School	96.4	96.5	96.7
Kilcooley Primary School	93.1	91.9	93.8
Rathmore Primary School	96.5	95.9	96.8
Towerview Primary School	95.9	96.6	96.6
Kilmaine Primary School	96.9	96.5	96.8
Ballymagee Primary School	96.2	96.0	96.3
St Patrick's Primary School	96.0	94.8	95.3
St Anne's Primary School	92.0	92.6	95.6
St Comgall's Primary School	95.6	95.6	96.3
St Malachy's Primary School	94.2	94.5	94.6
Bangor Central Integrated Primary School	95.2	95.3	95.6
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	96.5	96.0	96.5
Glennola Collegiate	96.1	96.6	96.2
Sullivan Upper School	97.3	96.8	98.0

Source: School Census

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43099/11-15, to detail the new wards in (i) Omagh; and (ii) Strabane districts which will benefit from access to Sure Start provision and services to the top 25 per cent most disadvantaged wards by April 2015.

(AQW 43742/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As part of the expansion of Sure Start services from the top 20% to the top 25% most disadvantaged wards, one additional ward became eligible for Sure Start service delivery within the Omagh district council area. The LAST Sure Start project has recently expanded their catchment to include the Gortrush ward, which is located within the Omagh district council area. No further wards became eligible in the Strabane council area.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the funding arrangements and timings for the new Coleraine Grammar School so that it can open in September 2015.

(AQW 43755/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that recent meetings between the Interim Board of Governors (IBOG), the NEELB and DE officials have clarified the work that needs to be completed and the measures to be put in place to ensure that Coleraine Grammar School is operational from September 2015.

The works scoped under the on-going Schools Enhancement Programme project at the Coleraine Inst site will be expanded to seek to provide co-educational toilet facilities by September 2015.

A scheme to re-assign toilets and works to the Assembly Hall changing rooms at the Coleraine Grammar site to make them into 2 separate changing rooms will be required. DE has already approved the increase to the NEELB capital minor budget by this amount to enable the Board to complete the work in readiness for September 2015.

Officials are also exploring with NEELB colleagues options for co-educational changing facilities.

Given the carryover of commitments on expenditure for capital minor works from the 2014/15 financial year and the substantial reduction in the capital budget from 2015/16 onwards, the ability to implement new works will be severely constrained. However, the Department will bid in year for additional resources in order to progress these schemes.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many staff were employed by each Education and Library Board's Music Service in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43808/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides the total number of staff employed by each Education and Library Board's (ELB's) Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
BELB*	13.6**	33	32.6	31.8	32
WELB	62	60	56	58	50
NEELB	32	32	34	33	36
SEELB	39	44	51	52	40
SELB	56	59	57	60	59

* All BELB figures relate to Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.

** Data for part-time Instrumental Tutors and Lecturers for BELB is not available for 2010/11.

The following tables provide how many schools, by (a) sector; and (b) type, supported by the Music Service, broken down by year:

BELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Nursery					
Controlled	0	0	5	0	0
Maintained	0	0	0	3	0
Primary					
Controlled	19	27	18	26	22
Maintained	23	30	23	23	32
Integrated	4	5	4	5	3
Irish Medium	0	3	2	5	1
Special	0	0	1	0	1
Secondary					
Controlled	5	4	3	3	3
Maintained	7	8	7	8	7
Integrated	2	2	2	2	2
Irish Medium	0	1	0	0	0
Special	2	1	1	1	1
Grammar					
Controlled	2	2	2	2	2
Total	62	81	66	76	72

WELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	36	43	42	41	43
Controlled Integrated Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Maintained Primary	63	74	72	70	73
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary Grammar	9	9	9	9	9
Controlled Grammar	4	4	4	4	4
Controlled Secondary	6	6	4	4	4
Maintained Secondary	16	16	15	16	14
Controlled Integrated Secondary	0	0	0	0	0
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	3	3	3	3	3

WELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Special	0	3	3	3	2
Independent School	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium	0	1	1	2	2
Total	140	162	156	155	157

NEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Grammar	4	3	4	4	4
Controlled Integrated Post Primary	1	2	2	2	2
Controlled Integrated Primary	3	5	5	5	5
Controlled Post Primary	14	13	13	11	11
Controlled Primary	98	96	95	92	92
Grant Maintained Integrated Post Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	6	6	6	6	6
Maintained Post Primary	12	12	12	11	11
Maintained Primary	55	53	52	49	51
Other	1	1	1	1	0
Special Schools	1	2	2	2	2
Voluntary Grammar	8	8	8	8	8
Total	206	204	203	194	195

SEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	58	58	54	52	50
Maintained Primary	22	22	19	19	19
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	4	4	5	4	4
Controlled Secondary	11	11	11	9	9
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	4	4	4	4	4
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Grammar	5	5	5	4	6
Total	107	107	101	95	95

SELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	65	65	64	66	69
Controlled Integrated Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Maintained Primary	91	92	92	93	101
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Voluntary Grammar	11	11	11	11	11
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Controlled Secondary	15	15	15	15	15
Maintained Secondary	17	18	17	17	17
Controlled Integrated Secondary	1	1	1	1	1
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	2	2	2	2	2

SELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Special	2	2	1	1	1
Independent School	1	1	0	0	0
Total	213	215	211	214	225

The following table provides the number of pupils that were provided with instrumental tuition by each ELB in 2013/14:

BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB
3,503	12,802	3,700	2,062	10,000

The detail of how this tuition is funded for each ELB is as follows:

BELB – Funded from core budget. Charges for tuition are passed on to parents, either through charges to schools or directly to parents. Income from schools and parents does not recover the full cost of tuition.

WELB – Schools may pass on all or part of this charge to parents. Where a charge is passed on to parents the actual cost will depend on the number of students involved and the level of subsidy provided by the school. Each school's remission policy will determine whether or not charges may be subject to further reduction in agreed circumstances.

NEELB – Schools were charged £918.84 per year which generated £585,751. Most schools passed on much of this cost to parents. Instrument loan charge generated £66,200; Music Centres generated £25,344; and Orchestra/band system generated £84,588.

SEELB – The tuition is funded through a combination of allocated budget and a charge to schools of £32 per hour to be passed on to parents.

SELB – Instrumental tuition is funded through direct invoicing of the schools in which the tuition takes place. The schools can determine whether or not to pass on some or all of those charges to parents.

The following table provides the expenditure by each ELB on their Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)	2012/13 (£)	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 (£)
BELB	969,211	819,045	810,380	911,820	648,965*
WELB	1,034,000	1,192,000	1,037,000	972,000	1,354,000**
NEELB	437,000	376,000	365,000	401,000	436,000***
SEELB	480,202	314,281	423,432	471,808	380,000
SELB	1,051,712	1,277,285	1,135,849	1,387,246	1,220,000**

* Figure as of February 2015.

** Figure for April 2014–February 2015, including estimates for March 2015.

*** Figure is based on budget for 2014/15.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many schools, broken down by (a) sector; and (b) type, were supported by the Music Service in each Education and Library Board, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43809/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides the total number of staff employed by each Education and Library Board's (ELB's) Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
BELB*	13.6**	33	32.6	31.8	32
WELB	62	60	56	58	50
NEELB	32	32	34	33	36
SEELB	39	44	51	52	40
SELB	56	59	57	60	59

* All BELB figures relate to Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.

** Data for part-time Instrumental Tutors and Lecturers for BELB is not available for 2010/11.

The following tables provide how many schools, by (a) sector; and (b) type, supported by the Music Service, broken down by year:

BELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Nursery					
Controlled	0	0	5	0	0
Maintained	0	0	0	3	0
Primary					
Controlled	19	27	18	26	22
Maintained	23	30	23	23	32
Integrated	4	5	4	5	3
Irish Medium	0	3	2	5	1
Special	0	0	1	0	1
Secondary					
Controlled	5	4	3	3	3
Maintained	7	8	7	8	7
Integrated	2	2	2	2	2
Irish Medium	0	1	0	0	0
Special	2	1	1	1	1
Grammar					
Controlled	2	2	2	2	2
Total	62	81	66	76	72

WELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	36	43	42	41	43
Controlled Integrated Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Maintained Primary	63	74	72	70	73
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary Grammar	9	9	9	9	9
Controlled Grammar	4	4	4	4	4
Controlled Secondary	6	6	4	4	4
Maintained Secondary	16	16	15	16	14
Controlled Integrated Secondary	0	0	0	0	0
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	3	3	3	3	3
Controlled Special	0	3	3	3	2
Independent School	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium	0	1	1	2	2
Total	140	162	156	155	157

NEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Grammar	4	3	4	4	4
Controlled Integrated Post Primary	1	2	2	2	2
Controlled Integrated Primary	3	5	5	5	5

NEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Post Primary	14	13	13	11	11
Controlled Primary	98	96	95	92	92
Grant Maintained Integrated Post Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	6	6	6	6	6
Maintained Post Primary	12	12	12	11	11
Maintained Primary	55	53	52	49	51
Other	1	1	1	1	0
Special Schools	1	2	2	2	2
Voluntary Grammar	8	8	8	8	8
Total	206	204	203	194	195

SEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	58	58	54	52	50
Maintained Primary	22	22	19	19	19
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	4	4	5	4	4
Controlled Secondary	11	11	11	9	9
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	4	4	4	4	4
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Grammar	5	5	5	4	6
Total	107	107	101	95	95

SELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	65	65	64	66	69
Controlled Integrated Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Maintained Primary	91	92	92	93	101
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Voluntary Grammar	11	11	11	11	11
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Controlled Secondary	15	15	15	15	15
Maintained Secondary	17	18	17	17	17
Controlled Integrated Secondary	1	1	1	1	1
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	2	2	2	2	2
Controlled Special	2	2	1	1	1
Independent School	1	1	0	0	0
Total	213	215	211	214	225

The following table provides the number of pupils that were provided with instrumental tuition by each ELB in 2013/14:

BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB
3,503	12,802	3,700	2,062	10,000

The detail of how this tuition is funded for each ELB is as follows:

BELB – Funded from core budget. Charges for tuition are passed on to parents, either through charges to schools or directly to parents. Income from schools and parents does not recover the full cost of tuition.

WELB – Schools may pass on all or part of this charge to parents. Where a charge is passed on to parents the actual cost will depend on the number of students involved and the level of subsidy provided by the school. Each school's remission policy will determine whether or not charges may be subject to further reduction in agreed circumstances.

NEELB – Schools were charged £918.84 per year which generated £585,751. Most schools passed on much of this cost to parents. Instrument loan charge generated £66,200; Music Centres generated £25,344; and Orchestra/band system generated £84,588.

SEELB – The tuition is funded through a combination of allocated budget and a charge to schools of £32 per hour to be passed on to parents.

SELB – Instrumental tuition is funded through direct invoicing of the schools in which the tuition takes place. The schools can determine whether or not to pass on some or all of those charges to parents.

The following table provides the expenditure by each ELB on their Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)	2012/13 (£)	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 (£)
BELB	969,211	819,045	810,380	911,820	648,965*
WELB	1,034,000	1,192,000	1,037,000	972,000	1,354,000**
NEELB	437,000	376,000	365,000	401,000	436,000***
SEELB	480,202	314,281	423,432	471,808	380,000
SELB	1,051,712	1,277,285	1,135,849	1,387,246	1,220,000**

* Figure as of February 2015.

** Figure for April 2014–February 2015, including estimates for March 2015.

*** Figure is based on budget for 2014/15.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how many pupils were provided with instrumental tuition by each Education and Library Board in 2013/14; and to detail how this was funded.

(AQW 43810/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides the total number of staff employed by each Education and Library Board's (ELB's) Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
BELB*	13.6**	33	32.6	31.8	32
WELB	62	60	56	58	50
NEELB	32	32	34	33	36
SEELB	39	44	51	52	40
SELB	56	59	57	60	59

* All BELB figures relate to Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.

** Data for part-time Instrumental Tutors and Lecturers for BELB is not available for 2010/11.

The following tables provide how many schools, by (a) sector; and (b) type, supported by the Music Service, broken down by year:

BELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Nursery					
Controlled	0	0	5	0	0
Maintained	0	0	0	3	0
Primary					
Controlled	19	27	18	26	22
Maintained	23	30	23	23	32
Integrated	4	5	4	5	3
Irish Medium	0	3	2	5	1

BELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Special	0	0	1	0	1
Secondary					
Controlled	5	4	3	3	3
Maintained	7	8	7	8	7
Integrated	2	2	2	2	2
Irish Medium	0	1	0	0	0
Special	2	1	1	1	1
Grammar					
Controlled	2	2	2	2	2
Total	62	81	66	76	72

WELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	36	43	42	41	43
Controlled Integrated Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Maintained Primary	63	74	72	70	73
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary Grammar	9	9	9	9	9
Controlled Grammar	4	4	4	4	4
Controlled Secondary	6	6	4	4	4
Maintained Secondary	16	16	15	16	14
Controlled Integrated Secondary	0	0	0	0	0
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	3	3	3	3	3
Controlled Special	0	3	3	3	2
Independent School	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium	0	1	1	2	2
Total	140	162	156	155	157

NEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Grammar	4	3	4	4	4
Controlled Integrated Post Primary	1	2	2	2	2
Controlled Integrated Primary	3	5	5	5	5
Controlled Post Primary	14	13	13	11	11
Controlled Primary	98	96	95	92	92
Grant Maintained Integrated Post Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	6	6	6	6	6
Maintained Post Primary	12	12	12	11	11
Maintained Primary	55	53	52	49	51
Other	1	1	1	1	0
Special Schools	1	2	2	2	2
Voluntary Grammar	8	8	8	8	8
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SEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
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Maintained Primary	22	22	19	19	19
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	4	4	5	4	4
Controlled Secondary	11	11	11	9	9
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	4	4	4	4	4
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Grammar	5	5	5	4	6
Total	107	107	101	95	95

SELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	65	65	64	66	69
Controlled Integrated Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Maintained Primary	91	92	92	93	101
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Voluntary Grammar	11	11	11	11	11
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Controlled Secondary	15	15	15	15	15
Maintained Secondary	17	18	17	17	17
Controlled Integrated Secondary	1	1	1	1	1
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	2	2	2	2	2
Controlled Special	2	2	1	1	1
Independent School	1	1	0	0	0
Total	213	215	211	214	225

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NEELB – Schools were charged £918.84 per year which generated £585,751. Most schools passed on much of this cost to parents. Instrument loan charge generated £66,200; Music Centres generated £25,344; and Orchestra/band system generated £84,588.

SEELB – The tuition is funded through a combination of allocated budget and a charge to schools of £32 per hour to be passed on to parents.

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The following table provides the expenditure by each ELB on their Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)	2012/13 (£)	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 (£)
BELB	969,211	819,045	810,380	911,820	648,965*

	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)	2012/13 (£)	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 (£)
WELB	1,034,000	1,192,000	1,037,000	972,000	1,354,000**
NEELB	437,000	376,000	365,000	401,000	436,000***
SEELB	480,202	314,281	423,432	471,808	380,000
SELB	1,051,712	1,277,285	1,135,849	1,387,246	1,220,000**

* Figure as of February 2015.

** Figure for April 2014–February 2015, including estimates for March 2015.

*** Figure is based on budget for 2014/15.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 42827/11-15, how this was procured.
(AQW 43811/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The banking services contract was procured using a Direct Award Contract.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education how much was spent by each Education and Library Board on their Music Service in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43857/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table provides the total number of staff employed by each Education and Library Board's (ELB's) Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
BELB*	13.6**	33	32.6	31.8	32
WELB	62	60	56	58	50
NEELB	32	32	34	33	36
SEELB	39	44	51	52	40
SELB	56	59	57	60	59

* All BELB figures relate to Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff.

** Data for part-time Instrumental Tutors and Lecturers for BELB is not available for 2010/11.

The following tables provide how many schools, by (a) sector; and (b) type, supported by the Music Service, broken down by year:

BELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Nursery					
Controlled	0	0	5	0	0
Maintained	0	0	0	3	0
Primary					
Controlled	19	27	18	26	22
Maintained	23	30	23	23	32
Integrated	4	5	4	5	3
Irish Medium	0	3	2	5	1
Special	0	0	1	0	1
Secondary					
Controlled	5	4	3	3	3
Maintained	7	8	7	8	7
Integrated	2	2	2	2	2
Irish Medium	0	1	0	0	0
Special	2	1	1	1	1

BELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Grammar					
Controlled	2	2	2	2	2
Total	62	81	66	76	72

WELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	36	43	42	41	43
Controlled Integrated Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Maintained Primary	63	74	72	70	73
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary Grammar	9	9	9	9	9
Controlled Grammar	4	4	4	4	4
Controlled Secondary	6	6	4	4	4
Maintained Secondary	16	16	15	16	14
Controlled Integrated Secondary	0	0	0	0	0
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	3	3	3	3	3
Controlled Special	0	3	3	3	2
Independent School	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium	0	1	1	2	2
Total	140	162	156	155	157

NEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Grammar	4	3	4	4	4
Controlled Integrated Post Primary	1	2	2	2	2
Controlled Integrated Primary	3	5	5	5	5
Controlled Post Primary	14	13	13	11	11
Controlled Primary	98	96	95	92	92
Grant Maintained Integrated Post Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	6	6	6	6	6
Maintained Post Primary	12	12	12	11	11
Maintained Primary	55	53	52	49	51
Other	1	1	1	1	0
Special Schools	1	2	2	2	2
Voluntary Grammar	8	8	8	8	8
Total	206	204	203	194	195

SEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	58	58	54	52	50
Maintained Primary	22	22	19	19	19
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	4	4	5	4	4
Controlled Secondary	11	11	11	9	9
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	4	4	4	4	4

SEELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Grammar	5	5	5	4	6
Total	107	107	101	95	95

SELB	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Controlled Primary	65	65	64	66	69
Controlled Integrated Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Maintained Primary	91	92	92	93	101
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary	3	3	3	3	3
Voluntary Primary	1	1	1	1	1
Voluntary Grammar	11	11	11	11	11
Controlled Grammar	3	3	3	3	3
Controlled Secondary	15	15	15	15	15
Maintained Secondary	17	18	17	17	17
Controlled Integrated Secondary	1	1	1	1	1
Grant Maintained Integrated Secondary	2	2	2	2	2
Controlled Special	2	2	1	1	1
Independent School	1	1	0	0	0
Total	213	215	211	214	225

The following table provides the number of pupils that were provided with instrumental tuition by each ELB in 2013/14:

BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB
3,503	12,802	3,700	2,062	10,000

The detail of how this tuition is funded for each ELB is as follows:

BELB – Funded from core budget. Charges for tuition are passed on to parents, either through charges to schools or directly to parents. Income from schools and parents does not recover the full cost of tuition.

WELB – Schools may pass on all or part of this charge to parents. Where a charge is passed on to parents the actual cost will depend on the number of students involved and the level of subsidy provided by the school. Each school's remission policy will determine whether or not charges may be subject to further reduction in agreed circumstances.

NEELB – Schools were charged £918.84 per year which generated £585,751. Most schools passed on much of this cost to parents. Instrument loan charge generated £66,200; Music Centres generated £25,344; and Orchestra/band system generated £84,588.

SEELB – The tuition is funded through a combination of allocated budget and a charge to schools of £32 per hour to be passed on to parents.

SELB – Instrumental tuition is funded through direct invoicing of the schools in which the tuition takes place. The schools can determine whether or not to pass on some or all of those charges to parents.

The following table provides the expenditure by each ELB on their Music Service, broken down by year:

	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)	2012/13 (£)	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 (£)
BELB	969,211	819,045	810,380	911,820	648,965*
WELB	1,034,000	1,192,000	1,037,000	972,000	1,354,000**
NEELB	437,000	376,000	365,000	401,000	436,000***
SEELB	480,202	314,281	423,432	471,808	380,000
SELB	1,051,712	1,277,285	1,135,849	1,387,246	1,220,000**

* Figure as of February 2015.

** Figure for April 2014–February 2015, including estimates for March 2015.

*** Figure is based on budget for 2014/15.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what is the source and status of the 5 mile criterion used in assessing need for pre-school provision.

(AQW 43866/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In considering the level of need when a Development Proposal (DP) for new or additional pre-school provision is published, consideration is consistently given to the existing level of pre-school provision within a 2-mile and a 5-mile radius of the school subject to the DP. This information, taken with other factors including population projections and the potential impact of the proposal on other providers, informs the assessment of need for any proposed new or additional provision.

The source of the information is the school census.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education what action has followed on from the recent working group report on careers advice for pupils.

(AQW 43927/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I welcome the careers review report and note that the independent panel's overall assessment of the careers system here has been very positive. The review panel has put forward a number of recommendations for improving the current system but these represent potential enhancements to what the panel concluded is basically a sound model.

Officials from my Department are working closely with officials from the Department for Employment and Learning to examine these recommendations in more detail. A joint programme management structure has been put in place to oversee the implementation of actions flowing from the review and officials are currently developing a joint action plan. In doing so, my officials will take into consideration the relative priority of proposed actions in the context of my department's many other pressing priorities and the current budgetary constraints.

My department is taking forward work in a number of areas that potentially could contribute to the programme of work flowing from the review such as the bespoke careers CPD programme.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education what percentage of his departmental budget for the financial year 2015/16 forms the Aggregated Schools Budget; and of the remainder of the budget, to detail the (i) budget headings; the (ii) (a) percentage of his budget; (b) amount allocated to each heading; and (iii) how the money will be spent.

(AQW 43929/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Details of the information requested regarding my departmental resource budget for the financial year 2015-16 are set out below.

Spending Areas	2015-16 Resource Budget	
	£m	%
Aggregated Schools Budget	1,147.5	59.9%
EA Block Grant	396.6	20.7%
Earmarked Funding	182.5	9.5%
VGS/GMI Central Support Costs	43.7	2.3%
Other NDPBs and Other Education Services	39.6	2.1%
Early Years Provision	26.6	1.4%
Youth and Community Relations	33.1	1.7%
Department of Education Costs	31.3	1.6%
Savings Delivery Plan Provision	13.4	0.7%
Total Resource Budget	1,914.2	100.0%

Note: May not add due to roundings.

I can confirm that the funding listed above will be spent on my strategic priorities and in reaching my final decisions on these 2015-16 budget allocations I have:

- • Focused on protecting frontline services as far as possible, promoting equality and raising education standards;
- • Secured the continuation of specific programmes that reflect the Department's statutory responsibilities;
- • Continued to tackle social disadvantage; and
- • Ensured that support for children with Special Education Needs is prioritised.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what plans are in place for an additional schools for children with Special Educational Needs to meet the increasing demand in the Southern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 43959/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am advised that, to accommodate increasing pupil enrolment, building work is planned by the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) at a number of existing special schools, in line with projected need.

The SELB has no plans at present for an additional special school.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children who have a statement of Special Educational Needs and are (i) under 11; (ii) 11 and older, in each of the Education and Library Board, (a) currently; and (b) in each of the last 3 academic years.

(AQW 43960/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The tables below show the number of pupils in each ELB that are statemented in each of the last four academic years, split by those aged under 11 and 11 and older. The proportion of those statemented based on the total number of pupils has also been supplied for the purposes of providing context.

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2014/15

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i) Under 11	Statemented pupils	1511	1010	1423	1830	1580	7353
	% statemented pupils	5.2%	3.1%	3.3%	4.5%	3.4%	3.8%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1640	1683	1645	1715	1940	8623
	% statemented pupils	5.5%	6.6%	5.2%	6.8%	5.9%	5.9%

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2013/14

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i) Under 11	Statemented pupils	1371	972	1325	1652	1556	6876
	% statemented pupils	4.8%	3.0%	3.1%	4.1%	3.4%	3.7%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1530	1573	1600	1748	1922	8373
	% statemented pupils	5.1%	6.1%	5.0%	6.9%	5.8%	5.7%

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2012/13

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i) Under 11	Statemented pupils	1307	866	1269	1492	1479	6413
	% statemented pupils	4.7%	2.7%	3.1%	3.8%	3.4%	3.5%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1432	1492	1571	1723	1923	8141
	% statemented pupils	4.7%	5.7%	4.8%	6.7%	5.8%	5.5%

Statemented pupils by ELB and age, 2011/12

		BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
(i) Under 11	Statemented pupils	1229	855	1193	1522	1461	6260
	% statemented pupils	4.5%	2.7%	2.9%	4.0%	3.4%	3.5%
(ii) 11 and over	Statemented pupils	1355	1406	1474	1732	1863	7830
	% statemented pupils	4.5%	5.3%	4.5%	6.6%	5.6%	5.2%

Source: NI school census

Notes:

- Figures include children in voluntary and private preschool centres, nursery schools, grant-aided primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
- Figures include pupils at stage 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- Age is at 1st July.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Education how many Western Education and Library Board employees are currently on Protective Notice.

(AQW 43993/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The WELB has advised that 30 staff employed in earmarked funded posts have been placed on Protective Notice of redundancy.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43561/11-15, to outline his Department's policy priorities for 2015/16.

(AQW 44010/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Any new Department of Education funding to support Early Years will be strategically aligned to the Department's "Learning to Learn" (a framework for Early Years Education and Learning). Alignment will ensure improved outcomes for young children and their families.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Education what consideration has been given to introducing sign language as a GCSE subject.

(AQW 44014/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am advised that the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), as the regulator of general qualifications here, has considered this issue previously. It concluded that as there is a range of non-GCSE qualifications widely recognised by the signing community and employers, and covering both British and Irish Sign language, there is no requirement for a GCSE sign language qualification.

I am assured that CCEA will keep this issue under review and should it be made aware of new evidence in support of additional qualifications it will act upon the information and evidence provided at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education to list each pre-school in South Down that has received a letter advising that they may face a reduction in the number of places they can offer; and to detail the proposed reduction for each pre-school.

(AQW 44056/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executives of the Southern and South Eastern Education and Library Boards have confirmed that no pre-school setting which offers funded places in the Pre-School Education Programme in the South Down area has received a letter advising that it may face a reduction in the number of places it can offer.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail all ongoing policy reviews within his Department, including the (a) commencement date; and (b) the expected finalisation date for the reviews.

(AQW 44089/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The ongoing policy reviews within the Department of Education are detailed in the table below.

Review	Commencement Date	Expected Finalisation Date
Addressing Bullying in Schools	January 2015	April 2016
Community Relations Equality and Diversity Policy	September 2014	*
Deferral of School Starting Age in Exceptional Circumstances	September 2014	*
Reform of NI Teachers' Pension Scheme	March 2012	March 2015
School Transport	August 2014	*
Special Educational Needs and Inclusion	April 2006	September 2016
Teacher Education	April 2003	May 2015
Teacher Honorarium Payments	January 2015	*
The Future of the Youth Council	March 2015	March 2016

*the outworking of the review will determine the expected finalisation date, as such it is not yet possible to provide this date.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many Freedom of Information requests his Department received in the last two financial years; and to detail the cost of processing these requests.

(AQW 44095/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The numbers of requests received during 2012/13 and 2013/14 are as follows:

Financial Year	Number of Requests
2012/2013	183
2013/2014	224

The member may wish to note that quarterly FOI statistics are published for each Department up to the end of September 2014 and can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/annual-reports-and-statistics>

In common with all NICS departments, DE does not routinely calculate or record information on the cost of processing individual FOI requests and therefore this information is not held.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education to outline the (i) major; and (ii) minor works in the capital investment programme for the East Londonderry constituency, in the next financial year.

(AQW 44107/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) In June 2012, I announced 18 projects, one of which was Rossmar Special School, Limavady. It is anticipated that this project will be on site before the end of the 2015/16 financial year.

In January 2013, the combined Listress, Craigbrack and Mullabuoy Primary School was identified as one of the 22 projects to be taken forward in planning. Work is currently under way on the feasibility study for this project and when completed a supporting business case will be provided prior to the appointment of a multi-disciplinary design team to take forward the detailed design of the new school.

I announced 16 capital projects in June 14 that included Roe Valley Integrated Primary School. A draft feasibility study has been received for this project and work is ongoing on the economic appraisal.

With a constrained capital budget it is currently difficult to provide definitive timescales for the commencement of the above major works projects.

In June 2014, I also announced the first of three major projects under the shared education campus programme, one of which is in Limavady. This project will provide two new shared facilities: a shared sixth form on the St Mary's High School site and a shared science, technology, engineering and maths centre on the Limavady High School site. Work is under way on the feasibility study and business case for this project.

Finally, there is one School Enhancement Project (SEP) in the constituency. This project will upgrade the mechanical and electrical services at Coleraine Academical Institution at an approved cost of £1.7 million, with site work commencing in April 2015.

Work is also ongoing to prepare an addendum to the original business case for the above SEP scheme. This addendum is to detail additional works required to facilitate the amalgamation of Coleraine High School and Coleraine Academical Institute. The works are for the refurbishment and reassignment of toilets at Coleraine Academical Institute.

- (ii) A total budget of £25m has been made available for capital minor works for all schools in the north of Ireland during the 2015/16 year. All capital minor works projects for 2015/16 will be prioritised and progressed in line with my ministerial priorities and within the context of available resources and competing pressures for investment across the schools' estate. Given the carryover of expenditure for capital minor works from the 2014/15 financial year and the substantial reduction in the capital budget from 2015/16 onwards, the ability to implement new works will be severely constrained. This effectively means that the majority of schools will have very restricted access to capital minor works funding during 2015/16.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW43478/11-15, in relation to a private educational psychological report and the subsequent production of a statement of special educational needs, what is meant by, will take account of.

(AQW 44196/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Paragraph 3.57 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs states that "The educational psychologist from whom the Board seeks advice must consult, and record any advice received from, any other psychologist, such as a clinical or occupational psychologist, who may have knowledge of or information about the child."

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to outline the pre school provision currently available to parents in Poyntzpass.

(AQW 44198/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executive of the Southern Education and Library Board has provided the attached list of pre-school providers which parents with Poyntzpass addresses have listed as preferences during the 2014/15 and 2015/16 pre-school admissions process.

Under the DE funded Pre-School Education Programme, parents of pre-school children may apply to any setting they choose and are not restricted by where they live. Boards of Governors and Management Committees must, however, publish criteria capable of selecting children down to the last available place in the event that the setting is oversubscribed and these criteria may include proximity to the setting of a child's home address.

Provider	No of Places Available 2015/16
Poyntzpass PG	24
Loughbrickland PG	26
Buttonmoon PG, Tandragee	26
Tandragee NS	78
Glenn and Barr PG, Jerrettspass	24
St Peter's PSNU, Cloughreagh	26
St Joseph's PSNU, Bessbrook	52
Kidzone PG, Bessbrook	10
Giggles Daycare, Newry	12
Happy Days PG, Newry	25
St Patrick's NU, Newry	52
St Malachy's NS, Carnagat	52
St Clare's Abbey PSNU, Newry	52
Rainbow Stop PG, Markethill	45
Dominican PG, Newry	24
Downshire NS, Banbridge	52

Letters will be issued on 17 April advising parents of settings for which their children have been admitted for September 2015 and, where no setting has been confirmed, advising parents where places remain available and seeking nomination of further preferences.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for an update on the actions taken as a result of recommendations contained within the Education and Training Inspectorate report, Provision to meet the needs of pupils with persistent and challenging behaviours in special schools, published in 2012-13.

(AQW 44199/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: On foot of the 2013 ETI Survey – “An evaluation of the provision to meet the needs of pupils with persistent and challenging behaviour in special schools”, my officials held a workshop with Special School Principals to consider the recommendations outlined in the ETI report and identify what proposals could be achieved in both the short term and longer term. It is anticipated that further engagement will take place with the Education Authority to take their views on how best to address the needs of these pupils.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the current numbers of pupils in special schools, as categorised in para 4.2 of the 2012-13 Education and Training Inspectorate report.

(AQW 44200/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The survey was commissioned by my Department to examine the extent of challenging behaviour across Special Schools and the report provided an extensive evidence base about the impact of challenging behaviour in special schools. I note and acknowledge the numbers of pupils who are displaying challenging behaviours and my officials have already engaged with Special School Principals to identify issues and consider what approaches could be adopted to meet the needs of pupils with challenging behaviour.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education whether he will reconsider his decision to cut the Primary Modern Languages Programme.

(AQW 44201/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Westminster Government has cut the Executive's budget by £1.5bn over this last 5 years. This has resulted in year on year cuts to the Education budget. In order to protect frontline services and the Aggregated Schools Budget, it has been decided that the earmarked funding for the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) will cease with effect from 31 March 2015. I regret that it will not be possible to reconsider this decision in the absence of an increase to my Department's budget.

I am aware that some schools provide language tuition outside of the PMLP and hope that these schools and those schools which had been part of the programme, can continue to provide an additional language, funded from the schools own budget.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the capacity of current pre-school provision, including the number of available places, to deal with growing demand. [R]

(AQW 44211/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Executive's Programme for Government Commitment is to provide at least one year of pre-school education for every child whose parents want it. During the 2014/15 admissions process 99.9% of children, whose parents engaged with the admissions process to the end, obtained a funded pre-school place.

The Pre-School Education Advisory Group (PEAG) in each Education and Library Board (ELB) is responsible for the planning and provision of sufficient pre-school places in their area and I have allocated sufficient funding to meet the projected need for pre-school places across the north for the 2015-16 academic year.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pre-school places provided by the (i) statutory; (ii) voluntary; and (iii) private/independent, sectors in each of the last three years. [R]

(AQW 44213/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Department of Education funded pre-school places

Sector	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Statutory	14,613	14,804	15,047
Voluntary	7,453	7,319	7,516
Private	957	1,041	1,105

Source – 2014 School Census

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education what impact the cut to Early Years funding will have on his Department's Programme for Government Commitment 43, to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.[R]

(AQW 44214/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I remain committed to ensuring that every child whose parents want it will have a funded pre-school place within the Pre-School Education Programme. To that end I have allocated sufficient funding to Education and Library Boards to meet the projected need for pre-school places for children in their final pre-school year. I note that just over 1600 of the places are provided by groups in which some salaries are currently supported by the Early Years Fund. These places will continue to be funded under the Pre School Education Programme in the usual way.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the role of the Early Years Organisation, and associated bodies, in driving forward improvement in education provision through (i) raising standards; (ii) supporting all children to reach their full potential; and (iii) narrowing the performance gap at an early age.[R]

(AQW 44215/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) administers the Early Years Fund (EYF) on behalf of my Department under Service Level Agreement. They fulfil a management and accountability role in respect of the funds allocated and provide additional support and guidance to those groups in receipt of funding to ensure that quality standards are raised.

The Early Years Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a "closed" Fund since then to only those groups that were identified as in need at that time.

The current criteria for receipt of EYF funding, which the eligible groups must demonstrate to EYO are to;

- Provide direct early years care and education to children;
- Provide a service in areas of low provision, disadvantaged areas or where the service is considered critical for children;
- Ensure inclusion and diversity; and
- Ensure a standard of excellence in relation to quality.

Any new Department of Education funding to support the Early Years sector will be strategically aligned to the Department's framework for Early Education and Learning - "Learning to Learn". Alignment will ensure improved outcomes for young children and their families.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education why his Department relies on submissions by schools to establish averages in literacy and numeracy when there is no mechanism to ensure that those submissions are accurate and objective.

(AQW 44226/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Pupil progress at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 in the cross-curricular skills of Communication and Using Mathematics is assessed using a system based on teacher-assessment. Teachers use a range of evidence to support their judgment and this evidence will be generated from everyday class-room practice. The statutory external moderation process is intended to ensure consistency of schools' understanding of the standards and their application.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Education to detail his Department's approach to promoting French, German and Spanish in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary education.

(AQW 44229/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Modern languages are not a statutory part of the curriculum at primary level here and it is a matter for primary schools to decide whether they wish to teach an additional language.

In order to protect frontline services and the Aggregated Schools Budget, it has been decided that the earmarked funding for the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP), which provided tuition in Spanish, Irish and Polish, will cease with effect from 31 March 2015.

My Department is aware that many primary schools provide language tuition, including French, German and Spanish, outside of the PMLP and I hope that schools can continue to do so.

Modern languages are a statutory requirement at Key Stage 3 and a qualification choice at Key Stage 4 and Sixth form. Schools are now able to choose any of the languages of the 27 EU member states to meet the minimum requirement, as well as any other additional languages they wish. I am aware that French, Spanish and to a lesser extent German are some of the most popular languages chosen by students.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether his Department compiles data on the number of unemployed teachers.

(AQW 44277/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not compile data on the number of unemployed teachers. The General Teaching Council (GTCNI) collects information on teacher employment on an annual basis. The table below sets out the number of teachers whose employment is of a permanent or a significant temporary nature (ie. one term or more), at the dates specified in each of the last three years, and includes full-time and part-time teachers:

Year of Graduation	North of Ireland Graduates registered with the GTCNI	North of Ireland Graduates employed on a permanent or a significant temporary nature at January 2013
2012	475	79

Source: GTCNI (January 2013)

Year of Graduation	North of Ireland Graduates registered with the GTCNI	North of Ireland Graduates employed on a permanent or a significant temporary nature at February 2014
2013	476	110

Source: GTCNI (February 2014)

Year of Graduation	North of Ireland Graduates registered with the GTCNI	North of Ireland Graduates employed on a permanent or a significant temporary nature at February 2015
2014	464	182

Source: GTCNI (February 2015)

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how many graduate teachers get full time teaching posts within one year after graduation.

(AQW 44278/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not compile data on the number of unemployed teachers. The General Teaching Council (GTCNI) collects information on teacher employment on an annual basis. The table below sets out the number of teachers whose employment is of a permanent or a significant temporary nature (ie. one term or more), at the dates specified in each of the last three years, and includes full-time and part-time teachers:

Year of Graduation	North of Ireland Graduates registered with the GTCNI	North of Ireland Graduates employed on a permanent or a significant temporary nature at January 2013
2012	475	79

Source: GTCNI (January 2013)

Year of Graduation	North of Ireland Graduates registered with the GTCNI	North of Ireland Graduates employed on a permanent or a significant temporary nature at February 2014
2013	476	110

Source: GTCNI (February 2014)

Year of Graduation	North of Ireland Graduates registered with the GTCNI	North of Ireland Graduates employed on a permanent or a significant temporary nature at February 2015
2014	464	182

Source: GTCNI (February 2015)

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education whether teaching staff or assistants currently on the retainer method of pay can opt out to have holiday pay paid in their four weekly wage, instead of a retainer paid in July.

(AQW 44290/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are no teachers or classroom assistants employed on a retainer method of pay.

The only staff who are paid a retainer fee (such as supervisory assistants, transport escorts/catering staff) receive a payment during each period of school closure but have to work both sides of the period concerned. The retainer fee is an incentive for staff to return following period of school closure and is a separate payment - it is not a payment for accrued holiday entitlement.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the wards in the Omagh and Strabane districts which will benefit from the expansion of Sure Start services by April 2015; (ii) the wards in the West Tyrone constituency which do not fall into the top 25 per cent most disadvantaged wards; and (iii) the wards in the West Tyrone constituency as defined by the Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010.

(AQW 44292/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As part of the expansion of Sure Start services from the top 20% to the top 25% most disadvantaged wards, one additional ward became eligible for Sure Start service delivery within the Omagh district council area. The LAST Sure Start project has recently expanded their catchment to include the Gortrush ward, which is located within the Omagh district council area. No further wards became eligible in the Strabane council area.

NIMDM 2010 places wards in rank order from most deprived to least deprived. The most deprived ward is ranked number 1 with the least deprived ward ranked 582. The wards which do not fall within the top 25% most disadvantaged wards within West Tyrone constituency are listed in table 1 below:

Table 1 - West Tyrone constituency wards which do not fall within the top 25% most disadvantaged wards:

Wards - West Tyrone	NIMDM 2010 Ranking
Artigarvan	190
Beragh	263
Camowen	188
Clanabogan	368
Coolhagard	178
Dergmoney	262
Dromore	186
Drumnakilly	189
Drumragh	402
Fairy Water	406
Gortin	341

Wards - West Tyrone	NIMDM 2010 Ranking
Killyclogher	282
Newtownsaville	316
Owenkillew	210
Plumbridge	173
Sixmilecross	194
Slievekirk	182
South	171
Strule	170
Termon	181
Trillick	376
Victoria Bridge	148

The wards in the West Tyrone constituency together with NIMDM 2010 rankings are listed in table 2 below:

Table 2 - West Tyrone constituency wards by NIMDM 2010 rankings:

Wards - West Tyrone	NIMDM 2010 Ranking
Artigarvan	190
Ballycolman	27
Beragh	263
Camowen	188
Castleberg	40
Clanabogan	368
Clare	130
Coolnagard	178
Dergmoney	262
Dromore	186
Drumnakilly	189
Drumquin	141
Drumragh	402
Dunnamanagh	95
East	5
Fairy Water	406
Finn	93
Fintona	132
Glenderg	73
Gortin	341
Gortrush	139
Killyclogher	282
Lisanelly	107
Newtownsaville	316
Newtownstewart	69
North	98
Owenkillew	210

Wards - West Tyrone	NIMDM 2010 Ranking
Plumbridge	173
Sion Mills	76
Sixmilecross	194
Slievekirk	182
South	171
Strule	170
Termon	181
Trillick	376
Victoria Bridge	148
West	113

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the community and voluntary groups in North Down that have received funding from his Department, or its arm's-length bodies, since 2011; and (ii) the amount of funding received in each case.

(AQW 43558/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Since 1 January 2011, the Department or its arms length bodies have provided funding to community and voluntary groups in North Down as follows:

FIT NI	£ 926,856.80
Include Youth	£ 502,583.00
South East Health and Social Care Trust	£ 489,428.00
South Eastern Regional College	£ 360,844.00
Training for Women Network	£ 756,694.58
People 1st	£ 321,082.00
Workers Educational Association	£ 4,794.00
Conservation Volunteers NI	£ 890,357.00

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail what value of construction work, funded from the resource budget, does he intend to start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43610/11-15)

Dr Farry: There is no construction work to be funded from the resource budget planned to start in the 2015/16 financial year.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail what actual value of construction work, funded from the capital budget, does he intend to start in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43613/11-15)

Dr Farry: In addition to those projects which started prior to 1 April 2015, there are new projects planned to commence construction work in 2015/16 as detailed below.

Higher Education

Within the capital budget, Departmental funding of £6.8 million is planned within the Higher Education sector to support construction work starting in 2015/16, subject to appropriate business case approvals. The table below provides details.

	Planned Department funding 2015/16 £'000	Total approximate project capital value £'000
Higher Education Institutions	6,762	17,165

Further Education

Within the capital budget, Departmental funding of up to £0.6 million is planned within the Further Education sector to support construction work starting in 2015/16, subject to appropriate business case approvals. Funding of up to £7 million is also planned for minor works across all the colleges in 2015/16 which may include smaller construction projects as well as other capital expenditure, for example plant and vehicles replacements, IT Infrastructure and small scale refurbishments. The table below provides details.

	Planned Department funding 2015/16 £'000	Total approximate project capital value £'000
Further Education Colleges including minor works	7,600	7,600

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, whether he is aware of (i) concerns raised by former Civil Servants who have transferred to ISS under the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations, who did not receive redundancy payments under the Civil Service Compensation Scheme 2010; and (ii) what action he will take to investigate these claims. **(AQW 43669/11-15)**

Dr Farry: My Department was not involved in the transfer of former Civil Servants to ISS and I am not aware of claims or concerns raised in relation to this transfer.

Whilst my Department is responsible for The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE regulations) and the Service Provision Change (Protection of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, I am unable to intervene in, or provide specific advice on, individual cases where there may be an employment dispute. I am therefore not in a position to investigate any claims or concerns raised.

Individuals with concerns about their rights and entitlements under the TUPE regulations should contact their local Citizen's Advice Bureau, or the Labour Relations Agency for free and impartial advice, including information and advice on the process for submitting a claim to an industrial tribunal.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, whether his Department is responsible for the regulations under the Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) for former Civil Service Cleaners who transferred to contract cleaning companies such as ISS; and whether these former Civil Servants are entitled to the Terms and Conditions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme 2010. **(AQW 43670/11-15)**

Dr Farry: My Department is responsible for The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 and the Service Provision Change (Protection of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 which give effect to an EC Directive safeguarding employees' rights when the business they are working for is transferred to a new employer.

Whilst my Department is responsible for the TUPE 2006 regulations, I am unable to intervene in, or provide specific advice on, individual cases where there may be an employment dispute.

Individuals with concerns about their rights and entitlements under the TUPE regulations should contact their local Citizen's Advice Bureau, or the Labour Relations Agency for free and impartial advice, including information and advice on the process for submitting a claim to an industrial tribunal.

I am not in a position to comment in any detail on entitlement to the Terms and Conditions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme 2010. The Department of Finance and Personnel may be able to provide information in relation to the scheme to which you refer.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps can be taken to review or remove the Non-Departmental Public Body status of Stranmillis University College. **(AQW 43703/11-15)**

Dr Farry: The decision to classify Stranmillis University College as a central government body was taken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). A decision to review, or remove, such classification is also a matter for the ONS rather than for my Department or the Northern Ireland Assembly.

As you will be aware, I am currently conducting a review of the Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland and I would wish to see the outcome of that work before I would consider initiating legislative change to any part of the sector.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 41201/11-15, for the time frame for (i) the establishment of the steering group and (ii) the commissioning of research. **(AQW 43849/11-15)**

Dr Farry: My Department is in the process of establishing the Steering Group and issuing invites to industry representatives. It is hoped that the first meeting will take place within the next month.

The role of the Steering Group will be to advise my officials as to the scope and the depth of the research needed for the sector. Any research undertaken will be procured through the normal public procurement processes and timescales.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline his Department's plans to increase foundation degree courses at the Strabane Campus of the North West Regional College.

(AQW 43859/11-15)

Dr Farry: North West Regional College currently has 710 full time and 824 part time students enrolled in higher education courses across all of its campuses in the North West.

North West Regional College currently delivers part time higher education provision for 59 students and full time provision for six students at its Strabane campus covering the following courses; Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling and Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Working with Children and Families.

A college's allocation of student numbers is based on established current and future demand for higher education in each of the college areas; the college's alignment with my Department's strategic priority areas as demonstrated in the College Development Plan; and support for my Department's Widening Participation goals in the geographical distribution of higher education places across Northern Ireland.

In July 2013, I allocated an additional 25 full time places to North West Regional College to deliver a new Foundation Degree in Software Development. In 2014, I allocated a further 50 places for the development of new Foundation Degrees in Computing and Software, and Applied Medical Sciences.

It is the responsibility of each individual college to manage its Higher Education funding allocations in line with local priorities, as well as the priorities set by my Department. However, decisions relating to the location of courses and the allocation of student places across the college's campuses are matters for the senior management of the regional college and not for my Department.

Mr Allister asked Minister for Employment and Learning whether the proposed JTI redundancy scheme is compliant with equal opportunity and non-discrimination, on grounds of age, in consequence of it purporting to exclude any worker over 65 years.

(AQW 43868/11-15)

Dr Farry: Whilst my Department is responsible for employment policy and legislation, I am unable to intervene in, or provide specific advice on, individual cases where there may be an employment dispute.

Individuals with concerns about their rights and entitlements under an employer's redundancy scheme should contact their local Citizen's Advice Bureau, or the Labour Relations Agency for free and impartial advice, including information and advice on the process for submitting a claim to an industrial tribunal.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much his Department has spent on postage in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 43905/11-15)

Dr Farry: Expenditure incurred by my Department on postage in each of the last two years has been as follows:

2013/14	£283,861
2012/13	£251,072

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the further education student places under threat of being cut, broken down by Regional College.

(AQW 43925/11-15)

Dr Farry: At present, officials from my Department are working with the six regional colleges to determine their individual funding allocations for 2015/16. Once individual college allocations have been agreed, this will enable colleges to profile their enrolment intake for the next academic year.

Funding for individual further education colleges is determined through the annual College Development Planning (CDP) process. This process aims to ensure that available resources are distributed on a fair, equitable and transparent basis across all colleges in order to support the delivery of my Department's key strategic objectives.

As the CDP process is currently on-going, it is not possible to know the impact (by college) on enrolment numbers. Indeed, whilst my Department will provide a strategic direction on the profile and type of provision offered by each college, the actual number of student enrolments is a matter for the colleges themselves to determine. It will, therefore, be a number weeks before we are in a position to know the agreed offering for each college in terms of enrolments.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the employers that have participated in the ESS First Start Programme in West Belfast; and (ii) the number of 18-24 year olds gaining (a) temporary; and (b) permanent employment as a result.

(AQW 43935/11-15)

Dr Farry: First Start was initially delivered as a strand of the Steps to Work programme and, following the closure of Steps to Work to new entrants, as a strand of Employment Service Support.

The network of Lead Contractors responsible for the delivery of both Steps to Work and Employment Service Support liaised with employers to source suitable vacancies for the First Start programme and, consequently, my Department does not hold detail on the employers participating on a constituency basis.

Validated statistical information is not yet available that would allow me to report on the number of 18-24 year olds gaining (a) temporary, and (b) permanent employment following participation on Employment Service Support First Start, at present.

Management information collected on the First Start strand of Employment Service Support indicates that, by 16 March 2015, over 355 clients have found subsidised employment opportunities through this initiative across Northern Ireland.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether the proposed central service can be accessed by non-mainstream or specialist providers.

(AQW 43953/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships includes a commitment to establish an apprenticeship central service. Aspects of this central service will be piloted during 2014/15 to inform the introduction of the new apprenticeship system in 2016. Once established, the central service will be aimed at employers and prospective apprentices. It will promote apprenticeship opportunities, provide advice and guidance, and administer any support available, to both apprentices and employers where required.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he plans to encourage employers to reach under-represented or disadvantaged groups of young people, in particular young people leaving care.

(AQW 43954/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department leads the way on the agreed cross-departmental strategy for those young people in the "Not in Employment, Education or Training" (NEET) category. The strategy to address this issue, "Pathways to Success" (PtS), was published in May 2012.

The strategy, which is led and implemented by DEL, is made up of a three tier package aimed at:

- preventing young people missing opportunities for education and training, and/or becoming unemployed;
- helping young people in the 16-18 age group, especially those facing barriers, for example those leaving care; and
- assisting unemployed young people aged 18-24 more generally.

As part of the Pathways Strategy, the Collaboration and Innovation Fund was introduced in 2012 to explore new approaches to address the specific and general employability barriers faced by young people. Over £9 million was allocated to 24 organisations to deliver project activity from December 2012 to March 2015.

Projects aim to support 6,000 NEET young people from across Northern Ireland through a broad range of provision including mentoring, vocational qualifications, personal development, motivational, life and employability skills plus work experience with local employers. Five projects, which have received combined funding of over £1.88 million, are providing support specifically to young people who have had experience of the care system.

LEMIS (Local Employment Intermediary Service) is an initiative designed to help unemployed people in the community overcome those issues that may be preventing them from finding and keeping a job, which includes young people aged 16-24 who are not engaged in education, training or employment. LEMIS subsumed my Department's Progress to Work (P2W) Programme in April 2011, which assisted clients with a common employability barrier enter employment, i.e. those with a history of drug/alcohol misuse, homelessness and ex-prisoners/ex-offenders and care leavers. In July 2013, under the Pathways to Success Strategy, the service was refocused to include NEET young people as a common employability barrier, which enabled young people to be case loaded and supported by a LEMIS mentor to help move them closer to education, employment or training; this includes young people leaving care.

The current round of funding for NEET interventions will cease at the end of March 2015, and my Department will continue to support young people not in employment, education or training through the new European Social Fund (ESF) Programme commencing in April 2015.

Through priority 1 - Access to Employment - a total of £109.9m will be provided over the lifetime of the ESF programme. Of this total, £69.9m will support economic inactivity and unemployment, with the remaining £49.9m being set aside to support young people aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training. Young people who are NEET and their families will also benefit from the Community Family Support programme which has been allocated a total of £21.6m over the lifetime of the ESF 2014-2020 programme and is a signature project under the Delivering Social Change agenda.

In addition, there is a separate ESF strand for people with disabilities which will also include young people in the NEET category and care leavers.

My Department's Careers Service currently provides dedicated advice and support to all 16-17 year olds in the NEET category including those leaving care. These clients are allocated a specific careers adviser who provides support and advocacy to assist them to secure an appropriate education, employment or training opportunity. Careers advisers also work

with those young people who have, unfortunately, dropped out of education and training, to help them back into a positive labour market opportunity.

I have also referenced a number of new initiatives which will provide additional support to those young people furthest away from the labour market. These are listed below.

The United Youth Programme (UYP)

My Department is leading on the development of the Executive's United Youth Programme which has two specific outcomes:

- i. the personal development of young people who are in the NEET category, to improve their confidence, skills and experience; and
- ii. the promotion of good relations between these young people and others across the community, including people (and particularly young people) from other community backgrounds.

In the early pilot phase, I am particularly interested in finding new and creative ways of engaging those most disadvantaged or at risk of exclusion, including care-experienced young people.

Apprenticeships

In June 2014, my Department published *Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships* which will be central in transforming our skills landscape and securing our economic success. The new model for apprenticeships will be in place for 2016 and includes a range of commitments to increase participation by a wide range of individuals. In particular, a pilot project will be taken forward to develop a new youth training offer to widen access to apprenticeships to individuals with disabilities or other barriers that are impacting on their ability to engage in education and training.

Economic Inactivity

My Department is currently working in partnership with DETI, DSD, Invest NI and DHSSPS to develop a new strategy to tackle economic inactivity. A key aspect of this Strategy will be the delivery of initiatives designed to reduce the numbers of young people who are economically inactive.

Inter-Departmental Working

The policy lead for work with Looked after Children lies with DHSSPS. Trusts, as the corporate parent, have a primary responsibility for helping young people to achieve economic independence and stability in adult life through promoting gateways to employment. Equally, my Department has the key role to play in promoting learning and skills and preparing people for work and supporting pathways to employment for looked after and care experienced young people.

My Department has been involved closely with DHSSPS in attempting to improve the education, training and employment outcomes for young people in care or leaving care. In particular, the Careers Service has, for some considerable time, been working with Trusts and others in an attempt to ensure that these vulnerable young people have access to the right advice about their future.

Improving outcomes in education, training and employment for care experienced young people and effective delivery against Departmental targets in this area requires collaborative working arrangements at a Departmental and inter-agency level. This has involved partnerships between my Department, in particular the Careers Service, DE, HSCB and Trusts, as well as a range of voluntary sector partners who make a contribution to supporting young people in education, training and employment.

Care Matters

My Department has commitments in "Care Matters in NI" involving Careers, Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE), Training and Essential Skills. It also highlights the need for better collaborative working in the interests of these young people, improving statistical information gathering and a range of pastoral care issues.

My Department's policies and actions are inclusive of this population and flexibilities are built into mainstream programmes to facilitate the inclusion of care experienced young people.

Care to Careers Regional Steering Group

An outcome of the DHSSPS "Care Matters in NI" publication was the establishment of the Care to Careers Regional Steering Group (RSG). The Group is co-chaired by My Department's Director of Strategy, European and Employment Relations (Colin Jack), and the Director of Children and Families in the Health and Social Care Board. The Group has representation from across all Health Trust areas, the public sector (DEL, DE, DSD and DHSSPS – the latter recently agreed to join the Group) and some key external partners (VOYPIC, Fostering Network and the Equality Commission). The Group focuses on promoting positive outcomes in education, training and employment for looked after and care-experienced young people.

Employability Scheme

My Department is engaged with Health Trusts to address proactively employability issues for those in care/care leavers. A key deliverable arising out of the above RSG was the establishment of an "employability scheme" by Health Trusts. In addition to interventions for those aged 13+ with Trusts and the Fostering Network, DHSSPS funds each Trust to have dedicated age 16+ workers with the responsibility of addressing employability aspects of care. Some of these services are contracted out by DHSSPS to the voluntary/ community sector. The overall aim is for each young person in care have the same access to

opportunities as their peers, such as information advice and guidance about their future career options, opportunities for work experience/volunteering and support from their corporate parent, just as any young person might expect from their family.

Careers Service

The Careers Service within my department has a formal partnership agreement with the five Health Trusts which aims to ensure that all young people with a care background receive timely and appropriate support in career planning to achieve their full potential and that this is provided at local level, through seamless joint working arrangements.

The Careers Service actively case manages young people who drop out early or do not have a positive destination when they leave school, until they are settled in appropriate education or training provision or employment.

The Careers Service is represented on the Care to Careers Joint Regional Steering group and the Regional Pathways in Further and Higher Education for Looked After and Care Experienced young people aged 16-21.

Social Clauses

My Employment Service helps deliver the Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-15 commitment to include social clauses in public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction. Work has been progressing within DHSSPS on the use of social clauses to provide more opportunities under Health Service contracts for care experienced young people. Officials in DHSSPS are aware of the work going on in the Employment Service, and have been encouraged to make contact to implement social clauses with regard to employment, training and skills opportunities in Health Service contracts. Trust officials on the RSG have been working to develop opportunities for care experienced young people in the health sector and through health sector social clauses.

Employment Service Interventions

The Employment Service (ES) does not differentiate between client groups (including young people from care) when discussing vacancies with employers. However ES does work to reach under-represented or disadvantaged groups of young people, including young people in or leaving care to assist them improve their skills, gain valuable work experience and ultimately secure employment.

Local Jobs & Benefits Offices and Job-Centre services and Outreach work

Employment Service Advisers (ESAs) work with some disadvantaged young people through the Pathways programme and when necessary case conference with social workers to enable them to move into training or employment.

Offices throughout the JBO network, through the 'Transition Programme' have been working with, and providing one to one support to, young disadvantaged/disabled students and their support workers/guardians in conjunctions with Careers Service.

Strabane Jobcentre delivers annual outreach to a group of young people from the local special needs school who are approaching their time to leave education. They discuss my Department's programmes and services and provide information packs.

In recent years, as part of our work promoting the Youth Employment Scheme, offices partnered with many organisations representing young people, including those leaving care, such as youth workers, staff from youth clubs, community centres, Princes Trust and the FE Colleges.

Foyle JBO staff worked closely with Include Youth, an organisation which, at that time, was responsible for helping secure employment for those in care in the Western Education and Library Board. By working closely with these organisations,(ESAs) were able to reduce the barriers to reaching and influencing those young people who would have been deemed furthest from the labour market according to our client assessment tool.

Foyle and Lisnagelvin offices have worked with Grit Rey in order to engage with young people. The aim of Grit Rey is to support young people who are "furthest away" from the labour market to find access to it, support young people with multiple disadvantages to fulfil their potential, and empower young people to re-engage with education, training, employment or community volunteering. They deliver this through a one week programme for 16-24 year olds with continued support over the following 6 months. Our ESA's and Team Leaders would offer the young people involved in this scheme assistance in job-search activities and highlighted training opportunities and vacancies.

All of this work is to reach under-represented or disadvantaged groups of young people, encouraging them to get involved in my Department's schemes, and raise their awareness of vacancy and placement opportunities with local employers who ES also works closely with to assist them to recruit and fill their vacancies with suitably skilled employees including young people leaving care.

Employer Engagement Team

Working in partnership with local employers, the Employment Service's Employer Engagement Team has facilitated a number of events across the province in the past twelve months, including five major job fairs, in order to promote the range of services which my Department has to offer, many of which provided specific opportunities for young people.

I am committed to continuing to create and improve opportunities for our young people at a time when youth unemployment in NI remains high. I have, therefore, made the introduction of a refreshed Youth Employment Scheme a key priority going forward into 2015.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department has taken to record the views of young people who are furthest away from formal, mainstream education and training provision; and how these views have influenced his Departments proposals for the new youth training scheme.

(AQW 43955/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department recently published the interim report of the review of youth training in Northern Ireland. This report drew from research of international best practice and engagement with a wide group of stakeholders, including young people who are furthest away from formal, mainstream education and training provision.

The stakeholder engagement, carried out as part of the development of the interim report, built on existing mechanisms established by my Department to engage young people furthest away from mainstream provision. In developing the 'Pathways to Success' strategy for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), my Department helped to establish the independent NEET Strategy Forum to engage and help co-ordinate those organisations in the voluntary and community sector which deliver services in this area. The forum has established the NEET Youth Forum, a regional network of young people who have experienced difficulties in accessing meaningful education, employment and training.

The NEET Strategy Forum, currently consisting of over 80 members, works collaboratively to inform and showcase proactive work that respects the voice of young people and focuses on the right of young people to access, maintain and progress to employment of their choice in Northern Ireland and beyond.

As part of the development process for the interim report, the review team met with members of the NEET Strategy Forum to discuss the review and the emerging proposals for youth training. The NEET Strategy Forum has also facilitated engagement events with hard-to-reach young people to inform the development of the United Youth programme, a key connected initiative to youth training. This engagement built on the findings of a Design Day for United Youth held in January 2014 by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister to gather views from young people and other interested parties.

In the development phase of the interim report for the review of youth training, my Department also sought feedback through a series of stakeholder engagement events, held in January 2014 across Northern Ireland. This included a specific event for young people to give their views and help shape the review's proposals. At this event the importance of valued and relevant qualifications such as GCSEs was highlighted, along with the importance of a high quality work-based learning experience with an employer. This feedback informed both the proposal for youth training to deliver a new, baccalaureate-style professional and technical award that equated to a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, and the proposal that youth training would include structured work-based learning as a mandatory element for all participants.

In addition to the review's stakeholder events, the views of over 40 young people disengaged from formal, mainstream education and training provision were recorded through discussion with participants on the Springboard Opportunities Headstart programme.

Topics discussed included, amongst other things, the duration of training, desired qualifications, work-based learning, advice and support, careers advice and how best to engage young people. In particular the importance of mentoring and pastoral support was highlighted, and this feedback helped to inform the proposals related to supporting young people both through their training provider and while on placement with an employer.

A public consultation was recently completed by my Department on the interim report. In addition to written responses from eight groups representing young people, more than one hundred and twenty young people directly responded to the consultation through focus groups, workshops and a complementary consultation response document specifically aimed at young people.

Views of young people who are furthest away from formal, mainstream education and training provision were further received through focus groups which included disengaged young people, through the NEETS forum, the Prince's Trust Young Ambassadors, and Unity Training's FIT4Life Education Programme. Focus group participants also included some young people with physical and learning disabilities and those from a care background.

All the views received from the young people during this consultation are presently being considered in tandem with the views received during the formal consultation process, and will inform the final strategy in its totality. The new strategy for youth training will be published in Spring 2015.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the process of collection, analysis and monitoring of data on the care status of young people participating in the new youth training provision.

(AQW 43956/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department recently completed a review of youth training in Northern Ireland for 16 – 24 year olds. This comprehensive review included an in-depth examination of international best practice in youth training, including data collection and analysis.

To help ensure that data collection and monitoring accurately highlights how the new youth training system is working for different groups the review duly proposed that the youth training system be underpinned by robust data collection, analysis and evaluation, including for those young people who may face barriers to engagement and progression, such as those leaving care.

The review of youth training consultation has recently concluded, with the new strategy for youth training expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. Detail regarding how such data, including for care leavers, will be collected, monitored and evaluated, will be developed comprehensively over the coming months.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there are any NVQ framework qualifications which equate to four GCSEs grades D-G, including English and Mathematics grades D-F.
(AQW 43957/11-15)

Dr Farry: National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work based awards that are achieved through assessment and training. To achieve an NVQ, learners must prove that they have the competence to carry out their job to the required standard. NVQs are based on National Occupational Standards that describe the 'competencies' expected in any given job role. Learners will work towards an NVQ that reflects their role in a paid or voluntary position.

GCSEs graded D – G are Level 1 qualifications. NVQs range from Level 1, which focuses on basic work activities, to Level 8 for senior management. The award of a Level 1 NVQ demonstrates competence that involves the application of knowledge in the performance of a range of varied work activities, most of which are routine and predictable.

Even though NVQ Level 1 qualifications and GCSEs graded D - G both sit on the Qualifications and Credit Framework at Level 1, the qualifications differ in terms of size and mode of assessment. Therefore, NVQ qualifications are not directly comparable to four GCSEs at grades D – G, including English and mathematics at grades D – F.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions have taken place between his Department and Queen's University regarding the removal of funding to the Belfast Festival at Queen's.
(AQW 43988/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides Queen's University Belfast with funding for the purposes of teaching, learning and research activities and capital expenditure in relation to these activities.

The funding of the Belfast Festival at Queen's is outside my Department's remit and is a matter for Queen's University Belfast.

The University did inform my Department of the decision to remove funding to the Belfast Festival in advance of the announcement being made.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the extent and level of funding aimed at providing IT conversion courses for non IT graduates, for the most recent year available; and how he anticipates the recent budget adjustments will impact on funding for such initiatives.
(AQW 43995/11-15)

Dr Farry: Working with Invest NI, 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 in Northern Ireland. Assured Skills also enhances the capability of Northern Ireland to respond to the needs of potential investors. In recognition of ICT as a priority sector for economic growth and of the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and in order to ensure that Northern Ireland's economic growth is supported through an appropriate skills pipeline, my Department has provided financial support through the Assured Skills programme during the last year for the following IT conversion courses:

- two Data Analytics Academies;
- a Software Testers Academy;
- a Cloud Academy; and
- a Software Professionals Development Course.

The total value for these courses is £1.087m.

My Department carries out an ongoing process of evaluation of such courses, and decisions as to future support are made in light of these evaluations and in response to identified demand. For example, a further Analytics Academy is due to complete on 5 May 2015.

Within the context of the available budget for the Assured Skills programme, I anticipate that we will be able to continue to support a number of conversion projects across a number of sectors, including the IT sector.

Postgraduate courses in the higher education sector, especially Masters conversion courses, are also an effective and efficient way to up-skill and re-skill individuals in areas of economic importance.

In light of this, in June 2014 my Department provided the universities with an additional £0.4m to pilot a Masters scholarship scheme for academic year 2014/15. Both Queen's University and Ulster University decided to use all 88 scholarships in STEM subjects, 70 of these were awarded in key areas of ICT.

The total number of applications to both universities for these courses increased from 110 in June 2014 to 274 in September 2014. Of these, 240 applications were in key ICT areas, demonstrating a significant increase in applications after the point at which the scholarships were made available.

The pilot will be reviewed at the end of the academic year, however, in the recent budget settlement for financial year 2015-16 the £0.4m which was allocated for the scholarship pilot was identified as a Departmental saving and funds may be not available for future provision.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for the number and percentage increase in students applying to ICT related university courses in (i) 2013; and (ii) 2014.
(AQW 43996/11-15)

Dr Farry: While my Department does not routinely collect or receive detailed data on student applications, it does collect information on enrolments to HEIs in Northern Ireland.

Figures for first year enrolments to Computer Sciences courses^A at Northern Ireland HEIs are presented below in Table 1. Contextual figures for all enrolments to Computer Sciences courses at NI HEIs are presented below in Table 2.

Table 1: First year enrolments on Computer Sciences¹ courses at NI HEIs by mode of study, 2012/13 and 2013/14

	Full-time and Sandwich	Part-time and Other	Total
2012/13	1015	95	1110
2013/14	1295	95	1385
% change	27.4%	0.0%	25.1%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2: Enrolments on Computer Sciences courses at NI HEIs by mode of study, 2012/13 and 2013/14

	Full-time and Sandwich	Part-time and Other	Total
2012/13	2740	315	3055
2013/14	3260	320	3580
% change	19.0%	0.3%	17.1%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes for both tables:

- 1 To prevent the identification of individuals, figures have been rounded to the nearest '5', with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0, in line with HESA's rounding policy.
- 2 Due to rounding, the sum of rows or columns may not match the total given.
- 3 Percentage changes are calculated on unrounded figures.

I trust that you find this information helpful.

- A. Computer Sciences include, for example, programming, data management, information systems etc and a full list of all courses included for Computer Sciences (section I) is available at the following link:
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/content/article?id=1787>

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 42760/11-15, (i) whether St Mary's Teacher Training College has a policy or similar against the acceptance of external students completing the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education; (ii) whether this is equality impact tested; and (iii) why has this never been considered, in light of significant government funding.

(AQW 44003/11-15)

Dr Farry: St Mary's University College has advised that it does not have a policy, or similar, against the acceptance of external students completing the Certificate of Religious Education. The College reported that the programme leading to the above award is delivered to initial teacher education students who are attending St Mary's and it was not designed for any other purpose. The College has further advised that in their view to facilitate students who are external to the College, and who may wish to complete the St Mary's programme, it would be necessary to design a new approach.

The issues raised form part of the Review of Initial Teacher Education Infrastructure and are specifically referenced in Aspiring to Excellence, the report of the International Review Panel. These issues have been the focus of discussions with key stakeholders over recent years. It remains my clear intention to achieve a successful outcome to secure the reform of teaching training infrastructure in Northern Ireland including equality issues.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his Department's assessment of the level of savings realised since the merger of the 16 Further Education Colleges, into the current 6 Colleges in each of the financial years since the merger.

(AQW 44032/11-15)

Dr Farry: The college restructuring was not driven by a requirement to make efficiency savings. The principal driver of the restructuring was to facilitate the successful implementation of the wider Further Education Means Business strategy. The main focus of this strategy was to ensure that colleges met the needs of employers and learners in their areas through an increasing focus on the economic development agenda. Accordingly, colleges were tasked with delivering better value for money through the outcomes of this economic development agenda rather than through significant cost savings. The restructuring enabled colleges to devote more resources to the delivery of services to individual learners and to employers.

Savings were, however, achieved in terms of staffing costs and staffing numbers and details, as per the audited annual accounts, are provided below. Although the overall wage bill has actually risen slightly by approximately 1.8% from 2006/07 to 2013/14, this represents a significant decrease in 'real' costs given inflationary pressures over the same period. The change in staffing numbers represents a reduction of 14.3% for the same two years.

Staffing Costs £'000's		Staffing Numbers (Full Time Equivalent):	
Year	Total	Year	Total
2006/07	150,047	2006/07	4,795
2007/08	146,830	2007/08	4,665
2008/09	146,440	2008/09	4,600
2009/10	144,607	2009/10	4,711
2010/11	152,622*	2010/11	4,439
2011/12	146,397	2011/12	4,183
2012/13	150,592	2012/13	4,139
2013/14	152,746	2013/14	4,109

* Increase due to a change in FRS17 - the accounting standard for pension costs.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many Freedom of Information requests his Department received in the last two financial years; and to detail the cost of processing these requests.

(AQW 44097/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department received 129 and 116 Freedom of Information requests in the 2013/14 and 14/15 financial years respectively.

Information regarding the cost of processing the requests is not collected by my Department and cannot therefore be provided. Given that every request is different, it is not possible even to provide a reasonable estimate of the costs involved.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, what notice was given to organisations of the date for appeals on European Social Fund Application decisions.

(AQW 44120/11-15)

Dr Farry: Applicants to the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme, 2014-2020, were given five working days to appeal selection decisions at Phase I and Phase II of the competition. Applicants were notified of Phase I decisions on 9 February 2015, and given until 16 February 2015 to register an appeal. Phase II decisions were notified to applicants on 26 March 2015, with a date of 2 April 2015 as a closing date for submission of appeals.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what initiatives are being taken in regional colleges to promote the benefits of cycling.

(AQW 44256/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department does not hold information in relation to initiatives by the regional colleges to promote the benefits of cycling. Each further education college, in its capacity as an independent body, is responsible for promotion of its own initiatives. I have therefore referred this question to each of the Principals of the six Further Education colleges, who will respond direct to the Member.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many organisations who applied for European Social Funding achieved the 115 pass mark, but will not receive funding.

(AQW 44318/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am not in a position to provide this information as the European Social Fund assessment process is continuing, with successful appeals from Phase I now progressing to Phase II.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much her Department has spent on postage in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 43843/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has incurred the following postage costs in the 2013/14 and 2012/13 financial years:

- 2013/14: £56,533
- 2012/13: £49,092

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether Rathlin Energy Ltd has notified her Department of its intention to drill an exploration borehole in its licence area, at a site other than Ballinlea 1 or Ballinlea 2, which is currently subject to a full planning application; and if so, to provide the address of that site.

(AQW 43902/11-15)

Mrs Foster: No. Rathlin Energy Ltd existing proposals are to drill a second exploratory well, "Ballinlea No 2" in County Antrim and this is the subject of the Company's on-going planning application with DOE Planning Service.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the costs incurred by Tourism Northern Ireland in distributing greetings and thank you cards to stakeholders and partners in the last twelve months.

(AQW 43904/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Tourism NI has stated that it is not possible to disaggregate the costs for distributing greetings and thank you cards from its total postage costs.

Department of the Environment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the budget that will be transferred to each local council to undertake the review of extant permissions and will involve reviewing permissions which were extant at the time of designation.

(AQW 38686/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): In August the Department provided the Local Government sector with a paper which set out the financial consequences of the transfer of planning functions to councils. When calculating the level of funding each Council would require, the department considered costs associated with the full range of their planning responsibilities, including the review of old mineral permissions and extant permissions.

The Department asked each council to consider the paper and to provide comments. A number of comments have been received by my Department and these are being considered. The quantum of funding to transfer to each Council will be confirmed within the coming weeks.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment whether a letter has been, or will be, sent to all taxi drivers to inform them that Single Tier is not being introduced; and if so, whether he will provide a copy or place the letter in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 43100/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Following the decision by the Assembly to annul the Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, my Department issued a press release regarding the annulment. The Taxi Reform website was also updated.

My Department has written to all taxi drivers advising them of the outcome of the debate, updating them as regards plans to implement the Act and reiterating the restrictions and conditions that currently apply to existing taxi licences. The letter has been made available on the Taxi Reform website with hard copies issued by post to all taxi drivers.

A copy of the letter has been provided to the Committee and a further copy will be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment how many civil servants are employed in his Department.

(AQW 43293/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The latest published figures as set out by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency show that there were 2,672 civil servants (headcount) employed in the Department of the Environment in January 2015.

Some 400 of the staff will transfer to new Councils on 1 April 2015 with the transfer of planning responsibilities to local government. A further 110 staff will leave the Department at the same time following the transfer of vehicle licensing services to DVLA in Swansea last year.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will designate the area around, and including, the JTI/Gallaher site in Ballymena as an Enterprise Zone, under the authority given in the Enterprise Zones Northern Ireland Order 1981.

(AQW 43320/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has specific powers to introduce Enterprise Zones under the Enterprise Zone (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. These powers effectively grant planning permission for a specified class of development or a range of developments within a defined geographic area. In relation to this Order I have no powers relating to relaxing of any financial provisions other than to negate the need for planning applications and their associated fee.

Currently there are no plans to designate JTI/Gallagher site in Ballymena as an Enterprise Zone under current DoE powers. From my Department's perspective I consider that the future planning status of this particular site would be best considered by the new Mid and East Antrim Council through its Local Development Plan or through the determination of any future planning application taking account of relevant regional planning policy.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 42492/11-15, to detail the rationale behind the decision to make staff from the Driver and Vehicle Agency exempt from applying to the Northern Ireland Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme.

(AQW 43575/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The purpose of the NICS Voluntary Exit Scheme, launched on 2 March 2015, is to deliver a permanent paybill reduction for the Civil Service by securing reductions in the numbers of staff working in departments. The Scheme permitted a provision for the exclusion of employees from consideration for selection where it would be necessary to fill consequential vacancies by external recruitment rather than by internal redeployment.

The decision to exclude most Driver Vehicle Agency (DVA) Professional and Technical (P&T) staff was based on an assessment that any vacancies created by these staff leaving under the VES could not be filled by internal redeployment from elsewhere in the Civil Service. This was because there are no other groups of staff in the Civil Service with the required vehicle and HGV mechanical skills. Thus their release would have triggered a recruitment competition which would have meant no permanent paybill reduction as required, but would also incur the additional costs of releasing staff under the Scheme and running a recruitment exercise.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to provide, or place in the Assembly library, a copy of the local government policy against the use of council-owned and staffed facilities for use by individual political parties for launches, meetings, or any similar purposes; and whether this policy will transfer verbatim to the new council structures.

(AQW 43617/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no responsibilities for these matters. As I stated in my answer to AQW 43675/11-15, policy and decisions on the use of council property are a matter for each council, subject to any legislative restrictions.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment whether the local government policy against the use of council-owned and staffed facilities for use by individual political parties for launches, meetings, or any similar purposes, can be superseded or voided by Section 75; and if so, who has responsibility for making the decision to go against council policy in these instances.

(AQW 43622/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no responsibilities for these matters. As I stated in my answer to AQW 43675/11-15, policy and decisions on the use of council property are a matter for each council, subject to any legislative restrictions.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment how many wind farm planning applications, considered centrally, have been determined by his Department (i) between May 2007-May 2011; (ii) between May 2011-July 2013; and (iii) from July 2013 to date; and with what outcomes.

(AQW 43626/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department's Strategic Planning Division has determined wind farm planning applications as follows:-

- (i) Between May 2007 and April 2011, 34 applications have been determined (31 approved and three refused);
- (ii) Between May 2011 and June 2013, 23 applications have been determined (18 approved and five refused); and
- (iii) Between July 2013 and January 2015, 16 applications have been determined (nine approved and seven refused).

These figures have been extracted from the latest available, provisional, renewable energy tables.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment how many wind farm planning applications, considered centrally, were referred to the Planning Appeals Commission on the grounds of non determination (i) between May 2007-May 2011; (ii) between May 2011-July 2013; and (iii) from July 2013 to date.

(AQW 43627/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The system we use to record data on appeals does not hold the information in the form requested. Nevertheless there have been seven non-determination appeals lodged with the Planning Appeals Commission since 2012. Of these, one was heard in September 2014, two further were heard in March 2015 and the remainder are still to be heard.

It should be noted that this information on appeals is provided from Planning administrative systems and does not form part of published and validated DOE Official Statistics.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment what is the longest period for which his Department has centrally considered a wind farm planning application; and what has been the average period taken by his Department in making determinations over the last three years.

(AQW 43628/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The longest period which my Department's Strategic Planning Division took to consider a wind farm planning application was 429 weeks.

The average period taken to make a determination in the last three years is 171 weeks.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment which of the existing councils have, and have not, adopted the local government policy regarding the use by individual political parties of council owned and staffed facilities for launches, meetings or any similar purposes.

(AQW 43679/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no responsibilities for these matters. As I stated in my answer to AQW 43675/11-15, policy and decisions on the use of council property are a matter for each council, subject to any legislative restrictions.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment how many employees in his Department have retired since April 2010; and how many are due to retire by April 2018.

(AQW 43693/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In total, 215 employees of the Department of Environment have retired during the period 1 April 2010 to 1 March 2015 (inclusive). The NICS no longer has a compulsory retirement age. A total of 7 employees have confirmed their intention to retire by April 2018.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of the concerns of residents of Kernan Gardens, Portadown at the proposal of the Department for Social Development to sell a plot of land in the vicinity of their homes; and what evidence his Department have that an ancient fort was once located on the site.

(AQW 43759/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am aware that in August 2013 the Department for Social Development (DSD) wrote to the Department seeking planning advice on a plot of land at Kernan, Portadown. The DSD were advised in writing that the plot of land in question lies within the development limits for Portadown and is designated white land in the Craigavon Area Plan 2010. White land has the potential to accommodate a number of types of development.

The DSD were also advised that the site lies within the area of influence of an Unscheduled Monument and that NIEA-Protecting Historic Monuments should be contacted for further advice. The mature trees on the site were highlighted as being a further possible constraint on the development of the land. The site also adjoins a cycle route and any future development of the site should account for this.

I am aware that there are two plots of land for sale at Kernan. A smaller plot of land, adjacent to the plot referred to above has a number of mature trees on the site and these are protected by a TPO.

I am advised that the residents of Kernan Gardens, Portadown have not been in contact with my officials to express any concerns regarding the sale of this land.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment how his Department is working towards making the process of the evaluation of a vocational medical driving licence more efficient.

(AQW 43804/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) issues driving licences in accordance with the regulations set out in the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The DVA is required to ensure that driving licences are only issued to applicants who are medically fit to drive.

Where an applicant for or holder of a Group 2 (lorries and buses) driving licence has declared a medical condition the DVA may need to refer the application to its medical advisors, the Occupational Health Service (OHS), for an assessment of the applicant's fitness to drive.

In association with the OHS, the DVA has drawn up procedures and workflows with decision points that enable staff to decide whether an application can be determined in-house or if referral to the OHS is required. This ensures that only those applications that require assessment are referred to the medical advisors.

The OHS is currently developing a case referral system that will be implemented for driver licensing cases in April 2015. The new eMed system will enable electronic sharing of documents and medical reports and will remove the need for hard copy documents to transfer between the two organisations. This new system will improve turnaround times and document security.

Other steps that have been taken in the DVA to improve efficiency include:

- a weekly review of applications that remain outstanding to ensure follow up actions are taken promptly;
- an increase in the number of staff trained in this area of work;
- a review of the standard correspondence issued to applicants to ensure relevant information is provided such as information to the driver on whether they can continue to drive pending consideration of their application;
- review of the DLM1 medical form to incorporate changes in medical standards that will improve processing; and
- an ongoing review of information on the NI Direct website relating to declaring a medical condition has been reviewed and updated to ensure it remains accurate.

I can also advise that the DVA has initiated a project for the development of a new driver licensing IT system which will be delivered by April 2016. This system will improve the customer experience, deliver efficiencies and will introduce online processing and other enhancements.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment what consultation he intends to conduct with stakeholders, including public hire taxi drivers, in relation to the proposal to remove perspex partitions from public hire taxis.

(AQW 43827/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no plans to require the removal of partitions in taxis. I acknowledge that a partition can act as a driver protection measure and taxi drivers will continue to be able to use vehicles fitted with them if they wish, taking a decision based on the cost and the benefits they consider accrue for them in having a partition. Around 95% of taxis in Northern Ireland do not have a partition.

No consultation on the matter is, therefore, planned and no risk assessment or health and safety reports are required. Similarly there have been no discussions with the bodies mentioned as drivers will still be able to choose to use a partition.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the reasoning behind the proposal to remove perspex divisions from public hire taxis.

(AQW 43828/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no plans to require the removal of partitions in taxis. I acknowledge that a partition can act as a driver protection measure and taxi drivers will continue to be able to use vehicles fitted with them if they wish, taking a decision based on the cost and the benefits they consider accrue for them in having a partition. Around 95% of taxis in Northern Ireland do not have a partition.

No consultation on the matter is, therefore, planned and no risk assessment or health and safety reports are required. Similarly there have been no discussions with the bodies mentioned as drivers will still be able to choose to use a partition.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department's updated Planning Application Portal has been experiencing any problems; and what impact this would have on keeping the public informed about current planning applications.

(AQW 43873/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The DOE has not been experiencing any problems regarding the public's access to the existing Planning Portal and there has been no impact on the availability of information about planning applications to the public.

The DOE is currently undertaking a programme of essential enhancements for the Planning Portal to ensure that it can respond to the legislative changes being introduced by the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

As the legislation does not take effect until 1 April 2015, these changes were not deployed into either the internal or public facing systems before that date.

The implementation of these changes will be undertaken from close of business on 1 April 2015 until 6 April 2015. From a public perspective, the Planning Portal website, www.planningni.gov.uk will be available throughout this period, however during this time there will be limited ability to search and monitor planning applications.

Staff will still be available in the local offices to provide information about current applications either in person or by telephone during normal business hours.

This minor reduction to normal service and internet access is vital to ensure that the new Councils can take over responsibility for planning applications from 1 April 2015 and I remain committed to ensuring that the changes to the system occur as scheduled.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 43000/11-15, how many compliance audit visits have taken place in the last twelve months.

(AQW 43892/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Pursuant to AQW 43000/11-15, the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) do not hold records pertaining to those specific bus operators that provide home to school transport on behalf of the Education and Library Boards.

However, I can advise that DVA commenced a programme of Compliance Audits in April 2014 and up until 28th February 2015 there have been 32 audits carried out at bus operator premises. All bus operators will be expected to go through a Compliance Audit conducted by DVA.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 43000/11-15, how many vehicles were found to be non-compliant; and what action was taken by the Driver and Vehicle Agency.

(AQW 43893/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Pursuant to AQW 43000/11-15, for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014 there were 29 vehicles found to be non-compliant following spot checks on school buses. The resultant enforcement action taken is contained in the table below.

Enforcement Action	No of Notices Issued*
Defect Notice	9
Prohibition Notice	20
Licensing Suspension Notice	1
Fixed Penalty Notice	0

* Please note that more than 1 type of Enforcement Notice can be issued to an offending vehicle.

** The figures provided are derived from DOE Official Statistics.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment whether Rathlin Energy Ltd has notified his Department of its intention to drill an exploration borehole in its licence area, at a site other than Ballinlea 1 or Ballinlea 2, which is currently subject to a full planning application; and if so, to provide the address of that site.

(AQW 43903/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can confirm that my Department is in receipt of only one application (ref: E/2013/0093/F) to drill a borehole for hydrocarbon exploration in the Rathlin Basin.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to provide, or place in the Assembly library, the risk assessment for drivers and the health and safety reports to date, on the proposal to remove perspex partitions from public hire taxis.

(AQW 43912/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no plans to require the removal of partitions in taxis. I acknowledge that a partition can act as a driver protection measure and taxi drivers will continue to be able to use vehicles fitted with them if they wish, taking a decision based on the cost and the benefits they consider accrue for them in having a partition. Around 95% of taxis in Northern Ireland do not have a partition.

No consultation on the matter is, therefore, planned and no risk assessment or health and safety reports are required. Similarly there have been no discussions with the bodies mentioned as drivers will still be able to choose to use a partition.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 22801/11-15, whether there are any immediate risks to health, such as asbestos fibres being released due to the extreme disrepair.

(AQW 43914/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This Department is not aware of immediate risks to health because of the condition of this building, and the issue of health risks associated with asbestos is not a Departmental matter.

Architects in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Historic Buildings Unit have, however, advised that most asbestos is not dangerous, unless it is disturbed by activities such as drilling, sawing, or demolition and any other work which generates asbestos bearing dust. Officials have advised that if there are concerns about asbestos, then before any intervention with the building fabric takes place, a survey should be carried out by an accredited surveyor. Any asbestos material identified can then be removed by a licensed contractor.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the applications from North Down to the Challenge Fund; and which of these applications have been successful.

(AQW 43924/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The table below details all applications to the 2014/15 NGO Challenge Fund for projects based in North Down. In total seven applications received letters of offer out of a total of 22.

Table outlining all applications to the 2014/15 NGO Challenge Fund for projects based in North Down.

Group	Project Title
Successful Applicants	
British Trust for Ornithology	Measuring And Monitoring Biodiversity Offshore 2 Conference
Copeland Bird Observatory	A roof over their heads
National Trust	North Down Coastal Improvement Path Project
South Eastern Regional College (SERC)	SERC Woodland:School Programme
St Malachy's Primary School	St. Malachy's Eco School Garden
The Conservation Volunteers	Improving the Clandeboye Way at Helen's Bay
The Conservation Volunteers	Growing more local provenance trees from seed
Unsuccessful Applicants	
Bangor Central Integrated Primary	Bangor Environmental Awareness Programme
British Trust for Ornithology	BTO Drone Proof-of-Concept
Camphill Community Glencraig	Training for Forest and Beach School Leaders
Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR)	Ash dieback monitoring in Northern Ireland
Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR), Department of Natural Sciences, National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI)	CEDaR Seals Database
Donaghadee Sailing Club	'Wild-Sails' – Interactions With Wildlife & Sailing
Glens Red Squirrel Group	Red Squirrel Protection and Development
Hollywood Shared Town Organisation	Redburn Country Park Development Project
Hollywood Steiner School	Gardening and outdoor play resources
Hollywood Steiner School	Natural Childhood
Hollywood Steiner School	Outdoor education worker
Hollywood Steiner School	Practical skills, Natural materials.
Millisle Youth Forum	Growing our Community
National Museums Northern Ireland	Habitas Website Redevelopment Project
NOW	Regeneration of Pinewood Pottery

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment when he will answer AQW 43320/11-15.

(AQW 43936/11-15)

Mr Durkan: AQW 43320/11-15 was answered on Friday 27 March 2015.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 40780/11-15, for the definition of controlled waste; and why the landfilling which took place between 16 August 1995 and 28 December 2006 does not fall within that definition.

(AQW 43942/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, the primary legislation under which NIEA enforces waste-related activities, waste is regarded as "any substance or object which the holder discards or intends or is required to discard." Controlled waste is defined as "household, industrial and commercial waste, or any such waste."

The legislation further clarifies the respective categories. Commercial waste is interpreted as coming from premises where trade, business, sport, recreation or entertainment is conducted. Household waste is taken to mean that from any building,

or part of a building, used for living accommodation, including caravans, residential homes and educational establishments. Industrial waste is any taken from factories, premises used for the provision of public transport (by land, sea or air), or for the connection or supply, gas, water, electricity or sewerage. In addition, industrial waste can be taken from premises used for the provision to the public of postal or telecommunication services and any mine or quarry or any premises used for agriculture within the meaning of the Agriculture Act (Northern Ireland) 1949.

As regards this specific matter, the origin of material used in the alleged infilling and site construction was deemed to have been generated from on-site workings and, as such, was not regarded as waste.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 40780/11-15, whether the content from the settlement lagoons is considered to be controlled waste.
(AQW 43943/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The definition of waste in the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 is 'any substance the holder discards or intends to discard.' In this case, The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is content the holder does not intend to discard the material. If site-derived material is used for on-site construction purposes, it does not fall under waste regulation.

Therefore in this case the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has confirmed that this material is not considered to be controlled waste.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment what engagement has he had with the Health and Safety Executive and the Public Health Agency as to driver's rights to be protected from crime, assault or injury in view of the proposed removal perspex partitions from public hire taxis.

(AQW 43962/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no plans to require the removal of partitions in taxis. I acknowledge that a partition can act as a driver protection measure and taxi drivers will continue to be able to use vehicles fitted with them if they wish, taking a decision based on the cost and the benefits they consider accrue for them in having a partition. Around 95% of taxis in Northern Ireland do not have a partition.

No consultation on the matter is, therefore, planned and no risk assessment or health and safety reports are required. Similarly there have been no discussions with the bodies mentioned as drivers will still be able to choose to use a partition.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 22801/11-15, instead of repair, why the building cannot be demolished in the interests of safety and for the benefit of other facilities and service users in the immediate area.

(AQW 43963/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Drumglass Hospital is listed as a building of 'special architectural and historic interest' under Article 42(1) of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. Article 45 (1) states:

'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, and in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, the Department shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'

Demolition would remove such 'special architectural or historic interest' completely.

Policy BH10 of Planning Policy Statement 6 therefore explains that:

'The Department will not permit the demolition of a listed building unless there are exceptional reasons why the building cannot be retained in its original or a reasonably modified form.'

I understand that, no such exceptional reasons exist and - notwithstanding current difficulties - the old hospital has the potential for reuse. Therefore, a proposal for demolition is likely to be considered contrary to this policy. Officials remain willing and available to work with any potential owner, towards securing the regeneration and sustainable reuse of this listed building.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether his Department has received complaints that excavation works at Kirkiston Castle Golf Club have been adversely impacting on known nesting habitats of the skylark; (ii) whether this work was authorised by his Department; (iii) whether environmental assessments were carried out before the works were undertaken; (iv) what was the extent enforcement action initiated; and (v) for his assessment of the environmental damage caused.
(AQW 43973/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has received complaints regarding works at Kirkistown Castle Golf Club. An enforcement case was opened and is currently subject to investigation. A further complaint was received on 13 March 2015 which raised the further matter of the results of the works carried out having adverse impacts on nesting habitats of skylarks.

No planning application has been received by my Department for the work carried out to date and I can confirm that no environmental assessments have been submitted. I can assure the member that my Department is fully aware of the situation and is carefully following its enforcement policy and procedures.

As the case is ongoing it is inappropriate for me to comment further. I should also advise that as of 1 April the enforcement case and ongoing investigations will transfer to North Down and Ards Council.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the average wait for an MOT test in each test centre; (ii) the number of cancelled MOT tests in each test centre in the last twelve months; and (iii) the steps he is taking to reduce delays. **(AQW 44041/11-15)**

Mr Durkan: The key Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) vehicle testing waiting time target is: to appoint 92 per cent of all applications within 21 days or on request, at a later date.

Currently the average waiting time for a vehicle test for the period 1 April 2014 to 23 March 2015 is 14 days. However, waiting times are historically longer in the months January to April when the DVA experiences peak demand. The average waiting time for March is 20 days with Downpatrick test centre having the longest waiting time at 23 days (see Table 1 below).

To meet peak demand and limit the impact of increasing waiting times, the DVA targets all available staff resources, including the use of overtime, at those centres most affected. In previous years, adopting these techniques has ensured that the overall customer waiting time has been well within target. The DVA expects this to be the case again this year, which they will monitor closely.

During the last 12 months records show that 6,171 tests were cancelled by the DVA for a number of reasons, including inclement weather or industrial action. The figure of 6,171 also includes tests cancelled by DVA where the Agency accepted the reasons presented by the customer as to why they were unable to cancel and rebook within the required one clear day cancellation period. Only 151 vehicle tests were cancelled by the DVA, where the reason was deemed to be within DVA's control and the Agency was unable to give the customer the appropriate notice of one clear working day. These cancellations which were due to the failure of test equipment, power failure, or for health and safety reasons affecting staff and customers resulted in a payment of compensation to the customer.

Table 1: Vehicle Test – Waiting times

Test Centre	Average waiting time in days – YTD 1 April 2014 to 23 March 2015	Average waiting time in days – 1 March 2015 to 23 March 2015
Armagh	14	18
Ballymena	14	21
Belfast	15	22
Coleraine	14	22
Cookstown	15	20
Craigavon	12	18
Downpatrick	16	23
Enniskillen	13	17
Larne	12	20
Lisburn	15	22
Londonderry	15	21
Mallusk	13	19
Newry	14	21
Newtownards	13	20
Omagh	15	19
Overall	14	20

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will introduce new legislation to control the use of jet skis to safeguard people who use beaches.

(AQW 44044/11-15)

Mr Durkan: New legislation is not required for this purpose. Under Article 68 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, councils have the power to create byelaws which regulate the use of pleasure boats, including personal watercraft (also known as jet skis), for the prevention of danger, obstruction or annoyance to people bathing in the sea or using the seashore.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to proposed changes to disability access regulations for public hire taxis, to clarify whether the proposed changes are unique to Northern Ireland, and if so, to detail (i) why this is necessary; and (ii) whether he intends to break parity with existing disability legislation in the rest of the UK as regards to public hire taxi design.

(AQW 44077/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department intends to introduce updated requirements for wheelchair accessible taxis to ensure that such vehicles fully meet the requirements of people with disabilities.

The new specification was designed following extensive research including surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with accessible vehicle manufacturers and converters, people with disabilities across Northern Ireland and taxi operators. An initial draft of the specification was circulated amongst selected manufacturers and converters to ensure that the proposals were achievable in the context of base vehicles currently available as taxis.

The proposed specification and the reports pertaining to it, were published for public consultation in February 2014, with a synopsis of responses and proposed way forward considered by the Environment Committee on 3 July 2014. You will be aware that an SL1 form, which included further details on the Department's proposals, was considered by the Committee on 19 March 2015.

Existing Belfast Public Hire taxis will not be subject to the new requirements for five years from the introduction of the regulations, providing that they continue to meet the current specification. At that time it is likely that many such vehicles will not require significant modification to achieve compliance. I do not believe that government providing financial assistance to taxi drivers (in Belfast or beyond) in order to meet the new specifications is necessary or appropriate in these circumstances.

In terms of parity with other jurisdictions, the last update of the technical requirements for wheelchair accessible taxis was carried out in 1995. These regulations, which remain in force today, relate solely to taxis being used in Northern Ireland; there is no explicit connection or parity with similar taxi operations in Britain. Taxi regulation in Britain is the responsibility of individual local authorities, each of whom establishes their own regulatory regime.

The new Regulations will solely apply to taxis being licensed in Northern Ireland and will be made using powers contained in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This Act is UK-wide in its effect, but gives the Department specific powers in relation to the regulation of the accessibility features of taxis in Northern Ireland.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to proposed changes to disability access regulations for public hire taxis, what financial assistance will be available from his Department to support public hire drivers in making the proposed modifications to their vehicles, not currently required to be fitted by the manufacturer.

(AQW 44079/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department intends to introduce updated requirements for wheelchair accessible taxis to ensure that such vehicles fully meet the requirements of people with disabilities.

The new specification was designed following extensive research including surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with accessible vehicle manufacturers and converters, people with disabilities across Northern Ireland and taxi operators. An initial draft of the specification was circulated amongst selected manufacturers and converters to ensure that the proposals were achievable in the context of base vehicles currently available as taxis.

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Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to proposed changes to disability access regulations for public hire taxis, what engagement his Department has had with the manufacturers of such taxis about making the required alterations to vehicles at source.

(AQW 44080/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department intends to introduce updated requirements for wheelchair accessible taxis to ensure that such vehicles fully meet the requirements of people with disabilities.

The new specification was designed following extensive research including surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with accessible vehicle manufacturers and converters, people with disabilities across Northern Ireland and taxi operators. An initial draft of the specification was circulated amongst selected manufacturers and converters to ensure that the proposals were achievable in the context of base vehicles currently available as taxis.

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The new Regulations will solely apply to taxis being licensed in Northern Ireland and will be made using powers contained in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This Act is UK-wide in its effect, but gives the Department specific powers in relation to the regulation of the accessibility features of taxis in Northern Ireland.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how many Freedom of Information requests his Department received in the last two financial years; and to detail the cost of processing these requests.

(AQW 44096/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The number of Freedom of Information requests received by this Department for 2013/14 and the first three quarters of 2014/15 are:-

2013/14

Date	No of Requests
1/04/13 – 30/06/13	157
1/07/13 – 30/09/13	137
1/10/13 – 31/12/13	128
1/01/14 – 31/03/14	135
Total	557

2014/15

Date	No of Requests
1/04/14 – 30/06/14	102
1/07/14 – 30/09/14	148
1/10/14 – 31/12/14	115
1/01/15 – 31/03/15	Not yet available
Total (to 31/12/14)	365

Since 2005, information on the numbers of FOI requests received by all Northern Ireland departments has been published annually by OFMDFM on a calendar year basis. These annual reports, together with quarterly statistics, are available on the OFMDFM website.

The Department does not hold information detailing the cost of processing FOI requests.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the proposal to remove perspex partitions from public hire taxis, what engagement has taken place with the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland on the views of passengers as service users.

(AQW 44115/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no plans to require the removal of partitions in taxis. I acknowledge that a partition can act as a driver protection measure and taxi drivers will continue to be able to use vehicles fitted with them if they wish, taking a decision based on the cost and the benefits they consider accrue for them in having a partition. Around 95% of taxis in Northern Ireland do not have a partition.

No consultation on the matter is, therefore, planned and no risk assessment or health and safety reports are required. Similarly there have been no discussions with the bodies mentioned as drivers will still be able to choose to use a partition.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment what engagement has he had with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on the rights of drivers to be protected from crime, in view of the proposed removal of perspex partitions from public hire taxis.

(AQW 44116/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has no plans to require the removal of partitions in taxis. I acknowledge that a partition can act as a driver protection measure and taxi drivers will continue to be able to use vehicles fitted with them if they wish, taking a decision based on the cost and the benefits they consider accrue for them in having a partition. Around 95% of taxis in Northern Ireland do not have a partition.

No consultation on the matter is, therefore, planned and no risk assessment or health and safety reports are required. Similarly there have been no discussions with the bodies mentioned as drivers will still be able to choose to use a partition.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the political rally held in a Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, which staff member by job title was the spokesperson acting on behalf of council who issued the statement to the press that Ranfurly House was booked by an individual on behalf of Sinn Fein for a private meeting and is a shared space available to all groups identified under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, and that the use of shared space by any group was not contrary to council policy.

(AQW 44165/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This is an operational matter for Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council.

Mr Agnew asked Minister of the Environment in relation to the prosecution of NI Water for pollution, reported on the NI Executive website on 19 March 2015, (i) whether the Ardnabrocky Burn flows into the River Faughan Special Area of Conservation (SAC); (ii) how close the pollution incident occurred in relation to this European site and; (iii) whether the courts were made aware of the proximity to the River Faughan SAC as part of his Department's prosecution case.

(AQW 44216/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The boundaries of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lie close to the actual River Faughan and to its principal tributaries. The SAC does not include the entire River Faughan catchment or all of its minor tributaries.

In the case of the pollution incident at Northern Ireland Water's Manorwood Waste Water Pumping Station, the Ardnabrocky Burn is a minor tributary of the River Faughan. However, this incident occurred approximately 750 metres from the outer boundary of the River Faughan SAC (or approximately 1,000 metres as measured along the path of the Ardnabrocky Burn). The visible impact of the incident extended for approximately 200 metres, with the last visible impact occurring approximately 550 metres outside the boundary of the SAC (or approximately 800 metres as measured along the path of the burn).

As there was no direct evidence that this incident had damaged the River Faughan SAC, no allegation of damage to the SAC was made in court.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment, given the rejection of the one tier system affecting taxis by the Assembly on 2 February 2015, why he brought secondary legislation to the Committee for the Environment on 19 March 2015, introducing a part-time one tier system applicable at weekends and on public holidays and allowing any type of wheelchair accessible taxi to use public hire ranks within Belfast.

(AQW 44221/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Although the Assembly voted to annul the Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the Taxi Operators Licensing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 on 2 February 2015, there was a general consensus during the debate that the status quo is not viable and that there are significant difficulties providing sufficient taxi availability in Belfast city centre at certain times of the week. Speakers indicated the need to find a sensible compromise, and I committed to play my part in this process.

Although the initial draft Regulations were annulled as a result of opposition to single tier licensing, they contain many other improvements to the existing regime, and form the core element of a further raft of taxi-related legislation which is currently being developed.

In order to assist the process of reaching a compromise at an early date (thereby bringing certainty for taxi providers and users), my officials therefore drew up a set of proposals which were, as you are aware, placed before the Environment Committee on 19 March. I believe that the proposals provide an appropriate compromise, recognising the views of those associated with the taxi industry who are resistant to single tier, whilst improving the supply of taxis at peak times to address public order and public safety issues.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) for his assessment of the figures published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland showing that the number of leavers in the public service in Northern Ireland has averaged

over 20,000 per year for each of the last five years; and (ii) to detail the justification for borrowing £700m to fund an exit scheme to secure 20,000 leavers.

(AQW 42633/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

- (i) A 'leaver' in the figures published by the Equality Commission can include individuals who leave one employer in the public sector and take up employment elsewhere within the sector.

The figure of 20,000 therefore reflects movement within the public sector labour market, as individuals leave one job to take up employment elsewhere, rather than an exact measure of those exiting public sector employment completely. The 20,000 figure also incorporates all specified public authorities and as such includes some bodies that would not be included in a public sector exit/redundancy scheme e.g. the BBC, Royal Mail Group and the Ministry of Defence.

- (ii) The Executive faces a range of financial pressures which require early action to reduce costs, particularly in relation to salary costs. The Executive has been considering a range of measures to reduce paybill costs including VE schemes, future pay restraint and a moratorium on recruitment.

Voluntary exit schemes incentivise people to leave and offer each organisation the opportunity to minimise disruption to service delivery through timely and planned use of redeployment.

The £700m available to fund the various exit schemes across the public sector over the next four years will only be used and drawn down as needed.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) whether a review of the effectiveness of the Commission on Disposals of Land (NI) Order has been conducted: and (ii) if so, what was the outcome.

(AQW 43277/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Law Commission mentioned the Order in the context of its review of land law. However, so far as I am aware, there has been no review of how effective the Order is in practice.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to ask whether he will collaborate with the Department of the Environment to provide advice and assistance to applicants to ensure Sustainable Development will be adequately addressed in the application and project delivery stage within the Peace IV and INTERREG VA programmes.

(AQW 43482/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The INTERREG VA programme was approved by the EU Commission during February 2015. It is expected the PEACE IV programme will be approved later this year.

Applicants to both programmes will be required to demonstrate how their proposed project contributes to the principles and objectives of Sustainable Development.

I understand officials in the Department of Environment have provided input on this issue and my officials are willing to engage further if required.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel will the Voluntary Exit Scheme apply to General Practitioners.

(AQW 43526/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Executive faces a range of financial pressures which require early action to reduce costs, particularly in relation to salary costs. The Executive has been considering a range of measures to reduce paybill costs including voluntary exit schemes, future pay restraint and a moratorium on recruitment.

The NI Civil Service (NICS) launched a VES on 2 March 2015. As this scheme relates only to NICS staff, those staff in arm's length bodies (ALBs) will not be eligible to apply under this scheme.

The Voluntary Exit Scheme currently being developed for the health and social care sector (HSC) is aimed at HSC employees, and consequently will not apply to independent practitioners such as GPs.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 39173/11-15 and AQW 42846/11-15, to clarify his response to an oral supplementary question on 9 March 2015 regarding the restricted Voluntary Exit Scheme to generate vacancies for those who lost their jobs in the Driver and Vehicle Agency, Coleraine.

(AQW 43578/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: This particular Voluntary Exit Scheme was not intended to result in jobs being relocated to Coleraine but rather to create suitable vacancies within reasonable daily travelling distance into which DVA surpluses could be redeployed.

DOE have advised that in total, 72 surplus DVA staff will be redeployed into vacancies within DOE or other departments and as a result will cease to be surplus. Many staff have already moved to their new posts which are located in or around Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney, Londonderry, Magherafelt and Ballymena.

All remaining DVA AA and AO surpluses in Coleraine have been allocated by DOE, to long term temporary posts (for up to 2 years) in DVA Coleraine, pending identification of suitable permanent posts. The Scheme has now closed.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of agency staff currently employed in each Department.

(AQW 43709/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The number of agency staff currently employed in each NICS department is set out in the table below:

Department	Number of Agency Staff
DSD	219
DFP	74
DOJ	27
DE	12
DOE	7
DCAL	6
DARD	14
DEL	2
DETI	2
DRD	3
PPS	5
OFMDFM	10
DHSSPS	1
Total	382

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps he is taking to improve the co-operation between Land and Property Services and the new local councils to increase the collection of rates and reduce rates arrears.

(AQW 43711/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Land & Property Services has, historically, maintained close working relationships and co-operation with local councils.

Senior officials from Land & Property Services are currently undertaking a series of meetings with their counterparts across the new local council structure to discuss and explore enhancements in partnership working arrangements, with a view to maximising the collection of rates and reduce rates arrears.

A draft Memorandum of Understanding has issued to the new councils setting out the LPS and council commitment to partnership working across a number of key areas including enhanced data sharing and close liaison with Council Finance Officers, particularly in relation to maximising council funding levels from the penny product.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 42275/11-15, whether proposals for utilising these funds now exist for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43803/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Following consideration of the previous proposals, and subject to the outcome of a future consultation exercise, it is my intention that the spending priority should be social investment in general.

It is also anticipated that a third party distributor will be appointed in Northern Ireland to manage the Dormant Accounts funds as a loan scheme during the course of 2015-16.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the Barnett consequential for Northern Ireland following the Chancellor's Budget Statement

(AQW 43853/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Chancellor's 2015 March Budget resulted in an increase to our 2015-16 Resource DEL Budget of £10.9 million. There was also an increase of £0.5 million Capital DEL.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the impact on the Northern Ireland block grant if mitigation measures were sustained in response to the further £12 billion welfare cuts anticipated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

(AQW 43981/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Chancellor of the Exchequer has indicated in his recent Budget Statement an intention to deliver a further £12 billion in welfare savings by 2017-18. Full details of the measures planned to deliver these savings are not yet known. As a consequence it is not yet possible to determine the implications for Northern Ireland.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what will be the shortfall of money to his Department should the Welfare Reform Bill fail to pass through the NI Assembly.

(AQW 44000/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Should the Welfare Reform Bill fail to pass through the NI Assembly the £114 million reduction set out by HM Treasury will apply in full to the Northern Ireland Executive's Budget in 2015-16.

HM Treasury have not indicated the level of reductions beyond 2015-16 however Social Security Agency (SSA) estimates of the foregone UK Exchequer savings of not implementing welfare reform in Northern Ireland are as follows:

£million

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
196	283	366	366

In addition to the Resource DEL reductions applied by HM Treasury non-implementation will also lead to significant capital costs associated with developing a bespoke IT system for Northern Ireland – SSA have suggested that this may be in the region of £705 million over a number of years.

Failure to proceed with the Welfare Reform Bill will also put at risk the other aspects of the financial package agreed under the Stormont House Agreement.

The non-implementation of welfare reform will reduce the level of funding available to the Executive which will in turn impact on the budgets of all departments, my own included.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) ward kitchens; and (ii) departmental kitchens in each Southern Health and Social Care Trust Hospital.

(AQW 43623/11-15)

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The number of ward kitchens in each Southern Health and Social Care Trust Hospital is as follows:

Hospital	Ward Kitchens
Mullinure	1
South Tyrone	2
Daisy Hill	8
Lurgan	3
Bluestone	6
CAH	24
Total	44

The number of departmental kitchens in each Southern Health and Social Care Trust Hospital is as follows:

Hospital	Departmental Kitchens
Mullinure	1
South Tyrone	7 including 1 production kitchen
Daisy Hill	2 including 1 production kitchen
Lurgan	2 including 1 production kitchen
Bluestone	2
CAH	2 including 1 production kitchen
Total	16

It should be noted that the number of departmental kitchens in the table above does not include coffee bars or staff kitchens.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the (a) number; and (b) cost of care packages within the Northern Health and Social Trust; and (ii) the ambulance cover in Mid Ulster, including (a) the number of ambulances; and (b) personnel available in the area over the last five years as well as the cumulative number of on duty hours in each year since 2010.

(AQW 43642/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (i) Information on the number of residential and nursing care packages in effect in the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust at the end of each quarter in the last year is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Residential and Nursing Care Packages in Effect

Quarter Ending	Residential Care	Nursing Care	Total
31 December 2014	932	1,930	2,862
30 September 2014	939	1,941	2,880
30 June 2014	937	1,951	2,888
31 March 2014	942	1,912	2,854

Source: CC7 Community Information Return

Further information on the number of care packages in effect each quarter is available on the DHSSPS website at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/socialcare/residential-nursing-care-packages.htm>

Information on the cost of care packages is not collected centrally. However, information on residential and nursing care actual spend in the Northern HSC Trust across all Programmes of Care between 2009/10 and 2013/14 is available and detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Residential and Nursing Care Actual Spend

Year	Residential Care	Nursing Care	Total
2013/14	£48,488,079	£68,070,881	£116,558,959
2012/13	£47,349,602	£67,869,452	£115,219,055
2011/12	£44,580,823	£68,795,645	£113,376,468
2010/11	£43,549,847	£69,274,943	£112,824,790
2009/10	£42,494,038	£64,299,155	£106,793,193

Source: HSC Trust Financial Returns (TFR)

- (ii) The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service have advised that information on the number of ambulances, available personnel and the cumulative number of on duty hours, for each of the last five years could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact the Minister of Education's decision to withdraw the funding for the Early Years Fund will have on the health and well-being of the children affected.

(AQW 43689/11-15)

Mr Wells: All Executive Ministers are having to make difficult funding decisions in difficult financial circumstances. It would not be appropriate for me to second guess decision-making any other Executive Minister.

In terms of our mutual early years commitments, my Department is working collaboratively with the Department of Education and three other departments to deliver a range of new early intervention projects under the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP). The EITP is underpinned by a £30 million Fund. The Fund is made up of contributions from the Delivering Social Change Programme, all five participating government departments and private philanthropy. The Programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland by embedding early intervention approaches in a transformative way in services for children and families, including services to address children's physical and emotional health.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times, in the last six months, emergency ambulance provision in Foyle was reassigned to transferring patients to a hospital in Belfast.

(AQW 43749/11-15)

Mr Wells: It is assumed that that this question refers to the Foyle Parliamentary constituency.

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) have advised that emergency ambulance provision is not re-assigned. If a patient's presenting medical condition requires treatment in another hospital environment and the presenting condition requires an emergency ambulance, then an emergency inter-hospital transfer will take place based on the clinical decisions made by Consultants/Doctors.

During the last 6 months (1st September 2014 to 28th February 2015), the NIAS indicate that the Altnagelvin Ambulance Station provided 121 emergency inter-hospital transportations from Altnagelvin Area hospital to hospitals in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSC).

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on adoption legislation. (AQW 43761/11-15)

Mr Wells: A draft Bill has been prepared and a Third Draft Executive paper issued to Executive colleagues on 6 March 2015, seeking agreement to consult.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42377/11-15, what update can be provided in terms of locations, services and timelines for 5-7 hospital networks. (AQW 43762/11-15)

Mr Wells: Recommendation 73 in Transforming Your Care (TYC 73) proposed: "Over time, move to a likely position of five to seven major acute hospital networks in Northern Ireland". The TYC Vision to Action Consultation Document set out high level options for acute hospital configuration across the five HSC Trust areas. It also contained Criteria for Acute Reconfiguration.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what role is taken by clinical personnel into the appropriateness of emergency vehicles dispatched to transport patients. (AQW 43769/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Trust's call takers categorise emergency calls based on a formal system called Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System (AMPDS) which employs a set of questions which guide the call-taker to obtain information from a caller in order to allow the urgency of any call to be determined in a standardised way. Emergency vehicles are dispatched when the information necessary to initiate dispatch successfully has been ascertained. An emergency call can be responded to by a Rapid Response Vehicle Paramedic, an A&E vehicle, or an Intermediate Care Vehicle if deemed appropriate. Not all calls will require the dispatch of an emergency vehicle.

The NIAS Trust's Medical Director will systematically quality assure any AMPDS re-categorisation in line with clinical research and updates, and is represented at the regular meetings of the National AMPDS Clinical Governance Group where any issues with the system are identified and reviewed.

NIAS also responds to requests from GPs and other healthcare professionals for emergency and routine ambulance transport. The information received from the healthcare professional will determine the type of emergency vehicle allocated to the call.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland reports of child neglect/abuse submitted by schools to the Gateway Social Service Teams, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in the last 5 years; (ii) the average length of time for a social worker to be allocated to a case; and (iii) the current cases that have not been allocated and the length of time they have gone unallocated.

(AQW 43774/11-15)

Mr Wells: The information was requested from the Health and Social Care Trusts.

- (i) Table one below details the number of Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) reports of child abuse/neglect submitted by schools to the Gateway Social Service Teams broken down by Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in the each of the last five years.

Table 1: The number of UNOCINI reports of child abuse/neglect submitted by schools to Gateway Social Service Teams by HSC Trust area in each of the last five years

HSC Trust	Year					Total
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15*	
Belfast	26	57	44	49	80	256
Northern	15	20	18	10	74	137
South Eastern	137	184	105	128	150	704
Southern	180	113	113	73	81	560
Western	40	44	49	71	64	268

HSC Trust	Year					Total
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15*	
Total	398	418	329	331	449	1,925

Source: Health and Social Care Trust Information Systems

Note: These figures have been extracted from the Trusts' "live" systems and may therefore vary to some extent when compared with previously published figures.

Note: These figures have not been validated by the Department; Figures for the Belfast Trust are for 1st March – 28th/29th February, all other Trust figures range from 1st April – 31st March

* Figures up to mid March 2015

- (ii) All Child Protection referrals (i.e. child abuse/neglect) are allocated to a social worker within 24 hours from the point of referral. All other referrals are prioritised on the basis of risk. On average cases are allocated within 20 days across Northern Ireland.
- (iii) There are currently no unallocated child protection referrals in Northern Ireland.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the amount spent on (i) agency nurses; and (ii) other agency staff, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43781/11-15)

Mr Wells:

- (i) The table below details the expenditure on Nursing Agency staff for the period 2009/10 - 2013/14.

Agency Staff – Nursing £'000s

Year	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Total
09/10	6,066	540	3,303	1,186	1,269	12,364
10/11	2,818	613	3,399	453	1,526	8,809
11/12	3,114	836	2,032	263	2,070	8,315
12/13	3,742	1,079	2,768	672	1,591	9,852
13/14	5,326	1,153	2,188	233	2,225	11,125

- (ii) The table below details the expenditure on 'Other' Agency staff for the period 2009/10 - 2013/14.

Other Agency Staff –£'000s

Year	Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Northern Ireland Ambulance Service	Total
09/10	13,823	10,826	n/a	1,374	8,538	561	34,561
10/11	10,233	7,921	6,227	865	11,608	482	37,336
11/12	14,549	6,465	8,259	1,757	10,203	398	41,631
12/13	19,185	11,321	13,231	4,611	10,704	608	59,660
13/14	19,165	11,182	11,591	3,631	12,283	621	58,473

* Other Agency staff includes Medical, Allied Health professionals, Professional and Technical, Admin and Clerical, Ancillary, Social Services, Ambulance and Estates services. Not all Trusts have spend against every category. The information has been sourced from Trust Finance returns and directly from HSC Trusts.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the Public Health Agency has spent on dementia awareness campaigns in each of the last five financial years.

(AQW 43787/11-15)

Mr Wells: Over the past five financial years the Public Health Agency has spent a total of £815 for 10,000 leaflets (Communicating Effectively with People living with Dementia) plus the linked publication below has been produced:

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/communicating-effectively-person-living-dementia>

The entirety of this work took place during 2014/15.

In addition the PHA has received £1.5m funding through the Delivering Social Change Dementia Project (2014 – 2017) to deliver a dementia public awareness campaign.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the exact nature of Health and Social Care Trust efficiency savings for 2015/16, and following court decisions regarding Bangor and Dalriada Hospitals, whether he will be conducting consultations on any measures that will directly impact patients.

(AQW 43801/11-15)

Mr Wells: Financial planning for 2015/16 is still ongoing and the Trusts continue to work with the HSCB to identify the potential savings opportunities which could be achieved in 2015/16. Trusts' savings proposals are being considered by the Trusts' Boards and submitted to the HSCB. Relevant savings proposals will be subject to consultation as appropriate, in line with their Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) schemes and Departmental guidance.

My Department reissued its 2012 guidance on Change or Withdrawal of Services on 27 November 2014, with an additional paragraph providing advice on consultation in circumstances where this has not been possible in advance of a change or withdrawal of service (both temporary and permanent). The purpose of this guidance was to assist Trusts in considering whether public consultation is required in relation to any proposals to change or withdraw services. The guidance also states that where changes are temporary in nature and may be considered as part of the day to day management of services and non-contentious, the requirements for consultation and referral to the Department do not apply.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to his statement in the Assembly on 16 March 2015 in relation to the introduction of the Meningitis B Vaccine Bexsero "figures quoted suggest that it might cost £1.5 million to £2 million to do that for all children under one", to detail how he can quote these figures given that the negotiations being conducted by the government at Westminster on behalf of all regions of the United Kingdom have not been completed.

(AQW 43815/11-15)

Mr Wells: As I said in my statement in the Assembly on 16 March the figures quoted suggest that a Men B vaccination programme might cost £1.5 million to £2million. These costs are estimates based on a full year cohort of children. We will not know the actual costs involved until we finalise details of the programme. Negotiations for the vaccine have recently been successfully concluded and I have decided that Northern Ireland should be included in a procurement process led by the Department of Health in London. We now need to agree the administration fee for GPs to vaccinate all eligible infants; the costs involved in storing and distributing the vaccine; the cost of upgrading the software of the child health system; the cost of inputting the data onto the child health system, and the costs of producing and distributing information for parents. We cannot be precise about any of these costs at this stage but for financial planning purposes and based on the costs for other similar vaccination programmes it is important that we understand the potential total cost of the Men B vaccination programme.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of paediatric cardiac procedures performed on children from Northern Ireland by each Health Trust outside Northern Ireland in each of the last two years.

(AQW 43816/11-15)

Mr Wells: Information on the number of paediatric cardiac surgery procedures carried out on children from Northern Ireland in each of the last two years is detailed in the table below. Information on the Health Trust of Residence of these patients could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Year	Republic of Ireland	England	Total
2012/13	40	34	74
2013/14	13	91	104

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Note:- The figures above do not include cardiac catheterisation procedures.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any discussion he has had with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust about waiting lists for (i) new; and (ii) review of neurological outpatient appointments.

(AQW 43876/11-15)

Mr Wells: As delivery of service is an operational matter, I look to the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board and the HSC Trusts to ensure the necessary improvements to waiting lists across all medical specialties to meet the needs of the Northern Ireland population. My Department monitors the position with the HSC Board to ensure that all available action is being taken. I have been advised that additional neurology clinics have been provided in the Belfast Trust, recruitment exercises have been commenced to fill vacant neurology posts and a Neurology Modernisation Team has been established to oversee the development of neurology services.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide a breakdown of the waiting time for (i) new; and (ii) review neurology outpatient appointments from 1 January 2015, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust. **(AQW 43877/11-15)**

Mr Wells: Information on the waiting time for (i) new and (ii) review consultant led outpatient appointments in the neurology specialty at 1st January 2015, broken down by each Health and Social Care Trust is provided in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Number of patients waiting for a new consultant led outpatient appointment within the neurology specialty at 1st January 2015, by HSC Trust

	Number of patients waiting for a new consultant led outpatient appointment at 1st January 2015 by weeks waiting					Total
	0-6 weeks	>6-9 weeks	>9-12 weeks	>12-15 weeks	>15 weeks	
Belfast	698	279	268	310	2,582	4,137
Northern	715	142	109	55	4	1,025
South Eastern	305	83	126	87	311	912
Southern ¹	222	113	127	134	348	944
Western	255	125	123	113	825	1,441
Northern Ireland	2,195	742	754	699	4,074	8,464

Source: HSC Trusts

1 Information provided as at 3rd January 2015

Table 2: Number of patients waiting beyond their clinically intended review date, in months, for a review outpatient appointment within the neurology specialty, at 1st January 2015, by HSC Trust

	Number of patients waiting beyond their clinically indicated review date for a review outpatient appointment in the neurology specialty, at 1st January 2015 by months waiting			Total
	0-6 months	>6-12 months	>12 months	
Belfast	2,170	1,341	1,119	4,630
Northern	479	-	-	479
South Eastern	131	142	192	465
Southern	194	10	-	204
Western	362	167	16	545
Northern Ireland	3,360	1,660	1,327	6,347

Source: HSC Trusts

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 42778/11-15, what measures his Department is considering to reduce the number of transfers. **(AQW 43880/11-15)**

Mr Wells: Transfers of patients from the South West Acute Hospital to other hospitals only occur when it is necessary due to clinical need or for regional specialty input. Patients are repatriated to the South West Acute Hospital when appropriate.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what was the cost to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Board of providing (i) 29 consultant led fracture beds in Ards Hospital ; (ii) 22 independent provider beds with GP medical support in Ards Hospital; (iii) 20 consultant led beds in Ards Hospital; (iv) 14 beds in Northfield House with GP GMS Medical Support; and (v) 20 intermediate care beds in Bangor hospital, in (a) 2013/14; (b) 2012/13; and (c) 2011/12; and how many people availed of each of these services in each year. **(AQW 43882/11-15)**

Mr Wells:

	Cost			No Clients		
	13/14 £M	12/13 £M	11/12 £M	13/14	12/13	11/12
29 Consultant led fracture beds (Note 2)	£0.63	£0.61	£0.49	159	134	101
22 Independent provider beds with GP Medical Support (note 1)	£0.65	£0.63	£0.61	385	387	366
20 Consultant led beds in Ards Hospital	£1.45	£1.39	£1.24	446	490	442
14 beds in Northfield House with GP GMS Medical Support (Note 3)	£0.59	£0.56	£0.42	116	107	95
20 Intermediate care beds in Bangor Hospital	£1.44	£1.378	£1.371	521	533	506

Note 1

22 Independent provider beds with GP Medical Support. These beds are not in Ards Hospital but are provided by independent sector in the North Down area - 13/14 Owing to demand up to 25 beds were purchased at any one time. 12/13 up to 32 beds were purchased at any one time. Costs provided are for 22 beds in each year

Note 2

29 Consultant led fracture beds. These beds are not in Ards Hospital. They are currently in Domnall Care Home. In 13/14, 12/13 and 11/12 there were 20 in place.

Note 3

In 13/14 there were 14 Intermediate Care beds in Northfield. On average there were 13 in 12/13 and 10 in 11/12

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what training health service staff receive on female genital mutilation; and what protocols are in place for staff should such an issue be identified.

(AQW 43883/11-15)

Mr Wells: Multi-agency Practice Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation were published in July 2014 and, in August 2014 a joint professional letter from the Chief Social Services, Medical and Nursing Officers issued to Chief Executives of HSC organisations and others who may be in a position to detect Female Genital Mutilation, asking that all health and social care professionals familiarise themselves with the relevant guidelines and the actions they need to take where they have reason to believe that a girl or woman has undergone, or is at risk of, Female Genital Mutilation. The joint professional letter also advised that the guidance should be incorporated into induction training and other education and training programmes for relevant staff.

The HSC Board has confirmed that the Multi-agency Practice Guidance was disseminated to HSC Trusts. Information on training relating to Female Genital Mutilation in each HSC Trust is appended.

Appendix

HSC Trust	FGM Training
Northern HSC Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FGM is incorporated into Corporate Safeguarding Induction and relevant service areas have delivered practice based learning sessions for staff. It is also available as a PowerPoint presentation to members of the Child Protection Co-ordinating Group for cascade awareness and incorporated into relevant Department Induction Sessions. ■ FGM is included in the 18 months and 3 year midwifery programmes of QUB. ■ A free e-learning programme is also available. ■ FGM guidance issued to staff.
Western HSC Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Online training available to all HSCT staff. ■ Integrated FGM awareness into other training areas. ■ Gateway made aware of FGM Guidelines issued by DHSSPS. ■ A Multi-disciplinary workshop to address FGM, Human Trafficking and forced Marriages is scheduled for September 2015. ■ FGM Guidance issued to staff. ■ Named Doctor delivered specific training to Doctors on FGM which was also distributed to staff on the child protection forum.

HSC Trust	FGM Training
South Eastern HSC Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SEHSCT disseminated the guidance issued in August 2014. ■ On-going FGM Awareness training delivered by Safeguarding Nurse Specialist. ■ Staff attended RCN Workshop which covered FGM on the 23/03/2015. ■ Staff made aware that FGM is a form of abuse and cases will be referred to child protection and/or vulnerable adult services. ■ Trust arranged a conference on FGM, Forced Marriages and Human Trafficking which took place in Feb 2015. ■ FGM is integrated into Safeguarding Training. ■ The Trust also intends to participate in the DHSSPS Regional Group to address FGM.
Belfast HSC Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trust arranged for "Forward" to attend half day sessions in April 2015. (Bespoke FGM training for Safeguarding Boards). ■ 25 staff will be trained including nurses, midwives, police, medics, education with the intention to cascade the training to other staff. ■ FGM Guidance issued to staff. ■ The training will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase knowledge and understanding about FGM. ■ Strengthen staff confidence and cultural competence in safeguarding girls at risk of FGM. ■ Improve knowledge of support services and access for women and girls affected by FGM practice.
Southern HSC Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The SHSCT will deliver multi-disciplinary training facilitated by "Forward" in April 2015. ■ FGM is also highlighted during protocol for Joint Investigation training events. ■ FGM Guidance has been issued to staff.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what his Department is doing to address the detrimental effect extensive appointment waiting times is having on patients suffering with sleep apnoea.
(AQW 43894/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health and Social Care (HSC) Board has made significant investment in obstructive sleep apnoea services across HSC Trusts. All HSC Trusts have made progress in developing their own local services. However, the Belfast HSC Trust continues to provide some of these services regionally, including continuous positive airway pressure service in the Northern HSC Trust, and limited sleep studies for the South Eastern HSC Trust. Local commissioners are currently working to expedite the transition of these services from the Belfast Trust to the local Trusts to address waiting times.

A second sleep apnoea clinic commenced in the Northern Trust in February 2015.

The HSC Board has also invested in the Belfast Trust to develop tertiary level sleep services for more complex patients and is actively working with the Trust to reduce waiting times for patients.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are care packages in place in each Health and Social Care Trust for people severely affected with ME; and whether the care is (i) long term; and (ii) available to patients under 65 years old.
(AQW 43932/11-15)

Mr Wells: I refer the member to the responses provided by the five Health and Social Care Trusts which are attached at Annex A.

Annex A

Western HSC Trust

Older People's teams have advised that they do not have any care packages in place for clients with ME. Any client who has any type of illness would be assessed and care given if appropriate no matter what the diagnosis.

There are several people with ME under 65 years of age in receipt of care packages living within the Western Health and Social Care Trust. A number of these packages of care have been ongoing for several years or more.

Northern HSC Trust

The Northern Trust has care packages in place for people affected by ME. ME can be considered secondary to the client's primary disability/illness but is still taken into consideration into how it affects their ability to manage daily living. Care packages are provided based on assessed need and are provided as long as required.

If a person with ME / Fibromyalgia is referred to the physical disability community social work team, they will be offered an assessment of need which will take a multi-disciplinary perspective. This will assist to ascertain their needs and the support plan to meet their needs. Services identified to meet the assessed need could include domiciliary care, day-care/ opportunities, respite/short break, temporary/permanent placement.

South Eastern HSC Trust

GPs refer patients with a potential diagnosis of ME or Fibromyalgia to a range of specialties, including the Pain Service, Rheumatology or Neurology. The SEHSC Trust does not provide an ME service. Consultants will look to eliminate other potential illnesses or conditions and then help manage the symptoms and may refer on to psychology, for CBT or physiotherapy for exercise classes. They may also refer on to the Pain Service if required.

All older people are assessed and a care package is provided to meet their assessed needs

Belfast HSC Trust

It is difficult to determine the exact numbers of service users who are severely affected with ME as this is not a standard return required from the Trust. However, within the Physical Health and Disability Service Area there are currently 8 service users with only ME who have a care package to support them live in the community.

It should be noted that there may be other service users who have a package in place due to ME and another health condition or they may be within other service areas— e.g. Mental Health, Learning Disability, Children or Older People.

Service users with ME can have long term needs but this depends on the individual's health and circumstances. The Trust identifies the care needs via the assessment and review processes and care is provided accordingly.

The above mentioned care packages are service users who are under 65 years old who are managed within the Physical Health and Disability Service Area so therefore the BHSCT can confirm that care packages are available to patients under 65 years old.

Southern HSC Trust

The SHSCT provide a range of services to individuals diagnosed with ME, who have had their needs assessed by professional staff. The package of care offered to any individual will be subject to regular review and may be increased, decreased or ceased, dependant on the level of need at time of review.

Many service users with ME have had their service long term. An assessment and subsequent provision of a care package is available to patients/service users under 65years who meet the criteria for domiciliary care.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the health campus model for Derry.

(AQW 43961/11-15)

Mr Wells: My response to your previous question AQW 40619/11-15 remains current.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43968/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43969/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 43970/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service plans to introduce a policy to recoup the costs of responding to repeat unwanted fire signals.

(AQW 43998/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Northern Ireland Fire and rescue Service has no plans to introduce a policy to recoup the costs of responding to repeat unwanted fire signals.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of the number of missed appointments at each health centre in the Coleraine Borough Council area in February 2015.

(AQW 44004/11-15)

Mr Wells: General Practitioners (GPs) are independently contracted to the Health and Social Care Board to provide Primary Medical Services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for the day to day management of their practice, including patient appointment arrangements, hence the issue of missed appointments is dealt with by practices on an individual basis. Information on the number or hours of missed appointments and the corresponding financial effect is not therefore collated centrally and is consequently not available.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total hours lost due to missed appointments in each health centre in the Coleraine Borough Council area in February 2015.

(AQW 44005/11-15)

Mr Wells: General Practitioners (GPs) are independently contracted to the Health and Social Care Board to provide Primary Medical Services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for the day to day management of their practice, including patient appointment arrangements, hence the issue of missed appointments is dealt with by practices on an individual basis. Information on the number or hours of missed appointments and the corresponding financial effect is not therefore collated centrally and is consequently not available.

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost incurred to each health centre in the Coleraine Borough Council area in February 2015 due to missed appointments.

(AQW 44006/11-15)

Mr Wells: General Practitioners (GPs) are independently contracted to the Health and Social Care Board to provide Primary Medical Services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for the day to day management of their practice, including patient appointment arrangements, hence the issue of missed appointments is dealt with by practices on an individual basis. Information on the number or hours of missed appointments and the corresponding financial effect is not therefore collated centrally and is consequently not available.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to deliver a Children in Care Council in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44031/11-15)

Mr Wells: I understand that Children in Care Councils are intended to provide a formal mechanism to facilitate effective engagement with looked after children (LAC). A range of LAC engagement mechanisms currently exist. For example, under contract with the Health and Social Care Board, the voluntary organisation, Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC), provides advocacy and mentoring services to looked after children. This provides an independent process whereby the views of children and young people in care can be represented. Where appropriate, VOYPIC and other agencies working with young people will be asked to undertake consultations or engage with care-experienced young people to ascertain their views on a range of matters. Also by way of example, arrangements exist within residential care settings to enable young people cared for in those settings to have a voice. Independent visitors, formal complaints and representations processes and inspection processes also provide opportunities for LAC to raise their concerns or make their views known.

My Department is currently developing a strategic statement for looked after children which will set out LAC priorities for the next 3-5 years; it will be subject to consultation. In consultation, we will invite views on the concept of Children in Care Councils (CiCC) and how these would work alongside, and fit with, existing LAC engagement mechanisms. It is crucial that we strike the right balance between ensuring that individual children have their voices heard at critical points and establishing fora on which nominated children and young people represent the views of their peers.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to develop a Care Day on 19 February 2016, in line with the plans of the Scottish Parliament.

(AQW 44036/11-15)

Mr Wells: I have agreed to meet with the Chief Executive of Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) to discuss proposals to designate Friday 19 February 2016 as Northern Ireland Care Day in line with the plans of the Scottish Parliament.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 44045/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the strategy or initiative being taken to reduce the incidence of hospital admissions from accidents in the home.

(AQW 44049/11-15)

Mr Wells: In Northern Ireland there are around 17,000 hospital admissions each year as a result of unintentional injuries in general. In a typical week two people die as a result of accidents at home. The majority of accidental injuries and deaths in the home are caused by falls, which over the period 2001-2011 accounted for 480 deaths. This is almost half of all accidental deaths at home.

Last month I launched the Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2015 – 2025. The strategy will help to focus the drive to minimise injuries and deaths caused by home accidents. In doing so the strategy should also reduce the number of people who have to be admitted to hospital following accidents at home. The strategy will also help us to make the

best use of the resources available for home accident prevention. The strategy is available on the DHSSPS website at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hapstrategy.pdf>.

This strategy is concerned with the whole population but has a particular focus on those who are most at risk. That is babies and children under five, people over 65, and those with greater social, economic and health disadvantage. These groups are the most likely to have accidents and are the most likely to suffer long-term harm as a consequence of an accident.

The Public Health Agency will lead the implementation of the strategy.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on whether his Department will publish the landscape review of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.

(AQW 44054/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Capacity and Capability Review of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority will be published shortly.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 44055/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

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Mr Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 44058/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made regarding international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 44060/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

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Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) what funding has been made available to the Public Health Agency for transient ischemic attack and stroke awareness in 2014/15 and subsequent years; (ii) what plans are in place for an awareness campaign specific to Northern Ireland; and (iii) whether the £80,000 allocated for the FAST campaign remains in stroke services.

(AQW 44064/11-15)

Mr Wells: As these two questions are related I am answering them together.

In launching the FAST programme in Northern Ireland the PHA gave an undertaking that it would deploy the campaign over a sustained period of 3 years initially. Having concluded the 3 year programme and given the FAST campaign was being reviewed by Public Health England in 2014 the PHA determined that for 2014/15 it would defer running the campaign for one year and enable other priority health campaign topics to be addressed. The PHA is obliged to contain its campaign advertising expenditure in accordance with the annual allocation made by the NI Executive and DHSSPS. There was therefore no expenditure against TIA or stroke public awareness in 2014/15.

The £80,000 was re-prioritised in 2014/15 by the PHA to support wider programmes aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the local population.

The PHA submitted a proposal to the DHSSPS to continue with a revised FAST campaign in Northern Ireland during 2015/16. This proposal will now be subject to review in the context of both a reduced advertising programme allocation and the need to find 15% savings within PHA Management and Administration budget.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the full economic cost of strokes locally is estimated at £260m per year, what plans are in place to maintain public awareness.

(AQW 44065/11-15)

Mr Wells: As these two questions are related I am answering them together.

In launching the FAST programme in Northern Ireland the PHA gave an undertaking that it would deploy the campaign over a sustained period of 3 years initially. Having concluded the 3 year programme and given the FAST campaign was being reviewed by Public Health England in 2014 the PHA determined that for 2014/15 it would defer running the campaign for one year and enable other priority health campaign topics to be addressed. The PHA is obliged to contain its campaign advertising expenditure in accordance with the annual allocation made by the NI Executive and DHSSPS. There was therefore no expenditure against TIA or stroke public awareness in 2014/15.

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The PHA submitted a proposal to the DHSSPS to continue with a revised FAST campaign in Northern Ireland during 2015/16. This proposal will now be subject to review in the context of both a reduced advertising programme allocation and the need to find 15% savings within PHA Management and Administration budget.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has accepted the recommendations of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority review of stroke services published in December 2014; and what plans he has to implement these recommendations, including a timescale for completion.

(AQW 44066/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has accepted the recommendations from the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority's review of stroke services in Northern Ireland. My Department is currently preparing an implementation plan which will be published as soon as possible. Implementation of the recommendations will be subject to available resources and other competing priorities for funding facing the health service at this time.

Mr Milne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behaviour Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 44091/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice

evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what screening services are in place to enable the early detection of ovarian cancer.

(AQW 44110/11-15)

Mr Wells: The National Screening Committee, which is the expert body that advises the four UK Health Departments on screening programmes, at present recommends that screening should not be offered for ovarian cancer, except in the context of the current Medical Research Council randomised controlled trial which is due to report in 2015/16. This study is investigating the effectiveness of screening for ovarian cancer using either a blood test or ultrasound screening. 200,000 women between the ages of 50 and 74 have been recruited to the study. Belfast City Hospital is one of the centres involved in the study.

A sister study, the UK Familial Ovarian Cancer Screening Study is also in progress. The primary objective of this study is to develop a screening strategy for ovarian cancer, in terms of the most appropriate screening tests, criteria for the interpretation of results, and screening interval, in women who are at high risk of ovarian cancer because of a family history or an inherited genetic predisposition.

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what professional bodies in the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis have been consulted by his Department; and what assessment his Department has made of international standards of training in Applied Behavioural Analysis locally.

(AQW 44128/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has not undertaken such consultation or assessment. The Department and the HSC follow the guidelines set out by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) including guidance CG170 on Autism - management of autism in children and young people. This guidance offers evidence-based advice on the care and management of children and young people with autism and does not make specific reference to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Although my Department recognises that there are a number of interventions for autism, including ABA, it does not advocate any particular approach. This is a decision for clinicians to make, based on individually assessed needs and good practice evidence. HSC Trusts provide a range of individually tailored programmes which are drawn from a wide body of research and evidence and many of these use approaches from the theoretical frameworks which contribute to ABA.

Following assessment, Trusts work collaboratively with children and their families to provide a systemic-based therapeutic intervention, which includes working with children, young people and their families in their communities. Whilst most ABA programmes focus solely on the child, the approach adopted by HSC Trusts means they can work with the child but also the parent (developing supports, effective and consistent parenting strategies, etc) or the school, to support the young person with autism.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43490/11-15, to detail how people living with dementia, their families and carers, within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, will benefit from the £6.25m funding provided through the joint Atlantic Philanthropies/Delivering Social Change Dementia initiative; and how the three work streams will be taken forward within the Trust.

(AQW 44157/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Atlantic Philanthropies/Delivering Social Change Dementia initiative will lead to a significant improvement in the quality of dementia care for people in Northern Ireland, including those living in the Northern Trust area. It will support people living with dementia to maintain their independence and live well with the condition for as long as possible, and will also result in an improved understanding of dementia in wider society, with benefits in primary and secondary prevention and reduced stigma.

The initiative aims to ensure that people living with dementia and their carers will be better informed and have greater access to support and advice on care pathways, and feel empowered to seek that support as required. It will create a more confident and competent workforce and take steps to ensure on-going workforce development by employers, educators and professional bodies, while also enhancing the carers' understanding of the condition, strengthening their coping mechanisms and building confidence.

The initiative will also develop a range of innovative alternatives to institutional services and create greater choice and access to support options for people with dementia and their carers. By building a network of supports, carers will be enabled to continue in their role as carers for longer.

The three workstreams are being taken forward on a regional basis by a project team working in close collaboration with all five Health and Social Care Trusts, and reporting to a Programme Board chaired by my Department.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nurse vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44178/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually giving figures at 31st March and 30th September. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Qualified Nursing & Midwifery	26	20.3
Medical	1	1.0
Qualified Physiotherapy	1	1.0
Qualified Occupational Therapy	8	6.8
Qualified Social Work	0	0.0

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many doctor vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44179/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually giving figures at 31st March and 30th September. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Qualified Nursing & Midwifery	26	20.3
Medical	1	1.0
Qualified Physiotherapy	1	1.0
Qualified Occupational Therapy	8	6.8
Qualified Social Work	0	0.0

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many physiotherapist vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44180/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually giving figures at 31st March and 30th September. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Qualified Nursing & Midwifery	26	20.3
Medical	1	1.0
Qualified Physiotherapy	1	1.0
Qualified Occupational Therapy	8	6.8
Qualified Social Work	0	0.0

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many occupational therapist vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44181/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually giving figures at 31st March and 30th September. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Qualified Nursing & Midwifery	26	20.3
Medical	1	1.0
Qualified Physiotherapy	1	1.0
Qualified Occupational Therapy	8	6.8
Qualified Social Work	0	0.0

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many social worker vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44182/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually giving figures at 31st March and 30th September. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Qualified Nursing & Midwifery	26	20.3
Medical	1	1.0
Qualified Physiotherapy	1	1.0
Qualified Occupational Therapy	8	6.8
Qualified Social Work	0	0.0

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current policy development being carried out by his Department, including their respective stages and expected completion dates.

(AQW 44189/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department is constantly developing policies on a wide range of issues right across the health, social services and public safety bailiwick. Central to all policy development is the patient and client, and in particular, patient and client safety.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many clerical staff vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44251/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Administrative & Clerical	11	8.5
Porters/Orderlies	0	0.0
Domestic Services	0	0.0
Nursing Support	2	1.3
Estates Services	3	2.5

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many porter vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44252/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Administrative & Clerical	11	8.5
Porters/Orderlies	0	0.0
Domestic Services	0	0.0
Nursing Support	2	1.3
Estates Services	3	2.5

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many domestic staff vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44253/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Administrative & Clerical	11	8.5
Porters/Orderlies	0	0.0
Domestic Services	0	0.0
Nursing Support	2	1.3
Estates Services	3	2.5

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many auxiliary nurse vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44254/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Administrative & Clerical	11	8.5
Porters/Orderlies	0	0.0
Domestic Services	0	0.0
Nursing Support	2	1.3
Estates Services	3	2.5

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many maintenance staff vacancies exist in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44255/11-15)

Mr Wells: A survey report on vacancies within HSC organisations, defined as posts to which an organisation is actively recruiting at the survey date, is published biannually. The most recent edition describes vacancies at 30th September 2014, and is published at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce/staff-vacancies.htm>.

The South Eastern Trust reported that, at 30th September, it was actively recruiting to the groups you refer to at the levels shown below.

Staff Group	Headcount	Whole-Time Equivalent
Administrative & Clerical	11	8.5
Porters/Orderlies	0	0.0
Domestic Services	0	0.0
Nursing Support	2	1.3
Estates Services	3	2.5

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of children with autism waited longer than 13 weeks from referral to assessment in each Health and Social Care Trust in the last three years.

(AQW 44313/11-15)

Mr Wells: The figures requested are not held centrally and were requested from the Health and Social Care Board. Table 1 below details the percentage of children referred for an assessment for autism that waited longer than 13 weeks for an assessment in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust in the last three years.

Table 1

HSC Trust	Year		
	At 31 March 2013	At 31 March 2014	At 28 February 2015
Belfast	30%	0%	75%
Northern	13%	0%	47%
South Eastern	1%	33%	46%
Southern	0%	0%	0%
Western	7%	0%	49%
Total	15%	9%	59%

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Please note these figures have not been validated by the Department

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of paediatric cases waiting more than eight months for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44323/11-15)

Mr Wells: There were no paediatric patients waiting longer than 8 months for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust at the 31st December 2014, the latest time point for which official statistics are available.

Information on the average waiting time for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by patient age, at the 31st December 2014, is shown in the table below.

Patient age (years)	Average number of weeks waiting for tonsillectomy surgery at 31st December 2014
< 18	8.16
≥18	8.59

Average number of weeks waiting for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern HSC Trust at 31st December 2014

Source: DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Tonsillectomy surgery has been identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes F34.1 – F34.9. The figures in the answer refer to the intended primary procedure.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current average waiting time for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for paediatric and adult cases.

(AQW 44324/11-15)

Mr Wells: There were no paediatric patients waiting longer than 8 months for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust at the 31st December 2014, the latest time point for which official statistics are available.

Information on the average waiting time for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by patient age, at the 31st December 2014, is shown in the table below.

Patient age (years)	Average number of weeks waiting for tonsillectomy surgery at 31st December 2014
< 18	8.16
≥18	8.59

Average number of weeks waiting for tonsillectomy surgery in the Northern HSC Trust at 31st December 2014

Source: DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Tonsillectomy surgery has been identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS – 4.7) codes F34.1 – F34.9. The figures in the answer refer to the intended primary procedure.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the number of Multiple Sclerosis patients currently in receipt of treatment, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44327/11-15)

Mr Wells: Information on the number of Multiple Sclerosis patients currently in receipt of treatment at the end of February 2015 is shown in the table below. This data is broken down by Health and Social Care Trust of Residence.

Number of patients on treatment for Multiple Sclerosis at 28th February 2015

HSC Trust of Residence	No. of Patients on treatment
Belfast HSC Trust	247
Northern HSC Trust	436
South Eastern HSC Trust	344
Southern HSC Trust	275
Western HSC Trust	253
Northern Ireland	1,555

Source: Belfast HSC Trust

Department of Justice

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) how much his Department has spent on catering equipment contracts; and (ii) the top five companies, broken down by funds received from his Department for this work, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 43715/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Spend by the Department of Justice, including its agencies but not its arm's-length bodies, on catering equipment contracts for completed financial years since its formation in April 2010 is shown in the table below:

Year	£k
2010-11	46
2011-12	64
2012-13	76
2013-14	91

The names of catering equipment firms have been withheld in line with standard Department of Justice practice of not placing supplier names into the public domain for security reasons.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43258/11-15, why a review of the contract is not considered essential, given the public expenditure involved.

(AQW 43724/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) manages the contract on behalf of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service. DFP has advised that the number of faults that have occurred since the bollards were installed are commensurate with mechanical devices of this nature.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Justice how he plans to support the work of interface projects; and what funding is he providing for the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43745/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department is engaged with voluntary/community sector groups and statutory agencies in exploring the opportunities for reducing and eventually removing interface structures, in line with the commitments made in the Programme for Government and Together: Building a United Community Strategy.

A key element of our work in 2015 will be developing an effective interface programme that can address the causes of division in interface areas. Delivering change at interfaces requires cross Executive commitment, and indeed a commitment from Councils, to ensure that we can maximise the benefit of those resources available.

Any physical change that is agreed to Department of Justice structures will be funded by the Department. However, my Department is not responsible for funding, for example, good relations or regeneration projects at interfaces, that responsibility lies with other Departments.

For 2015/16, the Departmental budget to cover physical changes to interface structures is £387,500. In addition, my officials have also bid through OFMDFM, under the Together: Building a United Community Strategy, for a further £774,500 to cover a range of projects aimed at bringing about physical change at interfaces. This figure includes resources to support work being carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Belfast City Council.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to list the law firms that have received (i) less than £250,000; (ii) £250,000 to £499,000; (iii) £500,000 to £999,999; and (iv) more than £1,000,000 in legal aid payments, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 43793/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Commission is currently in the process of finalising the information for the publication of the top 100 solicitor firms which received the highest payments from the Legal Aid Fund in 2013/14.

Details of the top 100 law firms which received the highest value of payments in 2012/13 are available in the Freedom of Information section of the Commission's website at www.dojni.gov.uk/legalservices.

Before publishing any information in respect of the payments made to practitioners, the Commission consults with the individuals whose personal information is to be published to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Information which has not been published by the Commission has not been subject to the Commission's fair processing procedures. This procedure could not be completed within the timeframe for answering Assembly Questions. The Commission will consider this request once the publication process for 2013/14 top 100 is complete.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 42805/11-15, to provide, or place in the Assembly library, a copy of the evidence supporting the view of adequate cell capacity as stated by Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service and the Prison Service.

(AQW 43847/11-15)

Mr Ford: NICTS had pre-consultation discussion with NIPS on the rationalisation of the court estate and the issue of cell capacity was considered during those discussions. Both organisations are content that the number of prisoners in court custody can be managed under the proposals.

NICTS and NIPS continue to discuss the matter of cell capacity as the consultation continues. The following table indicates the current number of cells at each court location and the assessed maximum total capacity for these.

Location	Number of Cells	Total Capacity
Antrim	14	48
Ballymena	7	21
Coleraine	9	24
Newtownards	6	24
Downpatrick	4	12
Armagh	8	32
Newry	14	36

Location	Number of Cells	Total Capacity
Craigavon	12	48
Lisburn	4	8
	1 Youth Cell	2
Dungannon	9	36
Enniskillen	4	12
Omagh	5	15
Strabane	2	6
Limavady	2	2
Londonderry	5	13
Magherafelt	2	6
Laganside	25	100

On an operational basis these figures will be influenced by the type of prisoner held at any given time at a location.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how much his Department has spent on postage in each of the last two financial years. (AQW 43906/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice, including its agencies but not its arm's-length bodies, has spent the following amount on postage in each of the last two financial years:

2012-13	2013-14
£521,571	£645,082

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how much funding his Department provided (i) The Law Society; and (ii) The Bar Council, in each of the last three years. (AQW 43915/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice, including its agencies but not its arm's-length bodies, provided no funding to (i) The Law Society or; (ii) The Bar Council, in each of the last three financial years.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Justice how his Department is improving access to Justice, as outlined in the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment number 52. (AQW 43916/11-15)

Mr Ford: In 2010 I commissioned a review of Access to Justice. I am currently taking forward a programme of work in response to the recommendations in the Review.

A key recommendation was to change the delivery mechanism for legal aid to an Agency of the Department of Justice. The legislation required to deliver this has been passed and the Agency was created on 1 April. This will deliver a range of important governance improvements and efficiency savings. This includes opportunities for economies of scale through shared services, staff development and access to skills and facilities within the wider NICS.

Other reforms are being delivered across the legal aid system in order to protect access to justice while ensuring that legal aid continues to be affordable. Reform has concentrated on ensuring that fees paid for publicly funded work represent value for money, and that legally aided clients receive representation appropriate to the complexity of the issues involved. This helps to ensure that the available resources are targeted to support those most in need and to protect the most vulnerable in society.

I have commissioned a further review of Access to Justice to build on the work already done and to help to inform the agenda for the future. This will report in the Summer.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what assurances he can give that under the proposed police pension reform serving officers will not be treated less favourably than their English and Welsh counterparts. (AQW 43975/11-15)

Mr Ford: Terms for police pension reform as laid out in the Police Pension Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 are perhaps more favourable to serving officers here. Unlike their counterparts in England and Wales, the 2015 Northern Ireland scheme does not include provision for a voluntary retirement scheme to allow for a reduction in numbers within the police service. In addition, only police pension schemes in Northern Ireland allow widows to retain their pension after remarriage.

I remain committed to ensure that all serving officers' pensions are among the very best available amongst the public sector in Northern Ireland, providing a guaranteed pension level for all police officers.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice whether he has had sight of the Scofield Report on Injury on Duty Payments; and whether any of the recommendations have been acted upon.

(AQW 43980/11-15)

Mr Ford: A copy of the Scofield report was received by officials in November 2014.

My Department will not be responding to the Scofield report as it was commissioned by, and submitted to, the Policing Board.

My Department has however, agreed to take forward actions to address a

number of issues raised in the report. This includes a review of the policy and associated legislation. Guidance in respect of reviews was also provided to the Board in December 2014.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Justice which provisions of the Serious Crime Act, relating to female genital mutilation, apply to Northern Ireland.

(AQW 44078/11-15)

Mr Ford: Sections 70 to 73 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 relating to female genital mutilation (FGM) apply to Northern Ireland.

Section 70 makes it an offence for a United Kingdom national or permanent resident to perform FGM abroad, assist a girl to perform FGM on herself abroad, or assist (from abroad) a non- United Kingdom national or resident to carry out FGM abroad on a United Kingdom national or permanent resident.

Section 71 provides life-long anonymity for victims of FGM.

Section 72 creates an offence for those with parental or caring responsibilities of failing to protect a girl under the age of 16 from FGM.

Section 73 allows the courts to make Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders for the purposes of protecting a girl against the commission of a genital mutilation offence or protecting a girl against whom such an offence has been committed.

Sections 70-72 will commence on 3 May and Section 73 will commence later in the year.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Justice what steps he is taking to raise public awareness of female genital mutilation; and what he is doing to improve co-ordination of the work of Departments, agencies and organisations with responsibilities for preventing and responding to female genital mutilation.

(AQW 44081/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has raised awareness of the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) with agencies and stakeholders of the justice system such as PCSPs, Human Trafficking Support Service Providers and Public Prosecutors. Raising awareness of the issue from a Health, Safeguarding and Cultural perspective would sit with other Executive colleagues.

My officials will ensure and deliver a co-ordinated approach within the Department of Justice and associated agencies. As I have highlighted previously, my Department stands ready to play its role in any targeted Executive response to tackling FGM.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43460/11-15, what is the purpose of such a meeting if there is to be no disclosure of what occurred, no clarity on the circumstances will be provided and no written invitations will be issued.

(AQW 44082/11-15)

Mr Ford: The purpose of such a meeting would be to explain the role and work of the multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) in local communities. PPANI and its constituent member agencies cannot discuss individual cases.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many Freedom of Information requests his Department received in the last two financial years; and to detail the cost of processing these requests.

(AQW 44098/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has received 372 Freedom of Information requests for the calendar years 2013 and 2014. Freedom of Information (FOI) figures are calculated by calendar rather than financial years, in line with the FOI Annual Reports that have been compiled by OFMDFM. Previous FOI Annual Reports are available on OFMDFM's website:

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/annual-reports-and-statistics

Freedom of Information requests, and the time and resources required to provide responses, differ considerably. All requests are processed on a case by case basis. The department does not calculate or record information on the cost of individual FOI requests and this information is therefore not held.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice for a projection of the average cost, by the end of the next financial year, of accommodating a prisoner.

(AQW 44105/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Cost Per Prisoner Place (CPPP) for 2014/15 is estimated at £60,800. Northern Ireland Prison Service is still working on the detailed breakdown of the 2015-16 budget and the CPPP projection for the year will be finalised on its completion, but I anticipate a further reduction.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why is there no additional penalty at court for fine defaulters who, do not pay outstanding fines, have shown contempt of court by allowing the fine to go unpaid resulting in a default summons and the costs associated therein, including, in some instances, legal aid.

(AQW 44112/11-15)

Mr Ford: The non-payment of a fine already attracts a range of sanctions including imprisonment and I currently have no plans to create a specific and additional criminal offence for failing to discharge a court imposed fine. However, I am currently preparing a Fines and Enforcement Bill to be introduced into the Assembly later this year which will provide courts with additional sentencing, collection and enforcement options.

The Bill will contain proposals both to prevent default in the first instance and to strengthen the Court's enforcement options. It will allow for the payment of fines by way of deductions from income or benefits and will permit, in appropriate circumstances, the seizure of vehicles for non-payment and the deduction of money from bank accounts. It will also increase the availability of community-based options in place of custody. For those who do end up in prison for non-payment, the Bill will include the removal of remission from any period spent in custody for non-payment.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many preliminary investigations or mixed committals are pending in each court division; and how many of these are legally aided for (i) solicitor; and (ii) counsel.

(AQW 44113/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of preliminary investigations or mixed committals currently pending in each court division listed as of 27 March 2015 is set out in the table below.

Mixed Committals and Preliminary Investigations pending at the Magistrates' Court at 27 March 2015

Court Division	No. of Mixed Committals and Preliminary Investigations	No. of defendants involved	No. of defendants funded by Legal Aid	No. of defendants funded by Legal Aid	
				Solicitor only	Solicitor and Counsel
Belfast	5	7	4	2	2
Londonderry	0	0	0	0	0
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0
Fermanagh and Tyrone	1	1	1	1	0
Armagh and South Down	0	0	0	0	0
Ards	2	3	2	2	0
Craigavon	2	2	2	0	2
Total	10	13	9	5	4

Source: Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS)

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many violent offenders are currently managed in the community under Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland, broken down by policing district or court division.

(AQW 44114/11-15)

Mr Ford: Data in relation to relevant violent offenders being managed in the community is subject to change on a daily basis. A snapshot of statistics of offenders being risk managed under the public protection arrangements (PPANI) is published annually in the PPANI Annual Report. On 31 March 2014 the number of Category 1 violent offenders totalled 596 but a retrospective breakdown by police district is not available. Statistics for 2014-15 have not yet been compiled.

PSNI are responsible for data in relation to Category 1 violent offenders they are risk managing on a single agency basis under the public protection arrangements.

Data for Category 2 and 3 violent offenders, who are risk managed on a multi-agency basis under the PPANI arrangements, is provided in the table below:

Police District	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Category 2	3	11	7	3	5	6	2	4
Category 3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Pending risk assessment or categorisation	3	5	7	1	5	2	4	4
Total	7	17	14	4	10	8	7	8

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what suppression of posts or job losses are predicted for the agency tasked with administering legal aid, or any other agency under his Departmental remit involved with legal aid.

(AQW 44167/11-15)

Mr Ford: A number of posts have been suppressed in the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission over the past 12 months in response to reducing resources. In addition, a staffing review of the Commission has just been completed and the draft report is being considered by management.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what initiatives his Department is taking to reduce reoffending among young people.

(AQW 44172/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has direction and oversight of the Youth Justice Agency which is tasked with providing a range of services both in the community and in custody with an emphasis on reducing offending by young people.

Staff (most of whom are social work or youth work trained) deliver community based services to around 1000 young people a year from seven area teams across Northern Ireland. About five out of every 1000 young people age 10-17 in Northern Ireland are involved with this service each year. The number of young people who offend is therefore relatively low but this does not negate the impact such offending behaviour can have.

Northern Ireland has a unique youth justice system in that a significant number of young people who commit a crime are facilitated to meet their victim face to face in a youth conference. This allows the young person to better understand the harm that they have caused and allows the victim to have a direct say in the nuances of the action plan or court order. The programme of work, delivered by the Youth Justice Agency, following the youth conference addresses the young person's particular circumstances and difficulties while also taking into account the particular wishes of the victim.

For minor offences a system of Youth Engagement Clinics has been introduced. These clinics allow the police, the Public Prosecution Service and the Youth Justice Agency to work together to divert low risk young people out of the system at the earliest possible opportunity. At the other end of the spectrum we have introduced an Intensive Supervision and Support Programme which ensures the highest levels of supervision, support and engagement with and for the highest risk young offenders.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice what was the annual cost of keeping a person in prison, in each of the last fifteen years.

(AQW 44184/11-15)

Mr Ford: The annual cost of keeping a person in prison is known as the Cost per Prisoner Place (CPPP). The Department of Justice came into being in April 2010. Since its formation the CPPP in each year between 2010 and 2013 is set out in the table below.

Cost per Prisoner Place (CPPP)

Date	Cost
2010/11	£73,762
2011/12	£71,398
2012/13	£66,494
2013/14	£62,898

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice what percentage of the prison population was under 25 years old, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 44185/11-15)

Mr Ford: The percentage of the prisoner population under 25 years, by year, is contained in the table below. The figures are based on the Northern Ireland Prison Service population in custody on the 31 December each year.

Year	Percentage of Prisoners Aged Under 25
2007	29.20
2008	27.16

Year	Percentage of Prisoners Aged Under 25
2009	26.33
2010	25.85
2011	29.28
2012	24.75
2013	22.75
2014	22.28

Please note that figures are only available since 2007. Prior to this date the information was not recorded on the Prison Record Information System (PRISM).

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice to detail the percentage of prisoners who served (i) less than six months; (ii) 6 to 12 months; (iii) 1 to 3 years; and (iv) more than 3 years that were able to secure paid employment (a) within six months; (b) within one year; and (c) more than one year after release
(AQW 44186/11-15)

Mr Ford: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, if a person is under a Public Prosecutions Service summons in a court case as opposed to a charge sheet, which is moving toward committal for crown court trial, and this person has instructed lawyers to act in their defence but does not appear in person in court during the run-up to committal, (i) whether the specified charges are any less significant; and (ii) whether the instructing of defence lawyers counts as appearance on the accused's behalf.
(AQW 44234/11-15)

Mr Ford: The appearance or non-appearance of a defendant has no impact on the significance of any charges brought by the Public Prosecution Service. The recording of appearance and resulting outcome following a court appearance are entirely matters for the independent judiciary.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Justice what protocols are followed when a departmental staff member is on sick leave.
(AQW 44249/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice, including its Agencies, adheres to the following policies as laid down in the Northern Ireland Civil Service HR Handbook:

- Leave and Attendance Policy - Chapter 3.01 "Sickness Absence"; and
- Employee Relations Policy - Chapter 6.06 "Inefficiency Sickness Absence."

Please find below the link to the relevant section of the NICS HR Handbook for your information:

- Sickness Absence - <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/3.01-sickness-absence.pdf>
- Inefficiency Sickness Absence - <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/inefficiency-sickness-absence.pdf>

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Justice what protocols are followed when a departmental staff member returns to work following sick leave.
(AQW 44250/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice, including its Agencies, adheres to the following policies as laid down in the Northern Ireland Civil Service HR Handbook:

- Leave and Attendance Policy - Chapter 3.01 "Sickness Absence"; and
- Employee Relations Policy - Chapter 6.06 "Inefficiency Sickness Absence."

Please find below the link to the relevant section of the NICS HR Handbook for your information:

- Sickness Absence - <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/3.01-sickness-absence.pdf>
- Inefficiency Sickness Absence - <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/inefficiency-sickness-absence.pdf>

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many preliminary investigations or mixed committals were held in each court division in the 2014/15 financial year; and how many of these were legally aided for (i) solicitor; and (ii) counsel.
(AQW 44261/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested is outlined in the table below.

Mixed Committals and Preliminary Investigations at the Magistrates' Court during 2014/15^{P,1}

Court Division	No. of Mixed Committals and Preliminary Investigations	No. of defendants involved	No. of defendants funded by Legal Aid	No. of defendants funded by Legal Aid	
				Solicitor only	Solicitor and Counsel
Belfast	22	39	37	20	17
Londonderry	0	0	0	0	0
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0
Fermanagh and Tyrone	6	9	8	4	4
Armagh and South Down	5	7	3	2	1
Ards	6	7	7	2	5
Craigavon	10	12	12	5	7
Total	49	74	67	33	34

Source: Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS)

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

1 Relate to the period April 2014 to February 2015.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether violent offenders are categorised in a similar system as sex offender categorisation, depending on the offences committed and the risk presented.

(AQW 44299/11-15)

Mr Ford: Convicted relevant violent offenders are assessed and categorised under the public protection arrangements, in the same manner as relevant sexual offenders, taking account of the nature of the offence and any identifiable evidence of the risk of them causing serious harm.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43728/11-15, what assurances he can give that the offenders are being pursued; and to outline the rationale for imposing notification orders if there is no automatic arrest warrant issued when court orders are breached.

(AQW 44301/11-15)

Mr Ford: All three offenders are currently wanted by PSNI and efforts continue to be made to locate and apprehend them. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes failure to comply with notification requirements a criminal offence which does not require a court warrant to be issued before an individual can be arrested by police for allegedly committing that offence.

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Justice whether a study has been undertaken on the potential resale value of Armagh Courthouse.
(AQW 44303/11-15)

Mr Ford: As part of the consultation on the rationalisation of the court estate Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service has not carried out a study of the potential resale value of Armagh Courthouse. Advice on this issue will however be provided by the Strategic Investment Board. It should be noted that potential sale would result in a one-off capital gain, which could not be used to off-set resource costs.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail speed restrictions at (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in North Down.

(AQW 41568/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): There are 25 schools in the North Down area: 19 primary and 6 post primary. All of the schools lie within 30mph speed limit zones.

Eighteen of the schools have already had additional measures put in place under my Department's Safer Routes to Schools initiative.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development, since January 1 2013, to list the 50 roads with the highest number of surface defects; and the 50 roads with the highest number of complaints about surface defects.

(AQW 41865/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The following is a list of 50 roads with the highest number of carriageway defects instructed for repair during the period in question. However, there are couple of points to note:

- 1 The numbers associated with each road, while including the number of potholes, also include a range of other surface defects including cracking, depressions etc;
- 2 For management purposes, the road network is broken down into 'sections' which are lengths of road between two defined points. Sections range in length from tens of metres to kilometres. To provide a practical example, the Ormeau Rd in Belfast, as far as the public is concerned, runs from Ormeau Avenue (at the Gas Works) to the Saintfield Rd near Forestside. However, from a TransportNI perspective, this length of road is broken down into five separate sections each with their own unique reference number. Defect information can only be provided for each of these separate sections rather than for the total length. The following list is a list of road sections; and
- 3 Given that each section of road has a unique reference number, it is possible that the same road name appears more than once in the following list, for example, the Glenshane Road.

In order to provide some clarification as to the roads location, the Section Office area where the section of road is located has also been provided:

Section Name	Section Office Area
Glenside Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Annvale Road	Armagh
Carnhill	Londonderry
Glen Road	Omagh
Artasooly Road	Armagh
Chapel Hill	Newry And Mourne
Chapel Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Glenshane Road	Cookstown/Magherafelt
Glenshane Road	Cookstown/Magherafelt
Beechmount Avenue	Belfast North
Gosford Road	Armagh
Leitrim Road	Newry And Mourne
Mowhan Road	Armagh
Glenshane Road	Cookstown/Magherafelt
Glenshane Road	Cookstown/Magherafelt
Mullaghglass Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Crockanboy Road	Omagh
Ballyvannon Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Newry Road	Armagh
Dundalk Road	Newry And Mourne
Coolmillish Road	Armagh
Colinglen Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
U75621 (No Name)	Armagh
Mullaghcarron Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Clontariff Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Moygannon Road	Newry And Mourne
Bonds Glen Road	Londonderry
Lylehill Road	Antrim

Section Name	Section Office Area
Tonnagh Road	Omagh
Church Road	Newry And Mourne
Carmeen Road	Newry And Mourne
Glen Road	Cookstown/Magherafelt
Gosford Road	Armagh
U85821 (No Name)	Armagh
Old Kilmore Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Altinure Road	Londonderry
Armagh Road	Armagh
Green Road	Newry And Mourne
Ballydonaghy Road	Antrim
Lower Ballyboley Road	Newtownabbey/Carrick
Ballymiscaw Road	Belfast South
Ballylane Road	Armagh
Tennent Street	Belfast North
Glenavy Road	Castlereagh/Lisburn
Portadown Road	Banbridge/Craigavon
Disert Road	Cookstown/Magherafelt
Glebe Road	Ballymena And Larne
Upper Dromore Road	Newry And Mourne
Corrinare Road	Newry And Mourne
Glenshane Road	Londonderry

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development which body has jurisdiction over the naming of bridges.
(AQW 42441/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has responsibility for naming road bridges.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the process by which a bridge can be renamed, including the criteria used.
(AQW 42443/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not have a policy of naming or renaming road bridges and therefore there is no existing formal process or criteria in relation to this matter.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what criteria is used to determine whether signage highlighting its name is used on a bridge.
(AQW 42444/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not usually provide or erect nameplates on bridges or other structures, as this is not considered to be a good use of our finite resources.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what official status or recognition is given to the name of a bridge.
(AQW 42446/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not have a policy in relation to the naming of bridges; this being the case, neither official status nor recognition is applicable.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what changes will take place in his departmental operations in North Down from April 2015.
(AQW 42621/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is facing a £60 million Resource budget pressure in 2015/16, more than half of which will fall to TransportNI. This budget pressure will create an immediate impact on the delivery of routine maintenance services such as gully cleaning, road marking and street light repairs, together with road and footway patching, winter service, grass cutting and the maintenance of traffic signals.

The budget allocation that is currently available to TransportNI is only sufficient to cover its fixed costs, such as PPP payments and staff costs; energy bills for street lighting and traffic signals; and statutory inspection and testing of street lighting installations.

No budget is available to allocate to external contractors to carry out gully cleaning, road marking, street light repairs and other routine maintenance activities from 1 April 2015. Consequently, my Department will not be able to employ external contractors to undertake these routine activities beyond 31 March 2015

In addition Translink will need to make efficiencies in administration and overhead costs, to reduce the frequency of some services and reduce its workforce. A public consultation on this process is therefore now in place and details can be found on Translink's website, www.translink.co.uk.

The financial constraints are so great that difficult decisions had to be made and the impact of the budget cuts will affect not only Translink but also the level of funding available to community transport providers.

I can confirm that ownership and operational responsibility for Donaghadee Harbour transferred under RPA to the new North Down and Ards Council on 1 April 2015.

My Department will continue to review the provision of all of its functions in light of the 2015/16 budget settlement, the outcome of subsequent monitoring rounds and any other significant developments, such as the impact of the Voluntary Exit Scheme within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress as been made in relation to dedicated taxi-ranks for public hire taxis in Belfast city centre.

(AQW 42688/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Recent improvements to the city centre area under the 'Belfast on the Move' programme have facilitated a reduction in general traffic levels and encouraged greater levels of walking, cycling and public transport use. This has made the city centre area a more pleasant and attractive environment while still providing access for everyone.

In light of this officials have been considering several designs to provide additional public hire taxi rank spaces in Donegall Square North. I am keen that careful consideration is given to whether an expanded taxi rank might build upon these other benefits and if it could contribute to my cycling revolution.

Officials also have proposals to take forward formal consultation on the provision of additional taxi ranks in Botanic Avenue and High Street.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has taken steps to sell the Belfast Harbour Commission into the private sector.

(AQW 43081/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have not taken steps to sell Belfast Harbour to the private sector. While I am not inclined to support the sale or privatisation of Belfast Harbour, I do remain open to considering any initiatives that could deliver significant economic and social benefits to Northern Ireland. In this regard, I have approved the establishment of an Expert Panel which will advise and make suggestions on how Belfast Harbour can, as one of Northern Ireland's largest businesses, contribute most effectively to sustainable, and prosperous, regional development.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development the amount of funding allocated to (i) the road network; and (ii) road and footways repairs in North Down since 2010.

(AQW 43708/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of my Department's total expenditure on the road infrastructure in the North Down Borough Council area, over the period 2010/11 to 2013/14, are set out in the table below:

Financial Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Total Expenditure (£'k)	4,252	4,894	4,635	5,245

Details of expenditure on road and footway repairs in North Down since 2010 (including capital and resource structural maintenance), which is included in the total expenditure figures in the table above, are set in the table below:

Financial Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Structural Maintenance Expenditure (£'k)	1,938	2,667	2,577	3,337

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many apprenticeship places will be available with TransportNI in the 2015/16 financial year.

(AQW 43721/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has been developing a pilot higher level Civil Engineering Apprenticeship Scheme for the NI Civil Service in liaison with DARD and other NICS Departments. The original aim of the pilot was to offer up to 14 apprenticeships in DRD and other NICS Departments.

I am currently assessing the impact of budgetary issues and the Voluntary Exit Scheme on the proposals and I am not in a position to confirm the number of places, if any, which will be available within TransportNI in the 2015/2016 financial year.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 42871/11-15, how the current exclusivity of the rank is lawful, if the clause permitting this is only due to be added as part of the tendering exercise later in the year.

(AQW 43726/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that the omission of specific wording in the current contract in relation to exclusivity is not material; the fact that a contract was offered implies that the service and facilities to facilitate such, were for a sole user. Inclusion of such reference in the forthcoming tender exercise is merely to avoid any ambiguity.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development what structural protection measures are in place on public buses to protect drivers from assault, theft or similar incidents.

(AQW 43848/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Structural measures in place on Ulsterbus and Metro buses to protect drivers are as follows:

- 1 Multi-camera CCTV systems which monitor vehicle saloons, driver's cab areas and the front and rear exterior of vehicles are fitted to 91% of the Ulsterbus vehicles and 85% of Metro buses.
- 2 Drivers' assault screens are fitted to 86% of Metro Fleet and 45% of Ulsterbus buses .
- 3 All buses in the Metro fleet are fitted with two-way radio systems. An additional eight buses operating late night Derry City Services also have radio systems fitted.
- 4 All buses in the Ulsterbus and Metro fleets are fitted with vehicle tracking systems which provide real time location and tracking information.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any people living along the route of the A8 project have been offered alternative accommodation during work on the project; and if so, (i) how many; (ii) at what cost; and (iii) for how long.

(AQW 43890/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised, in the light of a number of Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations requests and an associated appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office, that the requested information constitutes personal information.

Therefore, placing this personal information into the public domain would be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any people along the route of the A8 project have been provided with a free taxi service to and from school during work on the project; and if so, to detail the (i) reasons; and (ii) cost.

(AQW 43891/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised, in the light of a number of Freedom of Information Act/Environmental Information Regulations requests and an associated appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office, that the requested information constitutes personal information.

Therefore, placing this personal information into the public domain would be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 43325/11-15, given this does not stipulate exclusive use by a specific taxi company, will he instigate a full investigation into how this was permitted to become the case under the terms of Translink's own definition of a dedicated passenger rank, including (i) who within Translink permitted this to occur; (ii) whether procedures were fully adhered to; (iii) why Translink security staff were instructed to prevent any other taxi firm to operate at the rank; (iv) why the rank is hosting signage for a specific taxi firm; (v) who made the original approach to have this rank exclusively for a specific firm; and (vi) on what date.

(AQW 43911/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that the response to AQW 43325/11-15 was in regards to the existing contract agreed between Translink and the current contracted private taxi firm. That contract was awarded following the requisite procurement procedures.

It is important to note that Translink has advised there is nothing to prevent it from agreeing contracts which allow the exclusive use of the taxi rank with an individual private company. Therefore I do not believe that any sort of investigation is necessary.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development what percentage of (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school pupils walk or cycle to school.

(AQW 43919/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Data on travel behaviours, including journeys to and from school, is routinely collated through the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI). The following information, setting out the percentage of journeys to or from school by walking/ bicycling, is extracted from the most recent report covering the calendar years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Age Group	Travel Mode	2011-2013
4-11	Walk	26%
	Bicycle	<1%
	All modes	100%

Age Group	Travel Mode	2011-2013
12-18	Walk	15%
	Bicycle	<1%
	All modes	100%

My Department's 'Active School Travel Programme' began in September 2013. The statistics provided in the most recent edition of the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland covers the period substantially before this programme began.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development what Translink is doing to reduce the number of people smoking on platforms in both manned and un-manned stations.

(AQW 43939/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised that Translink has been proactive in this matter and operates a no smoking policy at all of its rail stations, halts and on its services.

Translink also does not permit electronic cigarettes to be used at any of its stations or on any of its services and this decision is in line with the British Medical Association's recommendation that e-cigarettes should be included in the ban on smoking in public places.

Designated smoking areas have also been identified at main stations.

No smoking signage is visible at all of the locations, and staff will intervene, if required. However, Translink has no enforcement powers, as legislation removed the NIR bye-law that would have allowed it to enforce the ruling. Enforcement is now through local councils.

Therefore, Translink actively engages with the local authority 'smoking cessation officers' to try and raise awareness of this issue and it regularly has information stalls in its main stations, most recently for No Smoking Day on 11 March 2015 in the Europa Buscentre / Great Victoria Street and in Coleraine. This information provides both staff and members of the public with advice on how to stop smoking. Translink also displays information on 'stop smoking' support services at other locations.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what provisions for cycling will be included in proposals for the York Street Interchange in Belfast.

(AQW 43979/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The proposed York Street Interchange Scheme provides direct links by means of underpasses and bridges connecting the three busiest roads in Northern Ireland: The Westlink, M2 and M3. Cycling facilities are proposed on the carriageway on both sides of York Street between Frederick Street and Dock Street, with the city centre bound facility being a shared bus/cycle lane over the new bridge.

The proposals will also maintain the existing link to the National Cycling Network Route 93 via Whitla Street subway in its upgraded form.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on any plans to expand the Belfast Rapid Transport network into South Belfast; and what research or assessments have been undertaken on potential routes.

(AQW 43997/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is progressing the implementation of the pilot Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) routes which will link East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter via the city centre. As you know, we would intend to extend the BRT network to serve both North and South Belfast, subject to the success of this pilot and the availability of funding.

In order to assess the viability of potential BRT routes to North and South Belfast, my Department undertook parking and topographical surveys. The results of these, along with other passenger surveys and existing datasets, such as the 2011 Census and Translink's ticket database, will be used in the development of a new transport model for Belfast. The model will enable my Department to estimate future traffic and public transport passenger flows and travel times for a range of possible transport measures and economic and demographic scenarios. It is planned that the transport model will be completed in early 2016. At that stage, the options appraisal and business case for the extension of the BRT system to North and South Belfast will be able to commence, subject to the availability of funding.

My Department is continuing to engage with those responsible for proposed developments on potential routes outside the current pilot network to ensure, as far as possible, that the future provision of BRT to key areas is not prejudiced.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many street lights were recorded as being lit for 24 hours a day over the last year.

(AQW 44025/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's records show that there were 3,917 street lights recorded as being lit 24 hours a day between 20 March 2014 and 20 March 2015.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the cost of a street light being lit for 24 hours a day.

(AQW 44026/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Since street lighting electricity is not metered, there is no additional monetary cost for a street light operating during daylight hours.

When officials have been made aware of street lights operating during the daytime, as a result of faulty equipment or for routine maintenance purposes, they endeavour to attend to such issues promptly, as they appreciate energy is being used unnecessarily with consequential detriment to the environment.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the annual cost of lighting the street lighting network.

(AQW 44027/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The approximate annual cost of maintaining the street lighting network is in the region of £20 million which includes energy payments, statutory electrical inspection and testing and defect maintenance.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the flooding measures being installed in Samsonagh, Boho, Co Fermanagh are to prevent further flooding of the road or to prevent damage to vehicles during flooding incidents.

(AQW 44034/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The raising of the verges at Samsonagh, Boho is not intended to prevent future flooding of the road or prevent damage to vehicles during flood events, but is intended to help delineate the edge of the road in a flood situation.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the inspection process for faults occurring in street lighting.

(AQW 44037/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has a number of inspection processes that identify faults in street lighting. These processes are in addition to the fault reports that are received from members of the public, elected representatives and other public bodies such as the PSNI. These reports can be made in person, by telephone, on-line or by correspondence.

Periodic inspection and testing of street lighting installations is carried out at a frequency not exceeding six years. These inspections aim to identify electrical or structural faults and they are required under the Electricity at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1991.

Night-time scouting inspections have also been carried out on a regular basis, i.e. 2-weekly in the winter months and 4-weekly in the summer months. The present 4-week cycle is due to be completed on 24 April 2015. Regrettably, due to the significant resource budget pressures facing my Department in 2015-16, night scouting will be discontinued after that date.

TransportNI roads inspectors also identify street lighting safety defects as part of their routine road safety inspections regime.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Freedom of Information requests his Department received in the last two financial years; and to detail the cost of processing these requests.

(AQW 44094/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The numbers of Freedom of Information requests received by my Department during the last two financial years are set out in the table below.

Year	Number of requests received
2013/14	194
2014/15 (as at 27 March 2015)	125

In common with all NI Departments, DRD does not calculate or record information on the cost of processing individual Freedom of Information requests. This information is therefore not held.

Information regarding requests made to NI Departments is collated on a calendar year basis and published in a series of Freedom of Information Annual Reports. These published reports are available on the OFMDFM website.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has any plans to increase the grant for households seeking to connect to the mains water supply.

(AQW 44099/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water provides a Reasonable Cost Allowance (RCA) of around £2,000 per property to extend the public water main. My Department supplements this allowance for properties built before 2000 to a maximum of £12,000 per property. This is an increase from £10,000 in 2013 which I approved as Minister. I have no plans to increase the allowance further at this time

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development how many occupied houses in the Glens area of Antrim do not have mains water.

(AQW 44100/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Water maintains records of its customers, that is, those who are connected to the mains network. It does not hold records on the number of properties unconnected to the public water supply.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development what consultation took place in advance of the roadworks and road closures carried out at Lisnagelvin Road, Londonderry on Sunday 22 March 2015, to alleviate inconvenience of worshippers at the Church situated on that road.

(AQW 44103/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A number of attempts were made in the days prior to the commencement of resurfacing works to contact the local church pastor to advise him of the proposed works. Unfortunately these attempts were unsuccessful and my officials were unable to advise Reverend Brown of the impending road works.

The contractor was made aware of the Sunday morning service and was asked to put in place, adequate measures to ensure that worshippers were provided with access to attend the Sunday morning service. The contractor put in place procedures to meet this requirement, however, a small number of worshippers arrived earlier than anticipated and unfortunately had to be delayed in their journey through the works to the Church car park. Once this issue was resolved, the remaining worshippers were able to access the Church car park unhindered.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development how many compensation claims were lodged by pedestrians who had claimed to have fallen on either footpaths or roadways in the last three years; and how many of these were rejected by his Department.

(AQW 44104/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's claims database records the number of claims received for personal injury on footpaths and roadways, but does not specify the number of claims by pedestrians who have fallen. Consequently, the information requested by the Member is not available.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development how much funding has been ring fenced for the (i) Active School Travel Programme; and (ii) Bicycle Strategy.

(AQW 44135/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Active School Travel Programme is funded jointly and equally by my Department and the Public Health Agency. The cost for 2015/16 will be £400,000.

£2 million capital funding has been earmarked for schemes to support the Bicycle Strategy in 2015/16.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on cycling provision in each of the last three years.

(AQW 44136/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of expenditure on cycling measures covering the last three financial years are set out in the table below:

Expenditure on Cycling Measures in the Last Three Years

Financial Year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Expenditure on Cycling Measures (£k)	1,101	367	910

Whilst the outturn for the 2014/15 financial year is currently being finalised, it is estimated the projected figure for investment in cycling infrastructure will be in the region of £6.8 million.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the pilot residential parking schemes in South Belfast.

(AQW 44143/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My officials carried out a formal consultation on the implementation of Residents' Parking Schemes in the Lower Malone and the College Park Avenue/Rugby Road areas between 29 October 2014 and 19 November 2014. During this time they received a significant number of objections and representations on the two proposals.

Officials are currently considering and dealing with the issues raised and plan to have met with all of the objectors by the end of March 2015. However, they cannot complete the remaining part of the legislative process for either scheme until the issues raised have been fully considered and dealt with. It is envisaged the earliest a scheme could be implemented on the ground in these areas would be within the 2015/2016 financial year, although this is very much dependent upon there being a positive outcome to the consultation process.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development why AQW 42688/11-15 remains unanswered.

(AQW 44168/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I regret that there was a delay in responding to AQW 42688/11-15; however, the answer was published on 30 March 2015.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the role that the Busy Bee Bus Service plays in reducing social isolation for the older people, infirm people and people on low incomes; and (ii) given the high levels of multi-deprivation in Strabane, what commitment he can give to protect the Strabane town Busy Bee Bus Service.

(AQW 44206/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink is currently reviewing its overall levels of service provision and a public consultation process is now in place, details of which can be found on Translink's website: www.translink.co.uk.

This process includes the service to which you refer.

The consultation invites/encourages individuals, representative organisations, Councils, community groups etc. to provide feedback on, inter alia, current usage, purpose of travel, priorities including preference for alternatives available. This feedback will enable Translink to determine where resources are best targeted in a context of limited budgets.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the timescale for the commencement and completion of the Strabane Town Centre Pedestrian Bridge from lower Main Street to Bradley Way as part of the Department's sub-regional transportation plan.

(AQW 44207/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department remains committed to providing a town centre footbridge downstream of Strabane Bridge in line with the measures contained within the Sub Regional Transport Plan for Strabane. As you will appreciate, delivery of the project will be subject to the availability of funding and, unfortunately, in the current economic climate, it is unlikely that work on the town centre footbridge will be able to proceed in the short term.

While it is not possible to specify a timescale for the commencement of construction work, my Department continues to develop plans for the bridge with the objective of being in a position to deliver this worthwhile project should funding become available.

You will be aware that my Department has recently provided significant input to promoting sustainable transport measures in Strabane town, including provision of an Active Travel grant of £873K towards the cost of the new footbridge in the Melvin area of the town.

Additional sustainable transport measures, including widened footways and cycle paths on Melmount Road, Meeting House Street and Bradley Way, will be completed shortly and these schemes, along with the work completed in Bridge Street, mark a significant step towards delivering a number of the Transport Plan objectives.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development why he has ordered the parking up of the Transport NI vehicles and machinery, such as gully suckers, road sweepers; and when these vehicles will be back in service.

(AQW 44265/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Due to the significant pressure in the resource funding that is available to my Department for the incoming financial year, officials have been reviewing how, and to what level, they will continue to carry out the range of maintenance activities.

Funding will not be available to permit the normal levels of pothole repair and mechanical gully cleaning, for example, to be carried out. This will result in some vehicles being taken out of service until the funding situation improves.

We will however use this opportunity to redirect the freed up capacity within the workforce to focus on other important maintenance tasks that require little or no resource funding such as maintenance of roadside verges and drains.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what organisations have expressed an interest in purchasing Portavoe reservoir.

(AQW 44304/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water has advised that in accordance with the Department of Finance and Personnel's guidance document, Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland, a public sector trawl was carried out in May 2014 to determine any interest in the purchase of Portavoe Reservoir.

In response to this trawl NI Water received an expression of interest from North Down and Ards District Council.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the cost of running the bus service between Bangor and Donaghadee.

(AQW 44306/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In 2013/14 it operated 40 hours per week for 51 weeks at a cost of £77,757.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has plans for a subsidy scheme to support non-domestic properties facing disproportionate increases to water charges.

(AQW 44314/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The increase in non-domestic charges this financial year is on average 2.4%. This is the first increase in water and sewerage charges in three years. In the previous two consecutive years, NI Water has reduced all non domestic charges. Non domestic charges were reduced on average by 2.5% in 2013/14 and then by a further 4% in 2014/15.

Since the Executive agreed to the extension of water and sewerage charging to all non-domestic consumers from April 2008, charges for water and sewerage services have been reviewed annually. Any revisions must be determined in accordance with a process overseen by the Utility Regulator which protects customer interests.

It is important to remember that the Executive continues to subsidise non-domestic customers' charges by providing a domestic allowance for measured consumers and a 50% discount for unmeasured consumers.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to to AQW 43625/11-15, whether the Director is suspended on full pay.

(AQW 44331/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that the Director of Water Policy and Shareholder Division is currently suspended on full pay.

Department for Social Development

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage increase in salary was approved for staff of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in each year since its creation; and what was the highest individual percentage increase in each year.

(AQW 43033/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): The salary increases applied by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland are reflective of total salary increases in the Northern Ireland Civil Service as detailed below:

Commission staff equivalent to a grade below that of the Northern Ireland Senior Civil Service:

■ 2011/12 7.48%	■ 2013/14 1.58%
■ 2012/13 5.77%	■ 2014/15 1.53%

Commission staff equivalent to a grade of the Northern Ireland Senior Civil Service:

■ 2011/12 0%	■ 2013/14 3.25%
■ 2012/13 10.58%	■ 2014/15 2.18%

The highest individual percentage increase in each year was:

- 2011/12 10.58%
- 2012/13 10.58%
- 2013/14 3.54%
- 2014/15 3.53%

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development how much money has been spent by his Department on maintenance and improvements in Rathcoole, North Belfast in each year since May 2011.

(AQW 43614/11-15)

Mr Storey: The tables attached detail the amounts spent by the Housing Executive on maintaining and improving their properties in Rathcoole in each year since May 2011.

Table 1- Amounts spent on Maintenance

Year	Expenditure
May – Dec 2011	£461,126
Jan – Dec 2012	£730,484
Jan – Dec 2013	£614,318
Jan – Dec 2014	£453,055
Total	£2,258,983

Table 2- Amounts spent on Improvements

Year	Expenditure
May – Dec 2011	£343,255
Jan – Dec 2012	£4,248,430
Jan – Dec 2013	£1,062,364
Jan – Dec 2014	£1,470,955
Total	£7,125,004

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average number of points required to be allocated social housing in the Lurgan area.

(AQW 43707/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that during the period 1 February 2014 to 31 January 2015 there were 166 Housing Executive allocations made to applicants on the waiting list for the Lurgan area. The table attached details the points and allocations during the period.

Allocations in Lurgan 1st Feb 2014 -31st January 2015

0-29 points	38
30-39 points	10
40-49 points	8
50-59 points	10
60-69 points	9
70-79 points	13
80-89 points	8
90-99 points	20
100-149 points	45
150 + points	5
Total	166

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of how changes to the welfare system are likely to impact on people currently eligible for the Mobility Scheme.

(AQW 43735/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Motability Scheme, whereby people who receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Allowance may exchange all or part of their allowance in return for a car, is administered by the independent charity Motability. My Department does not hold information on how many people, who receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance currently, choose to exchange all or part of their allowance in return for a car.

People who are entitled to the enhanced rate of the mobility component under Personal Independence Payment, which will replace Disability Living Allowance for working age people (16-64), will also be able to avail of this Scheme.

We will continue to work with Motability to ensure that they are aware of the introduction of Personal Independence Payment in Northern Ireland. Further detail on arrangements to support Motability customers who are impacted by the

introduction of Personal Independence Payment can be obtained by writing to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, and Essex, CM19 5PX.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development how many agency workers are currently employed to carry out work for, or under the auspices of, the Housing Executive.

(AQW 43756/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that they currently employ 539 agency workers.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development how many dwellings could be provided, assuming a successful sale by the Housing Executive, of the recently advertised lands at (a) Burn Road, Ballysally; and (b) Windyhall, Coleraine.

(AQW 43757/11-15)

Mr Storey: Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised that:

- (a) The Burn Road Ballysally site which is almost 7 hectares is part zoned housing and the remainder is zoned as Local Landscape Policy Area in the draft Northern Area Plan. Under current key site requirements the site would likely accommodate 120 housing units. There are constraints such as NIE pylons and PPS8 for the unzoned element, so any estimate is subject to necessary approvals.
- (b) The Windyhall site in Coleraine is 0.64 hectares. Although the site is poorly maintained and used as open space, there may be PPS8 planning restrictions subject to planning and access approvals. Based on surrounding densities the site would likely provide between 20-25 units.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many Freedom of Information requests have been made to his Department; and to detail the cost of processing these requests in the last two financial years.

(AQW 43765/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Department for Social Development received a total of 239 Freedom of Information requests during the 2012/13 financial year and 287 in the 2013/14 year.

The member may wish to note that the number of requests received for each Northern Ireland Civil Service departments is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports. These are on the basis of calendar years, not financial years and can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

Statistics for 2014 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2014 FOI Annual Report.

The Department for Social Development in common with all NI Departments does not calculate or record information on the cost of individual FOI requests. This information is therefore not held. The position in the NICS corresponds to that of Whitehall departments.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how much is estimated to have been lost in benefit fraud in the last twelve month period for which figures are available; and how many fraudsters were made amenable.

(AQW 43775/11-15)

Mr Storey: The most recent figures available are for 2013. The estimated sum of public money lost through benefit fraud in respect of social security benefits administered by the Social Security Agency (the Agency) in 2013 was £16.6 million. Housing Benefit is not included in this figure and is provided separately in response to AQW 43776/11-15.

Made amenable is assumed to refer to the sanctions that can be applied i.e. an Administrative Penalty, Formal Caution or prosecution in court leading to a conviction. The number of people who were made amenable during 2013-14 was 1,132. This figure includes those sanctioned for fraudulently claiming Housing Benefit.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how much is estimated to have been lost in housing benefit fraud in the last twelve month period for which figures are available; and how many fraudsters were made amenable.

(AQW 43776/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the last twelve month period for which figures are available are for year ending 31 December 2014. In that period the estimated amount of fraud in the Housing Benefit, system was £17.1m, which represents 2.6% of expenditure. During the same period sanctions were taken against 534 claimants for Housing Benefit fraud.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 43125/11-15, whether any reasons have been identified as being behind the significant increase in Disability Living Allowance claimants whose residence is described as unknown.

(AQW 43805/11-15)

Mr Storey: A Central Postcode Directory (CPD) which is updated at certain times is used to allocate DLA claimants where possible to Assembly Areas. The primary cause of a customer being assigned to the unknown category is because the postcode is missing from the benefit record or incomplete or there can often be a delay in assigning the locational information to the CPD after a postcode is first introduced. Since the DLA statistics were published in November 2014 the CPD has been updated and this has now been applied to that data, resulting in more customers being assigned to an Assembly Area, hence there is now a decrease in Disability Living Allowance claimants whose residence is categorised as unknown. The number of cases included in the unknown category is now broadly in line with previous figures.

The following table details the number of people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance as of November 2014, by Assembly Area using the previous CPD and applying the updated CPD.

Assembly Area	Published data CPD Nov 2014	Revised CPD Nov 2014
Belfast East	9,530	9,550
Belfast North	15,870	15,950
Belfast South	9,020	9,040
Belfast West	18,230	18,760
East Antrim	8,060	8,080
East Londonderry	9,460	9,460
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	9,510	10,120
Foyle	14,580	14,740
Lagan Valley	8,480	8,260
Mid Ulster	11,160	11,210
Newry And Armagh	12,950	13,060
North Antrim	9,440	9,470
North Down	6,870	6,890
South Antrim	8,830	8,860
South Down	11,920	12,050
Strangford	8,220	8,240
Upper Bann	13,590	13,600
West Tyrone	13,780	13,790
Unknown	2,710	1,100
Total	202,210	202,210

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

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of (i) families; and (ii) individuals on the waiting list for social housing in Ards and North Down council areas.

(AQW 43826/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that the breakdown of applicants in the Ards Borough Council and North Down Borough Council areas at 31 December 2014 was as follows:

Ards Borough Council

	Single Person*	Small Adult*	Small Family*	Large Adult*	Large Family*	Older Person*	Total
Total Applicants	712	112	400	21	104	338	1687
Housing Stress	403	47	195	13	49	220	927

North Down Borough Council

	Single Person*	Small Adult*	Small Family*	Large Adult*	Large Family*	Older Person*	Total
Total Applicants	662	108	357	37	84	548	1796
Housing Stress	368	60	200	25	46	361	1060

* definition of household types

- Single person – one person 16-59 years old;
- Small adult – two persons 16-59 years old;
- Small family – one or two persons aged 16 or over, with 1 or 2 children;
- Large adult – three or more persons aged 16 or over with or without one person aged 0-15;
- Large family - one or two persons aged 16 or over and three or more persons 0-15 or three or more persons 16 or over and two or more persons aged 0-15;
- Older person – one or two persons aged 16 or over, at least one over 60.

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.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are on the housing waiting list in North Belfast; and of these, how many people have 130 points or fewer.

(AQW 43837/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive advises that at 31 December 2014 there were 3,783 applicants on the waiting list in the North Belfast Parliamentary constituency. 3,473 applicants have 130 points or fewer.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to provide details on the Social Housing Development Programme for BT13, BT14 and BT15; and how many houses will be completed in 2015/16.

(AQW 43841/11-15)

Mr Storey: Data relating to the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) is not collated by postcode area it is only collated by District Council areas and Parliamentary Constituencies..

Therefore, information has been provided for BT13 relates to the West Belfast Parliamentary Constituency. Information for BT14 and BT15, relates to North Belfast Parliamentary Constituency.

The SHDP is managed through the programming of starts on the basis of housing need using a set of strategic guidelines.

Area	Completions scheduled in 2015-16	Starts scheduled in 2015-16
BT13 (West Belfast Parliamentary Constituency)	239	665
BT14 & BT15 (North Belfast Parliamentary Constituency)	216	385

Please be advised that the SHDP is managed through the programming of starts on the basis of housing need using a set of strategic guidelines. Schemes can also be lost or slip to future programme years for a variety of reasons, such as failure to achieve planning permission. Schemes can also be added in-year through Existing Satisfactory or Off-the-Shelf purchases. Further schemes may also be added through subsequent programme formulations/housing association bidding rounds.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of houses in each constituency which are currently boarded up; (ii) the reasons why these houses are boarded up; and (iii) the length of time they have been boarded up.

(AQW 43860/11-15)

Mr Storey: In relation to Housing Executive properties, the information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not collate this information by Parliamentary constituency nor do they hold the information on how long each property has been boarded up. However, Table 1 attached details Housing Executive properties which are currently boarded up by NIHE local office area.

Table 1 – NIHE Properties Boarded Up

Local Office	Pending Demolition Blocked	Transfer to Housing Association	Sale Pending Blocked	Vandalised	Total
North Belfast	140	6	0	0	146
South & East	0	0	0	0	0
West Belfast	30	0	0	0	30
Shankill	35	0	0	0	35
Belfast Region Total	205	6	0	0	211
Bangor	0	0	1	0	1
Newtownards	8	0	0	0	8
North Down & Ards	8	0	1	0	9
Castlereagh	0	24	0	0	24
Lisburn A Street	0	6	0	0	6
Lisburn Dairyfarm	0	0	0	1	1
Lisburn / Castlereagh	0	30	0	1	31
Downpatrick	0	0	5	0	5
Newry	0	0	0	0	0
South Down	0	0	5	0	5
Banbridge	1	0	0	0	1
Armagh	0	0	0	0	0
Lurgan	0	0	0	0	0
Portadown	0	0	1	0	1
South Area	1	0	1	0	2
Dungannon	0	0	1	0	1
Fermanagh	0	0	2	0	2
Omagh	0	0	1	0	1
Cookstown	0	0	0	0	0
South West	0	0	4	0	4
South Region Total	9	30	11	1	51
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0
Newtownabbey 1	0	0	0	0	0
Newtownabbey 2	0	0	0	0	0
South Antrim	0	0	0	0	0
Ballymena	15	0	0	13	28
Carrickfergus	0	0	0	0	0
Larne	0	0	0	2	2
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0
East	15	0	0	15	30
Ballycastle	0	0	0	0	0
Ballymoney	0	0	0	0	0
Coleraine	0	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0	0
Causeway	0	0	0	0	0

Local Office	Pending Demolition Blocked	Transfer to Housing Association	Sale Pending Blocked	Vandalised	Total
Waterloo Place	0	0	0	0	0
Waterside	0	0	0	0	0
Collon Terrace	0	0	0	1	1
Strabane	0	0	0	0	0
West	0	0	0	1	1
North Region Total	15	0	0	16	31
N.I. Total	229	36	11	17	293

Housing Associations confirmed that they have 137 properties boarded up, as detailed in Table 2 attached. These are boarded up for a variety of reasons such as secured whilst long term works are completed, fire damage, pending demolition and relet repairs being carried out. The length of time they have been boarded up varies from, for example, one month to over ten years.

Table 2 – Housing Association Properties Boarded Up

Constituency	Number of houses in each constituency currently boarded up
Belfast East	15
Belfast North	48
Belfast South	8
Belfast West	10
East Antrim	2
East Londonderry	17
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	1
Foyle	1
Lagan Valley	8
Mid Ulster	1
Newry & Armagh	5
North Antrim	0
North Down	6
South Antrim	0
South Down	0
Strangford	0
Upper Bann	14
West Tyrone	1

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.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 43284/11-15, how many applications his Department has received for 2015/16 funding; and how many applicants have received notification of the outcome of their application. (AQW 43920/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department has received three hundred and sixty five applications through its Neighbourhood Renewal Programme for funding in 2015/16. All organisations have now been advised of the outcome of their application, following the completion of my Department's assessment and appraisal process.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development whether offers of 100 per cent funding for tenanted properties under the Warm Homes Scheme will be honoured.

(AQW 43921/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Warm Homes Scheme Managers, Bryson Energy and H&A Mechanical, were responsible for marketing, taking applications, verifying the householder's entitlement, carrying out technical assessments and arranging delivery of the energy efficiency improvement measures.

In order to avoid any outstanding applications when the scheme ended, Bryson Energy and H&A Mechanical, were instructed by the Housing Executive that they should only accept applications where they were confident they would have the work completed by 31 March 2015. The Warm Homes Scheme contract ended on 31 March 2015 and there is no provision to carry out any outstanding work after that date.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 42828/11-15, how his Department intends to end the use of open fire and open fire back boiler heating systems in Housing Executive homes.
(AQW 43938/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that through their planned investment programmes they have installed almost eighty thousand oil or gas heating installations into their tenants' homes. They have also provided the option of an electric focal point fire which continues to provide an alternative heat source, if required.

However, in line with the Housing Executive's heating policy, and in order to help alleviate fuel poverty for some Housing Executive tenants, they can allow the retention of an existing open coal fire with no back boiler. In a heating replacement scheme, where an open fire with back boiler exists, the tenant has the option to retain the open fire or have an electric focal point fire. The back boiler is removed with a fire back and fireplace provided for room heat only.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Warm Homes Scheme.
(AQW 43967/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Warm Homes Scheme has been my Department's main tool in tackling fuel poverty across Northern Ireland. Since its inception in 2001 over 127,000 households have had energy efficiency improvement measures installed. The Warm Homes Scheme relies on self-referrals and has been a popular and successful scheme. The current Warm Homes Scheme contract was due to end in July 2014 and was extended to 31 March 2015 to allow for the new Affordable Warmth Scheme to become established and embedded in the new council structures. The Affordable Warmth Scheme is a new area based approach to tackling fuel poverty in Northern Ireland. It is a targeted approach which will find and assist those households in severe or extreme fuel poverty using a targeting tool that has been developed by the University of Ulster and successfully tested in two pilots. Even with the level of homes that have been helped already by Warm Homes, research carried out by University of Ulster highlighted that over 33,000 households in Northern Ireland are in severe or extreme fuel poverty, that is, they need to spend more than a quarter of their household income on energy costs. These are the households which the Affordable Warmth Scheme will find and help as a priority. All of the energy efficiency measures available under the Warm Homes Scheme will be retained under the Affordable Warmth Scheme, with some additional new measures added. A package of energy efficiency and heating measures will be offered to each household.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are on the housing waiting list in North Down that have 130 points or fewer; and what percentage this represents of the overall waiting list in North Down.
(AQW 43989/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that at 31 December 2014 there were a total of 2,009 applicants on the waiting list for re-housing in the North Down Parliamentary constituency and 1,178 of these were considered to be in housing stress. Of the total number of applicants on the waiting list there were 1,846 applicants with 130 points or less. This represents 92% of the overall waiting list in the North Down Parliamentary constituency.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the plans for the future of the Social Security Office on Hamilton Road, Bangor.
(AQW 43991/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Department for Social Development provides social security benefit services through the Social Security Office on Hamilton Road. The Bangor Office is one of a small number of remaining offices not converted to the Jobs and Benefits delivery model. Consequently the Department for Employment and Learning's employment-related services are delivered from another office in Bangor.

Although there are no immediate plans, the Department remains committed to considering ways to improve service delivery in North Down and Ards generally, should opportunities arise.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 43283/11-15, for his assessment of the impacts of Neighbourhood Renewal Projects in East Londonderry.[R]
(AQW 44067/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department has received eighteen applications from organisations that provide services within the Coleraine and Limavady Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Each application has been subject to a thorough assessment and appraisal process in line with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation and Managing Public Money NI. The

outcome of which is that all will receive funding for 2015/16. I understand that officials have been in contact and advised each of the organisations of the outcome.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 43125/11-15, to detail the approximate percentage of those eligible and in receipt of Disability Living Allowance in each constituency, for the year ended November 2014. (AQW 44106/11-15)

Mr Storey: The following table details the number of people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance as of November 2014 and as a percentage of the population, by Assembly area.

Assembly Area	DLA recipients	Population	DLA Recipients as % of Population
Belfast East	9,550	93,100	10.3%
Belfast North	15,950	102,500	15.6%
Belfast South	9,040	112,200	8.1%
Belfast West	18,760	94,200	19.9%
East Antrim	8,080	90,000	9.0%
East Londonderry	9,460	100,000	9.5%
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	10,120	104,400	9.7%
Foyle	14,740	101,600	14.5%
Lagan Valley	8,260	103,100	8.0%
Mid Ulster	11,210	100,800	11.1%
Newry & Armagh	13,060	115,100	11.3%
North Antrim	9,470	109,500	8.6%
North Down	6,890	90,100	7.6%
South Antrim	8,860	100,400	8.8%
South Down	12,050	110,400	10.9%
Strangford	8,240	90,000	9.2%
Upper Bann	13,600	120,600	11.3%
West Tyrone	13,790	91,900	15.0%

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

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development whether there is any financial assistance or grants available for the removal of asbestos. (AQW 44118/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive advises that discretionary renovation, replacement and home repair assistance grants are at present only available in instances where the home owner satisfies the eligibility criteria for access to the particular grant type and can demonstrate that the required works present an imminent and significant risk to the household.

In such instances the Housing Executive will arrange for the property to be inspected by a technical officer and, if such a potential risk exists, refer the details to the Housing Executive's Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) for a decision. The ECC was put in place as a consequence of the discretionary grant restrictions introduced in 2009. Its purpose is to independently and consistently review any individual cases referred to it where the local Grants Manager considers that the defects specified by the household present an imminent and significant risk to the health and safety of the occupants. Where this is established the Grants Manager is authorised to process a discretionary grant on an exceptional basis.

In determining whether an imminent or significant risk exists in relation to asbestos, the Housing Executive would require the home owner to provide a written specialist asbestos report on the property in order to make a determination on imminent and significant risk. Where such a risk exists, for example, high grade asbestos internally which is deteriorating, then discretionary grant aid would be considered towards its removal, with any grant aid including for any costs associated with the survey.

Where such a risk does not exist, for example, lower grade asbestos located within the external environment or no evidence of deterioration, then discretionary grant aid would not be considered towards its removal and any costs associated with producing the specialist report would require to be borne by the home owner.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the possibility of a stock transfer programme of Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties, including the (a) timescale; (b) proposed numbers of properties; and (c) geographical spread.

(AQW 44129/11-15)

Mr Storey: Following the approval of the review of stock transfer in 2014, by the NIHE Board and Minister, the Housing Executive is currently preparing a new transfer programme. The Housing Executive has undertaken to transfer 2000 properties in this programme.

The transfer process for the first tranche has been initiated, and the Housing Executive will appoint housing associations to work with it and the tenants during 2015/2016 to develop the transfer proposals.

The estates that will make up the programme will be identified as part of the Housing Executive's new Asset Management Strategy that is currently being developed through the Department for Social Development / Housing Executive's Asset Management Commission being undertaken with Savills PLC.

It is therefore not possible at this stage to comment on the geographical spread of properties that will be in the full programme. Estates will be identified on the basis of need. The estates will be identified and the complete programme confirmed by early this summer.

The new approach will commence in 2015/16.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development what is being done to ensure all new build social housing has access for people with a disability.

(AQW 44133/11-15)

Mr Storey: All new build social housing must comply with the relevant requirements of The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (as amended). Building Regulations 91, Part R set out the specific regulations in terms of access and use of buildings.

In addition all new build social housing is required to meet the standards of the Lifetime Homes guide in order to receive grant funding. The design of Lifetime Homes removes the barriers of accessibility often present in other dwellings. The flexibility and adaptability within the design and structure enables new social homes to meet a diverse range of needs over time, which includes the approach to the house, entrances and circulation and accessibility within the house, for all visitor and tenant including those with a disability.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development what communication his Department has had with neighbourhood renewal projects in East Londonderry in respect of funding; and to detail how projects are being assessed to determine need and impacts so that communities with highest levels of deprivation will be supported via projects.

(AQW 44155/11-15)

Mr Storey: My Department wrote to project promoters of all existing Neighbourhood Renewal projects in June 2014 and December 2014 to confirm funding would continue to receive Neighbourhood Renewal funding up to 31 March 2015. Applications for further funding were subsequently sought and received. As advised in my earlier response to AQW 44067/11-15, each application was subject to a thorough assessment and appraisal process in line with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation and Managing Public Money NI. All eighteen were successful and will receive funding for 2015/16. I understand that officials have been in contact with each applicant and advised them of the outcome.

From 1 April 2016, subject to the successful passing of relevant legislation, under the Reform of Local Government, the new Causeway Coast and Glens Council will be responsible for urban regeneration and community development and will take all decisions regarding funding from that date. I and my officials are in close, regular, contact with the new councils to help ensure business continuity.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, if a person is released on bail to a hostel or similar accommodation, having been remanded in custody, whether they are responsible for payment of their accommodation or is this met in part or full by any agency within his Department; and if so, which agency.

(AQW 44166/11-15)

Mr Storey: If someone is required by a court as part of their bail conditions to reside in a hostel then Housing Benefit cannot be paid for that accommodation.

If the accommodation fits the definition of a hostel and a person is required as a condition of bail to reside there, housing benefit cannot be paid by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nor can accommodation be paid for by any other agency of this department.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will provide further funding to the Community Access to Lifelong Learning project which was delivered in conjunction with the Northern Regional College in Ballee, Ballykeel and Harryville.

(AQW 44224/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Community Access to Lifelong Learning (CALL) project run by Northern Regional College has been awarded funding for a further year to 31 March 2016.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will take the positive outcomes from the Community Access to Lifelong Learning project and deliver them in other areas.

(AQW 44225/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Community Access to Lifelong Learning (CALL) project has proved to be very successful and has met or exceeded its targets in the 14/15 year. The Northern Regional College delivers the project across all of the Ballymena Neighbourhood Renewal Area as well as the Grange Neighbourhood Renewal Area in Ballyclare.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of people on housing lists in South Belfast, broken down by housing division.

(AQW 44243/11-15)

Mr Storey: I assume the Member's reference to housing division relates to household type. The Housing Executive has advised that the breakdown of applicants on the waiting list in the South Belfast Parliamentary constituency at 31 December 2014 was as follows:

	Single Person*	Small Adult*	Small Family*	Large Adult*	Large Family*	Older Person*	Total
Total Applicants	2,021	175	733	39	184	448	3,600
Housing Stress	1,084	71	383	17	96	244	1,895

* definition of household types

- Single person – one person 16-59 years old;
- Small adult – two persons 16-59 years old;
- Small family – one or two persons aged 16 or over, with 1 or 2 children;
- Large adult – three or more persons aged 16 or over with or without one person aged 0-15;
- Large family - one or two persons aged 16 or over and three or more persons 0-15 or three or more persons 16 or over and two or more persons aged 0-15;
- Older person – one or two persons aged 16 or over, at least one over 60.

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Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, if a person is released on probation to a hostel or similar accommodation, having been remanded in custody, whether they are responsible for payment of their accommodation or is this met in part or full by any agency within his Department; and if so, which agency.

(AQW 44262/11-15)

Mr Storey: If someone is required by a court to reside in a hostel then Housing Benefit cannot be paid on that accommodation.

If the accommodation fits the definition of a hostel the critical factor is whether occupation is a requirement of the court. If an individual is placed in a hostel by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland on its own initiative, without reference to a court, then Housing Benefit is payable by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on that accommodation, subject to the Housing Benefit rules concerning income, capital and eligibility.

However if it is a requirement of the court then Housing benefit cannot be paid by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nor any agency of this Department.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 10 April 2015

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the Stormont House Agreement, for an update on the North West Gateway Initiative.

(AQO 7680/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): At the North South Ministerial Council Plenary meeting in October 2014 Ministers considered a paper on the review of the North West Gateway Initiative and agreed that a meeting of relevant Ministers would take place in the North West early in 2015.

The issues pertaining to the North West were also raised as part of the negotiations leading up to the Stormont House Agreement and leading on from that we are now jointly Chairing a Ministerial Working Group that will consider the economic needs of the North West, and the potential for further investment to promote growth and prosperity. While focussing initially on the North West, it will in due course examine other regions with identified economic needs.

Recently we met with Charlie Flanagan TD, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister Sean Sherlock TD at a North South Institutional meeting in Belfast. Our respective officials have consulted relevant Departments on the views expressed by stakeholders on the direction and priorities for the North West. Officials have also met the Chief Executives of Donegal County Council and the shadow Derry City and Strabane District Council.

We are now working towards a meeting between Ministers, North and South, in May to decide how the North West Gateway Initiative will proceed.

Mrs Cochrane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much consideration their Department has given to reallocating junior minister and special advisor posts to the proposed new Department that will have responsibility for rebalancing the economy.

(AQO 7686/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Executive discussions on the departmental structures and allocation of functions concluded at the end of February. The First Minister made a statement to the Assembly on 2 March.

There is further consideration to be given over the coming months to the detailed implications of that decision.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the next steps on sub-regional soccer funds.
(AQW 43984/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): In the March 2011 the Executive endorsed an investment of circa £36 for sub-regional stadia development for football as a priority in the next CSR period.

In January 2015 the Department received confirmation that a resource budget of £0.6m had been allocated by DFP for 2015/16 to enable the ongoing development of the Sub-Regional Programme.

A Strategic Outline Case has been developed and this was submitted to DFP in February 2015 for approval.

Programme specific details in terms of eligibility criteria, funding strands, funding limits, funding timelines etc are currently being finalised. Plans for formal consultation with key stakeholders are underway.

The Programme timeline remains that 2015/16 will step through the various audits of need, competitions, business cases and that capital delivery will be under taken in financial years 2016-2018.

The Programme is currently being developed with delivery planned to commence in April 2016 and run to March 2018.

The forthcoming process for allocation of funding will be a fair, open and transparent process with an evidenced based approach to demonstrating need of investment.

All projects will be assessed under “challenge fund” principles, with award recommendations being made based on eligibility and projects attaining a high assessment score. As per DCAL's Financial Approval Framework the Programme Senior Responsible Owner will seek Ministerial approval on all award decisions.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in relation to sub-regional soccer stadia, whether her Department has input on the decision of which stadia will be developed or is it a matter solely for the IFA.

(AQW 43985/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: DCAL is responsible for the development and delivery of the Sub-Regional Programme, including the allocation of funding.

The Department is currently in the process of developing the programme and is working closely with the IFA in aligning their Facilities Strategy with the Departments Programme.

Programme specific details in terms of eligibility criteria, funding strands, funding limits, funding timelines etc. are currently being finalised. Plans for formal consultation with key stakeholders are underway.

The allocation of funding will be a fair, open and transparent process and will be based on an evidence based approach to demonstrate need and investment.

All projects will be assessed under “challenge fund” principles, with award recommendations being made based on eligibility and projects attaining a high assessment score. As per DCAL's Financial Approval Framework the Programme Senior Responsible Owner will seek Ministerial approval on all award decisions.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the process by which the IFA are working with her Department on a strategy for soccer development, including the development of facilities.

(AQW 43986/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Responsibility for the development of a strategy for soccer development rests in the first instance with the Irish Football Association (IFA), the Governing Body for football in the north of Ireland. The IFA has a Strategic Plan in place for the period 2013-18, including for the development of facilities. On request from the IFA and through regular contact and meetings, DCAL and Sport NI provide support to the IFA and many of its affiliated clubs as they develop aspects within this Strategic Plan.

Specific examples of areas where the Department is working directly with the IFA in this regard include the concussion awareness campaign, the child protection ‘app’ for mobile phones, the financial investment of £1.5 million to develop football within deprived communities under the Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion Programme and the provision of a world class stadium at Windsor Park with DCAL financial investment of £31 million.

Sport NI also works closely with the IFA to help develop and implement aspects of its Strategic Plan. Specific support includes the provision of advice to the IFA around club facilities, including health and safety at sports grounds and facility design advice; governance and club development; coaching programmes; high performance pathways; and increasing participation – including amongst underrepresented groups such as females and those with disabilities.

In the March 2011 the Executive endorsed an investment of circa £36 million for sub-regional stadia development for football as a priority in the next CSR period. DCAL is currently working closely with the IFA in aligning the Sub Regional Stadium programme for Soccer with the IFA's Facility Strategy. Programme specific details in terms of eligibility criteria, funding strands, funding limits, funding timelines etc are currently being finalised. Planning for a formal consultation exercise with key stakeholders is underway.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a breakdown of the £6m that was allocated to support Derry's City of Culture legacy in the 15 month period to March 2015.

(AQW 44073/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: A breakdown of the funding allocation to support the City of Culture legacy from January 2014 – March 2015 is provided in the tables attached.

In the 14/15 financial year, £1.249m was allocated to the North Coast Sports Village and £75k was allocated to Boxing projects bringing the total investment since January 2014 to £6,037,273.

January to March 2014 Period:

Project	Total
Other Voices	£583,870
Community Cultural Strategies	£108,485
Music Promise	£154,346

Project	Total
Portrait of a City	£76,112
Go Berserk	£15,639
Humdinger Festival	£26,066
Nerve Centre (FAB LAB)	£6,256
Lumiere Stitch in Time	£52,131
Portable Marquee	£64,187
Social Media services	£4,000
Walled City Tattoo	£70,000
NRA Community leader development training	£3,200
Outer West Community Cultural Projects	£9,000
Community Cultural Activity (Pan Celtic Festival, St.Patrick's Day Festival, Jazz Festival, Music City Day, Stendhal, marketing)	£151,181
Armoured Pram	£25,000
North Coast Sports Village	£232,000
Boxing	£120,000
Creative Marketplace	£403,300
Grand Total	£2,104,773

North West Community Cultural Programme 2014/15 - £1M

Strategic Theme	Project	Details
Support for Continuation of Key City of Culture 2013 Events c£280k	Music Promise	Flagship City of Culture 2013 community music programme. SYNC element of Music Promise delivered by Nerve Centre.
	Portrait of a City	Flagship City of Culture 2013 community digital programme. Digital training delivered by Hive in Creggan.
	Music City	Flagship City of Culture 2013 music showcase. A weekend of school and community music programming with extension to wider NW in partnership with DCC and include marching bands and Ulster-Scots showcase activity.
	CultureTech	The North West's key digital and creative development festival. Extension of outreach to wider North West including Big Video Challenge in all NW schools.
	City Wide Festival Step Up Support	Step up support for community festival activity in Derry. Next Steps Partnership Group comprising Culturlann, LD Bands Forum, Tattoo, Maiden City Festival and Gasyard Feile.
	Walled City Tattoo	Support committed in 2013/ 14 for August 2014 Walled City Tattoo Event.
	An Droichead	An Culturlann cross community project with marching bands established as part of the 2013 All Ireland Fleadh.
	VAC Reading Rooms	Verbal Arts Centre's City of Culture 2013 literacy project now extended to the wider North West and Belfast.
	Playhouse	Extension of outreach programme to wider NW. Programme in partnership with PSNI targeting disengaged young people.
	Women of the World	November 2014 festival exploring women's issues. Specifically support for WoW schools event.

Strategic Theme	Project	Details
City Based NRA Capacity Building Interventions c£140k	Community Cultural Strategies	Support for activity, projects and events under Derry's four Community Cultural Strategies – Waterside, Outer West, Outer North and Triax. Variety of activity including festivals, events, engagement projects, skills development, a cultural audit and updating Waterside's Strategy.
Wider North West NRA and Rural Community Capacity Building Interventions c£112k	Joint NRA Project	Talent North West Project. A project coordinated and delivered by Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA) partnerships across the North West to develop new networks; share learning; and showcase local talent. The first time NRAs across the NW have collaborated on a joint project.
	Limavady	NRA targeted cultural projects across town and rural Community Associations to link the rural groups with the urban groups. Support for Stendhal Festival, community based arts festival, to allow continuation of outreach programme across the NW.
	Coleraine	NRA and rural targeted project with WOMAD delivering music, dance and art events with a focus on encouraging respect for different cultures and building capacity in community organisations to deliver events.
	Strabane	NRA and rural targeted projects with Alley Theatre: two productions with NRA and rural community for performance in January and February 2015; and craft collective community craft workshops and masterclass in Strabane Social Hub.
Cultural Hub Development c£255k	Creative Learning Centre Development	Allocations to Nerve Centre and via NI Screen in line with Executive commitment under the Innovation Strategy to enhance our Creative Learning Centres. Projects including Creativity Month, Conference and Cinema project.
	Rosemount	Programme support for cultural hub at Rosemount Factory.
	Mid Ulster	Support for Cornstore Creative Hub, community based facility, to extend Rural Key music outreach (rural version of SYNC).
Delivery, Marketing and Coordination c£213k	DCAL internal admin costs associated with NW Socio Economic Development Programme, direct DCAL event costs (eg Audience NI Conference 11 March 2015); marketing banners and pop up stands; and costs associated with wider coordination work to develop new linkages and partnerships in the North West. (5% of overall NW Socio Economic Development Programme.)	

North West Capital Event Delivery Equipment Programme - £810k

Location	Organisation	Details
NW wide outreach c£250k	CultureTECH	Minecraft Edu licenses for use in every post primary school across the North West
	Nerve Centre	Nerve Centre mobile FabLab to extend outreach to wider North West
	Waterside Theatre	Soundbeam sensory device for disability outreach
	Playhouse Theatre	Disability access and theatre link up IT equipment
	Verbal Arts Centre	Mobile reading rooms bus to extend literacy project.
	Derry City Council	Tower Museum; Ebrington Gallery; Formula Derr E skills and educational projects.
Derry based community focussed events c£200k	Culturlann ui Chanain, City Centre	Event delivery equipment – sound, lighting.
	Celtronic, City Centre	Recording studio.
	Gasyard, Triax	Additional kit for community marquee.
	GSCA, Outer North	Event delivery equipment – sound, lighting.
	Leafair, Outer North	Portacabin to house expanding cultural and sporting programme for men
	Artichoke, Waterside	Burning Temple March 2015; securing Teenage Kicks sign
Maiden City Motor Club, Waterside		Rally event est as part of CoC2013. Event delivery and safety equipment.
Strabane and Bready £100k	Various organisations including theatre and community associations	Event delivery equipment to enhance community outreach programmes; Mini bus for community transport; project equipment for community skills development
Limavady £100k	Stendhal Festival	Site, management and production equipment, inc sound, staging, lighting
Coleraine £100k	Coleraine Council	Mobile staging for community festivals which council will manage to enhance local community events
Bellaghy and Draperstown £60k	Mid Ulster Council Cornstore Hub	Listening wands for Seamus Heaney Interpretive Centre Mini bus for community transport
Optimism Bias	N/A	Subject to additional Ministerial approvals

North West Capital Cultural Hub Development Programme - £266,500**Community Centres – Digital and Specialist Equipment**

		DCAL NW cultural hubs	Allocation
1	Outer North	St Bridgets School	30,000
2	Outer West	Rosemount Factory	25,000
3	Waterside	Shared Future Centre	30,000
4		Hillcrest House	
5	Triax Area	The Hive	35,000
6	Strabane and Castledearg	SECA, Strabane	50,000
7		Churchtown Community Association	
8		Fountain Street, Strabane	

		DCAL NW cultural hubs	Allocation
9	Limavady/Dungiven	St Mary's Limavady	50,000
10		Glens Community Association	
11		Benbradagh Community Support	
12	Coleraine inc Portstewart	Ballysally Youth and Community Centre	30,000
13		Flowerfield, Portstewart	
14	NW wide outreach/ partnership	Aras Colmcille	16,500

Capital Refurbishments - £532K

Cultural Hub	Detail	(£,000)
Culturlann, Derry	Contribution to refurb of building adjacent to Irish language centre in partnership with DSD	150
GasYard, Derry	Contribution to new floor in GasYard drum to house dance studio in partnership with DSD	22
Na Magha Camogie	Contribution to new facility to increase outreach and create sporting hub in partnership with DSD	50
Rosemount, Derry	Small scale refurb to allow establishment of a cultural hub in location identified as most appropriate for pilot	30
Nerve Centre, Derry	Enhancement of FabLab space at Magazine Street in line with Executive Innovation Strategy commitment	280

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the sports recognised by her Department and the Sports Council.

(AQW 44259/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I can advise that recognition of a sport is a joint policy, operated by the five Sports Councils operating in the UK (Sport England, Sport NI, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales and UK Sport).

A list of sporting activities recognised by the Sports Councils is attached.

This list can also be obtained on Sport NI's website at:

<http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Sporting-Activities-and-governing-bodies-recognised-by-the-sports-council.pdf>

Annex A

Sporting Activities Recognised By The Sports Councils

Activity	Disciplines
Aikido	
Air Sports	
Royal Aero Club of UK)	Flying, Aero Model Flying, Ballooning, Gliding, Hang/Paragliding, Microlight, Parachuting, Popular Flying
American Football	
Angling	Federation, Coarse, Game ,Sea
Archery	Target, Field
Arm Wrestling	
Athletics	Mountain/Fell, Road, Track and Field, Cross Country
Australian Rules Football	
Baseball	
Basketball	

Activity	Disciplines
Baton Twirling	
Biathlon	
Billiards and Snooker	
Bobsleigh	
Badminton	
Bowls	Crown, Federation
Boxing	
Camogie	
Canoeing	Marathon, Polo, Wild Water Racing, Freestyle, Sea Kayaking, Slalom, Surfing, Open Canoeing
Caving	
Chinese Martial Arts	
Cricket	
Curling	
Cycling	BMX, Mountain Biking, Road Racing, Cycle Speedway, Track, Cyclo Cross, Downhill, Stunt
Croquet	
Darts	
Disability Sport	
Dodgeball	
Dragon Boat Racing	
Equestrian	Dressage, Horse Driving, Endurance, Vaulting, Show Jumping, Harness Racing, Polocrosse, Eventing, Reining, Mounted Games, Horseball, Horse Racing
Exercise and Fitness	Yoga, Keep Fit, Medau, Margaret Morris Movement
Dance	Ballroom, Latin, Highland Dancing, Scottish Country, Folk Dance
Fencing	
Fives	Eton, Rugby
Floorball	
Football	Futsal
Gaelic Games	Handball (non Olympic), Football, Hurling
Golf	
Gymnastics	Artistic, Recreational, Rhythmic, Sports Acrobatics, Sports Aerobics, Trampoline, Tumbling
Handball	Olympic
Highland Games	
Activity	Disciplines
Hockey	Field
Hovering	
Ice Hockey	
Ice Skating	Short Track, Figure, Synchronised
Judo	
Ju-Jitsu	

Activity	Disciplines
Kabbadi	
Karate	
Kendo	Iaido, Jodo
Kite Surfing	
Korfball	
Lacrosse	
Life Saving	
Luge	
Modern Pentathlon	
Motor Sports	Road Racing, Trials, Enduro, Motocross, Track Racing, Super Moto, Drag/Sprint, Speedway, Sidecar Racing, Hill Climbing, Autocross, Autotests, Car Racing, Karting, Rallycross, Rallying
Mountaineering	Abseiling, Bouldering, Climbing, Trekking
Netball	
Orienteering	
Petanque	
Polo	
Quoits	
Rambling	Long Distance Walking
Real Tennis	
Roller Sports	Speed, Inline Hockey, Artistic, Skater Hockey, Freestyle, Roller Hockey
Rounders	
Rowing	
Rugby League	
Rugby Union	Tag, Sevens, Touch
Sailing	Sailing, Sportsboats, Powerboarding, Windsurfing, Personal Watercraft, Motor Cruising, Inland Boating
Sand and Land Yachting	
Shinty	
Shooting	Federation, Clay Target, Pistol, Rifle, Muzzle Loaders, Small-bore Rifle
Skateboarding	
Snowsport	Skiing, Snowboarding, Telemark
Softball	
Sombo	
Squash	Squash Racketball
Stoolball	
Sub Aqua	Underwater Hockey
Surfing	Short Board, Kneeboard, Long Board, Skim Board, Standup Paddle, Body Surf
Surd Life Saving	
Swimming	Swimming, Diving, Synchronised, Water Polo, Open Water, Long Distance
Table Tennis	
Taekwondo	

Activity	Disciplines
Tang Soo Do	
Tenpin Bowling	Skittles
Activity	Disciplines
Tennis	
Triathlon	
Tug of war	
Ultimate Volleyball	
Water Skiing	Barefoot, Cable Ski, Kneeboard, Racing, Tournament, Wakeboarding
Weightlifting	Olympic, Powerlifting
Wrestling	Olympic Freestyle

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support her Department has provided to Horse Sport Ireland in each of the last three years.

(AQW 44289/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: From 2011/12 to date, Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, provided total funding of £480,006 to Horse Sport Ireland as detailed below:

Programme	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Grand Total
Athlete Investment Programme	£54,000	£70,500	£88,500	£69,000	£282,000
Coaching Legacy Programme	-	-	£4,000	£4,000	£8,000
Investing in Performance Sport	£48,716	£41,290	-	-	£90,006
PerformanceFocus	-	-	£50,000	£50,000	£100,000
Grand Total	£102,716	£111,790	£142,500	£123,000	£480,006

In addition, Sport NI's Outdoor Recreation Development Officer has provided ongoing informal support and guidance to Horse Sport Ireland over the last three years. Advice and guidance based on the governance best practice framework is also provided.

Furthermore, Sport NI supports the employment of a talent officer for Horse Sport Ireland through its PerformanceFocus Governing Body programme and funds the talent Development programme for 32 talented athletes in show jumping, eventing and dressage.

I can advise that the Sports Institute NI has engaged with Horse Sport Ireland Eventing to offer support to potential team members for the Olympic Games.

The Institute also supported three workshops for the Performance/Talent group of NI riders covering nutrition, psychology and media awareness.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in each of the last five years, to detail the groups which her Department awarded funding to for the purchasing a minibus.

(AQW 44309/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Please see the attached table which lists the funding provided for minibus purchases in each of the last five years.

The funding was provided under 2 initiatives; Tackling Poverty and North West Socio Economic Development programme.

Tackling Poverty Initiative

Group Funded	Details of Funding	Year
IFA	Purchase of new 17 seat minibus	2013/14
IFA	Purchase of new 17 seat minibus	2013/14
UBIRFU	Purchase of new 17 seat minibus	2013/14
UBIRFU	Purchase of new 17 seat minibus	2013/14
UBIRFU	Purchase of new 17 seat minibus	2013/14
UBIRFU	Purchase of new 17 seat minibus	2013/14

Group Funded	Details of Funding	Year
Immaculata Junior Football Club	Purchase of new 17 seat minibus	2014/15
Greater Shankill Partnership	Provision of a new 17-seater Wheelchair Accessible Mini Bus	2014/15
174 Trust	Provision of a new 17-seater Wheelchair Accessible Mini Bus	2014/15
Short Strand Community Forum	Provision of a new 17-seater Wheelchair Accessible Mini Bus	2014/15
Greater Village	Provision of a new 17-seater Wheelchair Accessible Mini Bus	2014/15
Colin Neighbourhood	Provision of a new 17-seater Wheelchair Accessible Mini Bus	2014/15
Creggagh Community Centre (Castlereagh)	Provision of a new 17-seater Wheelchair Accessible Mini Bus	2014/15

North West Socio Economic Development Programme

Group Funded	Details of Funding	Year
Verbal Arts Centre	To procure and refurbish a van for use by the Verbal Arts Centre's Reading Rooms Project, bringing the Reading Rooms directly to the heart of communities in the North West and further afield, particularly in rural areas.	2014/15
Cornerstone Creative Hub	To procure and refurbish a van for use by the Cornstore Creative Hub, Draperstown and to enable the Cornstore to extend its community outreach programme.	2014/15
Strabane and District Caring Services	To purchase a mini bus for community transport. Grant allocation also includes the purchase of craft equipment for community cultural activity.	2014/15
The Nerve Centre	To purchase equipment and suitable transport for a mobile FabLab and to design and deliver a programme of community accessed digital activity through the mobile unit across the North West Region.	2014/15
The Ashton Centre	To purchase equipment and suitable transport for a mobile FabLab and to design and deliver a programme of community accessed digital activity through the mobile unit across Greater Belfast and the North East.	2014/15

Department of Education

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how many schools do not have fully trained Special Educational Needs Coordinators amongst their teachers, broken down by (a) sector; and (b) Education and Library Board.
(AQW 43552/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The Education Authority has advised that it does hold the detail in relation to training undertaken by Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo's). Schools should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the in-service training and professional development of staff (where appropriate, including non-teaching staff) to help them work effectively with pupils with special educational needs. Such arrangements might appropriately be included in the schools development plan. Schools and Boards should consider the particular training needs of SEN co-ordinators.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education whether the maintenance budget for Ballymena Nursery School will be increased to match the increased cost of maintenance associated with the age of the facility.
(AQW 43886/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Ballymena Nursery School is a controlled nursery school; as such the managing authority with responsibility for the management of the school is the Education Authority (EA).

The EA has confirmed it has a sizeable estate, made up of schools of all ages and that all estate related matters, including maintenance, are dealt with in order of priority and within the budget allocation provided to the EA. While there is no specific maintenance allocation for any school within the EA's overall maintenance budget, each school does have its own dedicated Local Management of Schools (LMS) budget, an element of which is for Tenant Maintenance which can be used at the school's discretion.

The 2015-16 maintenance budget is severely constrained, priority will therefore be given to inescapable statutory requirements, such as health and safety, and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, as well as to contractually committed works.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education what minor works are planned for Ballymena Nursery School.
(AQW 43887/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Ballymena Nursery School is a controlled nursery school; as such the managing authority with responsibility for the management of the school is the Education Authority (EA).

The EA has advised that design work has been carried out on an external minor works scheme to include replacement gates and fencing to improve accessibility to the building. Progression of this scheme will be assessed in accordance with the available budget and in line with competing priorities.

Minor Works applications are currently being considered for the following schemes:

- Refurbishment of toilets and provision of hygiene room;
- Covered play area to protect the children from exposure to the sun;
- Refurbishment of staff room and provision of additional staff toilets; and
- Replacement of windows in the office

The 2015-16 capital minor works budget is severely constrained, and priority will be given to inescapable statutory requirements, such as health and safety, and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, as well as to contractually committed works.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education what work is planned at Ballymena Nursery School to ensure the school complies with the Disability Discrimination Act.
(AQW 43888/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Ballymena Nursery School is a controlled nursery school; as such the managing authority with responsibility for the management of the school is the Education Authority (EA).

The EA has advised that a minor works application for refurbishment of toilets and provision of hygiene room is currently being considered.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education what consideration has been given to a new build for Ballymena Nursery School.
(AQW 43889/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Ballymena Nursery School is a controlled nursery school; as such the managing authority with responsibility for the management of the school is the Education Authority (EA).

The EA has advised that they consider all schools when identifying their priorities for major capital investment. To date, other schemes have achieved higher priority than Ballymena Nursery School.

From 1 April 2015 the Education Authority will have a duty to manage its available budget, as set out in the Education Act 2014, in accordance with the priorities that I identify as Minister with responsibility for education. The 2015-16 capital budget for major works is severely constrained. The reality is that the budget settlement for Education means the need for capital investment far exceeds the funds available and that many schools in need of investment are competing for limited capital funding.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the ending of the Primary Languages Programme, what (i) consultation was carried out and the time period for this consultation; and (ii) impact assessment was carried out on the ending of the programme.
(AQW 44092/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A consultation was carried out on all budget proposals outlined in the Draft Budget 2015/16. This included a proposed reduction in the budget of the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP). The consultation was launched on 26 November 2014 and closed on 29 December 2014. The decision to reduce and subsequently to cease funding of the PMLP was subject to equality screening and published on the DE website.

The Westminster Government has cut the Executive's budget by £1.5bn over this last 5 years. As a direct result of these cuts, it has proven impossible to deliver the same level of services as before.

It is highly regrettable that the PMLP has come to an end but is a consequence of seeking to protect frontline services and the Aggregated Schools Budget.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many school crossing patrol guards are employed in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area; and how this compares with ten years ago.
(AQW 44173/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority provided the following information which shows the number of school crossing patrols in the 2004/2005 and 2014/2015 school years:

Education and Library Board (ELB)	Number of school crossing patrols in 2004/2005 school year	Number of school crossing patrols in 2014/2015 school year
Belfast ELB	129	95
North Eastern ELB	148	129
South Eastern ELB	92	51
Southern ELB	161	124
Western ELB	Unknown*	118
Total for all ELBs	530 (excl WELB)	517

*Western ELB does not hold this figure

The Education Authority has provided the following list which shows the location of school crossing patrols in North Down (interpreted as all those schools in the Bangor area as far east as Donaghadee and also all of Holywood):

- Ballyholme Primary School x 2
- Ballymagee Primary School x 2
- Bangor Central primary School x 1
- Clandeboye Primary School x 1
- Donaghadee Primary School x 1
- Holywood Primary School x 1
- Kilmaine Primary School x 1
- Rathmore Primary School x 2
- St Comgall's Primary School x 1
- St Malachy's Primary School x 1
- St Patrick's Primary School x 1

Overall responsibility for road safety lies with Department of the Environment. However, the Education Authority also has a role to play and can set out measures in a scheme, approved by the Department, to assist in the prevention of accidents to children. This enables the Authority to provide school crossing patrols where particular traffic hazards have been identified. It also enables the Authority to remove crossing patrols where conditions have changed over time to the extent that a hazard has declined in significance, or disappeared altogether.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many school crossing patrol guards are employed in Northern Ireland; and how this compares with ten years ago.

(AQW 44174/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority provided the following information which shows the number of school crossing patrols in the 2004/2005 and 2014/2015 school years:

Education and Library Board (ELB)	Number of school crossing patrols in 2004/2005 school year	Number of school crossing patrols in 2014/2015 school year
Belfast ELB	129	95
North Eastern ELB	148	129
South Eastern ELB	92	51
Southern ELB	161	124
Western ELB	Unknown*	118
Total for all ELBs	530 (excl WELB)	517

*Western ELB does not hold this figure

The Education Authority has provided the following list which shows the location of school crossing patrols in North Down (interpreted as all those schools in the Bangor area as far east as Donaghadee and also all of Holywood):

- Ballyholme Primary School x 2
- Ballymagee Primary School x 2
- Bangor Central primary School x 1
- Clandeboye Primary School x 1

- Donaghadee Primary School x 1
- Holywood Primary School x 1
- Kilmaine Primary School x 1
- Rathmore Primary School x 2
- St Comgall's Primary School x 1
- St Malachy's Primary School x 1
- St Patrick's Primary School x 1

Overall responsibility for road safety lies with Department of the Environment. However, the Education Authority also has a role to play and can set out measures in a scheme, approved by the Department, to assist in the prevention of accidents to children. This enables the Authority to provide school crossing patrols where particular traffic hazards have been identified. It also enables the Authority to remove crossing patrols where conditions have changed over time to the extent that a hazard has declined in significance, or disappeared altogether.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many school patrol crossing guards are employed in each Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 44175/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority provided the following information which shows the number of school crossing patrols in the 2004/2005 and 2014/2015 school years:

Education and Library Board (ELB)	Number of school crossing patrols in 2004/2005 school year	Number of school crossing patrols in 2014/2015 school year
Belfast ELB	129	95
North Eastern ELB	148	129
South Eastern ELB	92	51
Southern ELB	161	124
Western ELB	Unknown*	118
Total for all ELBs	530 (excl WELB)	517

*Western ELB does not hold this figure

The Education Authority has provided the following list which shows the location of school crossing patrols in North Down (interpreted as all those schools in the Bangor area as far east as Donaghadee and also all of Holywood):

- Ballyholme Primary School x 2
- Ballymagee Primary School x 2
- Bangor Central primary School x 1
- Clandeboye Primary School x 1
- Donaghadee Primary School x 1
- Holywood Primary School x 1
- Kilmaine Primary School x 1
- Rathmore Primary School x 2
- St Comgall's Primary School x 1
- St Malachy's Primary School x 1
- St Patrick's Primary School x 1

Overall responsibility for road safety lies with Department of the Environment. However, the Education Authority also has a role to play and can set out measures in a scheme, approved by the Department, to assist in the prevention of accidents to children. This enables the Authority to provide school crossing patrols where particular traffic hazards have been identified. It also enables the Authority to remove crossing patrols where conditions have changed over time to the extent that a hazard has declined in significance, or disappeared altogether.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education which schools in North Down have a crossing patrol guard.

(AQW 44176/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Authority provided the following information which shows the number of school crossing patrols in the 2004/2005 and 2014/2015 school years:

Education and Library Board (ELB)	Number of school crossing patrols in 2004/2005 school year	Number of school crossing patrols in 2014/2015 school year
Belfast ELB	129	95
North Eastern ELB	148	129
South Eastern ELB	92	51
Southern ELB	161	124
Western ELB	Unknown*	118
Total for all ELBs	530 (excl WELB)	517

*Western ELB does not hold this figure

The Education Authority has provided the following list which shows the location of school crossing patrols in North Down (interpreted as all those schools in the Bangor area as far east as Donaghadee and also all of Holywood):

- Ballyholme Primary School x 2
- Ballymagee Primary School x 2
- Bangor Central primary School x 1
- Clandeboye Primary School x 1
- Donaghadee Primary School x 1
- Holywood Primary School x 1
- Kilmaine Primary School x 1
- Rathmore Primary School x 2
- St Comgall's Primary School x 1
- St Malachy's Primary School x 1
- St Patrick's Primary School x 1

Overall responsibility for road safety lies with Department of the Environment. However, the Education Authority also has a role to play and can set out measures in a scheme, approved by the Department, to assist in the prevention of accidents to children. This enables the Authority to provide school crossing patrols where particular traffic hazards have been identified. It also enables the Authority to remove crossing patrols where conditions have changed over time to the extent that a hazard has declined in significance, or disappeared altogether.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education detail the cost of providing translation services in (i) primary; and (ii) post primary schools in each of the last three years, broken down by Education and Library Board. (AQW 44195/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The cost of providing translation services in (i) primary; and (ii) post primary schools in each of the last three financial years, broken down by Education and Library Board (ELB) is:

		2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000
Belfast ELB	Primary	0	1	6
	Post primary	0	1	2
North Eastern ELB*	Primary	44	48	51
	Post primary	22	29	24
Southern ELB	Primary	0	1	1
	Post primary	0	0	1
South Eastern ELB	Primary	0	0	0
	Post primary	0	0	0
Western ELB	Primary	0	0	0
	Post primary	0	0	0

*Certain translation services are provided centrally by the NEELB.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43641/11-15, whether he has discussed with the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure the possibility of Libraries NI providing continued support for a computerised school library service. (AQW 44197/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have had no discussions with the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure about the possibility of Libraries NI providing continued support for a computerised school library service.

However, I am pleased to advise that I have just announced a £900,000 funding package to update the library management systems in schools.

Schools across the north will now be able to upgrade their library software to ECLIPSE, enabling them to maximise the potential of school resources to support teaching and independent learning.

The new software in schools will align with the library management system used by staff in the Education Authority Library Service which will result in a fully integrated service for the exchange of resources.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education whether he will reconsider his decision to cut the Early Years and Sure Start budgets for 2015/16.

(AQW 44202/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Westminster Government has cut the Executive's budget by £1.5bn over this last five years. As a direct result of these cuts it has proven impossible to deliver the same level of services as before. Hence, this has been the most difficult budget I have had to prepare and unavoidably, funding to some worthy programmes will be affected.

The Early Years Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a "closed" Fund since then to only those groups. The Fund is administered by Early Years, the Organisation for Young Children (EYO).

I have ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015. I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

I have protected the Sure Start budget as far as possible so that the original reduction of £2m has been reduced to £1m. The reduction of £1m leaves a Sure Start budget of £24.7m for 2015/16. It is anticipated that the reduction will be realised as far as possible from areas within service delivery where greater efficiencies can be realised, with the aim of protecting front line services.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 43713/11-15, for each of the last five years, to detail (i) the amount each Education and Library Board spent on catering equipment contracts; and (ii) the five companies that received the most funds from each Board, including the amounts received.

(AQW 44223/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The amount spent on catering contracts for each of the last five years for each Education and Library Board is:

	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	13/14 £	14/15 £	Total £
BELB	410,658	419,845	728,961	763,697	479,639	2,802,800
NEELB	542,499	739,967	810,167	244,399	184,765	2,521,797
SEELB	363,458	692,286	942,508	514,012	420,976	2,933,240
SELB	767,560	875,849	980,308	1,013,086	683,939	4,320,742
WELB	301,996	490,376	508,604	416,095	751,826	2,468,897

(ii) The five companies that receive the most funds from each Board in each year:

Belfast Education and Library Board	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	13/14 £	14/15 £
Galgorm Hygiene	250,050	196,675	236,888	238,093	226,527
Stephens Catering Equipment Co. Ltd	72,771	116,459	224,586	371,393	181,355
McKenna Catering	38,132	40,649	68,043	35,155	
Bunzl McLaughlin	33,843	45,765	161,884	68,229	39,982
Cater-Quip Ltd	6,880	14,116	25,928	28,027	16,510
Refrigeration Service					9,348

North Eastern Education and Library Board	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	13/14 £	14/15 £
Stephens Catering Equipment Co Ltd	346,919	491,518	619,288	109,483	92,423
School & Office Supplies	60,311	69,947	54,733	18,550	
Galgorm Group	26,066	31,501	35,544	20,349	44,625
Cater-Quip Ltd		24,145	35,100	16,589	22,472

North Eastern Education and Library Board	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	13/14 £	14/15 £
Moffett & Sons Ltd			25,195	21,208	21,952
Industrial Floorcare Machines	16,875				
Nugents	14,951				
Alpha Marketing plc		17,794			
Refrigeration Service					11,545

South Eastern Education and Library Board	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	13/14 £	14/15 £
Stephens Catering Equipment Co. Ltd	156,473	429,774	687,237	296,101	58,246
School & Office Supplies	70,647	41,939	139,360	50,892	8,699
Emos Infineer Ltd				58,245	196,130
McKenna Catering	49,996	90,963	52,809	26,124	
Industrial Floorcare Machines	25,929	36,989	7,430		
Galgorm Hygiene		18,733			59,158
Capita Managed IT Solutions				15,213	54,614
Refrigeration Service			10,321		
Avery Berkel Ltd	5,265				

Southern Education and Library Board	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	13/14 £	14/15 £
The Galgorm Group T/A McKenna Catering	408,500	391,104	452,257	382,781	397,209
Stephens Catering Equipment Co Ltd	201,922	273,097	329,238	379,890	166,093
Bunzl McLaughlin - T McLaughlin	83,652	131,418	153,357	169,573	79,895
Cater-Quip Ltd		17,704	37,963	37,633	27,504
Catering Equipment Engineers Ltd	18,201	32,456			
FF Food Engineering	18,881				
P&P Business Equipment			2,682		
Refrigeration Service				25,476	9,073

Western Education and Library Board	10/11 £	11/12 £	12/13 £	13/14 £	14/15 £
Stephens Catering Equipment Co. Ltd	72,071	105,450	209,054	232,031	456,404
Cunningham ACR	40,807	124,427	44,401	23,468	45,077
McKenna Catering	21,969	54,972	90,084		38,962
Thomas McLaughlin Ltd	42,794	47,448	26,032		
Alpha Marketing			23,363		67,166
Caterquip		29,274		22,453	24,416
Galgorm Hygiene	33,250			21,156	
CRB Solutions				21,521	

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education how many (i) children; and (ii) families currently benefit from Early Years funded organisations in East Londonderry.[R]

(AQW 44267/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The DE Early Years Fund is administered by Early Years, the Organisation for Young Children (EYO). According to monitoring information supplied to DE officials by EYO in relation to 2014/15, 16 of the funded organisations are located in East Londonderry Constituency, in which 398 children are benefiting from services supported by the Fund. I am advised that information on the corresponding number of families is not held by EYO.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to outline the correct staff-to-child ratio for children up to 12 years of age; and how the Early Years funding cut is likely to impact upon adequate staff cover within funded projects.[R]

(AQW 44269/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All settings which provide care for children under the age of 12 (including groups which offer Pre-School Education Programme places) are required to register with the Health and Social Care Trusts under the Children (NI) Order 1995. DHSSPS officials have confirmed that the staff-to-child ratios for settings working with children under the age of 12 are outlined in Volume two of the guidance to the Order and are:

- 0 to 2 years = 1:3
- 2 to 3 years = 1:4
- 3 to 12 = 1:8

Regardless of group size, at least 2 members of staff should be on duty at all times.

It is therefore a matter for each group, under the terms of their registration certificate, issued by the Health and Social Care Trusts, to ensure that the specified ratios are adhered to.

The Early Years Fund is administered by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) on DE's behalf under annual Service Level Agreement. Awards may be made towards a contribution towards the salary costs of the group or to meet a deficit between income and predicted expenditure.

The Executive's Budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's (DE) remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything, hence my decision to reduce the funding for the Early Years Fund.

I have endeavoured to minimise the impact to the Early Years Fund as far as possible by ensuring that Early Years Fund funding is available to enable all current recipients to receive continued funding until 31st August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond 31 August 2015. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of the Department of Education.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education who carried out the ballot for the Moy Regional Primary School and St. John's Primary School Moy development proposal.

(AQW 44279/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has not received Development Proposals for Moy Regional Primary School or St John's Primary School, Moy. No ballot has therefore been carried out.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether he will consider proposing the establishment an inter-departmental Executive sub-group to explore the feasibility of expanding Sure Start provision for all first time parents and children of pre-school age or universal access to Sure Start services for all parents and children of pre-school age.

(AQW 44293/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The focus of Sure Start is currently within at least the top 20% most disadvantaged wards in the north of Ireland, with expansion to the top 25% most disadvantaged wards underway. The budget for the programme in 2015/16 is £24.675m.

The Independent Review of the Sure Start Programme has recently concluded. When I have had the opportunity to consider the report findings in detail, taking account of wider Government and Departmental priorities, I will consider how to respond to ensure that Sure Start services are delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible.

In times of constrained finances it is increasingly important to ensure that money is spent on activities which are helping to secure improved well-being and development outcomes for children and families in the most disadvantaged areas.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) each area of current expenditure that his Department will be making savings in 2015/16; (ii) the estimated level of savings for each; and (iii) what impact this will have on service delivery.

(AQW 44347/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Details of the information you have requested are contained within my 2015-16 Savings Delivery Plan which has published on my Department's website at www.deni.gov.uk and can be found via the link below:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/microsoft_word_-_final_budget_2015-16__savings_delivery_plan.pdf

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) for details on the petroleum licensing round that saw Rathlin Energy awarded the license in 2011; (ii) whether procedure was correctly followed; (iii) to list the companies that expressed an interest; (iv) what was the award criteria; (v) how the call for applicants was advertised; and (vi) what checks were made of applicants and potential applicants.

(AQW 43977/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):

- (i) DETI operate an open door licensing system. Following the coming into effect of the Hydrocarbons Licensing Directive Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 and the Petroleum Production (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010, DETI published a Notice (2010/C169/4) in the Official Journal of the European Union, announcing the availability of all of onshore Northern Ireland for Petroleum Licence applications;
- (ii) Yes; Notice 2010/C/169/4 was published in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Hydrocarbons Licensing Directive Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010;
- (iii) the following valid Petroleum Licence applications were received by DETI:
 - (a) Infrastrata/eCORP – 18 August 2010
 - (b) Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd – 23 August 2010
 - (c) Rathlin Energy Limited – 26 August 2010
 - (d) P.R. Singleton Limited x 2 applications - 26 August 2010
- (iv) the licences were awarded in accordance with DETI's powers under the Petroleum (Production) Act (Northern Ireland) 1964. The arrangements for making and determining licence applications are set out in the Petroleum Production Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987 (as amended by the Petroleum Production (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010; and the Hydrocarbons Licensing Directive Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010). Detailed guidance for applicants is available on the DETI website;
- (v) see (i) above;
- (vi) My Department carried out a range of checks on the financial viability and capacity and, where relevant, the technical capacity of applicants;

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she has worked with the Orange Order and the Royal Black Institution on the future of tourism in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43978/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Both Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland have worked closely in recent years with the Orange Order to develop the Tourism Flagship concept, which aims to encourage the organisers of the demonstrations to think beyond their own traditional support and broaden the appeal of the event to a tourism audience.

Flagships are promoted on www.discovernorthernireland.com and www.ireland.com websites.

Tourism NI has met with the Orange Order on a number of occasions. Representatives from the Orange Order have attended Tourism NI marketing roadshows, undertaken WorldHost training and received tourism toolkits.

Tourism NI officials visited Schomberg House on 10 February 2015 to view progress on this visitor attraction and recommended that the attraction seeks a Tourism NI Visitor Attraction assessment when ready.

Tourism Ireland has also met with Grand Orange Lodge officials in recent years including attendance at Loyal Order parades and at an event in London hosted by the Ambassador of Ireland, Daniel Mulhall.

Previously, representatives from the Orange Order travelled to New York and met with the Tourism Ireland North American office and received presentations on marketing and promotion of Northern Ireland. Tourism Ireland also arranged a visit for key representatives of the Order to sites in Dublin with historic and cultural links.

I most recently met with the Royal Black Preceptory in February 2015 to discuss the 13 July Scarva Parade. In the past, Tourism NI has promoted the Scarva Sham fight event on their social and digital media channels. Tourism NI officials have also previously met with the event organisers, the Royal Black Preceptory to advise how they could develop the event.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department and Invest NI have supported businesses in the Fermanagh district council area.

(AQW 44035/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department offers a wide range of support from Invest NI, Telecoms, Tourism NI, etc to businesses in the Fermanagh District Council area. This support can be advisory, improvements in infrastructure or grant aid.

Some examples of these, although not an exhaustive list, are:-

There have been a number of projects aimed at improving access to and use of telecommunication infrastructure, including the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project which seeks to provide fixed line broadband services of at least 2 Megabits per second in areas that previously had no service and improve the availability of fixed-line broadband services of 24 Mbps or higher in areas where broadband speeds are low and are due to deliver improvements in the Council are later in 2015.

Tourism NI have been delivering an Industry Development Programme, the events include a series of master classes, business insights, road shows and workshops that run throughout the year to help maximise tourism industry growth. From 1 April 2009 to March 2015, Tourism NI has invested substantially within Destination Fermanagh in terms of capital expenditure, destination support, promotion & marketing and events estimated at approximately £3.2million.

Invest NI offers a range of financial and practical assistance to businesses across Northern Ireland covering key areas such as skills, research and development, exporting, job creation and capital development. Business can also avail of a range of advisory assistance and free workshops on a number of business related subjects including sales and marketing, design and finance. Support is also available to entrepreneurs seeking to start a new business, for example through the Regional Start Initiative, delivered on Invest NI's behalf by Enterprise NI.

Invest NI's Business Support Team handles enquiries from businesses throughout Northern Ireland and advice and guidance is also available through nibusinessinfo.co.uk - the official online channel for business advice provided by Invest NI in partnership with NI Direct.

Invest NI releases information at sub-regional level following each financial year end; therefore, the most up to date figures available are for 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2014. During this time Invest NI approved offers of support to 698 businesses in the Fermanagh district council area worth £7.52million in the Fermanagh district council area. This support will contribute to £30.97million of investment into the area.

Funding through INTERREG Iva benefitted both the Centre for Renewable Energy & Sustainable Technologies (CREST) and the Enniskillen Airport workspace project together totalling £2.9 million.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why there was late entry for Northern Ireland into the Contracts for Difference process; and who was responsible for the delay.
(AQW 44122/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My decision to delay Northern Ireland's entry into the Contracts for Difference scheme was announced in May 2012. As was noted then, "whilst the Feed-in Tariff with Contracts for Difference will be introduced in Great Britain in 2014/15, introduction in Northern Ireland will not take place until 2016/17 to take account of any changes needed to the Single Electricity Market as a result of European Electricity Market Integration." Consultation with the industry did not raise any issues.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the statement of 18 March 2015 from Mutual Energy on the Moyle Interconnector, who conducted the studies giving rise to the belief that payback will occur within three years and that the cost to consumers will be less than previously thought; and whether these studies have been published.
(AQW 44123/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The studies were completed by consultants Energy Link Partnership Ltd, and by the electrical system operator SONI. Both studies were published on 18 March 2015 by the Utility Regulator, along with an exchange of letters between Mutual Energy and the Regulator, and can be found at the following web-link:

http://www.uregni.gov.uk/publications/exchange_of_letters_between_the_utility_regulator_and_moyle_interconnector_

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) what is the final anticipated cost of restoring the Moyle Interconnector; (ii) how much of this cost will be passed on to customers; and (iii) how much of the cost will Mutual Energy's existing reserves cover.
(AQW 44124/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Mutual Energy has advised that the contract costs to restore the Moyle Interconnector to full transfer capacity remain confidential between the parties, but will be less than the previously estimated £60million. The company also advises that its reserves and capacity auction revenues will cover the majority of the Moyle repair costs.

On 18 March 2015 the Utility Regulator published an exchange of letters with Mutual Energy in relation to the Moyle Interconnector and these can be found at the following web-link:

http://www.uregni.gov.uk/publications/exchange_of_letters_between_the_utility_regulator_and_moyle_interconnector_

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why the annual salaries and pension contributions of three of the four members of the senior management team of InterTradeIreland are not disclosed in the annual report; and for her assessment of this lack of transparency.
(AQW 44125/11-15)

Mrs Foster: InterTradeIreland prepares its annual report in conformity with the North South Bodies Annual Report and Accounts Guidance which has been jointly prepared and agreed by the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Department of Finance in Ireland.

Under the terms of this guidance (Section 11.4 Disclosure of emoluments and pension entitlements – para 11.4.2.d) the prior written consent of the individual concerned is required for such disclosure.

Should an individual withhold consent to the disclosure the fact is noted in the annual report.

Transparency is facilitated by the disclosure of the number of employees paid higher salaries. This disclosure is set out in bands of £10,000 in note 4.c of the InterTradeIreland annual report.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 43030/11-15, whether the nitrogen mixture proposed for use by Rathlin Energy can be called an alternative fracturing fluid to slickwater, given that the nitrogen serves as a replacement for water.

(AQW 44163/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The answer to AQW 43030/11-15 explains that the nitrogen does not act as a strict replacement for water:

“The purpose of the nitrogen is not as a stimulation fluid but a medium to aid the recovery of the stimulation fluid at surface after stimulation has occurred. The use of nitrogen limits exposure of the stimulation fluid to the formation by energising the flow back water aiding maximum recovery of flow back water at surface.”

If nitrogen was not a part of the mixture, the proposed fracturing fluid would be a conventional cross-linked gelled fracturing fluid rather than a low viscosity ‘slickwater’ fracturing fluid.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what representations she has made to OFGEM on the Greenlink interconnector project.

(AQW 44204/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I have made no representations on this project to Ofgem or any other party.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has ascertained if OFGEM's assessment of the Greenlink interconnector project confines itself to whether the project is in the interests of GB consumers or in the interests of consumers in (i) this part of the UK; and in (ii) the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 44205/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Greenlink proposal emerged from discussions between the UK and Irish Governments on options for potential trading of renewable energy. Those discussions were discontinued on the grounds of inability to agree costs and benefits accruing to the respective parties. The proposal involved the trading of wind generation from the Republic of Ireland to the GB market. There was no Northern Ireland element to this project.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the level of 4G availability; and what her Department is doing to encourage faster roll out to customers outside Belfast.

(AQW 44230/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department does not gather information on mobile coverage. Such data is collected by the telecommunications regulator, Ofcom and is published on an annual basis in its Infrastructure Reports. The latest report, published in December 2014, indicates that, at June 2014, outdoor 4G coverage in Northern Ireland stood at 79% of premises and 41% geographically from at least one operator. This was the highest coverage of any UK nation.

My Department maintains regular contact with the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and takes every opportunity to press for faster roll-out of services. However, the telecommunications market is fully privatised and independently regulated, with investment decisions taken on the basis of commercial return and it is not therefore within DETI's gift to compel a provider to invest in particular infrastructure, technologies or to deploy services. In recent years the MNOs have invested significantly to improve their 2G and 3G networks and commence the roll-out 4G services and this is having a positive impact.

To address areas where the market is not currently investing, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is implementing the Mobile Infrastructure project. This is focused on 2G technology but, it is understood that operators will future proof the infrastructure being deployed, to further support 3G, 4G and beyond, where possible. Northern Ireland is now in line for the deployment of 70 nominal, new mast sites under this project.

Furthermore, in December 2014, the UK Government announced that it had reached an agreement with the MNOs which will see the mobile industry investing £5 billion in UK infrastructure and increasing coverage by 2017 with a view to addressing the issue of partial not-spots i.e. those areas where coverage is provided by just one or two of the four MNOs.

All of these initiatives should help to further improve mobile services across Northern Ireland. However, my Department is keeping a watching brief and will assess the need for further Government intervention once they have completed.

Department of the Environment

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of the Environment how the Strategic Planning Policy Statement will provide flexibility for councils in relation to planning in rural communities.

(AQO 7742/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The member will be aware of the issues surrounding rural planning and the need to manage development in a manner which strikes a balance between protecting the environment from inappropriate development whilst supporting and sustaining vibrant rural communities, which is the aim of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) with regards to the countryside.

The move to a two-tier planning system and the proposed revisions within the SPPS will allow considerable scope for councils to reflect differences across the region when developing planning policies for their areas. This will be achieved primarily through the production of Local Development Plans (LDPs) which will address the specific economic, social and environmental issues affecting individual council areas. In particular the LDP process will allow councils to bring forward bespoke local policies for the development of the rural parts of their own plan areas.

In order to address comments raised through the public consultation, the SPPS has been revised and improved to more closely reflect, in a strategic way, the current policy approach contained in PPS21 Development in the Countryside.

The final SPPS will still allow councils a much greater degree of autonomy and flexibility in bringing forward policies for the countryside, than has been the case under PPS21. As long as council's local planning policies take account of the SPPS in respect of development in the countryside then councils are free to develop their own approach to dealing with the local issues which affect rural communities in their areas.

The final SPPS is currently with the Executive for consideration. Whilst my Department will undertake a full review of the SPPS within five years, I aim to complete an urgent review of strategic policy on development in the countryside following the publication of the SPPS and during 2015/16.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the expenditure on private ambulances in each Health and Social Care Trust in the last five years.

(AQW 43733/11-15)

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Expenditure on private ambulances in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years is set out in the table below. The increase in expenditure reflects increases in hospital admissions, attendances, transfers and discharges.

Health & Social Care Trust	2013/14 £k	2012/13 £k	2011/12 £k	2010/11 £k	2009/10 £k
Belfast	290	252	158	126	152
Northern	125	77	22	26	12
South Eastern	555	755	403	292	264
Southern	31	38	31	7	8
Western	215	62	35	8	12
NI Ambulance Service	18	34	2	6	11
Total	1,234	1,218	651	465	459

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43153/11-15, to detail (a) where; and (b) how the Health and Social Care Board utilised the funding "to support the costs of paediatric cardiac surgery undertaken outside Northern Ireland."

(AQW 43754/11-15)

Mr Wells: A combined response has been provided as the Member's four questions refer to the costs associated with Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services.

The following table provides details of the location of surgery outside Northern Ireland for paediatric cardiac patients over the last four years. The £1m funding to which the Member referred in AQW 43153/11-15, which was not utilised to implement a new service model in 2013 as a decision was not taken at that time, contributed towards meeting the increased costs of higher numbers of treatments subsequently taking place in England.

Location of Paediatric Cardiac Surgery	Belfast	Dublin	England	Total
2011/12	91	15	36	142
2012/13	68	40	34	142
2013/14	51	13	91	155
2014/15*	27	6	108	141*

* 2014/15 activity is for the period April 2014 to February 2015

Source: Health and Social Care Board

The Health and Social Care Board estimates that the total cost of providing paediatric cardiac procedures (i.e. surgery and catheterisation) for Northern Ireland children outside Northern Ireland in 2014/15 will amount to £4.4m. The corresponding cost in 2013/14 was £3.3m.

The following table provides details of these payments by providing hospital outside Northern Ireland for each of the last two years. Please note that the figures provided for 2014/15 are based on an analysis of activity and spend to the end of January 2015, and therefore do not include additional forecast costs for February and March of some £570,000. A detailed breakdown of costs for previous years could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Cost of paediatric cardiac procedures by Providing Hospital outside NI	2013/14	2014/15*
Birmingham Children's Hospital	£1,388,908	£1,578,373
Evelina Children's Hospital	£1,557,234	£1,954,582
Alder Hey Children's Hospital	£39,909	£4,438
Royal Brompton Hospital	£35,816	£9,266
Freeman Hospital	£4,093	£35,013
Great Ormond Street Hospital	0	£35,013
Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin	£291,127	£178,039
Total	£3,317,087	£3,794,724

* 2014/15 activity is for the period April 2014 to January 2015

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what section of the health budget is assigned to cover paediatric cardiac procedures performed outside Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43817/11-15)

Mr Wells: A combined response has been provided as the Member's four questions refer to the costs associated with Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services.

The following table provides details of the location of surgery outside Northern Ireland for paediatric cardiac patients over the last four years. The £1m funding to which the Member referred in AQW 43153/11-15, which was not utilised to implement a new service model in 2013 as a decision was not taken at that time, contributed towards meeting the increased costs of higher numbers of treatments subsequently taking place in England.

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Total	£3,317,087	£3,794,724

* 2014/15 activity is for the period April 2014 to January 2015

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been assigned in the health budget in each of the last four years to cover the costs of paediatric cardiac procedures performed outside Northern Ireland.

(AQW 43818/11-15)

Mr Wells: A combined response has been provided as the Member's four questions refer to the costs associated with Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services.

The following table provides details of the location of surgery outside Northern Ireland for paediatric cardiac patients over the last four years. The £1m funding to which the Member referred in AQW 43153/11-15, which was not utilised to implement a new service model in 2013 as a decision was not taken at that time, contributed towards meeting the increased costs of higher numbers of treatments subsequently taking place in England.

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Cost of paediatric cardiac procedures by Providing Hospital outside NI	2013/14	2014/15*
Total	£3,317,087	£3,794,724

* 2014/15 activity is for the period April 2014 to January 2015

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much was paid to each health trust outside Northern Ireland in each of the last two years in respect of paediatric cardiac procedures on children from Northern Ireland. **(AQW 43819/11-15)**

Mr Wells: A combined response has been provided as the Member's four questions refer to the costs associated with Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services.

The following table provides details of the location of surgery outside Northern Ireland for paediatric cardiac patients over the last four years. The £1m funding to which the Member referred in AQW 43153/11-15, which was not utilised to implement a new service model in 2013 as a decision was not taken at that time, contributed towards meeting the increased costs of higher numbers of treatments subsequently taking place in England.

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Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin	£291,127	£178,039
Total	£3,317,087	£3,794,724

* 2014/15 activity is for the period April 2014 to January 2015

Source: Health and Social Care Board

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43404/11-15, to detail (i) the longest waiting time recorded for Occupational Therapy appointments; and (ii) the number of cases that exceeded the 26 week deadline. **(AQW 44038/11-15)**

Mr Wells:

- (i) The longest waiting time recorded for an Occupational Therapy appointment at 31st January 2015 was 333 days.
- (ii) The number of patients waiting longer than twenty six weeks at 31 January 2015 was 731.

These figures have been provided by the Health and Social Care Board and have not been validated by the Department.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the circumstances under which an individual is deemed suitable for extra contractual referral for bariatric surgery.

(AQW 44042/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health and Social Care Board does not at present commission bariatric surgery in Northern Ireland. All Extra Contractual Referrals (ECR) are considered individually. ECRs can be considered where:

- 1 The patient's clinical condition requires specialised care that could only be sustained for a large catchment population and cannot be provided for a small geographic area such as Northern Ireland.
- 2 The patient's clinician wishes to seek a second opinion from a provider outside Northern Ireland because of complexities of the patient's condition or circumstances.
- 3 The treatment is available locally but the patient has some exceptional reason which renders their case different from the vast majority of other patients with the same condition and which therefore justifies a referral for care or treatment outside Northern Ireland.
- 4 The service being requested is not reflected in commissioning arrangements such as a service level agreement (SLA) with a provider outside N Ireland.
- 5 The service being requested is not commissioned for the population of Northern Ireland, but the patient's clinical circumstances are such that exceptionality can be demonstrated and a case justified for an ECR to access care from a provider outside Northern Ireland.

The full guidance on the Extra Contractual Process can be found at the following website:

http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Protocol_ECR_and_IFR_arrangements.pdf

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recently published revised guidelines on the assessment and management of obesity. The Board is currently considering the commissioning implications of NICE Clinical Guideline 189 within the context of the very challenging 2015/16 financial position and competing health and social care priorities.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to review the criteria under which an individual can be considered for bariatric surgery.

(AQW 44043/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health and Social Care Board does not at present commission bariatric surgery in Northern Ireland. All Extra Contractual Referrals (ECR) are considered individually. ECRs can be considered where:

- 6 The patient's clinical condition requires specialised care that could only be sustained for a large catchment population and cannot be provided for a small geographic area such as Northern Ireland.
- 7 The patient's clinician wishes to seek a second opinion from a provider outside Northern Ireland because of complexities of the patient's condition or circumstances.
- 8 The treatment is available locally but the patient has some exceptional reason which renders their case different from the vast majority of other patients with the same condition and which therefore justifies a referral for care or treatment outside Northern Ireland.
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The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recently published revised guidelines on the assessment and management of obesity. The Board is currently considering the commissioning implications of NICE Clinical Guideline 189 within the context of the very challenging 2015/16 financial position and competing health and social care priorities.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43171/11-15, to detail the average percentage of bed occupancy and usage per week for the expenditure in Table B.

(AQW 44046/11-15)

Mr Wells: The following table provides information on the average annual figures on bed occupancy and occupied bed days for the North Down and Ards area in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust was unable to provide a weekly breakdown of figures.

Year	Beds	Bed Occupancy %	Occupied Bed days
2012/13	52	93%	17,908
2013/14	46	97%	16,234
2014/15	51	Figures for full year not yet available	

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the total number of beds available for respite and intermediate care at Northfield House; (ii) the average number of beds used in each week; and (iii) the average percentage of bed occupancy, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 44048/11-15)

Mr Wells: The information requested is not held centrally and was therefore requested from the South Eastern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. Their response can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Bed days used in Northfield House (2010-2014)

	Intermediate Bed Days Used	Respite Bed Days Used	Bed Days Available	Total used	% Bed Days Used	Total No. of Beds Available
Jan-10	298	42	589	340	58%	19
Feb-10	322	93	532	415	78%	19
Mar-10	342	124	589	466	79%	19
Apr-10	205	97	570	302	53%	19
May-10	249	103	589	352	60%	19
Jun-10	260	127	570	387	68%	19
Jul-10	282	135	589	417	71%	19
Aug-10	338	127	589	465	79%	19
Sep-10	295	58	354	353	100%	10
Oct-10	146	55	202	201	100%	7
Nov-10	143	53	210	196	93%	8
Dec-10	200	31	248	231	93%	9
Jan-11	237	31	282	268	95%	11
Feb-11	246	29	323	275	85%	12
Mar-11	293	31	336	324	96%	11
Apr-11	113	76	189	189	100%	9
May-11	56	73	139	129	93%	4
Jun-11	186	40	240	226	94%	10
Jul-11	204	65	279	269	96%	10
Aug-11	225	55	310	280	90%	10
Sep-11	169	45	300	214	71%	10
Oct-11	175	56	279	231	83%	10
Nov-11	153	9	270	162	60%	9
Dec-11	262	20	372	282	76%	12
Jan-12	259	84	372	343	92%	12
Feb-12	181	91	348	272	78%	12
Mar-12	257	3	372	260	70%	12
Apr-12	268	51	360	319	89%	12
May-12	252	108	420	360	86%	13

	Intermediate Bed Days Used	Respite Bed Days Used	Bed Days Available	Total used	% Bed Days Used	Total No. of Beds Available
Jun-12	221	167	420	388	92%	14
Jul-12	218	188	434	406	94%	13
Aug-12	180	144	403	324	80%	13
Sep-12	214	109	390	323	83%	13
Oct-12	119	104	401	223	56%	14
Nov-12	276	79	394	355	90%	14
Dec-12	265	117	403	382	95%	13
Jan-13	221	148	403	369	92%	13
Feb-13	210	131	364	341	94%	13
Mar-13	279	102	412	381	92%	14
Apr-13	240	162	420	402	96%	14
May-13	223	129	434	352	81%	14
Jun-13	282	58	420	340	81%	14
Jul-13	325	90	434	415	96%	14
Aug-13	285	93	433	378	87%	14
Sep-13	329	45	415	374	90%	14
Oct-13	394	2	434	396	91%	14
Nov-13	307	16	404	323	80%	14
Dec-13	296	54	434	350	81%	14
Jan-14	310	63	434	373	86%	14
Feb-14	243	86	392	329	84%	14
Mar-14	322	65	434	387	89%	14
Apr-14	333	35	420	368	88%	14
May-14	343	62	439	405	92%	14
Jun-14	279	69	420	348	83%	14
Jul-14	273	26	434	299	69%	14
Aug-14	341	17	434	358	82%	14
Sep-14	317	66	420	383	91%	14
Oct-14	344	70	434	414	95%	14
Nov-14	197	137	420	334	80%	14
Dec-14	196	120	434	316	73%	14

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43170/11-15, to detail the average number of beds per week that are represented by the figures in Table B.

(AQW 44051/11-15)

Mr Wells: The following table provides information on the average annual figures on bed occupancy and occupied bed days for the North Down and Ards area in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust was unable to provide a weekly breakdown of figures.

Year	Beds	Bed Occupancy %	Occupied Bed days
2012/13	52	93%	17,908
2013/14	46	97%	16,234

Year	Beds	Bed Occupancy %	Occupied Bed days
2014/15	51	Figures for full year not yet available	

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number; and (ii) the cost of care packages in the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44057/11-15)

Mr Wells: Information on the number of residential and nursing care packages in effect in the Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust at quarter ending 31 December 2014 is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Residential and Nursing Care Packages in Effect

Quarter Ending	Residential Care	Nursing Care	Total
31 December 2014	1,341	568	1,909

Source: CC7 Community Information Return

Further information on the number of care packages in effect each quarter is available on the DHSSPS website at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/socialcare/residential-nursing-care-packages.htm>

Information on the cost of care packages is not collected centrally. However, information on residential and nursing care actual spend in the Western HSC Trust across all Programmes of Care is available and detailed Table 2 below.

Table 2: Residential and Nursing Care Actual Spend

Year	Residential Care	Nursing Care	Total
2013/14	£29,407,654	£45,136,957	£74,544,611

Source: HSC Trust Financial Returns (TFR)

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why Local Advisory Committees to the Patient and Clients Council are being stood down; and how this is compatible with existing statutory provisions.

(AQW 44059/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Patient and Client Council is required by regulation 10 of its Membership and Procedure Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 to appoint a committee for each of the geographical areas covered by the five HSC Trusts (Belfast, Northern, South Eastern, Southern and Western). These committees are referred to as Local Advisory Committees. I can advise you that the Local Advisory Committees have not at this stage been stood down. The Patient and Client Council has undertaken a review of Local Advisory Committees which is currently being considered by my Department. If there are proposed changes to this legislation these would be subject to the normal consultation process.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken to work towards a screening test for pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 44062/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department is advised by the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) about all aspects of screening. Using research evidence, pilot programmes and economic evaluation, the UK NSC assesses the evidence for programmes against a set of internationally recognised criteria covering the condition, the test, the treatment options and the effectiveness and acceptability of the screening programme. Assessing programmes in this way is intended to ensure that they do more good than harm at a reasonable cost.

Currently there is no evidence base to support a screening programme for pancreatic cancer. My Department does not hold information into research being carried out worldwide, however should evidence of an effective screening test become available, this would be considered by the NSC.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to increase the number of specialist nurses who can assist patients and their families diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

(AQW 44063/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department has no plans at present to increase the number of specialist nurses for pancreatic cancer. All patients with a confirmed diagnosis of pancreatic cancer are discussed at the Health and Social Care Regional Hepato-Pancreatico-Biliary (HPB) Multidisciplinary Team meeting. The HPB clinical nurse specialist is a core member of that team. In addition all patients suitable for surgical intervention are assigned to the HPB Clinical Nurse Specialist.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he will fund the introduction of the Meningitis B Vaccine Bexsero as part of the Child Immunisation Programme, once negotiations have been completed.
(AQW 44108/11-15)

Mr Wells: I welcome the outcome of the negotiations to secure an effective, safe and cost-effective vaccine to protect against Men B. All four UK Health Ministers had previously accepted the JCVI recommendation to introduce a Men B vaccination programme, subject to the vaccine being procured at a cost effective price.

I have agreed that Northern Ireland should be included in the DH-led procurement process to secure adequate supplies of the Men B vaccine and I will ensure sufficient funds are allocated from the health budget to enable this programme to be introduced as quickly as practicable.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of providing a CA125 blood test for women presenting with symptoms of ovarian cancer.
(AQW 44109/11-15)

Mr Wells: The cost of providing a CA125 test is £6.66.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the decision to hold public meetings as part of the Individual Funding Request consultation; and whether the venues decided are strategic in providing for an opportunity for respondents across Northern Ireland to have their input.
(AQW 44150/11-15)

Mr Wells: The meetings are intended to provide a further opportunity for the public to make their views on the proposals known and are in addition to a full online public consultation which ends on the 8 May 2015. The choice of venues was based on a strategy to provide access for the public in each Health and Social Care Trust area. My Department is also arranging a sixth meeting in the Fermanagh/Tyrone area.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the roles that (i) screening; (ii) personalised medicine; and (iii) access to MRI scanners, have in the diagnosis and treatment of pancreatic cancer.
(AQW 44152/11-15)

Mr Wells: The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) provides advice on all aspects of medical screening. Using research evidence, pilot programmes and economic evaluation, the UK NSC assesses the evidence for screening against a set of internationally recognised criteria. Currently there is no evidence base to support a screening programme for pancreatic cancer.

All patients have a management plan individualised to their needs. Personalised Medicine specifically refers to the use of molecular or genetic information from the tumour to determine the approach to therapy. This approach to treating cancer is in development in Northern Ireland as it is internationally. However, a UK initiative called Precision-Panc aims to introduce a series of clinical trials based on the molecular phenotype of pancreatic cancers with the potential to improve the outcomes for patients. The HSC in Northern Ireland will consider the outcome of this initiative.

CT scanning is the usual imaging modality for the majority of pancreatic cancer patients. However MRI scanning is available for all those patients when clinically indicated.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the Public Health Agency's work plan 2015/16 will be published.
(AQW 44154/11-15)

Mr Wells: The need for the Public Health Agency to agree a savings plan will impact on their ability to finalise the 2015/16 Annual Business Plan and have it approved by the Department. Publication will occur as soon as possible after this process.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the different arrangements in place for the delivery of health services to serving members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces; and to provide the rationale for each.
(AQW 44187/11-15)

Mr Wells: Serving members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces have access to the same health services provided to other residents of Northern Ireland.

The Department of Health and Social Service's policy – "Delivering Healthcare to the Armed Forces – A Protocol for ensuring equitable access to Health and Social Care Services" aims to ensure members of the armed forces, their families and veterans are not disadvantaged.

In addition to the above, Health and Social Care has a contract with the Ministry of Defence which covers the delivery of specified healthcare services for serving members of the Armed Forces in based in Northern Ireland. Further details cannot be provided due to security considerations.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the rationale for the removal of departmental funding for the Modernising Scientific Careers programme; and for his assessment of the impact that this decision will have on workforce planning and students currently in receipt of funding.

(AQW 44188/11-15)

Mr Wells: While my Department has in previous years been able to provide some financial support to facilitate students pursuing healthcare science degrees, this has been on a non-recurrent basis. Given the very severe financial pressures currently impacting on Health and Social Care (HSC), my Department has been unable to allocate funding for this purpose in the 2015/16 budget.

I acknowledge the difficulties presented by the current position. However, I would encourage Trusts and the University of Ulster to continue to work collaboratively to facilitate placements to ensure that current students are able to complete their healthcare science courses.

My Department remains committed to developing the training of healthcare scientists for the long term benefit of HSC under the Modernising Scientific Careers initiative.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has developed a costing model and an estimate of income generation for the proposed introduction of prescription charges to fund specialist medicines.

(AQW 44191/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Department is currently working to develop costing models to provide estimates of income which could be generated through a range of charging options.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why no public consultation events have been organised in Counties Fermanagh or Tyrone to allow the local population to contribute to the consultation on his proposed introduction of prescription charges and the Individual Funding Request Process.

(AQW 44203/11-15)

Mr Wells: My Department is organising a further public meeting in either Fermanagh or Tyrone. I would also encourage the public to contribute to the consultation either online or in writing the details are listed below

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/consultations/current_consultations.htm

or by writing to:

IFR Consultation

Secondary Care Directorate
DHSSPS
Castle Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the anticipated annual saving that will result from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust's decision to switch from a daily meal delivery service to a fortnightly service.

(AQW 44210/11-15)

Mr Wells: I refer the member to the answer provided in AQW 41048/11-15.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the prudence of Health and Social Care Trusts measuring the number of patients treated in corridor beds, and the duration of time spent in a corridor bed.

(AQW 44227/11-15)

Mr Wells:

My Department has no plans at present to collect such data centrally. Health and Social Care Trusts will be fully aware if patients are waiting in non-designated beds in corridors. I expect Trusts to ensure that any such patients are transferred to a designated ward bed as soon as possible.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether nutritional screening is taking place in all Health and Social Care settings, including GP surgeries and Out Patient Departments, as per the recommendations of department Promoting Good Nutrition policy.

(AQW 44235/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Public Health Agency Advise that Nutritional screening has been established across a range of Health and Social Care settings. It has been implemented in adult acute care settings and is currently being rolled out in Community care settings including independent health care providers.

There is also a parallel programme of nutritional screening, assessment and care planning of patient receiving nutritional supplements carried out by dieticians within the within primary care setting.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to what extent support is being provided to GP surgeries and Out Patient Departments for the development of nutritional care plans linked to nutritional screening scores.
(AQW 44236/11-15)

Mr Wells: The DHSSPS have a resource package "Promoting Good Nutrition; Guidance and Resources" available to support Nutritional Screening across primary and independent healthcare settings.

The "Promoting Good Nutrition; Guidance and Resources" includes Malnutrition screening templates, Food Advice Leaflets and Food Record Charts. It is available to download from the DHSSPS website.

There is also a parallel programme of nutritional screening within the primary care setting, conducted by "Medicines Management" dieticians from the PHA who carry out assessment and care planning of patients who are receiving nutritional supplements.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of applications (i) to this year's Social Work Strategy Innovation Scheme; and (ii) from (a) statutory services; (b) the third sector; and (c) joint applications from statutory services and the third sector.
(AQW 44237/11-15)

Mr Wells: There were (i) 31 applications for this year's Social Work Strategy Innovation Scheme; of which (a) 25 were from the statutory sector; (b) 4 from the third sector; and (c) 2 were joint applications.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of successful applications (i) to this year's Social Work Strategy Innovation Scheme; and (ii) from (a) statutory services; (b) the third sector; and (c) joint applications from statutory services and the third sector.
(AQW 44238/11-15)

Mr Wells: There were 6 successful applications of which (a) 3 were from the third sector; (b) 4 were from the statutory sector; and (c) no joint bid was successful.

In addition, there were 5 conditional offers pending additional information/clarification. All of the conditional offers are to the statutory sector.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the successful applications to the Social Work Strategy Innovation Scheme for 2015/16, including the goal of each scheme and the level of funding was awarded.
(AQW 44239/11-15)

Mr Wells: The detail of the successful applications and those from whom more information was requested are outlined below:

Organisation	Title	Amount	Aim of Proposed Innovation
CLARE	Connecting to Self Directed Support	£8,930	A community development approach working with BHSCT, and services users to enable service users to make best use of direct payments/self directed support.
Extern	Reminiscence Work with Ex-Offenders	£14,838	A community development approach to help ex-offenders integrate back into the community and sustain positive lifestyles.
Positive Futures	Learning Disability	£15,000	A community development approach to support the inclusion of people with a learning disability to live ordinary lives in their own communities.
SE HSC Trust	Family Group Conference Service User Advocacy Toolkit	£5,000	An advocacy approach, in partnership with third sector agencies, to ensure the voices of young people and vulnerable adults are heard within the Family Group Conference process.
SE HSC Trust	Self Directed Support	£5,000	A partnership approach, working with community and voluntary organisations in the SEHSCT area, to develop the infrastructure for the future delivery of Self Directed Support and maximise the contribution of other disciplines and sectors.

Organisation	Title	Amount	Aim of Proposed Innovation
SE HSC Trust	Coming Out in Care	£5,900	A service user led initiative to engage care experienced Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) young people in informing social workers and others about their needs and experiences in the LAC system.
Probation Board NI	Cultural Competence	£8,000	A partnership approach to build safer communities and reduce offending motivated by prejudice and bias.
Belfast HSC Trust	Learning Disability Service (conditional offer)	£5,000	A service user led initiative to enable service users with a learning disability to have their views heard and improve their engagement in planning how their needs are/can be met.
Northern HSC Trust	Direct Payments (conditional offer)	£8,934	A service user led initiative to establish a buddy mentoring scheme between existing direct payments users and new direct payments users
Northern HSC Trust	CLEAR Dementia Care Model (conditional offer)	£6,659	A partnership working initiative to improve co-operation, understanding and more consistent caring approaches between formal and informal carers of individuals with dementia
SE HSC Trust	Partnership Working with Service Users (conditional offer)	£5,000	A service user led initiative to develop an evidence based practice model of partnership working with service users, based on service user stories as an improvement tool.
Western HSC Trust	Acquired Brain Injury Review (conditional offer)	£10,000	A partnership working and advocacy approach that aims to provide a specialist hub of support services to individuals with acquired brain injury based on the views and needs of service users, carers and support staff

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) male; and (ii) female (a) dieticians; and (b) chiropodists employed in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 44241/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health and Social Care Board does not at present commission bariatric surgery in Northern Ireland. All Extra Contractual Referrals (ECR) are considered individually. ECRs can be considered where:

- 11 The patient's clinical condition requires specialised care that could only be sustained for a large catchment population and cannot be provided for a small geographic area such as Northern Ireland.
- 12 The patient's clinician wishes to seek a second opinion from a provider outside Northern Ireland because of complexities of the patient's condition or circumstances.
- 13 The treatment is available locally but the patient has some exceptional reason which renders their case different from the vast majority of other patients with the same condition and which therefore justifies a referral for care or treatment outside Northern Ireland.
- 14 The service being requested is not reflected in commissioning arrangements such as a service level agreement (SLA) with a provider outside N Ireland.
- 15 The service being requested is not commissioned for the population of Northern Ireland, but the patient's clinical circumstances are such that exceptionality can be demonstrated and a case justified for an ECR to access care from a provider outside Northern Ireland.

The full guidance on the Extra Contractual Process can be found at the following website:

http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Protocol_ECR_and__IFR_arrangements.pdf

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recently published revised guidelines on the assessment and management of obesity. The Board is currently considering the commissioning implications of NICE Clinical Guideline 189 within the context of the very challenging 2015/16 financial position and competing health and social care priorities.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of pancreatic cancer patients were referred to a pain clinic in the last twelve months.

(AQW 44247/11-15)

Mr Wells: Patients are referred to pain clinics from a wide range of medical specialities, however the level of information requested regarding the speciality of origin and the percentage of patients from a specific sub-speciality is not recorded.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to increase funding for pancreatic cancer research.

(AQW 44248/11-15)

Mr Wells: Each year, around 8,500 people in the UK are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

The NI Cancer Registry states that 160 people are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in NI each year. A study carried out by the Registry in 2007 showed that, relative to 2001, care for patients with pancreatic cancer had improved with respect to referrals to dieticians (loss of appetite is a major feature of this illness) and referrals to palliative care. HSC clinical services offer multi-professional hospital teams (surgery, oncology); specialist palliative care in hospital; hospice and Marie Curie home care teams; Macmillan nurses in the community. Support is also available through websites which provide information on the disease and offer practical advice to users: www.cancerni.net/ <http://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/> and <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/type/pancreatic-cancer/>.

Belfast is the major cancer research centre in Northern Ireland and The Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Centre and Network enable patients and others from across Northern Ireland to participate in clinical trials of potentially beneficial prevention strategies, diagnostics, treatments and care. Currently, almost one fifth of all patients newly diagnosed with cancer in NI participate in clinical trials.

My Department funds core staff and facilities of the Centre and Network through the regional HSC R&D Fund. This support enables Trusts to benefit from research funds provided e.g. by cancer charities or industry. Use of the HSC R&D Fund does not specify the types of cancer on which research can be conducted so, although the predominant cancers studied in Belfast are breast, prostate and colon (reflecting the expertise / experience of our NI researchers) clinical studies involve many different types of cancer. Also, the fundamental discovery research led by academics and funded from a wide variety of sources is relevant to all cancers and their prevention.

Since 2000 Belfast has had a successful pancreatic cancer clinical trials portfolio. The completed trials have led to several major publications, thereby adding to global knowledge that is available to clinicians who are treating pancreatic cancer. Several new pancreatic cancer trials are being set up currently, including funding support from Cancer Research UK. These involve potentially beneficial new drugs to be used alone or in combination with radiotherapy.

The Northern Ireland Fund Raising Group of the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund (PCRF) was launched by Minister Poots on Monday 10th February 2014. Mrs Maggie Blanks, founder of PCRF, made her first trip to Northern Ireland to be present for the launch. To date, Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund has supported 27 research projects in the UK with grants totalling £4 million - all through fundraising and donations. Its mission is to defeat pancreatic cancer by funding and promoting innovative, world-class research into the disease - research that will lead to the development of more effective detection, diagnosis and treatment.

A new HSC R&D strategy for NI has just completed its public consultation stage. The strategy will highlight the benefits achievable for patients and the wider public through research that is undertaken within HSC organisations.

The National Cancer Research Institute has published an analysis of research funding by UK Health departments and charities over the 10 year period 2002 – 2011. For pancreatic cancer, research funding increased significantly over the period, from £1.5m to £5.1m.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the circumstances which led to a patient waiting 10 hours for an ambulance to take her to Altnagelvin Hospital on Friday 20 March 2015.

(AQW 44264/11-15)

Mr Wells: Due to patient confidentiality it is not appropriate to provide details about an individual patient's case in a Written Answer. If the Member writes to me enclosing the family's consent that the patient's personal details may be provided to him, I will respond directly to him on this matter.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 43096 -11/15, whether the increasing use of agency staff is an issue in terms of staff safety, since they cannot be given the full training mentioned, nor are they issued protective clothing or panic buttons, nor can they be embedded into the staff patient culture as is the case with the permanent staff.

(AQW 44283/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has advised that there has been no recent increase in the deployment of agency staff at Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

The Trust has arrangements in place for agency staff to avail of mandatory training immediately prior to, or on, appointment to the hospital and confirms that the agency staff currently deployed at Muckamore have completed the appropriate specialist training programmes relating to the management of actual or potential aggression. New staff taking up posts at the hospital also receive early induction training and additional support.

In addition, I understand that agency staff are supplied with a uniform through their agency and have the same access as all other staff to any protective clothing that may be required in order to safely discharge their duties.

Panic buttons are not deployed within the hospital but a customised alarm system is in place and all ward staff, including any agency deployments, carry a personal alarm which can be used to summon assistance as and when required.

BHSCT further advises that the expectations on all staff, regardless of their status, is communicated within the hospital and is consistent with a person centred approach to treatment and care.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with his Westminster counterparts regarding the announcement by the Government that £5 million of LIBOR funding has been made available every year for the next five years for any UK veterans who are surviving World War Two veterans, those who undertook National Service and other voluntary enlisted veterans who, by virtue of their age, may need some focused support in relation to their health and social care needs, to ensure that veterans based in Northern Ireland receive their fair share of this funding. **(AQW 44285/11-15)**

Mr Wells: The Department of Health (DH), London, is working with the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on the implementation process for this national scheme.

Officials from my Department are engaged with DH and the MoD to ensure that Northern Ireland based veterans will have full access to this funding.

Mr Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has explored opportunities with the Department for Social Development to fund current and future respite services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust via Supporting People funding. **(AQW 44317/11-15)**

Mr Wells: Supporting People funds housing related support services that a landlord (such as a housing association) or other provider, such as a voluntary organisation, can provide. Support means advice and help to make it easier for vulnerable people to maintain their independence in their home. People can receive support in a hostel or in sheltered housing or other type of supported living. Support can also be provided to people in their own homes through floating support services.

The Department for Social Development (DSD) have advised Health and Social Care Trusts that housing funds cannot be used for respite services.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of cases where paediatric tonsillectomy surgery patients have had their surgery cancelled on more than one occasion within the last twelve months in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. **(AQW 44325/11-15)**

Mr Wells: Within the last twelve months, there has been one instance where a paediatric tonsillectomy surgery patient has had their surgery cancelled on more than one occasion in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current number of Multiple Sclerosis consultants currently employed in each Health and Social Care Trust. **(AQW 44328/11-15)**

Mr Wells: Headcount and whole-time equivalent (WTE) numbers of consultant neurologists with a sub-specialty interest in Multiple Sclerosis, employed by each HSC Trust, are shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Headcount	WTE
Belfast	4	2.98
Northern	0*	0.0
South Eastern	1	1.0
Southern	0*	0.0
Western	3	3.0

While the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts do not currently employ consultants with a sub-specialty interest in MS, both Trusts provide care for their patients with MS through their general neurology services. The Southern Trust employs 2 (2.0 WTE) consultant neurologists; the Northern Trust employs 1 (1.0 WTE), and is actively recruiting a further 1.0 WTE.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many qualified doctors work in non-frontline roles in his Department and each of its arm's-length bodies. **(AQW 44349/11-15)**

Mr Wells: My Department currently employs seven (6.77 whole-time equivalent) qualified medical doctors within the office of the Chief Medical Officer. Headcount and whole-time equivalent (WTE) numbers of medical doctors employed by each Arms Length Body in roles that do not involve direct patient contact are shown in the table below.

ALB	Headcount	WTE
Belfast HSC Trust	0	0.0
Business Services Organisation	0	0.0
Health & Social Care Board	24	15.35
NI Ambulance Service	2	2.0
NI Blood Transfusion Service	0	0.0
NI Fire & Rescue Service	0	0.0
NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency	0	0.0
NI Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA)	12	5.6
NI Practice & Education Council	0	0.0
NI Social Care Council	0	0.0
Northern HSC Trust	2	2.0
Patient Client Council	0	0.0
Public Health Agency	39	36.4
Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority	1	1.0
South Eastern HSC Trust	0	0.0
Southern HSC Trust	0	0.0
Western HSC Trust	3	0.3

Source: HSC organisations and NIFRS

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service notes that its Medical and Assistant Medical Directors (included in the table above) have primarily managerial roles but would also engage directly in patient care if attending serious or major incidents on behalf of NIAS.

A large majority of the doctors listed above for NIMDTA also have clinical responsibilities with other organisations.

Department for Social Development

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development what efforts are being made to tackle homelessness.
(AQO 7466/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has a statutory responsibility for the assessment of homelessness and the delivery of homelessness services. The Housing Executive has adopted a strategic approach to tackling homelessness as outlined in The Homelessness Strategy 2012 -17. The strategy is wide ranging and cannot be delivered in isolation.

The Housing Executive therefore works in partnership with a range of agencies in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors to deliver its vision of long term homelessness and rough sleeping being eliminated across Northern Ireland by 2020. The strategy has a clear focus on the prevention of homelessness seeing this as key to its delivery.

On any given night it is likely that there will be around 10 people sleeping rough in Belfast and a similar number across Northern Ireland. Nobody in Belfast is forced to sleep rough due to the provision of the outreach service operated by the Welcome Organisation in conjunction with the crash facility provided by the Salvation Army.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Easton asked the Assembly Commission how many times the Independent Financial Review Panel has met since its inception.
(AQW 44001/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Independent Financial Review Panel (the Panel) has met formally a total of 40 times since its inception in July 2011. In addition, the Panel has held a total of 59 informal meetings with various stakeholders to inform their work.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 17 April 2015

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the proposed Goods, Facilities and Services legislation will ensure that no sections of society are discriminated against; and what is the timescale for the introduction of this legislation.
(AQW 31539/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to those aged 16 and over. Subject to consideration by the OFMDFM Committee and Executive agreement, we intend to issue a consultation document in the near future setting out our proposals for legislation. When we have concluded our policy consultation, and agreed a robust policy position, we will then consider all the options available to us for bringing this legislation before the Assembly.

Mr McKay asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have considered implementing the proposals contained within the Committee for Finance and Personnel's Report on the Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector that are applicable for their Department and its agencies.
(AQW 39911/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We very much welcome the proposals contained in the Department of Finance and Personnel's (DFP) Committee report on the Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector. Our Department takes a proactive approach to flexible working arrangements.

We look forward to working with DFP to identify further technological solutions which will enable and support smarter working not only in the NICS but across the public sector.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether an evaluation has been completed on the Ethnic Minority Development Fund; and if so, whether it has been published.
(AQW 41300/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: An evaluation of the 2003-2011 Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF) was carried out by NISRA in 2011. A copy of the evaluation was published on the OFMDFM website in August 2012 and also issued to the OFMDFM Committee. A copy has been deposited in the Assembly Library.

An evaluation of the 2013-2015 MEDF is currently being carried out and the results will be published in due course.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether there is money ring-fenced to fulfil successful applications of the Social Investment Fund; and whether money was ring-fenced to fulfil successful applications when the Social Investment Fund was agreed by the NI Executive in May 2012.
(AQW 42248/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Social Investment Fund is an Executive Fund with a ring fenced budget of £80million pounds. This position has not changed since the agreement of the fund by the Executive in May 2012.
Social Investment Fund

Mr Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to explain the delay in answering AQW 41166/11-15 and when they will answer the question.
(AQW 43373/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We would refer the member to the answer to AQW 41166/11-15 which was provided on 31 March.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the recipients and value of Bright Start funding since the fund was launched.

(AQW 43870/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme was launched in March 2014 and a first call for applications closed in May 2014. The following childcare settings successfully applied for funding.

Name of Applicant	Revenue Funding Received	Capital Funding Received
174 Trust	£29,434	£9,500
An Droichead	£65,503	-
Carryduff	£35,575	£7,500
Ardoyne ASC	£24,543	-
Bloomfield	£53,249	£15,000
Oasis Caring	£41,034	-
Short Strand	£31,442	£2,229
Blackie River Com Group	£41,566	-
Ionad Uibh Eachach	£53,459	£1,700
SVP Mountainview	£64,681	-
Upper Andersonstown	£45,153	£14,160
Little Treasures	£28,219	£5,000
Forthspring	£25,927	£1,800
SOLAS	£76,830	-
Strangford	£5,665	-
Lisbarnett/Lisbane	£9,787	£1,572
Hollywood Family Trust	£30,435	£29,280
Funtime	£30,321	-
Zero-8-Teen	£34,532	£30,000
Kids United	£49,013	-
Orana	£28,194	-
Paddington	£24,651	-
Dunnamann	£27,831	£1,000
Orchard Pre School	£7,158	£28,000
Derrytrasna	£17,699	£9,280
Cairde Ui Neill	£37,524	£11,110
Giggles	£55,717	£5,415
The Nest	£34,777	-
Strabane and District	£35,498	£13,200
Club Utd	£52,400	£10,000
Camowen P'ship (2 projects)	£48,708	-
Bluegrass ASC	£35,950	-
Erne East (2 projects)	£46,866	-
Drumahoe ASC	£59,805	£1,747
Cornabracken	£62,601	£30,000
Active Allsorts (ARC)	£7,891	-
Larne Community Care Centre	£21,391	-

Name of Applicant	Revenue Funding Received	Capital Funding Received
Rasharkin Womens Centre	£15,940	-
Kidsview	£23,868	-
Just 4 Kids	£17,651	-
Pomeroy	£33,671	-
Loughiel	£46,783	-
Glenullin	£11,764	-
Laughterland	£10,300	-
Draperstown	£44,131	£26,000
Kidz Lodge	£10,622	£8,500
Total	£1,595,759	£261,993

A second call for applications closed in September 2014. Letters of offer will issue shortly. A third call is planned for late 2015.

Under Key Action 6 of the Childcare Strategy, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Health and Social Care Board awarded grants to childcare providers to support access to childcare for children with a disability.

Three strands of funding were awarded directly to childcare providers, supporting:

- a small grant scheme aimed at providing specialist equipment and allowing small adaptations for children with a disability within a childcare setting;
- a holiday grant scheme to allow childcare providers to run holiday schemes for children with a disability during school holiday periods; and
- a trial of a range of peripatetic approaches to providing childcare to parents of children with a disability.

A table setting out the total funding amount of funding that has been awarded to each childcare provider to date under Key Action 6 of Bright Start has been placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the (i) current status; and (ii) timescale for funding of each Social Investment Fund application from groups in North Down, or projects involving North Down.

(AQW 43922/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Projects in or involving North Down are as follows:-

- The zone wide Transitions Support Programme (Early Intervention) worth £2,465,443 will tender for a service delivery agent shortly. It is hoped that the project will start in June 2015.
- An estimated £300,000 has been allocated to the Community Houses capital project, which is currently the subject of a scoping study. This should be completed shortly and will inform the SIF assessment process.
- The Community Sports Facilities capital project, which includes a 3G pitch in Kilcooley, is still being assessed. Officials are liaising with the project promoters to progress the project.
- Finally, two zone wide revenue projects, the Youth Intervention Programme and the Employment and Training Programme worth an estimated £873,927 and £913,954 are moving through the SIF assessment process.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 42485/11-15, why the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence has not met since November 2012.

(AQW 44008/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In our previous answer, in respect of AQW 42485/11-15, we advised that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Department of Justice jointly lead on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse. As the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety chairs the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence you may wish to direct this question to him.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the last meeting of the Northern Steering Group of the Social Investment Fund took place; and whether the minutes of meetings are accessible.

(AQW 44009/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The last Northern Zone Steering Group meeting was held on 2 February 2015. Minutes of Steering Group meetings are not published.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the departmental funding granted to (i) Tar Isteach; (ii) Tar Anall; (iii) Coiste na n Iarchimi; (iv) the Ex-Prisoners' Interpretative Centre; and (v) the Prisoners' Area Network.
(AQW 44218/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The department does not currently provide funding to (i) Tar Isteach; (ii) Tar Anall; (iii) Coiste na n Iarchimi; (iv) the Ex-Prisoners' Interpretative Centre; and the Prisoners' Area Network.

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the revised Programme for Government will be published.
(AQW 44310/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work on an extension to the current Programme for Government, to include the 2015/16 year, is currently underway. We intend to bring forward an Executive Paper and following Executive approval and Committee notification, the revised Programme for Government will be published.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 43947/11-15, why the protocol of referring to Her Majesty's Government by its correct title is not followed.
(AQW 44220/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): As Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, I will decide how I refer to the British Government.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the funding received from the (i) European Fisheries Fund; (ii) Single Farm Payment; and (iii) Northern Ireland Rural Development Fund between 2007 and 2014, has been distributed by her Department.
(AQW 44271/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The EU funding Programmes are administered using an open application process and are distributed in line with the relevant EU Scheme rules and regulations.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what support her Department has provided to Horse Sport Ireland in each of the last three years.
(AQW 44288/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not provide financial support to Horse Sport Ireland (HSI).

On 12 June 2014, I attended the northern public consultation meeting on the Irish Sport Horse Industry Strategy, which was organised by HSI, Teagasc and the Royal Dublin Society in conjunction with ECNI and held at CAFRE Enniskillen campus. CAFRE also provided light refreshments for those attending.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department took to encourage responses to the whole farm needs assessments; and whether she would consider extending the closing date for receipt of responses.
(AQW 44291/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I want as many farmers as possible to participate in the Whole Farm Needs Assessment (WFNA) Survey. The Survey offers farmers an opportunity to tell us about the barriers they face in meeting their business objectives and will provide the information DARD needs to help shape the proposed Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) to best meet their needs. It will also help farmers critically assess their business and make the right decisions as they plan ahead for the next few years.

My officials worked hard to ensure maximum uptake and met with the agri-food industry and stakeholders to ask for their support. I welcome the fact that several key industry organisations have issued calls for farmers to complete the Survey. In addition, I publicised the Survey in the press.

We have been very encouraged by the level of interest to date. However, I recognise that this is a busy time of year for farmers and decided to extend the closing date until Friday 10 April to allow those who have not yet replied a little more time to complete their forms.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) each area of current expenditure that her Department will be making savings in 2015/16; (ii) the estimated level of savings for each; and (iii) what impact this will have on service delivery.
(AQW 44351/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The projected savings in each area of current expenditure in 2015-16 are set out in the following table.

Projected Savings	£m
Reduce General Running Costs	3.0
Reduce Estate Maintenance	0.7
Cost Reductions	3.7
Staff Reductions	5.6
Increased EU Veterinary Fund Receipts	4.0
Increased AFBI Income	2.0
Raising Additional Revenue	6.0
Rural Development Programme	9.1
AFBI Approved Work Programme	3.0
Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI)	1.7
Animal Disease Programme	0.8
Scaling Back Programmes	14.6
Total	29.9

The impacts of the staff reductions and AFBI savings on service delivery have not yet been fully identified as the Voluntary Exit Scheme only closed for registering applications on 27 March 2015. On TRPSI the nature of delivery will change but a significant programme of activity and spend will continue. The impacts arising from the other savings are expected to be minimal at this stage.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the departmental funding granted to (i) Tar Isteach; (ii) Tar Anall; (iii) Coiste na n Iarchimi; (iv) the Ex-Prisoners' Interpretative Centre; and (v) the Prisoners' Area Network. (AQW 44119/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The table below details funding granted to the organisations listed.

Organisation	Amount £	Description
Ex-Prisoners' Interpretative Centre	15,000	2014/15 – North West Social and Economic Programme

Department of Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to list the recipients and value of funding received from each of the funding streams available through his Department to assist with early years educational intervention, in each of the last six years. (AQW 43869/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how much his Department has spent on postage in each of the last two financial years. (AQW 43907/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education spent the following on postage in each of the last two financial years:

	£'000
2013-14	194
2012-13	172

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education what impact his Department's cut to the Early Years fund is likely to have in rural areas where organisations receive their sole, or majority, funding from the Early Years fund. [R] (AQW 44209/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund (EYF), (administered by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children) was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a “closed” Fund since then to only those groups that were in need of support at that time.

Groups currently supported by the Early Years Fund which are also offering funded pre-school places within the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) will continue to be funded through the PSEP. In accordance with the Programme for Government commitment to ensure that at least one year of pre-school is available to every family that wants it, I have allocated sufficient funding to Education and Library Boards to meet the projected need for pre-school places for children in their final pre-school year.

The Pre-School Advisory Groups will monitor the situation and take any necessary action to ensure that a place continues to be available for every child whose parent wants it.

The Executive's Budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's (DE) remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything.

I have ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015. I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

I am aware that many programmes have made a positive impact on the lives of individuals and communities, however, it is essential to provide stability to the education budget and the education service moving forward and therefore maintaining all core services at current levels was simply not deliverable.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Education to outline the measures put in place by his Department to promote the integration of education.

(AQW 44228/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department funds NICIE to promote integrated education. Funding of £632,000 is being provided to NICIE in the 2015/16 financial year.

In addition, I am committed to ensuring my Department's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate integrated education continues to be discharged fully, positively and proactively.

I am also currently considering the need for and scope of a future review of integrated education.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education how organisations who are funded by Early Years, and who do not have funding reserves, will be assisted financially in the likely event of having to make staff redundancies.[R]

(AQW 44268/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund is administered by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) on DE's behalf under annual Service Level Agreement. Letters of Offer were made by EYO to eligible groups on an annual basis, based on each group's circumstances. Awards were made in some cases as a contribution towards the salary costs of the group and in others to meet a deficit between income and predicted expenditure.

EYO has confirmed that the current Letters of Offer with groups (which expired on 31st March 2015) make clear that EYO has no responsibility for commitments made by groups beyond 31 March 2015.

I have however ensured that funding is available to enable all current recipients to receive continued funding until 31st August 2015. I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However the Early Years Fund is effectively a “closed” fund and any alternative funding will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education what contingency plans his Department has developed to address the removal of access to vital services for children, and their families, who currently benefit from Early Years funded projects.[R]

(AQW 44270/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Early Years Fund was originally established in 2004 to help sustain certain early childhood services in areas of greatest need which were facing funding difficulties when Peace II funding ended. It has effectively remained as a “closed” Fund since then to only those groups that were identified as in need at that time.

The Executive's Budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's (DE) remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything.

I have ensured that budget is available in 2015/16 to enable all current recipient groups to receive continued funding to the end of the current academic year i.e. 31 August 2015.

I will continue to review my budget to establish if a fund can continue beyond that date. However any such fund will have to be open to all applicants, not just current recipients, and reflect the policy priorities of DE.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQO 7878/11-15, what evidence has he that the Primary Modern Language Programme, introduced in 2007, has not encouraged pupils to study languages at GCSE and A-level and is not delivering for the economy.

(AQW 44320/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Primary Modern Languages Programme was aimed at Foundation and Key Stage 1. The programme did not cover Key Stage 2 and for many children this meant that they began learning a language, stopped at Key Stage 2, and began learning a language again in post-primary school. This was not necessarily the same language they had been taught as young children.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education, pursuant AQW 40555/11-15, whether he has sought to bring forward proposals to amend or repeal the exception to the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1978.

(AQW 44340/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have previously stated that I do not believe there is a need to continue with the exception; however, any removal of the exception under Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order (FETO) is a matter for OFMdfM to take forward and should be subject to a full public consultation.

My Department does not employ teachers, however certain employers, namely the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and some Grant Maintained Integrated Schools require teachers to hold the Certificate in Religious Education to teach in a primary or nursery school setting; this is a policy decision of those employers and not related to FETO. A teacher of any religious background, or none, can hold the Certificate in Religious Education.

Should OFMdfM decide to remove Article 71 of the FETO, employers could still lawfully require for teachers to hold the Certificate in Religious Education.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Education whether the hydrotherapy pool at Roddensvale School in Larne will go ahead as planned in the current financial year.

(AQW 44370/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Executive's budget has been reduced by the Westminster Government by £1.5bn over the last five years. As a direct result of this reduction there is significantly reduced money to spend on frontline services such as Education. I have taken every action possible to protect Education funding and those frontline services within the Department of Education's remit. However, it is simply impossible to protect everything so difficult decisions will have to be made about prioritising schemes for capital investment.

Roddensvale School is a controlled special school and as such the Education Authority (EA) has responsibility for it. It is therefore for the EA to consider what schemes will be funded this year from within its capital allocation. Priority will have to be given to inescapable statutory requirements, such as health and safety and obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act; as well as to contractually committed works. I understand that the EA is considering the prioritisation of schemes within the available capital budget.

Both I and the EA remain committed to this scheme but the timing of delivery is dependent upon the available budget.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children attending an Irish-medium school who have a statement of Special Educational Needs, broken down by (a) naíscoil; (b) bunscoil; and (iii) meánscoil level.

(AQW 44388/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below shows the number of pupils that have a statement of special educational needs in Irish medium schools (note that this does not include Irish medium units in English medium schools). The total number of pupils has also been supplied for the purposes of providing context.

Pupils in Irish medium schools¹ that have a statement of special educational needs², 2014/15

	Number of stated pupils	Total number of pupils
Pre-school ³	*	855
Primary schools (years 1-7)	53	2,738
Post-primary schools	21	581

Source: NI school census

Notes:

1 Figures do not include pupils in Irish medium units in English medium schools

- 2 Figures include pupils at stage 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
- 3 Pre-school figures include pupils in Irish medium voluntary and private preschool centres, and nursery units in Irish medium primary schools.
- * denotes fewer than 5 pupils suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how his Department is co-operating with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that young children who are awaiting a health assessment for suspected autism are afforded interim assistance in school.

(AQW 44403/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I acknowledge the importance of close collaboration between the Education and Health sectors in supporting pupils with special educational needs (SEN), including autism.

While the responsibility for diagnosis of autism in children rests with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), addressing the individual SEN of a child with autism is not dependent upon receipt of a diagnosis. The identification, assessment and provision for children with SEN, including those with autism, will be addressed in line with the procedures outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. A non-diagnosis does not preclude a child with special educational needs from receiving appropriate support including, if required, a formal assessment or statement of his or her SEN.

My Department will continue to cooperate with DHSSPS to support pupils with autism.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education when the first formal meeting of the Education Authority Board will take place.

(AQW 44417/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The first formal meeting of the Education Authority will take place on Thursday 30 April 2015.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education, pursuant AQW 41214/11-15, to outline which 6 development proposals the Education and Training Inspectorate did not support.

(AQW 44491/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following development proposals for schools seeking an increase in their enrolment in the last two years and not supported by the Education and Training Inspectorate were:

- Rowandale Integrated Primary School.
- Millennium Integrated Primary School.
- Portadown Integrated Primary School.
- Enniskillen Integrated Primary School.
- Shimna Integrated College.
- Donacloney Primary School.

I again wish to reiterate the points made in my response to AQW 41214/11-15 that the ETI provide advice based the quality of education provision at a school, their knowledge of the local area, that this advice is only one part of the assessment and that all development proposals are considered on their own merit and are assessed against my Department's policies. In addition to the views of the ETI, all relevant comments received during the statutory objection period that follows publication of a DP are taken into account and due consideration is given to my Department's statutory duties in relation to Integrated and Irish Medium education, where appropriate.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr B McCreagh asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline how the Success through Stem strategy will address the gender imbalance in the sector.

(AQO 7904/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Recommendation four in the science, technology, engineering and maths Strategy, 'Success through STEM', is to address gender bias. This reflects the situation where in 2012/13, 62.5% of STEM enrolments in our higher education institutions were male.

I have funded the post of STEM Business Co-ordinator to ensure this recommendation as well as others are implemented. Together with my Department and the Equality Commission, the Co-ordinator has produced a report entitled 'Addressing Gender Balance – Reaping the Gender Dividend in STEM'. It demonstrates the business case for gender diversity and contains tools to help business engage, including a 'STEM CEO Charter', good practice guidelines and case studies.

The 'STEM CEO Charter', which enables organisations to demonstrate their commitment to equal opportunity in employment, recently had its thirty-first signature. Organisations which have signed include Allstate, Bombardier, Intel, Liberty, Magellan, Michelin, Moy Park, NACCO, Schrader, Seagate, Ulster University, Queens University and the Open University.

I have supported a project aimed at addressing the gender imbalance in advanced manufacturing and engineering, which supports small and medium sized entrepreneurs along with larger companies to develop female employees in STEM roles.

In ICT I have also committed significant funding to promote the sector as a career choice to young women through the 'Bring IT On' programme. The 'IT Girls' initiative brought together more than 300 young women to participate in a series of employability activities led by business women from the IT sector.

The Careers Service plays an active role in encouraging the uptake of STEM subjects and raising awareness of current and future job opportunities in STEM sectors, including among females.

Positively, the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey indicates female participation in higher level STEM roles, which includes engineering and IT professionals, has increased from just under 24% in 2011 to just below 32% in 2014.

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action he has taken following the recommendations of the Careers, Employability and Business Education Working Group.

(AQO 7907/11-15)

Dr Farry: The report from the independent Careers Review was published on the 10th December 2014.

Minister O'Dowd and I both welcomed the findings of the review and have considered the recommendations.

We have now agreed the actions to be taken forward by both Departments and have developed a joint action plan outlining the key actions and timelines for implementation during 2015-16.

The joint action plan also takes account of the recommendations made in the Employment and Learning Committee's report following its extensive inquiry into careers, and other recent publications from the CBI.

This will be published on the Department's website.

My Department will be taking forward a series of four projects over the next year. The first project will introduce a statutory duty to ensure the provision of impartial careers guidance and develop a quality assurance and accountability framework for the careers system.

The second will improve e-delivery and labour market information.

The third will develop a central work experience website and scope a web-based work experience portal. The fourth will ensure access to impartial advice including additional support to those at risk of becoming disengaged, support for those with barriers and the provision of more advice to parents.

Work has commenced on all four projects.

Stakeholder engagement will also be an important part of the process and will include the establishment of a careers advisory forum.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if his Department plans to hold a jobs fair in South Antrim during 2015.

(AQO 7912/11-15)

Dr Farry: My officials work closely with employers and actively pursue opportunities to facilitate Job Fairs, employer breakfast events to promote the services of my Department, and recruitment events for individual employers across Northern Ireland.

Bringing Job Fair events into local communities has proven to be a very successful means of assisting people back into work.

When planning to host a Job Fair my Department carefully considers the number of job opportunities employers have available in the location, and establishes whether there is sufficient interest and demand from local companies to participate.

Should the opportunity arise during 2015 that there is sufficient demand from employers in the South Antrim District, my officials are available to organise and facilitate a Job Fair.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the skills gaps that exist in Mid Ulster.

(AQO 7913/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department works with local businesses, universities and colleges to identify, plan for and meet skills, training and workforce development needs. I have established and chair several innovative Working Groups in key sectors to identify and address any skills gaps. The mid-Ulster area is well represented on all these groups.

The Food Skills Group, for example, contains companies such as Moy Park, Dunbia and Linden Foods. The Group identified a shortage of engineers in the industry and members worked together to develop and pilot a 'Food Engineering Apprenticeship' to meet relevant skills needs.

My Department works in collaboration with all six local further education colleges to address skills gaps through a broad range of curricular provision, from entry level to Foundation Degree. Of particular focus in the South West College, relevant to the mid-Ulster area, is the provision of a new Higher Level Apprenticeship in engineering with a unique strand on crushing and screening. This was developed following the identification of a skills need in mid-Ulster for higher level technician apprentices.

Also, more broadly, in the mid-Ulster area, the InnoTech Centre at the South West College provides research and development and innovation support to some 250 small and medium enterprises across Northern Ireland in response to identified skills needs. In the last two years, InnoTech has supported over 100 companies through my Department's Employer Support Programme – 'InnovateUs' – and delivered the Invest NI Innovation vouchers scheme to 44 companies in the mid-Ulster region.

My Department has commissioned the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy to develop a 'Northern Ireland Skills Barometer' on its behalf. This will indicate where skills gaps are, where they are emerging, and where they are forecast to emerge over the medium and longer term. The barometer will help to shape all areas of skills provision.

Mr Ó Muilleoir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he has had with Queen's University around its commitment to put the institution at the heart of civic society.

(AQO 7914/11-15)

Dr Farry: I and my Departmental officials regularly engage with Queen's University on a wide range of matters including its commitment to put the institution at the heart of civic society.

As part of 'Graduating to Success' my Department has been encouraging the higher education institutions, including Queen's University, to review their social and community engagement strategies and to use their skills and expertise to benefit and engage effectively with local communities.

A senior representative from the University plays an active role in the team which is overseeing the project to enhance engagement between the higher education sector, the community and government.

The key aims of this project are that, by the end of 2015,

the higher education institutions will have reviewed their strategies for social and community engagement and such activity will become embedded within each institution; and my Department and the sector will have developed a mechanism to support policy dialogue and engagement between the sector and government.

My officials met recently with Queen's University and were briefed on the progress which the university is making in developing a public engagement framework, including student and staff volunteering opportunities and engagement with the Science Shop on a range of practical community based projects which students can undertake as part of their academic studies.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his efforts to reduce economic inactivity.

(AQO 7915/11-15)

Dr Farry: As part of the Programme for Government 2011 – 2015, my Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in conjunction with a number of other Executive departments, have developed a draft strategy to reduce the high levels of economic inactivity in Northern Ireland.

Economic inactivity has been a persistent feature of our economy for a number of decades, irrespective of the positive and negative fluctuations in the wider economic cycle.

Following extensive research, development and stakeholder consultation, a final draft strategy and implementation plan is currently with the Executive for their consideration.

The strategy, if approved by the Executive, seeks to help a number of specific economically inactive groups make the transition towards, and into, the labour market on a purely voluntary basis.

The draft strategy also seeks to contribute to an increase in the employment rate in Northern Ireland through a reduction in the proportion of working age adults classified as economically inactive.

This will be the only dedicated government strategy in the United Kingdom targeted specifically at addressing the major socio-economic issue of economic inactivity and reflects the importance placed by myself, and my Executive colleagues, in seeking to tackle this long standing issue in a progressive and sustainable basis across Northern Ireland.

It is hoped that the Executive will agree the publication of the strategy in the near future so implementation can commence at the earliest opportunity.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what actions he, and his Department, have taken to engage with training providers, community and voluntary organisations and Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure proper preparation, recognition and reward for best practice in youth training systems.

(AQO 7917/11-15)

Dr Farry: My department recently completed a 12 week public consultation on the review of youth training interim report. As part of this consultation process consultation documents, and invites to two roadshows, were issued to over 4,500 stakeholders including training providers, community and voluntary organisations and Health and Social Care Trusts.

In addition, the review's expert panel, set up to advise upon the review, included representatives from training providers, voluntary and community voluntary organisations and from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust within its membership.

My department is also leading on the development of a United Youth Programme, and has been engaging with a range of organisations, including training providers and community and voluntary organisations, via a co-design process, to develop pilot projects. The Design Team that was set up to provide advice on programme development includes representation from the community and voluntary sector and the Public Health Agency.

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he has had with student representatives in relation to moving to a monthly payment system for student support and maintenance payments.
(AQO 7918/11-15)

Dr Farry: This matter was raised with me most recently at the NUS-USI conference on the 31st March.

For higher and further education students the frequency of standard student support payments is designed to align with the beginning of each of the three terms of the academic year. This allows students to meet the up-front costs associated with each term and also to plan ahead accordingly. Smaller and more frequent payments could leave students struggling to meet certain up-front costs which they face at the beginning of term, for example for their accommodation, course books and equipment.

The frequency of payments from the Higher Education Support Funds and the Further Education Hardship Funds, the main sources of support for students in financial difficulty, varies depending on individual circumstances of need as assessed by the universities and colleges. These particular payments are mostly in the form of grants which do not have to be repaid.

At the conference, I agreed to discuss this matter further with student representatives in the coming months with a view to determining what payment arrangements would be acceptable within current budgetary constraints. To that end I have asked officials to undertake a public consultation on the frequency of student support payments.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) whether the £25m, supplied by HM Treasury in respect of the Presbyterian Mutual Society settlement, and described at the time by Treasury Minister Lord Sassoon, as not having to be repaid, is being treated as a liability which has to be repaid; (ii) if so, to whom must the repayment be made; and (iii) whether the £25m supplied by her Department must also be repaid.
(AQW 44074/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):

- (i) The £25 million, supplied by HM Treasury, is being treated by the Presbyterian Mutual Society in its accounts as a liability to be repaid to the Department, it is not a repayment to the Treasury.
- (ii) See (i) above.
- (iii) The £25 million supplied by the Department is due to be repaid under clause (e) of the terms of the Scheme of Arrangement which sets out the order in which repayments are to be made as follows:
 - (a) Repayment of the £175 million loan facility (together with interest and all other costs, expenses and charges associated therewith);
 - (b) Repayment of the Voluntary Deferral Fund;
 - (c) Repayment of the Deferred Creditor Balance;
 - (d) Repayment of the Shareholder Balance;
 - (e) Repayment of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (PCI) Contribution of £1 million and up to a maximum of £25 million of the Financial Assistance, payment to be made *pari passu* between DETI and PCI; and
 - (f) any surplus to be distributed to DETI.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the current policy development being carried out by her Department, including their respective stages and expected completion dates.
(AQW 44190/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department continues to take forward policy development work in support of the Executive's Programme for Government and Economic Strategy. Policy development work is referenced in the Department's annual business plan. The plan for 2015/16 is currently in preparation and will be issuing shortly to the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to which jurisdiction does Intertradelreland pay corporation Tax. (AQW 44219/11-15)

Mrs Foster: InterTradelreland pays Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland only.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessments she has made on the impact of an exit by the UK from the European Union on potential Foreign Direct Investment. (AQW 44273/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Any referendum on EU membership will be determined by the outcome of the upcoming election nationally, and subsequently, the decision of the public should it go ahead.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment she has made on the impact of an exit by the UK from the European Union on cross-border trade with the Republic of Ireland. (AQW 44274/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Any referendum on EU membership will be determined by the outcome of the upcoming election nationally, and subsequently, the decision of the public should it go ahead.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what tourism industry experience the recently appointed Chair of Tourism NI has that qualifies him for such an appointment. (AQW 44332/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The position of Chair of Tourism Northern Ireland was filled by means of an open competition in accordance with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI (CPANI). At the outset of the process my Department identified six criteria which were considered essential to be able to fulfil the role effectively. The appointment was made from those applicants that satisfied all of the criteria.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to list the other paid public appointments held by the recently appointed Chair of Tourism NI. (AQW 44333/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Mr Terence Brannigan, the Chair of Tourism NI, holds one other paid public appointment. He is the Chairman of the Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the vacant land in West Tyrone owned by her Department or its arm's-length bodies. (AQO 7925/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI holds one hundred and nineteen acres of land at four locations across the West Tyrone constituency.

Whilst the majority of this land has been developed and is occupied by businesses there remain sixteen acres available to support business development.

This land is proactively marketed to potential investors, both indigenous and foreign direct. The final decision on investment location, however, rests solely with the investor. Irish Open 2015

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she is working with Executive colleagues to ensure that all opportunities arising from the Irish Open 2015, to showcase Newcastle and the surrounding South Down area globally, are maximised. (AQO 7930/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Irish Open 2015 provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase Newcastle and Co Down not only as a golfing destination, but also as a world class holiday destination.

For the Irish Open 2015 a Steering Group and governance structure, including sub groups for three key areas of delivery, has been established. These areas relate to Destination Delivery, Event Delivery and Marketing and Communications.

The Steering Group is chaired by Tourism NI and membership is consistent with that established for the Irish Open 2012. The 3 delivery groups have been meeting on a regular basis. They are made up of representatives from relevant Government Departments and Agencies who are directly contributing their expertise to the successful delivery of the event.

Both tourism agencies will be working with tourism businesses and the wider general tourism industry in Northern Ireland to promote this important event, using advertising campaigns featuring TV and radio, press, online and social media and digital channels and featuring special offers and packages around the Irish Open.

International travel and lifestyle media have been invited to visit Royal County Down golf club in the lead up to and during the tournament, with overnight stays at local accommodation providers and an opportunity to experience some of the visitor attractions in the region.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact the current deadlock on Welfare Reform is having on inward investment to Northern Ireland.

(AQO 7927/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Stormont House Agreement had an expectation that progress on a Welfare Bill in Northern Ireland would occur in parallel to the progression of the Corporation Tax Devolution Bill in Westminster. I hope that all parties will deliver on the agreement reached in the Stormont House Agreement.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Tourism Events Fund.

(AQO 7928/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Tourism Event Funding Programme for 2015/16 opened on Wednesday 4 February 2015 for applications. The deadline for completed applications was Monday 23 February 2015.

There are two schemes available, the International Tourism Events Fund and the Tourism Events Sponsorship Scheme.

A total of one hundred and five applications were received to the Tourism Event Sponsorship Scheme and five applications were received to the International Tourism Events Fund.

Applications have been assessed and Tourism NI is in the process of informing applicants of the outcome.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of how the recent Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget will impact on the local economy over the next three years.

(AQO 7929/11-15)

Mrs Foster: At a national level, the Office for Budget Responsibility has noted that the Coalition Government's policy decisions in the recent Budget are not expected to have a material impact on the economy.

Of course, it was just a few months ago that the Chancellor's Autumn Statement made the initial indication that Corporation Tax powers could be devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive. These powers could potentially create an additional 40,000 jobs if we introduced a 12.5% rate from April 2017.

From this Budget, the key message was that there will be a sharp squeeze on UK government spending in 2016-17 and 2017-18. This will continue to put pressure on the block grant that the Northern Ireland Executive receives and means that public spending will be constrained in the coming years as a result.

Department of the Environment

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what training in planning is scheduled for councillors in 2015/16.

(AQW 43058/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The DOE has supported the capacity building programme with a financial package secured from the Executive of £3.6 million; £800,000 was spent from this budget in 2013/14 year with further £2.8 million in 2014/15.

A series of training events were rolled out across Council areas from early September 2014 to late January 2015. The sessions covered an overview of Planning for councillors; development plans and working with the community, practical Planning and propriety and outcomes (Code of Conduct).

Copies of the slides, speaking notes (where available) and other support documents, including the guidance on the planning element of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, used at the events have been posted to the Planning NI website. Chief Executives and Area Planning Managers were advised of the links.

As well as drawing on the experience and knowledge of planning staff within councils, the Department will continue to provide support and guidance on, for example, policy and legislative matters as appropriate. Good practice guidance has been produced for the Development Plan Process, Development Management functions and Enforcement. These Practice Notes set out the legislative requirements and a recommended good practice approach for Councils to consider. These will be available on the Planning Portal from 1 April 2015 and will be a useful tool for Councils and the public in understanding the requirements of the new planning system.

A Protocol on the Operation of Planning Committees and guidance for councillors on the application of the Code of Conduct with regard to planning matters is also available. The aim of the guidance is to advise councillors how they should apply the principles and rules of the Code when it comes to dealing with planning. It is also there to provide protection for councillors by advising them of what they can and cannot do in relation to taking planning decisions.

Each new council will be responsible for meeting future training and development needs in relation to planning and other functions. These will be included in their training needs analysis and councillors will have opportunities to advise their training section of their on-going requirements post transfer.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how closing times or dates will change for Crawfordsburn Country Park for 2015 compared to 2014.

(AQW 43481/11-15)

Mr Durkan: All country parks will be open during the holiday periods this year.

Crawfordsburn Country Park, as with all other NIEA country parks, is available for pedestrian access 365 days a year. Visitor facilities within Crawfordsburn Country Park will be open on all public holidays, with the exception of Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The visitor centre however will close 30 minutes earlier during the 2015 summer season than in 2014.

Detailed opening times and dates for Crawfordsburn Country Park for 2015/16 are attached at Table 2 and these will be made publicly available through the Discover Northern Ireland website. For comparison, the 2014 dates and closing times are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: 2014/15 Crawfordsburn Country Park opening.

Country Park opening	
1st April 2014 to 31st May 2014	09:00am – 19:00pm daily
1st June 2014 to 15th September 2014	09:00am – 21:00pm daily
16th September 2014 to 31st October 2014	09:00am – 19:00pm daily
1st November 2014 to 31st March 2015	09:00am - 16:30pm daily
Visitor centre opening	
1st April 2014 to 31st October 2014	10:00am – 17:00pm daily
1st November 2014 to 28th February 2015*	10:00am – 16:00pm daily

* Please note that the Park Visitor Centre will be closed from 25th to 27th December 2014 during the Public Holiday though, weather permitting, the Park itself will be open on 26th and 27th December 2014.

Table 2: 2015/16 Crawfordsburn Country Park opening.

Country Park opening	
1st April 2015 to 31st May 2015	09:00am – 19:00pm daily
1st June 2015 to 15th September 2015	09:00am – 21:00pm daily
16th September 2015 to 31st October 2015	09:00am – 19:00pm daily
1st November 2015 to 31st March 2016	09:00am - 16:30pm daily
Visitor centre opening ^o	
1st April 2015 to 31st October 2015	10:00am – 16:30pm daily
1st November 2015 to 28th February 2016*	10:00am – 16:00pm daily

* Please note that the Country Park Visitor Centre will be closed from 25th to 27th December 2015 during the Public Holidays though, weather permitting, the Country Park itself will be open on 26th and 27th December 2015.

^o Please note that the toilet facilities at the Beach and Fort Road car park will remain open for public use in line with the Country Park opening times. This opening arrangement will be subject to ongoing review throughout 2015.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW42528/11-15 whether his Department has issued a stop notice on this unauthorised EIA development, or if he or any of his senior officials are preventing the initiation of formal enforcement proceedings.

(AQW 43944/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In September 2014 Warning Letters were issued to the operators (Sand Traders) advising that the development was unauthorised and that the activity should cease. I have instructed my staff to take further action in monitoring this situation.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to list all types of extant consents and permissions which are required to be reviewed under the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

(AQW 44086/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Habitats Directive does not specifically require any review of extant consents and permissions.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how the likely environmental effects of a new project on a European site can be assessed cumulative with other plans and projects to the degree of scientific certainty required under the Habitats

Directive, as articulated in decisions of the European Court of Justice, if his Department has neglected to carry out the review of extant permissions required by law.

(AQW 44087/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A clear distinction must be made between the requirements of the Habitats Directive to undertake an 'in combination' assessment and 'cumulative' assessments in general.

An 'in combination' assessment as required by the Habitats Directive is an assessment of the effects of projects which have not yet been included in the background environmental baseline.

A general 'cumulative' assessment is the effect of a project in addition to the prevailing environmental conditions. That is, all other projects currently impacting a site. My Department holds significant volumes of environmental data which allows a scientifically robust cumulative assessment to be undertaken in these cases.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 43177/11-15, what enforcement action his Department intends to take on the ongoing activity at the stated premises.

(AQW 44169/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Regulation 49 of the PSV Regulations (NI) 1985 currently outlaws touting, which prohibits the activities of a person employed as a driver to tout, call out or otherwise importune any person to be carried for hire in the vehicle.

Section 43 of the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 draws the touting provisions more broadly in that a person who solicits any person to be carried for hire or reward in a taxi is guilty of an offence.

The Department intends to introduce these broader touting provisions later this year and will be enforcing strict compliance with these new provisions that will curtail the role of taxi marshals at key venues throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of single taxi operator license compliance inspections which have taken place since the introduction of the taxi operator licence in 2012.

(AQW 44212/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Compliance inspections of single taxi operator licence holders are conducted during roadside checks where operator, driver and vehicle licensing requirements are scrutinised. The Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) does not capture the necessary details during roadside compliance checks to report the number of single taxi operators inspected and therefore the information requested cannot be provided.

However, since the introduction of taxi operator licensing on 1 September 2012, the DVA has completed roadside compliance checks on 3,952 taxis. These figures cover the period from 1 September 2012 to 31 December 2014.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what assurances he can give, with the degree of scientific certainty established by various rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union, that no significant environmental damage to habitats protected under Annex I, or harm to species protected under Annex II of the Habitats Directive, has taken place as a result of prolonged unauthorised sand extraction operations from the bed of Lough Neagh Special Protection Area.

(AQW 44217/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There is no evidence that sand extraction is leading to significant environmental damage to any annex I habitat or annex II species in, or close to, Lough Neagh. I am content that the Department has regard to the rulings of the courts, both national and international, in all decisions likely to impact natural habitats and species.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department is taking to address the number of dilapidated buildings in North Down and the risk that they will be used for anti-social behaviour.

(AQW 44257/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A discussion document on legislation regarding dilapidated/dangerous buildings and neglected sites was issued to key stakeholders on 31 March 2014. This exercise elicited 20 substantive responses, primarily from the local government sector, highlighting a range of complex policy and legal issues. A synopsis of these responses is available to view on the Department's website and officials have engaged with a range of key stakeholders, including district councils, to discuss these issues.

The link between dilapidation and anti-social behaviour is well known and one of the important issues under consideration as part of my Department's review of powers available to the new councils to address this and other significant issues associated with dilapidation.

Another of my Department's initiatives, the Dereliction Intervention Funding programme, has supported the efforts of a number of councils, including the former North Down District Council, to address the issue of dilapidation and it is hoped that further funds for this scheme will be made available in the future.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether the cumulative environmental impact from septic tanks represents a threat to the ecosystems of Lough Neagh Area of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area; and to detail all

Habitats Regulation Assessments his Department has carried out since 1998 on the cumulative environmental impact of septic tanks on this site.

(AQW 44276/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 the consent of the Department of the Environment is required to discharge any trade or sewage effluent into the aquatic environment. This includes any discharges from domestic septic tanks.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) does not currently undertake Habitats Regulation Assessments for single domestic septic tanks.

However, NIEA has developed and implemented a robust application process, with accompanying technical guidance, for single domestic wastewater treatment systems which requires applicants to demonstrate to NIEA that proposed systems are compliant with the appropriate British Standards before consent will be granted. This process ensures that the appropriate systems are installed in individual circumstances to ensure no detrimental impact to the receiving aquatic environment.

NIEA is aware of research and ongoing studies in the UK and Republic of Ireland regarding the environmental impacts of septic tanks and relative contributions to nutrient loads to freshwater rivers and lakes. The evidence base is not yet available to determine the threat, if any, posed by the cumulative impact of septic tanks to the ecosystems of Lough Neagh.

Should a potential detrimental impact on water quality due to the cumulative effect of septic tanks at a catchment level be detected, NIEA will provide advice and guidance to the owners of any systems suspected of contributing to the impact to resolve any issues. There are, however, processes in place whereby enforcement action can be taken by NIEA depending on individual circumstances, should co-operation not be forthcoming.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether intentional and negligent disturbance of nesting birds has been removed from NIEA's cross-compliance inspection sheet; and if so, to detail (i) why, given that this is a criminal offence under the Wildlife Order; and (ii) if this was as a result of lobbying or approach from any outside individual, group or organisation.

(AQW 44337/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Cross-Compliance Verifiable Standards are set by the European Commission to ensure that landowners who collect agricultural support adhere to a wide range of EU Regulations. As part of the recent round of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reforms, the Commission has reviewed the scope of Cross-Compliance requirements and subsequently removed the offence of intentional or negligent disturbance of nesting birds from its overarching Regulations. As a result of this change, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (who administer the process on behalf of the Commission) directed NIEA to remove this element from the Cross-Compliance process. All nesting birds in Northern Ireland are protected under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended). Disturbance of nesting birds is a criminal offence, and investigation of potential offences is the responsibility of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) who enforce this legislation.

My Department is unaware of any outside lobbying by any individual, group or organisations influencing the decision to remove this standard.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment which section within NIEA is responsible for dealing with reports of hedge cutting during the closed period; and what assurance he can give that all reports of potential offences relating to intentional and negligent disturbance of nesting birds will be promptly investigated.

(AQW 44338/11-15)

Mr Durkan: All nesting birds in Northern Ireland are protected under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Disturbance of nesting birds is a criminal offence, and investigation of potential offences is the responsibility of the PSNI who enforce this legislation.

It should be noted that the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 does not define any 'closed period' for nesting birds. As such, under this legislation, there is no legal impediment to cutting hedges at any time of year, so long as nesting birds are not disturbed.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) under the Good Agriculture and Environmental Conditions regulations (GAEC) sets a closed period for hedge management (1st March -31st August) and enforces any breaches of its regulations, with DARD inspectors responding to reports of hedge cutting within the 'closed period'.

All reports of wildlife crime passed to my officials are forwarded to the PSNI.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of the Environment whether current legislation permits an individual to develop and run a crematorium.

(AQW 44344/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under Article 17 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 my Department is responsible for the regulation of crematoria provided and maintained by a district council. There is no legislation in Northern Ireland to permit me, or any of my Executive Colleagues, to regulate private sector crematoria.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline (i) the financial implication of 'changes in claimant behaviour and further administrative costs' as referred to in the financial annex to the Stormont House Agreement; and (ii) any discussions with the Treasury on the implications of same.

(AQW 43488/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The potential for changes in claimant behaviour and any possible further administrative costs are a matter for the Minister for Social Development.

Mr B McCreagh asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the predicted cost of lowering corporation tax to 12.5 per cent and (ii) how he would make up this shortfall.

(AQW 43585/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Current estimates from HM Treasury indicate that, were a 12.5% Corporation Tax rate to be applied from April 2017, the net cost to the NI Executive would build up to a full cost of around £325m per annum from 2019-20. Costs in the initial two years of a NI regime are expected to be lower reflecting the fact that businesses are not required to pay their entire tax bill within the year that profits are made.

Should a decision be taken to reduce the rate of Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland, the associated costs would be managed as part of the wider budgetary process.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what progress has been made on the implementation of the Social Value Act.

(AQW 43723/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 does not apply to Northern Ireland.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how he will ensure that Civil Servants are not pressurised into taking voluntary redundancy should they wish to remain in post.

(AQW 43783/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: No civil servants are being selected for voluntary redundancy. This is a Voluntary Exit Scheme, which will compensate staff who choose to apply and are selected to leave. The Scheme is entirely voluntary in nature and so no one is being pressurised to apply.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for the (i) number of rates valuation appeals received from businesses in the Limavady area; and (ii) the number of businesses that were successful in being awarded a lower valuation as a result.

(AQW 43794/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The total number of non-domestic valuation challenge cases received for the Limavady District Council Area over the last three years was 128. Of these cases, 34 resulted in a valuation assessment lower than the initial assessment.

The total number of non-domestic valuation challenge cases received for the Coleraine District Council Area over the last three years was 238. Of these cases, 64 resulted in a valuation assessment lower than the initial assessment.

The reductions in the assessments are attributable to several factors including changes to the physical characteristics of a property.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for the number of (i) rates valuation appeals received from businesses in the Coleraine Area and (ii) the number of these appeals that were awarded a lower valuation as a result.

(AQW 43796/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The total number of non-domestic valuation challenge cases received for the Limavady District Council Area over the last three years was 128. Of these cases, 34 resulted in a valuation assessment lower than the initial assessment.

The total number of non-domestic valuation challenge cases received for the Coleraine District Council Area over the last three years was 238. Of these cases, 64 resulted in a valuation assessment lower than the initial assessment.

The reductions in the assessments are attributable to several factors including changes to the physical characteristics of a property.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Freedom of Information requests his Department has received in each of the the last two financial years; and to detail the cost to process these requests over that time.

(AQW 43840/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In the last two financial years, DFP has received:

- 2012/13 – 320 FOI requests;
- 2013/14 – 322 FOI requests.

DFP, in common with all NICS departments, does not calculate or record information on the cost of processing FOI requests.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether a Special Adviser can remain in post if they are standing for election to Westminster.

(AQW 43858/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In accordance with the terms and conditions of their contract of employment, Special Advisers must resign their appointment if they are publicly identified as a candidate or prospective candidate for Parliament, either by adoption by a political party or in any other way.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 38995/11-15, what action he plans to take to help tenants claim back any fees that they have paid.

(AQW 43872/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is not responsible for monitoring trade practices or the protection of consumers. If fees are recoverable and tenants cannot obtain these directly from the letting agent, they may have to proceed with a claim for the recovery of the money and may wish to seek independent advice with regard to their options.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the strategy being pursued to identify the owners of empty residential houses for rating purposes,

(AQW 43926/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Land & Property Services (LPS) employs various strategies to identify the owners/occupiers (the person liable to pay rates) of residential properties. The strategies are employed where the ratepayer is unknown, regardless of whether the property is vacant or occupied. These include searching LPS data sources, use of third party tracing services, use of the edited electoral register, internet searches for individuals to identify leads for determining the liable person, property inspections and use of Article 26 of the Rates Order (NI) 1977, which gives the Department the power to request information from bodies such as utility providers and estate agents.

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the average life expectancy at birth in each constituency.

(AQW 43940/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: While the Department of Finance and Personnel publish life expectancy at birth statistics at the Northern Ireland and local government district levels, it does not produce such information for parliamentary constituencies.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety does however publish life expectancy at birth figures by parliamentary constituency and has provided the figures included in Table 1 overleaf.

Table 1: Life expectancy at birth, by Parliamentary Constituency (2010-12)

Parliamentary Constituency	Male Life Expectancy			Female Life Expectancy		
	Life Expectancy Estimate	95% CI Lower Limit	95% CI Upper Limit	Life Expectancy Estimate	95% CI Lower Limit	95% CI Upper Limit
Belfast East	76.9	76.2	77.7	81.0	80.4	81.7
Belfast North	74.6	73.9	75.3	80.3	79.7	81.0
Belfast South	77.9	77.3	78.6	82.2	81.6	82.9
Belfast West	74.1	73.3	74.9	79.8	79.0	80.5
East Antrim	77.8	77.1	78.6	82.4	81.8	83.1
East Londonderry	78.0	77.4	78.7	82.4	81.7	83.1
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	77.8	77.1	78.5	82.9	82.3	83.6
Foyle	76.2	75.4	77.0	80.1	79.4	80.8
Lagan Valley	79.0	78.3	79.7	82.9	82.2	83.5
Mid Ulster	79.7	79.0	80.4	83.0	82.4	83.6
Newry and Armagh	77.2	76.5	77.9	81.8	81.2	82.4
North Antrim	78.4	77.7	79.0	83.5	82.9	84.1
North Down	79.2	78.5	79.9	82.4	81.8	83.0
South Antrim	79.0	78.3	79.7	82.3	81.7	83.0

Parliamentary Constituency	Male Life Expectancy			Female Life Expectancy		
	Life Expectancy Estimate	95% CI Lower Limit	95% CI Upper Limit	Life Expectancy Estimate	95% CI Lower Limit	95% CI Upper Limit
South Down	78.8	78.1	79.5	82.6	82.0	83.3
Strangford	78.9	78.1	79.7	83.4	82.7	84.0
Upper Bann	77.5	76.9	78.2	82.5	81.9	83.1
West Tyrone	78.5	77.7	79.2	83.3	82.6	84.0
Northern Ireland	77.7	77.6	77.9	82.1	82.0	82.3

Source: NI Health & Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System (HSCIMS), Information & Analysis Directorate (IAD), DHSSPS.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 43423/11-15, why annual figures are not available. (AQW 43952/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Tourism statistics are based on surveys undertaken in ports and households across both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. All surveys have a margin of error. An annual estimate of overnight trips of external holidaymakers to Fermanagh would have a wide margin of error of more than +/-30%. This lacks robustness, therefore an estimate based on the three year combined period 2011-13 was provided.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 43199/11-15, what were the overtime costs incurred in respect of hosting the Redbull Downhill event. (AQW 43982/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The overtime costs incurred in respect of hosting the Red Bull event on the Stormont Estate were £2,076.41.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 42665/11-15, how the number of employees could be too low in respect of East Belfast; and what level of employment is required. (AQW 43983/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The estimates provided in AQW 42665/11-15 were sourced from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). This survey is primarily designed to provide earnings estimates at the Northern Ireland level.

In the 2014 survey year the East Belfast Constituency estimate had a wide margin of error. This meant that the resultant estimate lacked robustness and was not provided. In this case, this margin of error is affected by the high variability coupled with the low number of responses received from employees resident in the East Belfast Constituency.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the cost of his Department's postage. (AQW 43999/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The cost of postage for the Department of Finance and Personnel for the 2013-14 financial year was £1,121,000.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to provide a full list and the corresponding amounts of non-identifiable expenditure attributed locally for 2012-13 and 2013-14 as an update to Table 4.9 of the net fiscal balance report 2011-12. (AQW 44012/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department intends publishing the next Northern Ireland Net Fiscal Balance Report later in Spring 2015. This Report will include estimates of non-identifiable expenditure attributed to Northern Ireland for 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when an updated net fiscal balance report will be available. (AQW 44013/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department intends publishing the next Northern Ireland Net Fiscal Balance Report later in Spring 2015. This Report will include estimates of non-identifiable expenditure attributed to Northern Ireland for 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the average occupancy rate; and (ii) average room rate of hotels, B&Bs and guesthouses, in the Fermanagh District Council area in (a) 2010; (b) 2011; (c) 2012; and (d) 2013. (AQW 44019/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Annual occupancy rates for Hotels and Bed & Breakfasts, Guesthouses and Guest Accommodation in Fermanagh Local Government District are detailed in the attached table (2010-13). Information is not collected on the average cost of a room in commercial accommodation.

Table: Annual occupancy for hotels and bed & breakfast, guesthouse and guest accommodation in the Fermanagh Local Government District (2010-2013).

Year	Hotel Occupancy		Bed & Breakfast, Guesthouse, Guest Accommodation Occupancy	
	Room Occupancy	Bed-Space Occupancy	Room Occupancy	Bed-Space Occupancy
2010	58%	48%	35%	26%
2011	58%	45%	37%	27%
2012	68%	49%	35%	24%
2013	60%	46%	35%	22%

Source: Northern Ireland Monthly Hotel, Bed & Breakfast and Guesthouse Accommodation Survey

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for a breakdown of European Union (EU) Funding, Northern Ireland has received since 1998, broken down by (i) the EU Programme which the funding derived and (ii) the local programmes where funding was spent.

(AQW 44033/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My policy responsibilities are for EU Structural Funds and I have confined my answer to those programmes. Structural Funds allocations are made in 7 year cycles - there were no allocations made in 1998 and 1999.

The table attached provides a breakdown of allocations since 2000, by programme and by priority activity.

More detailed information on the projects approved under the 2000-06 and 2007-13 funding periods can be found on the following weblinks:-

2000-06 <http://www.eugrants-successes.org/main.asp>
BSP

PEACE II
INTERREG IIIA
LEADER +
EQUAL
URBAN II

2007-13 <http://successes.eugrants.org/>
Sustainable Competiveness Programme
NI ESF Programme
PEACE III
INTERREG IVA

No website of funded projects is yet established for the 2014-2020 programmes.

European Union Structural Funds allocations to Northern Ireland 1998-2015
Broken down by funding period, programme and priority

(1) 2000-2006 period

Building Sustainable Prosperity	€929m
Economic Growth and Competitiveness	€377m
Employment	€346m
Urban and Social Revitalisation	€50m
Agriculture and Rural Development	€78m
Fisheries	€29m
Environment	€46m
Technical Assistance	€3m
PEACE II	€467m

Economic Renewal	€168m
Social Integration, Inclusion and Reconciliation	€113m
Locally-based Regeneration and Development Strategies	€69m
Outward and Forward Looking Region	€25m
Cross-Border Cooperation	€48m
Technical Assistance	€44m
INTERREG IIIA	€137m *
Integrated Local Development Strategies	€56m
Supporting Physical Infrastructure and the Environment	€57m
Civic and Community Networking	€16m
Technical Assistance	€8m
LEADER+	€15.4m
Territorial Rural Development Strategies	€13.3m
Co-operation	€1.7m
Networking	€0.2m
Technical Assistance	€0.2m
EQUAL	€12m
Access and return to Labour Market	€8m
Reducing gender gaps and desegregation	€3m
Technical Assistance	€1m
URBAN II	€11m
Physical and social resources	€6m
People resources	€4m
Technical Assistance	€1m

(2) 2007-2013 period

Sustainable Competitiveness	€307m
Sustainable Competitiveness and Innovation	€160m
Sustainable Enterprise and Entrepreneurship	€105m
Improving Accessibility and protecting and enhancing the environment	€38m
Technical Assistance	€4m
Northern Ireland ESF	€166m
Helping people into sustainable employment	€96m
Improving workforce skills	€67m
Technical Assistance	€3m
PEACE III	€225m *
Reconciling Communities	€129m
Contributing to a Shared Society	€82m
Technical Assistance	€14m
INTERREG IVA	€192m
Cooperation for a more prosperous Cross-Border Region	€50m
Cooperation for a sustainable Cross-Border Region	€133m

Technical Assistance	€9m
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(3) 2014-2020 period

Investment for Growth and Jobs ERDF	€308m
Strengthening Research, Technical Development and Innovation	€113m
Enhancing the Competitiveness of SMEs	€136m
Supporting the shift towards a Low-carbon Economy in all sectors	€47m
Technical Assistance	€12m
Investment for Growth and Jobs ESF	€205m
Access to Employment	€59m
Social Inclusion	€62m
Skills for Growth	€82m
Technical Assistance	€3m
INTERREG VA	€240m*
Strengthening Research, Technical Development and Innovation	€61m
Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency	€72m
Promoting Sustainable Transport and removing Bottlenecks in Key Network Infrastructures	€40m
Social Inclusion	€53m
Technical Assistance	€14m
PEACE IV (Not yet adopted)	€229m*
Promoting Peace and Reconciliation	€215m
Technical Assistance	€14m
NI Rural Development Programme (Not yet adopted)	€227m
Knowledge Transfer and Information Actions	€8m
Investment in Physical Assets	€13m
Basic services and Village Renewal in Rural Areas	€3m
Investments in forest area development and improvement	€8m
Agri-environment climate	€113m
Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints	€56m
Cooperation	€1m
Support for LEADER local development	€16m
Technical Assistance	€9m

* Allocations to INTERREG and PEACE cross-border programmes are shared between participating Member States. PEACE IV figures are subject to finalisation - the programme has not yet been adopted by the European Commission.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, what is his Department doing to ensure all new build housing has disability access.

(AQW 44134/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has responsibility for maintaining and improving building standards in Northern Ireland (NI) through the Building Regulations and supporting Technical Guidance Booklets. All new build housing in NI is subject to the relevant requirements of The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (as amended).

The current regulations in relation to access and use are set out in,

Part R- Access to and use of buildings, Regulation 91 – Access and use,

“Reasonable provision shall be made for people to have access to, into, within and to use a building and its facilities:

Providing that in a dwelling this requirement shall be limited to the entrance storey or, where that storey contains no habitable room, to the principal storey.”

These regulations are available in the Assembly Library.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, what plans his Department has to legislate to enact the legislation recommended by the Northern Ireland Land Commission in its 2010 Report on Land Law.

(AQW 44141/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Most of the recommendations in the Northern Ireland Law Commission's 2010 Land Law Report have been accepted. The process of drafting a Bill to give effect to the agreed recommendations has commenced. The Bill will be large and complex and is expected to take some time before it is drafted and ready for introduction in the Assembly. The recommendations relating to ground rent and the effect of covenants after the redemption of ground rent will be further considered and, if accepted, be contained in a separate small Bill.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans his Department has to legislate on the subject of party walls and structures as recommended by the Northern Ireland Land commission in its 2010 Report on Land Law.

(AQW 44142/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The recommendations of the Northern Ireland Law Commission, contained within its 2010 Report, relating to party structures (including party walls) have been accepted, along with most of the other recommendations in the Report. The process of drafting a Bill has commenced. The Bill will be large and complex and is expected to take some time before it is drafted and ready for introduction in the Assembly.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the rules in regard to Ministerial Special Advisors canvassing on behalf of general election candidates.

(AQW 44147/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The rules in regard to Ministerial Special Advisers canvassing on behalf of general election candidates are available in the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, at <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/spad-act-code-of-conduct.pdf>.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans he has to produce the legislation recommended by the Northern Ireland Law Commission in its 2010 Report on Land Law.

(AQW 44170/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Most of the recommendations in the Northern Ireland Law Commission's 2010 Land Law Report have been accepted. The process of drafting a Bill to give effect to the agreed recommendations has commenced. The Bill will be large and complex and is expected to take some time before it is drafted and ready for introduction in the Assembly. The recommendations relating to ground rent and the effect of covenants after the redemption of ground rent will be further considered and, if accepted, be contained in a separate small Bill.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what plans he has to legislate on party walls and structures as recommended by the Northern Ireland Law Commission in its 2010 Report on Land Law.

(AQW 44171/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The recommendations of the Northern Ireland Law Commission, contained within its 2010 Report, relating to party structures (including party walls) have been accepted, along with most of the other recommendations in the Report. The process of drafting a Bill has commenced. The Bill will be large and complex and is expected to take some time before it is drafted and ready for introduction in the Assembly.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many deaths have been attributed directly to alcohol misuse in each of the last five years.

(AQW 44193/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: While there is no agreed definition of deaths due to 'alcohol misuse', the National Statistics definition of alcohol-related deaths is based on those causes regarded as being most directly due to alcohol consumption. As such, it provides a good indicator of alcohol misuse.

On this basis, the table overleaf provides the latest figures for the number of alcohol related¹ deaths registered in Northern Ireland from 2009 to 2013.

Table: Number of alcohol related deaths registered in Northern Ireland, 2009 to 2013.

Registration Year	All Persons
2009	283

Registration Year	All Persons
2010	284
2011	252
2012	270
2013	236
Total	1,325

1 Alcohol related deaths are defined using International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision codes F10, G31.2, G62.1, I42.6, K29.2, K70, K73, K74, K86.0, X45, X65 and Y15.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether any further consideration has been given to the regulation of property management companies.

(AQW 44246/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Law Commission has considered the issues relating to property management and has recommended the regulation of managing agents, rather than additional regulation for management companies. Such companies are already subject to regulation under general company law and the issue of additional regulation would not be a matter for my Department.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much funding Executive Departments have received from the European Union over the last five years.

(AQW 44275/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My policy responsibilities are for EU Structural Funds and I have confined my answer to those funds. Details of EU structural funding received in the last 5 years through NI Government departments is detailed in the table below.

EU Structural Fund Receipts in £M Sterling

Year	ERDF	ESF	EAGGF	FIFG	Total
2010/11	52.881	19.425	4.662	0.000	76.968
2011/12	53.051	0.000	0.000	0.148	53.199
2012/13	83.201	19.487	0.000	0.000	102.688
2013/14	45.575	38.764	1.835	0.000	86.174
2014/15	120.836	12.294	0.000	0.000	133.130
Total	355.544	89.970	6.497	0.148	452.159

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, further to the proposed legislative changes made at Westminster requiring large companies to publish statistics detailing the pay gap between male and female staff, to detail (i) what action his Department is taking to address such pay imbalances in Northern Ireland companies; and (ii) whether he will consider implementing similar legislative changes locally to tackle such disparities.

(AQW 44294/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department has no plans to take action in this regard as it lies outside my policy responsibilities.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether current legislation permits an individual to develop and run a crematorium.

(AQW 44343/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department is not responsible for policy relating to provision and maintenance of crematoria.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether, in circumstances where an asset has been vested, there is a legal requirement to offer first right of refusal to the previous owner if selling or transferring the asset.

(AQW 44404/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Where an asset has been vested and becomes surplus to the operational requirements of a public sector disposing body, providing the wider public sector has no further need for it, it can be offered back to the former owner or his successor, by virtue of the Land Clauses Consolidation Act 1845, though this path is seldom applicable. More typically the expectation arises as a result of the rules established following a Public Inquiry into the disposal of land at Crichel Down in June 1954.

In both circumstances, however, there are specific exceptions which may mean there is no requirement to offer surplus land back to the former owner. As the rules are complex, each case must be considered on its merits.

The full details regarding the rights of former owners are set out in Section 7.0 of the Land & Property Services Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in Northern Ireland March 2013 guidelines, which are available on the DFP/LPS website www.dfpni.gov.uk/lps.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his Department's assessment of the process of ranking bids for additional funding for in-year monitoring.

(AQW 44445/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As part of the in-year monitoring process, my officials assess and prioritise bids submitted by departments for additional funding. This assessment will include consideration as to whether the bids are inescapable, pre-committed, high priority or simply desirable.

This process helps to inform my recommendations to the Executive on the allocation of resources. Ultimately it is for the Executive to agree the pressures that are to be funded.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail all ongoing policy reviews within his Department, including the (a) commencement date; and (b) the expected finalisation date for the reviews.

(AQW 44090/11-15)

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The following policy reviews are currently ongoing within my Department:

DHSSPS Review	Commencement Date	Expected Finalisation Date
Safeguarding Children and Young People	April 2014	Early 2016
Adult Safeguarding	March 2009	Summer 2015
Imaging Services	August 2013	Late 2015
Sir Liam Donaldson Report – Review of Governance across the HSC	August 2014	Summer 2015
Children's Palliative & End Life Care	September 2012	Summer 2015
Paediatric Review	September 2012	Summer 2015
Evaluation of the Individual Funding Request	September 2014	May 2015
Consultant Led Hospital Dental Services	July 2011	Summer 2015
Adult Care and Support	September 2012	Autumn 2020
Continuing Healthcare	October 2014	September 2015
Administrative Structures within the HSC	November 2014	Ongoing
Review of Commissioning	April 2015	Summer 2015

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has produced any proposals for revenue generation as part of his third strategic priority for 2015/16.

(AQW 44192/11-15)

Mr Wells: The trusts will endeavour to maximise existing sources of external income (as outlined in AQW 40033/11-15 and AQW 40035/11-15) as part of their financial planning processes for 2015/16. My Department is also conducting a public consultation exercise on the question of the use of prescription charges to support a specialist medicines fund. That consultation process runs until 8 May.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) male; and (ii) female nurses in each Health and Social Care Trust; and the number employed in (a) general; (b) psychiatric; (c) midwifery; (d) geriatric; (e) cancer; and (f) paediatric nursing.

(AQW 44240/11-15)

Mr Wells: The Health and Social Care Board does not at present commission bariatric surgery in Northern Ireland. All Extra Contractual Referrals (ECR) are considered individually. ECRs can be considered where:

- 1 The patient's clinical condition requires specialised care that could only be sustained for a large catchment population and cannot be provided for a small geographic area such as Northern Ireland.
- 2 The patient's clinician wishes to seek a second opinion from a provider outside Northern Ireland because of complexities of the patient's condition or circumstances.
- 3 The treatment is available locally but the patient has some exceptional reason which renders their case different from the vast majority of other patients with the same condition and which therefore justifies a referral for care or treatment outside Northern Ireland.
- 4 The service being requested is not reflected in commissioning arrangements such as a service level agreement (SLA) with a provider outside N Ireland.
- 5 The service being requested is not commissioned for the population of Northern Ireland, but the patient's clinical circumstances are such that exceptionality can be demonstrated and a case justified for an ECR to access care from a provider outside Northern Ireland.

The full guidance on the Extra Contractual Process can be found at the following website:

http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Protocol_ECR_and_IFR_arrangements.pdf

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recently published revised guidelines on the assessment and management of obesity. The Board is currently considering the commissioning implications of NICE Clinical Guideline 189 within the context of the very challenging 2015/16 financial position and competing health and social care priorities.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what impact proposed budget cuts will have on services for Multiple Sclerosis patients over the next twelve months.

(AQW 44245/11-15)

Mr Wells: The budget allocations to individual service areas are still being finalised for 2015/16.

All Trusts must deliver substantial savings in order to live within budget and meet rising demand across HSC services.

Savings from non-frontline areas will be maximised. However given the scale of the challenge that health and social care is facing in 2015/16, savings will also need to be delivered from front line services which will inevitably impact on the pattern of service delivery whilst still meeting needs. In any case, I would assure you that maintaining the safety of services for patients and clients across all trusts will remain my priority.

Delivery of services for MS patients is the responsibility of each HSC Trust.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the extent of research conducted by his Department into older people's care since the publication of Transforming Your Care.

(AQW 44326/11-15)

Mr Wells: To inform policy development my officials review and consider, on an ongoing basis, research undertaken by stakeholders such as the Commissioner for Older People as well as leading think tanks and consultancy firms including the Institute for Public Policy Research, The Kings Fund, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, KPMG, PwC and Deloitte.

In this context my Department is also progressing the Reform of Adult Care and Support project. As part of this project, which will consider the nature and cost of support for adults in the community, including older people, key stakeholders - many of whom carry out research - have been identified. This includes the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland and Age NI who are both represented on the Project Board. In addition, a wider range of stakeholders including professional colleges, providers, the Human Rights and Equality Commissions and voluntary groups have been identified and will be engaged with to ensure relevant research is highlighted and used to inform proposals for change.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) each area of current expenditure that his Department will be making savings in 2015/16; (ii) the estimated level of savings for each; and (iii) what impact this will have on service delivery.

(AQW 44345/11-15)

Mr Wells: At this stage, savings opportunities of £157m have been identified in 2015/16:

Cash releasing efficiencies and productivity gains in Trusts and the HSCB (£105m):

- Financial planning for 2015/16 is still ongoing and the HSCB continues to work with Trusts to identify the potential savings opportunities which could be achieved in 2015/16. The areas being looked at for savings are likely to include non pay opportunities, staff productivity, acute savings and social care opportunities.

Prescribing/FHS efficiencies (£22m)

- It is proposed to deliver savings from Family Health Services and prescribing budgets through the PPRS scheme in primary care and the pharmaceutical clinical effectiveness (PCE) plan.

Departmental and ALB savings opportunities and budget reductions (£30m)

- The final Budget emphasised the need for significant savings from non front line health and social care services. In that context, savings of £16m have been identified from a range the Department's own programme and administration budgets. A further £14m is to be delivered from the Department's smaller ALBs.

Savings from non-frontline areas will be maximised. However given the scale of the challenge that health and social care is facing in 2015/16, savings will also need to be delivered from front line services which will inevitably impact on the pattern of service delivery whilst still meeting needs. In any case, maintaining the safety of services for patients and clients across all trusts will remain my priority

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients who have been diagnosed with (i) Myalgic Encephalopathy; (ii) Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; and (iii) Fibromyalgia, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in the last three years.

(AQW 44391/11-15)

Mr Wells: Data is not collected centrally to determine the number of patients who have been diagnosed with Myalgic Encephalopathy (ME), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to implement Transforming Your Care.

(AQW 44440/11-15)

Mr Wells: Over the last three years the South Eastern Trust has been allocated £2.2m of transitional funding to support Transforming Your Care.

It important to note that this represents the allocation of Transforming your Care transitional funding and does not include recurrent and non-recurrent funding from other sources for service developments and reforms in line with the model set out in TYC – a vision which all Trusts are committed to and are implementing across their services.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of GP vacancies in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 44442/11-15)

Mr Wells: The information requested is not available. GPs are independent contractors who contract with the HSCB to provide primary medical services to their patients. As independent contractors they are responsible for deciding on and recruiting the doctors and other staff required to deliver services to their patients.

Department of Justice

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Justice how many, broken down by nationality, (i) men; and (ii) women make up the prison population.

(AQW 44183/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): As at 26 March 2015, the Northern Ireland Prison Service prisoner population, by declared nationality on committal, is shown in the table below.

Analysis of NIPS Population by Nationality

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Algerian	1		1
Australian	1		1
British	203	5	208
British - England	34	2	36
British - Scotland	11		11
British - Wales	1		1
Cameroonian	1		1
Chinese	15	3	18
Chinese (Hong Kong)	1		1
East Timorese	2		2
French		1	1

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Guyanese	1		1
Indian	1		1
Irish	182	7	189
Latvian	5		5
Lithuanian	32	1	33
Nigerian	2		2
Northern Irish	1123	42	1165
Polish	21	1	22
Portuguese	6	1	7
Romanian	10	2	12
Slovakia	1	1	2
Somalian	1		1
South African	1		1
Turk/Turkish	1		1
Vietnamese	8	1	9
Zambian	1		1
Total:	1666	67	1733

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43678/11-15, what was the purpose of the exercise to monitor G4S staff's response to wrongful parking in a disabled bay given they have no powers of enforcement.

(AQW 44298/11-15)

Mr Ford: The purpose of the exercise was to test G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd (G4S) management of the parking at Dungannon Courthouse, given the concerns you had raised previously.

On the occasion highlighted, G4S appropriately challenged the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals (NICTS) official for parking in the disabled parking space. G4S must provide timely written incident reports in line with contractual requirements. The purpose of these reports is to formally and accurately report issues that occur. The incident report completed by G4S on 30 January 2015 details that the official had a conversation with one member of G4S staff and notes the duration of the parking time as 13.25 – 14.10 (45 minutes). In line with procedures, an incident report was forwarded to NICTS staff which was received at 15.12.

Permission was not sought from G4S. The official discussed the need to move with G4S staff, but they concluded and agreed that on this occasion there was no need to move as other disabled parking bays were unoccupied at that time. There was no refusal to move and no reference to this is recorded in the incident report.

I am content that there is no merit in further investigating this matter.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 43678/11-15 (i) to review this answer given G4S staff spoke to the person on a number of occasions and she refused to move claiming she would only be parking briefly but then stayed several hours; (ii) why when G4S staff reported the matters to NI Courts Service Staff there was no action directed or intervention offered; and (iii) who gave permission to permit the car to remain parked in a disabled bay.

(AQW 44341/11-15)

Mr Ford: The purpose of the exercise was to test G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd (G4S) management of the parking at Dungannon Courthouse, given the concerns you had raised previously.

On the occasion highlighted, G4S appropriately challenged the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals (NICTS) official for parking in the disabled parking space. G4S must provide timely written incident reports in line with contractual requirements. The purpose of these reports is to formally and accurately report issues that occur. The incident report completed by G4S on 30 January 2015 details that the official had a conversation with one member of G4S staff and notes the duration of the parking time as 13.25 – 14.10 (45 minutes). In line with procedures, an incident report was forwarded to NICTS staff which was received at 15.12.

Permission was not sought from G4S. The official discussed the need to move with G4S staff, but they concluded and agreed that on this occasion there was no need to move as other disabled parking bays were unoccupied at that time. There was no refusal to move and no reference to this is recorded in the incident report.

I am content that there is no merit in further investigating this matter.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Rogers asked Minister for Regional Development, given the intent of the Assembly to oppose water charges and his recent budgetary restraints, whether he plans to order NI Water to stop the installation of water meters with immediate effect. (AQW 40628/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Under Article 81 of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, NI Water is required to install meters on properties being connected to the public water supply for the first time. This requirement relates to both new domestic properties and existing properties obtaining first time water services.

It is my intention to amend this legislation through the forthcoming Water Bill. I have asked my officials to take a power in the Bill to make Regulations in order to allow Article 81 to be amended. The Committee for Regional Development has been advised about my proposal and the Executive approved it on 15 January.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Regional Development when he will bring a paper on the A5 road project to the Executive. (AQW 42061/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is my intention to circulate a paper regarding the A5 project to Executive colleagues in the coming weeks.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 28625/11-15, for an update on the planned realignments to the A509 between Enniskillen and Derrylin. (AQW 43976/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to confirm that my Department has recently commenced work on the A509 Derrylin Road at Derryallen. This is a significant carriageway realignment, widening and resurfacing scheme with investment totalling around £350,000. It will greatly improve safety for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and is expected to be completed by mid May 2015.

My Department also has plans for a scheme on the A509 Derrylin Road at Derryhawlaght that will improve the vertical and horizontal alignment of the road. This proposal is still at the design stage and consultation is ongoing with officials in Rivers Agency. The scheme which is 800m in length has an estimated cost in the region of £1.2 million.

Another improvement scheme is proposed at the A509 Derrylin Road/C436 Innishmore Road junction, known locally as Montiagh Crossroads. Options are being developed to improve right turning facilities and enhance drivers' awareness of the junction by improving road marking and signs.

Delivery of the schemes at Derryhawlaght and Montiagh Crossroads will however be dependent upon future availability of funding.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development to explain the rationale behind the taxi rank at Laganside Bus Station which permits only one vehicle at any one time; and when this will be extended to allow more taxis to wait. (AQW 44233/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Although this taxi rank is legislated as a single taxi bay, the entire length of the lay-by has been marked as a taxi rank for several years. This provides sufficient space for three taxis. Recent site visits did not observe any more than one taxi waiting at any given time.

My officials will now initiate a consultation exercise with a view to amending the legislation to provide three taxi spaces at this rank. This will be subject to the normal legislative process including consultation with adjacent frontagers.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on plans to upgrade Botanic train station, Belfast; and whether there are any proposals to improve access from Botanic Avenue in the short term. (AQW 44242/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that currently, there are no plans to carry out such work to Botanic train station.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the policy on taking bicycles onto Translink buses. (AQW 44258/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I welcome the Members question and as he knows, I am very keen to promote the bicycle as an everyday form of transport and to support multi modal journeys.

Currently, the carriage of bicycles on buses is limited to folding bikes due to capacity constraints, however, my officials are working with Translink about hosting a pilot cycle carriage on the front of buses at a limited number of sites.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the policy on taking bicycles onto trains.
(AQW 44260/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise that Translink's current policy states that all bicycles, subject to the conditions below, will be carried free of charge on trains:

- Bicycles will not be permitted on trains prior to 09:30 hours Monday to Friday.
- Up to four full-sized bicycles can be carried at any one time within the designated bicycle area. Space will be allocated on a first come first served basis, in the designated area, and at the discretion of the Conductor. There is no bicycle reservation system.
- There are no travel restrictions nor limit to the number of 'folding bicycles' Translink can carry, provided they are completely folded down.
- Tandems, tricycles, motorcycles, mopeds, motorised cycles and scooters are not permitted on any train.
- Bicycles cannot be carried during periods of bus substitution.
- Bicycle parking shelters are available at many main stations throughout the rail network.

This information is readily available on the Translink website:

www.translink.co.uk/Services/NI-Railways/NI-Railways-conditions-of-carriage/

It should also be noted that on lightly loaded services, i.e. services operating in the opposite direction to peak commuter flow (out of Belfast each morning), conductors may apply discretion and will permit cycles where capacity permits. This policy was consulted and agreed with Sustrans.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many times per day the Translink bus service runs between Bangor and Donaghadee.
(AQW 44305/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink provides the 303A bus service eight times per day between Bangor and Donaghadee. There are four departures per day Monday – Friday from Bangor and four from Donaghadee. The service does not operate on weekends or bank holidays

It also operates the 3/3A and 3C service which operates between Bangor and Ballywater with a stop in Donaghadee. This provides 44 journeys Monday to Friday. On Saturdays the service runs each hour from 0755 to 2150 and on Sundays it operates 3 times in each direction.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many passengers used the Bangor to Donaghadee bus service in the last financial year.
(AQW 44307/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In 2013/14 the 303A service operated for 40 hours per week for 51 weeks with 27,562 recorded passenger journeys giving an average of 13 passengers per journey.

In relation to the 3, 3A and 3C service between Bangor and Ballywater with a stop in Donaghadee the passenger figures for 2013/14 were as follows:

- Service 3 had a total of 89,966 passenger journeys of which 28,500 boarded in Donaghadee with 22,687 alighting.
- Service 3A had 465 passengers of which 102 boarded and 79 alighted in Donaghadee
- Service 3C had a total of 14,458 passenger journeys with 1,908 boarding in Donaghadee and 2,779 alighting.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what are the estimated savings from the reduction of Translink services between Bangor and Donaghadee.
(AQW 44308/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise you that as a result of the reduction in its funding, Translink is currently reviewing its overall levels of service provision.

A public consultation process is now in place, details of which can be found on Translink's website www.translink.co.uk.

The consultation process invites / encourages individuals, representative organisations, Councils, community groups, etc to provide feedback on a number of areas including current usage, purpose of travel and priorities including preference for alternatives available. This feedback will enable Translink to determine where finite resources are best targeted.

Until this process has been concluded and the responses analysed and considered, I am not in a position to comment on any changes or quantify potential savings.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the Executive subsidy, which off-sets water charges for domestic customers, will remain in place following the extension of the Programme for Government to include 2015/2016.
(AQW 44312/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The funding of water and sewerage services is a cross cutting strategic issue with significant public expenditure implications. The Executive has given a commitment that, for households, it will ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government.

I brought a paper to the Executive in November 2012, which set out issues and risks associated with the governance and funding of water and sewerage services, and the Executive remitted these issues to the Budget Review Group (BRG) for consideration. The BRG's consideration of what are complex issues is ongoing.

In the meantime, the legislation which permits the Executive to provide subsidy for water and sewerage services (in lieu of funding by charging) expires in March 2016. I instructed my officials to amend the legislation to extend the Executive's power to provide a subsidy to NI Water until March 2017 and to take the power to extend this further by subordinate legislation. This enabling power does not pre-judge Executive consideration of the funding of NI Water in that period, but, will ensure that there is certainty about funding for NI Water's operating expenditure while the Executive considers those future funding arrangements.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development how organisations in the community and voluntary sector will be impacted by increases to water charges.

(AQW 44315/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The 2015/16 tariffs for water and sewerage services apply to all non-domestic customers including voluntary organisations and charities. This increase will depend on whether the relevant organisations are metered or unmeasured. The average increase in non-domestic charges is 2.4%. Despite this increase, customers will still be paying an average of 5.6 % less than they were in 2012.

A typical unmeasured bill will increase annually by approximately £16, while the smallest measured (metered) bill will increase by £4. The largest measured customer will see an annual increase of £45.

It is important to remember that the Executive continues to subsidise non-domestic customers' charges by providing a domestic allowance for measured consumers and a 50% discount for unmeasured consumers.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development which categories of non-domestic customers will be exempt from increases to water charges from April 2015; and to detail the criteria for exemption.

(AQW 44316/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The 2015/16 tariffs for water and sewerage services apply to all non-domestic customers. There are no exemptions for different categories of non-domestic customers.

The setting of limits by which charges are allowed to increase (which were agreed as part of Price Control process) and approval of the annual charges are matters for the Regulator.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the potential gains in road safety from the replacement of pelican crossings with newer designs, such as puffin or countdown crossings.

(AQW 44322/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Both Pelican and Puffin crossings are fully approved for use on the public road network in the UK. However, for all new controlled crossing installations, my Department's first consideration will be to install a Puffin crossing. Due to the cost involved, my Department does not have a retrofit programme to change all existing Pelicans to Puffins, but as existing Pelican equipment becomes due for upgrading, then again Puffins will be the initial consideration.

Research undertaken by Transport for London has indicated that there are fewer pedestrian casualties at sites equipped with Puffin crossings compared to those with Pelican crossings.

Puffin crossings offer several improvements to the Pelican crossing system. Unlike Pelican crossings there is no flashing amber light for drivers, which helps to reduce the potential for aggressive drivers intimidating pedestrians on the crossing. Similarly, there is no flashing 'Green Man' signal which can lead to confusion with pedestrians as to whether they can safely cross the road in time. The Red/ Green Man signals are mounted on the poles beside pedestrians wishing to cross, providing clear indication as to when it is safe to leave the footway and a better view of approaching traffic than afforded by a crossing signal on the other side of the road.

Detectors on a Puffin crossing sense pedestrians crossing the road and keep the traffic lights red for drivers until pedestrians get to the other side of the road. If pedestrians cross quickly the lights will change back to green for traffic sooner than a Pelican crossing, but a Puffin crossing will also allow extra time for slower pedestrians such as wheelchair users or those with young children.

The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy to 2020 contains an action measure to consider the introduction of countdown timer signals at pedestrian crossings. These systems are popular in many European countries at sites where there is high pedestrian flow and where many crossing movements frequently occur outside the safe operational crossing time. My Department is aware of the work ongoing in London with this facility and we will continue to monitor and assess their effectiveness before determining any potential future usage in Northern Ireland.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has considered phasing out pelican crossings in favour of puffin or countdown crossings.

(AQW 44334/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has been installing Puffin Crossings since September 2011. Both Pelican and Puffin crossings are fully approved for use on the public road network in the UK. However, for all new controlled crossing installations, my Department's first consideration will be to install a Puffin crossing. Due to the cost involved, my Department does not have a retrofit programme to change all existing Pelicans to Puffins, but as existing Pelican equipment becomes due for upgrading, then again Puffins will be the initial consideration.

With regard to countdown crossings, my Department is aware of the work ongoing in London with this facility and we will continue to monitor and assess their effectiveness before determining any potential future usage in Northern Ireland.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development how much funding his Department has received from the European Union over the last five years.

(AQW 44335/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has received a total of £41,776,482 of funding from the European Union from a range of European Programmes, including the Trans European Network – Transport (TEN-T), INTERREG IVA and the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for Northern Ireland, over the last five years. The distribution is as follows:

Financial Year	Value
2010-11	£1,571,458.43
2011-12	£3,417,789.00
2012-13	£6,637,205.00
2013-14	£10,355,264.00
2014-15	£19,794,765.89
Total	£41,776,482.32

This has, as opposed to guaranteed or grant aided funds, been secured through competitively designed application processes. As such, my Department's performance has been a major factor in the achievement of the Executive's Programme for Government commitment to increase drawdown of competitive EU funds.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development what action was taken to address parking violations in Coalisland over the last 12 months; and why no parking tickets were issued during this time.

(AQW 44342/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: No Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued in Coalisland during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

The number of PCNs issued in any one town or area depends on many factors, including the size of the town, the extent of parking restrictions and the volume of traffic. These factors, plus the level of illegal parking, will influence where Traffic Attendants are deployed.

There are very few parking restrictions in Coalisland to be enforced, which is the primary reason why no PCNs have been issued.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the number of resurfacing contractors having to make redundancies, when money allocated to his Department in the January 2015 monitoring round will be made available for resurfacing works.

(AQW 44346/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Capital funding received in January monitoring for structural maintenance, which includes resurfacing, was allocated to my Department on 20 January 2015. This additional funding has already been made available to contractors as it has to be utilised by the end of the financial year.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 43698/11-15, (i) how the percentage of staff costs to total costs for the year 2013/2014 was calculated for each Rural Transport Fund Partnership; and (ii) to give a breakdown of actual figures used.

(AQW 44415/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The percentage costs used were taken from the Audited Annual Accounts 2013/14 that were submitted by each of the Rural Transport Partnerships. The table below shows the breakdown of figures used.

2013/14

Partnership	Total Costs	Total Staff Costs	Percentages
CDM	£812,315	£386,644	47.6%
DDAT	£703,654	£373,394	53.1%
Easilink	£696,348	£345,730	49.6%
FCT	£584,891	£273,795	46.8%
LVRT	£327,427	£149,605	45.7%
NCCT	£905,718	£411,958	45.5%
SACT	£256,641	£102,822	40.1%
SAP	£906,062	£407,923	45.0%
Totals	£5,193,056	£2,451,871	47.2%

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he is giving to reviewing the funding for Community Transport.

(AQW 44423/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been working intensively with officials to determine how best to spend the limited resources that are available to me. My Department delivers key water, transport and road services. The population relies on my Department's services 24 hours a day. However, I am facing £60 million of pressures for this financial year and the scale of reduction required to meet that cannot be delivered without an impact on core services.

However, while I fully support the services provided by all community transport service providers, there will unfortunately be a reduction in the level of funding available. I have tried to minimise this. It should be noted that since becoming Minister, I have protected the baseline budget for community transport year on year and where possible supplemented with in-year funding.

My Department will be working closely with the service providers to explore ways of delivering the service in a more cost efficient manner and will seek to minimise the impact on the end user.

Department for Social Development

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the neighbour renewal spend, including the largest project spend, broken down by council area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 41260/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): Table A details the total Neighbourhood Renewal spend, broken down by council area, in each of the last five years. Table B details the largest project spend in each council area that contains a Neighbourhood Renewal Area, in each of the last five years.

Table A

Council Area ¹	Actual Expenditure 2010/11 (£)	Actual Expenditure 2011/12 (£)	Actual Expenditure 2012/13 (£)	Actual Expenditure 2013/14 (£)	Allocation 2014/15 (£)
Armagh City and District Council	438,620.24	532,698.34	443,016.03	796,289.82	497,546.05
Ballymena Borough Council	638,298.78	195,182.07	533,065.99	306,253.97	298,610.40
Belfast City Council	11,253,862.14	13,786,456.53	17,498,877.81	12,573,321.16	11,161,152.94
Castlereagh Borough Council	250,268.95	300,751.45	249,143.40	331,378.56	314,591.48
Coleraine Borough Council	812,848.06	501,707.77	791,931.23	1,170,602.18	984,548.21
Craigavon Borough Council	1,709,204.22	1,938,474.30	2,824,707.83	3,305,953.39	2,833,776.40
Derry City Council	3,798,372.26	3,855,221.17	4,098,963.21	5,106,340.88	8,046,670.17
Down District Council	536,752.44	214,532.29	673,803.97	811,672.41	393,645.33
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	562,775.16	776,737.42	409,570.67	530,264.76	644,058.72
Fermanagh District Council	309,297.64	376,800.96	1,091,670.59	770,971.74	977,059.40

Council Area1	Actual Expenditure 2010/11 (£)	Actual Expenditure 2011/12 (£)	Actual Expenditure 2012/13 (£)	Actual Expenditure 2013/14 (£)	Allocation 2014/15 (£)
Limavady Borough Council	298,751.86	407,065.45	226,881.04	422,002.86	574,489.87
Lisburn City Council	592,402.87	647,165.18	693,630.47	920,433.63	1,162,104.53
Newry & Mourne District Council	960,984.44	897,620.76	1,143,486.11	1,319,730.66	718,533.40
Newtownabbey Borough Council	128,370.70	199,961.44	218,281.16	262,706.38	286,130.57
North Down Borough Council	261,061.34	219,733.93	487,779.21	313,354.39	312,573.30
Omagh District Council	381,600.82	857,738.07	337,032.14	1,414,541.35	273,300.83
Strabane District Council	416,552.43	447,323.81	474,045.80	637,591.06	1,480,539.65

Note: Caution should always be exercised in making comparisons across Neighbourhood Renewal or Council areas, as a range of factors may influence expenditure. The main factors being the revenue investment in an area from lead Departments or from other initiatives/sources; history of capital investment and or proposed capital investment in an area from other initiatives or mainstream sources; size (population) of an area; geographical location and proximity to existing services; and priority needs identified in Action Plans.

Table B

Council Area	Largest Project Spend 2010/11 (£)	Largest Project Spend 2011/12 (£)	Largest Project Spend 2012/13 (£)	Largest Project Spend 2013/14 (£)	Largest Project Allocation 2014/15 (£)
Armagh City and District Council	167,000.00	113809.00	114039.00	310772.00	124631.78
Ballymena Borough Council	87,234.17	70,508.62	260,340.00	77,771.52	124631.78
Belfast City Council	560,733.30	2939267.00	1990000	519483.00	339926.76
Castlereagh Borough Council	70,848.00	97361.16	105575.02	107284.65	114143.00
Coleraine Borough Council	303,716.87	150,764.77	150,590.92	187,184.25	168,125.47
Craigavon Borough Council	227,210.00	452638.39	368765.57	424524.29	734700.00
Derry City Council	247,948.10	236299.00	300000.00	289236.68	289236.68
Down District Council	398590.12	56462.00	137875.67	463927.77	94963.64
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	150252.16	332797.38	79663.33	113037.26	137780.67
Fermanagh District Council	134520.50	125786.34	448000.00	147483.99	206763.00
Limavady Borough Council	97930.34	125000.00	91015.00	180000.00	308980.00
Lisburn City Council	149757.29	185674.00	150524.64	138175.29	200000.00
Newry & Mourne District Council	217350.17	153978.00	281176.02	388618.73	136931.00
Newtownabbey Borough Council	33,605.63	44,225.45	15,746.45	45,351.70	47,993.00
North Down Borough Council	65089.54	70000.00	95159.12	70000.00	70000.00
Omagh District Council	107490.00	472025.00	108967.61	576183.39	55032.02
Strabane District Council	48445.40	48786.00	47859.42	120000.00	295000.00

Note: Caution should always be exercised in making comparisons across Neighbourhood Renewal or Council areas, as a range of factors may influence expenditure. The main factors being the revenue investment in an area from lead Departments or from other initiatives/sources; history of capital investment and or proposed capital investment in an area from other initiatives or mainstream sources; size (population) of an area; geographical location and proximity to existing services; and priority needs identified in Action Plans.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development whether all 575 Housing Executive homes listed in East Londonderry for double glazing will have installation completed by 31 March 2015.

(AQW 43592/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that 604 properties in East Londonderry required double glazing and the current position is as follows:-

- 24 dwellings in Waterside Foyle Crescent/Enagh Crescent have been completed;
- 100 dwellings in Greysteel have been completed;
- 145 dwellings in Kennaught/Roe Mill are complete apart from two properties where the NIHE had access difficulties. However, these two properties will be complete within two weeks; and
- Coleraine Phase 2 scheme of 335 dwellings has commenced with 167 completed and the remaining will be completed shortly.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of empty housing units in North Down; and what action is being taken to bring the homes into use.

(AQW 44050/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive has advised that at 28 February 2015 they had 47 vacant properties, while Housing Associations advise they currently have 43 vacant properties in the North Down Parliamentary constituency.

Action being taken by both the Housing Executive and Housing Associations to bring properties back into use includes the carrying out of major repairs and improvements. In addition, a number of the properties are awaiting imminent relet or are pending appraisal/ consideration of disposal or redevelopment.

Also, following the launch of my Department's Empty Homes Strategy, a new facility was set up in 2014 via the Housing Executive's website to enable the reporting of empty homes across Northern Ireland. Since April 2014 a total of 42 empty homes have been reported to the Housing Executive, a number of which have been sold, are under renovation, or have been bought by Housing Associations etc.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of new housing units (i) completed; and (ii) under construction by (a) the Housing Executive; and (b) Housing Associations, in South Belfast during 2014/2015.

(AQW 44244/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive no longer develops new social housing. The Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) is delivered by housing associations.

- (i) In 2014/15 there were 149 units recorded as housing association completions in the South Belfast Parliamentary Constituency.
- (ii) There are currently 257 units recorded as on-site but now completed in the South Belfast Parliamentary Constituency.

Please note that these figures include new build housing and acquisition of (new and existing) properties for social housing.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development pursuant to AQWs 41798/11-15, 41905/11-15, 42574/11-15, 43345/11-15, 43408/11-15, 43409/11-15, whether (i) the Housing Executive Chief Executive and the Director of Housing, pursued, without permission from the Board, the business plan; (ii) the Chief Executive and Director of Housing and Regeneration acted against the decision of the Board, which had directed no further action till the issues they had raised had been addressed; (iii) the Chief Executive and Director of Housing and Regeneration breached Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) guidelines; (iv) departmental officials breached guidelines in pursuing the pilot transfer of stock; and (v) the failure to inform the Board of concerns over the actions of the Director of Housing and Regeneration breaches MSFM guidelines, paragraph 3.3.3.

(AQW 44284/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Housing Executive's Internal Audit carried out a follow up review of correspondence matters relating to Creggan Estate (Rinmore) Pilot Proposal in February 2013 in relation to these matters. Following this audit the then Housing Executive's Chief Executive advised the Department that the Housing Executive's Internal Audit had no ongoing concern over the handling of the Rinmore pilot scheme and there were no outstanding issues in relation to departmental officials.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions he has had with his Westminster counterparts regarding the announcement by the Government that £5 million of LIBOR funding has been made available every year for the next five years for any UK veterans who are surviving World War Two veterans, those who undertook National Service and other voluntary enlisted veterans who, by virtue of their age, may need some focused support in relation to their health and social care needs, to ensure that veterans based in Northern Ireland receive their fair share of this funding.

(AQW 44286/11-15)

Mr Storey: I have not had any discussions with Westminster counterparts in relation to the LIBOR funding scheme for charitable organisations to assist Veterans of WWII with their health and social care needs because I do not have Ministerial responsibility for health and social care. However, I recently met with Major General Mick Laurie who is a member of a team led by Lord Ashcroft which has been tasked with reviewing the policies, legislation, regulations, guidelines and provision in place for the Government to meet its commitments, under the Armed Forces Covenant with respect to veterans' transition to civilian life.

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Social Development how much money is being spent renting out additional facilities in Armagh for Welfare Tribunals instead of using the Courthouse.

(AQW 44302/11-15)

Mr Storey: A number of rented venues are used across Northern Ireland to provide a valuable local service to appellants and this has been the practice of The Appeals Service for some time, on the direction of the President of Appeal Tribunals. Between 01 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, Armagh Business Centre was used 109 times at a cost of £4,290.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) each area of current expenditure that his Department will be making savings in 2015/16; (ii) the estimated level of savings for each; and (iii) what impact this will have on service delivery.

(AQW 44348/11-15)

Mr Storey: Details of the areas where Departmental savings are to be made can be found in our Savings Plan for 2015-16, due to be published on the DSD internet site, www.dsdni.gov.uk on 13 April. Details of the impact on service delivery can be found in the DSD section of the Budget 2015-16 document, published on the NI Executive website: www.northernireland.gov.uk.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 43753/11-15 and AQW 43109/11-15, to detail the date the Committee for Social Development received the corrected answers.

(AQW 44378/11-15)

Mr Storey: The Committee noted Departmental correspondence providing the correct answer at its meeting on 19 March 2015.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission when the results of the consultation on flying the Union Flag from Parliament Buildings will be published.

(AQW 44222/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The formal consultation carried out as part of the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Review of the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings ended on Monday 2 February 2015. This consultation represented step 5 of the EQIA process. The next step in the process is step 6, decision and publication of the results of the EQIA.

Policy Arc, the consultancy company carrying out the consultation on behalf of the Assembly Commission, is scheduled to present a 'Final Decision' report to the Commission at its meeting on 20 May 2015. This report will include the findings of the consultation and recommendations to the Commission. The decision on whether or not to adopt the recommendations of the report rests with the Assembly Commission. Once the Commission has made its decision, the report will be published on the Northern Ireland Assembly website.

For information, the steps in the Equality Impact Assessment Process (EQIA) process are attached at Annex 1

Annex 1

Steps in the Equality Impact Assessment Process (EQIA) process

- Step 1: Definition of the aims of the policy
- Step 2: Consideration of available data and research
- Step 3: Assessment of potential and actual impacts
- Step 4: Consideration of measures
- Step 5: Formal consultation (including pre-consultation)
- Step 6: Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA
- Step 7: Monitoring for adverse impact

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

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

In Bound Volume 102, page WA 8 please replace AQW 41423/11-15 with:

South Down: DCAL Funding

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail her Department's financial investment in South Down in each year since 2007, including the (i) organisations that have received funding; and (b) investment they received. **(AQW 41423/11-15)**

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The information you requested is provided in the attached table. For the purposes of this response, investment is understood to include capital and resource funding since 2007: it is reported on a financial year basis except in the case of North/ South Bodies where expenditure is reported on a calendar year basis.

Financial investment in South Down (as revised) in each year since 2007, including the (i) organisations that have received funding; and (b) investment they received.

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2007	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Áit Thí Chathail	£2,941
2007	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£2,941
2007	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£22,508
2007	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Áit Thí Chathail	£1,670
2007	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2007	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Áit Thí Chathail	£1,400
2007	Foras na Gaeilge	Fís 2008	£14,925
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh House Cultural Society	£8,492
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Development Association	£4,290
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Hollymount Rural Community Association	£7,103
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilmegan & Aughlisnafin Rural Community Group	£7,818
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Newry Heritage & Development Association Youth Group "Kidiscape"	£17,025
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£11,247
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	South Down Action for Healing Wounds	£3,500
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballinran Summer Scheme	£3,500
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society Summer Scheme	£3,500
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne Young Defenders	£3,500
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Newry Heritage & Development Association Youth Group	£3,500
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£3,500
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh House School of Dance	£5,498
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughnagurgan Scottish Dance Association	£3,995
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilbroney Integrated Primary School	£720
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,668

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymartin Pipe Band	£2,325
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,800
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Grallagh Part Flute Band	£1,913
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Roden Accordion Band	£2,100
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£2,250
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£2,250
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughnagurgan Rural Development Association	£900
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Development Association	£3,173
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Moneygore Rural Development Association	£4,860
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£2,025
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Valley Heritage Society	£2,363
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne Young Defenders Flute Band	£1,200
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Development Association	£250
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Development Association	£250
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Friends of Slieve Roe House	£400
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumlough & Ballygorian Rural Development Association	£250
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Hollymount Rural Community Association	£250
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£678
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£250
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£167
2007	Ulster-Scots Agency	Waringsford & Tullyniskey Rural Community Association	£250
2007/08	Arts Council NI	Down District Council	£5,000
2007/08	Department	Banbridge District Council	£5,000
2007/08	Department	Down District Council	£2,820
2007/08	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£28,278
2007/08	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£47,855
2007/08	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£3,185
2007/08	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£5,284
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£1,740
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£35,786
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Áit Thí Chathail	£1,900
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,000
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	St. Patrick's Youth Club	£3,500
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathail	£3,000
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Staire Shéamúis Uí Néill	£4,478
2008	Foras na Gaeilge	Scoil Samhraidh Shéamúis Uí Dhuinn (Kairos)	£1,194
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Development Association	£4,500
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh House Ltd	£6,550
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballinran Community Association	£2,837

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£700
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Newry Heritage & Development Association Youth Group	£8,975
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£8,150
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne Young Defenders Flute Band	£2,400
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Newry Heritage & Development Association - Kidscape	£2,180
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£2,800
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh House School of Dance	£713
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Development Association	£250
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Heart of Down Highland Dancers	£770
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£778
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£250
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Rural Association	£250
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Waringsford & Tullyniskey Rural Community	£250
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh School of Dance	£6,000
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughnagurgan Scottish Dance Association	£3,364
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,360
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,950
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Development Association	£1,800
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£3,449
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Heart of Down Highland Dancers	£2,604
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Heart of Down Highland Dancers	£2,088
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,492
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymartin Pipe Band	£2,325
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£2,100
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Derryogue Flute Band	£2,850
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Hunter Memorial Flute Band	£3,750
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Legananny Accordion Band	£2,175
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne Young Defenders Flute Band	£3,840
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Roden Accordion Band	£2,100
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Development Association	£2,700
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£2,850
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£2,625
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£1,750
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Moneygore Rural Development Association	£3,600
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£1,275
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£700
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£850
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£2,025
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£1,400
2008	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£540
2008	Department	Public Angling Estate – Car park at Spelga Dam	£43,000

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2008/09	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£11,178
2008/09	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£2,294
2008/09	Sport NI	Dromara GAC	£245,000
2008/09	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£16,154
2008/09	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£13,031
2008/09	Arts Council NI	Ballymartin Pipe Band	£4,999
2008/09	Department	Banbridge District Council	£10,600
2008/09	Department	Down District Council	£16,500
2008/09	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,400
2009	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£35,333
2009	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,200
2009	Foras na Gaeilge	St Patricks Youth Club	£3,500
2009	Foras na Gaeilge	St Patricks Youth Club	£3,500
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£2,831
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	South Down Defenders Flute Band	£3,590
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£5,448
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumadonald Rural Dev Association	£1,275
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£5,095
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballinran Summer Scheme	£2,811
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Curley Rural Community Association	£1,830
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballinran Summer Scheme	£2,740
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Philip Crawford - Happenstance	£7,500
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£638
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Curley Rural Community Association	£2,272
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Development Association	£250
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£250
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh House School of Dance	£803
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£1,441
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£900
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£180
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£250
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Pipe Band	£200
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£1,213
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£1,950
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Flutes of Mourne	£2,066
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilkeel Silver Band	£735
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnaward Rural Association	£1,800
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of Ballinran	£2,080
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Skeogh Flute Band	£2,400
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Skeogh Flute Band	£1,040

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	South Down Defenders Flute Band	£1,650
2009	Ulster-Scots Agency	Geoghegan Memorial Pipe Band	£3,593
2009/10	Department	Banbridge District Council	£10,700
2009/10	Department	Down District Council	£16,500
2009/10	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,058
2009/10	Department	Fish Counter at Shimna River	£45,000
2009/10	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£2,188
2009/10	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£3,025
2009/10	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch Running Costs	£633,943
2009/10	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Running Costs	£105,630
2009/10	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library Running Costs	£66,189
2009/10	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library Running Costs	£379,123
2009/10	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library Running Costs	£122,663
2009/10	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Running Costs	£77,188
2009/10	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library Running Costs	£133,765
2009/10	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Running Costs	£46,923
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Belfast Music Society	£4,000
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£30,000
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Fringe Performances Ltd	£30,000
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Down District Council Arts Service	£600,510
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Newcastle Glees Musical Society	£80,424
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Elfire Architectural and Sculptural Ceramics	£8,621
2009/10	Arts Council NI	LitNet-NI	£32,233
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Melting Pot Candle Co	£6,029
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Penny Distribution	£10,000
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Referalot Ltd	£33,944
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Vectorfunk	£9,840
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Closkelt Highland Pipe Band	£3,663
2009/10	Arts Council NI	Schomberg Fife and Drum Band	£2,741
2009/10	Arts Council NI	South Down Defenders Flute Band	£5,000
2009/10	Sport NI	Glenn GAC	£4,700
2009/10	Sport NI	Kingdom Youth Club	£6,000
2009/10	Sport NI	Down GAA County Board	£149,168
2009/10	Sport NI	Down GAA County Board	£5,300
2009/10	Sport NI	Newry Wheelers Cycling Club	£3,161
2009/10	Sport NI	Quoile Yacht Club	£9,700
2009/10	Sport NI	Saval GAC	£5,799
2009/10	Sport NI	Tollymore United FC	£2,707
2009/10	Sport NI	Drumgath GAC	£245,000
2009/10	Sport NI	An Riocht GAC	£233,340

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2009/10	Sport NI	St Malachy's GAC (Castlewellan)	£245,000
2009/10	Sport NI	Clonduff GAC	£245,000
2009/10	Sport NI	Down District Council (sports hall)	£1,294,000
2009/10	Sport NI	Kilcoo GAC	£245,000
2009/10	Sport NI	Warrenpoint Town FC	£245,000
2009/10	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£15,490
2009/10	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£11,109
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	East Down Rural Community Network	£1,600
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£36,304
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£800
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£533
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,400
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,000
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	£3,260
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	£3,350
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Coiste Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,500
2010	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail (Colmcille)	£610
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£4,775
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£2,047
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£5,226
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£520
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Pipe Band	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilmegan & Aughlisnafin Rural Comm Group	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilmacrew & District Rural Comm Group	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Development Association	£250
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Annalong Single Star Flute Band	£1,680
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£2,415
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£3,612
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,680
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Grallagh Unionist Flute Band	£2,478
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Harry Ferguson Memorial Pipe Band	£3,290
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Legananny Accordion Band	£2,562
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Pipe Band	£3,640
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Loyal Sons of Benagh Flute Band	£3,255
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Star of Down Flute Band Maghera	£2,079
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne Young Defenders	£1,960
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Orangefield Flute Band	£3,549

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of the Hill Flute Band Rathfriland	£3,150
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Skeogh Flute Band	£3,640
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	South Down Defenders Flute Band	£3,402
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	St Patrick Pipe Band	£2,240
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Altnaveigh House School of Dance	£2,640
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£2,100
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Curley Rural Community Association	£4,165
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£2,421
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£375
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£3,247
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£2,240
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£2,520
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£2,100
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£1,400
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£611
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£1,710
2010	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£15,711
2010/11	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£3,000
2010/11	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£3,061
2010/11	Department	Banbridge District Council	£6037
2010/11	Department	Down District Council	£17,948
2010/11	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£24,802
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Belfast Music Society	£5,000
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£30,000
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Annalong Single Star Flute Band	£2,775
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£4,950
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Brunswick Accordion Band	£3,279
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Derryogue Flute Band	£4,402
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Hunter Moore Memorial Flute Band	£4,762
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Johnston Memorial Accordion Band	£4,569
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Pride of the Hill Flute Band	£5,000
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Down District Council	£41,892
2010/11	Arts Council NI	Mourne Heritage Trust	£25,000
2010/11	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch Running Costs	£241,866
2010/11	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Running Costs	£120,526
2010/11	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library Running Costs	£64,021
2010/11	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library Running Costs	£233,336
2010/11	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library Running Costs	£123,763
2010/11	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Running Costs	£84,837
2010/11	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library Running Costs	£84,330

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2010/11	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Running Costs	£49,117
2010/11	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Capital	£3,424
2010/11	Sport NI	Newry City FC	£28,737
2010/11	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library Capital	£15,862
2010/11	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Capital	£107,979
2010/11	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library Capital	£53,695
2010/11	Sport NI	Shinken Shobu Ryu	£4,075
2010/11	Sport NI	Down District Council	£250,000
2010/11	Sport NI	Mayobridge Community Association	£27,797
2010/11	Sport NI	Russell Gaelic Union	£29,633
2010/11	Sport NI	Russell Gaelic Union	£29,803
2010/11	Sport NI	Atticall Community Association	£3,756
2010/11	Sport NI	Dundrum Cricket Club	£24,324
2010/11	Sport NI	Down Basketball	£23,207
2010/11	Sport NI	Carlingford Lough Yacht Club	£29,923
2010/11	Sport NI	Newcastle Yacht Club	£15,000
2010/11	Sport NI	Down District Council	£1,000
2010/11	Sport NI	Down District Council	£192,562
2010/11	Sport NI	Down GAA County Board	£658,832
2010/11	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£15,750
2010/11	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£8,417
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£1,310
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,322
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£47,878
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	2011 Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	St Patricks Youth Club	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Ait Thí Chathal	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,250
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	St Marys Primary School	£3,211
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£3,500
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	St Patrick's Community Centre Mayobridge	£3,500
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£1,115
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Bunscoil na mBeann	£11,777
2011	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail (Colmcille)	£1,308
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	South Down Defenders Flute Band	£2,150
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£5,075
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£1,763
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£250
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Banbridge Orange Hall Committee	£250

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£4,157
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Dev Association	£215
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Donaghmore Dev Association	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£225
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£249
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£333
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,205
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Annalong Single Star Flute Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£998
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£165
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£1,568
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£1,050
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,238
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Crimsom Arrow Pipe Band	£659
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Ochestra	£1,050
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Crimsom Arrow Pipe Band	£480
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Crossgar Young Defenders	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumlough Highland Pipe Band	£1,050
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Pipe Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Moneygore Rural Development Association	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Orangefield Flute Band	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of the Hill Flute Band Rathfriland	£1,650
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,553
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£1,647
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Curley Rural Community Association	£2,565
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£1,971
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£2,421
2011	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Killeel Ltd.	£15,885
2011/12	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£7,403
2011/12	Department	Banbridge district Council	£10,000
2011/12	Department	Down district Council	£20,320
2011/12	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,807
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Belfast Music Society	£1,250
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£30,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Discovery Publications	£10,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Ballyvea Flute Band	£3,567
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Pride of Ballinran Flute Band	£4,680
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Pride of the Hill Auld Boys	£5,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Roden Accordion Band	£5,000

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Upper Crossgare Pipe Band	£4,890
2011/12	Arts Council NI	Newcastle Arts Festival Committee	£5,000
2011/12	Arts Council NI	The Beacon Association	£5,000
2011/12	Department	River restoration at Annacloy River	£33,000
2011/12	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch Running Costs	£143,424
2011/12	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Running Costs	£117,532
2011/12	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library Running Costs	£64,571
2011/12	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library Running Costs	£260,714
2011/12	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library Running Costs	£119,296
2011/12	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Running Costs	£88,042
2011/12	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library Running Costs	£89,907
2011/12	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Running Costs	£46,006
2011/12	Sport NI	Clearsky Adventure Centre	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Life Adventure	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Outdoor Concepts	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Mourne Heritage Trust	£5,000
2011/12	Sport NI	Greenhill YMCA	£750
2011/12	Sport NI	Castlewellan FC	£1,126
2011/12	Sport NI	Down Camogie Association	£3,150
2011/12	Sport NI	Friends of St Dallan's	£2,765
2011/12	Sport NI	Mayobridge Community Association	£5,130
2011/12	Sport NI	Moneyslane Football Club	£245,000
2011/12	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£16,300
2011/12	Sport NI	Down District Council	£282,651
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,497
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£45,864
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£2,690
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£3,500
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,400
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	St Marys Primary School	£3,245
2012	Foras na Gaeilge	Scoil Samhraidh an Dúin (Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre)	£3,900
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£6,422
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kilnacrew & District Rural Community Group	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£706
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Rural Association	£250

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£706
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Lisnamulligan Rural Association	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Ochestra	£250
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Ochestra	£926
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£1,140
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	St Patrick Pipe Band	£1,650
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of the Hill Flute Band Rathfriland	£1,193
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,035
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumlough Highland Pipe Band	£1,478
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Grallagh Part Flute Band	£1,620
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Legananny Accordion Band	£1,500
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£1,350
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£1,170
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,169
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£2,361
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£1,054
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Mourne School of Dance	£1,984
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£1,656
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£1,338
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cloughskelt Rural & Cultural Association	£1,551
2012	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£15,829
2012/13	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£2,964
2012/13	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£510
2012/13	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch	£99,192
2012/13	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Running Costs	£109,080
2012/13	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library Running Costs	£62,224
2012/13	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library Running Costs	£204,370
2012/13	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library Running Costs	£106,815
2012/13	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Running Costs	£83,379
2012/13	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library Running Costs	£105,693
2012/13	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Running Costs	£47,178
2012/13	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Capital	£30,380
2012/13	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Capital	£77,463
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£25,030
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Happenstance Theatre Company	£10,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Dphisound	£9,990
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Mighty Sprite Productions Ltd	£10,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Down District Council	£27,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£4,698
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Ballymageough Accordion Band	£4,500

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Castlewella Victoria Accordion Band	£3,045
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Glenloughan Flute Band	£3,600
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Holy Cross Accordion Band Atticall	£5,000
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Legananny Accordion Band	£4,993
2012/13	Arts Council NI	Atticall Youth Club	£5,000
2012/13	Department	Banbridge district Council	£10,700
2012/13	Department	Down district Council	£17,925
2012/13	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,000
2012/13	Sport NI	Clearsky Adventure Centre	£150
2012/13	Sport NI	East Coast Adventure	£750
2012/13	Sport NI	Outdoor Concepts	£150
2012/13	Sport NI	Greenhill YMCA	£150
2012/13	Sport NI	Mourne Heritage Trust	£245,000
2012/13	Sport NI	Action Outdoors	£750
2012/13	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£19,565
2012/13	Sport NI	Down District Council	£287,556
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,700
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£49,358
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£1,750
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic an Dúin	£1,750
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£1,750
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£3,025
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,450
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Ballyholland Primary School	£3,400
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór Uachtar Tíre (Colmcille)	£1,485
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail (Colmcille)	£1,000
2013	Foras na Gaeilge	Scoil Samhraidh Shéamúis Uí Néill (Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre)	£2,000
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ardarragh Accordion Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Festival Committee	£8,204
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Dev Association	£3,193
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Loughbrickland & District Rural Dev Association	£4,840
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£647
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,194
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	St Patrick Pipe Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Orangefield Flute Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Benraw Highland Pipe Band	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughlisnafin Accordion Band	£375
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballyvea Rural Development Association	£1,448

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballymageough Rural Dev Association	£1,650
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Fife & Drum	£1,500
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Ochestra	£975
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,093
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Cultural Society	£1,656
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£3,948
2013	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£950
2013/14	Libraries NI	Library HQ, Ballynahinch	£204,455
2013/14	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Running Costs	£103,407
2013/14	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library Running Costs	£72,779
2013/14	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library Running Costs	£230,218
2013/14	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library Running Costs	£150,427
2013/14	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Running Costs	£106,613
2013/14	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library Running Costs	£102,267
2013/14	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Running Costs	£45,085
2013/14	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Capital	£805,780
2013/14	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Capital	£109,896
2013/14	Department	Banbridge District Council	£10,000
2013/14	Department	Down District Council	£15,400
2013/14	Department	Newry & Mourne District Council	£25,000
2013/14	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Down County Museum	£2,641
2013/14	Northern Ireland Museums Council	Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway	£4,739
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Down Community Arts Ltd	£10,250
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Digital Circle (NI) Ltd	£9,995
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Dphisound	£9,600
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Mourne Textiles Ltd	£10,000
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Dunmore Silver Band	£4,920
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Kilkeel Silver Band	£4,515
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Loyal Sons of Benagh	£5,000
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Orangefield Flute Band	£3,892
2013/14	Arts Council NI	Spa Accordion Band	£4,920
2013/14	Sport NI	Ballymartin GFC	£245,000
2013/14	Sport NI	Christ The King Primary School (Drumaness)	£5,493
2013/14	Sport NI	Castlewellan FC	£131,394
2013/14	Sport NI	Mountain Sojourns	£750
2013/14	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£18,833
2013/14	Sport NI	Down District Council	£293,617
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Annalong Cultural Education Society	£4,436
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Aughnavollog Ulster Scots Cultural Society	£1,950
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge, Boirche Íochtar	£39,700

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre	£49,358
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£3,500
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Grúpa Tuismitheoirí agus Tachráin	£3,500
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Ógras an Dúin	£3,500
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic An Dúin	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Campa Chormaic An Dúin	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Conradh na Gaeilge Boirche Íochtar	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór Uachtar Tíre	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Mayobridge Community Centre	£1,750
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór Uachtar Tíre (Colmcille)	£800
2014	Foras na Gaeilge	Scoil Samhraidh Shéamuis Uí Néill (Glór na nGael Uachtar Tíre)	£2,000
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballynahinch Protestant Boys Flute Band	£1,950
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Brunswick Accordion Band	£1,950
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Highland Dancers	£1,122
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£208
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Closkelt Pipe Band	£1,575
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Cranfield Accordion Band	£1,950
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Drumlough Highland Pipe Band	£1,943
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Development Association	£2,094
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Finnard Rural Development Association	£242
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£2,259
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Kirknarra School of Dance	£1,925
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Loughbrickland & District Rural Development Association	£4,125
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Moneygore Rural Development Association	£1,913
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£250
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Folk Orchestra	£1,125
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£21,235
2014	Ulster-Scots Agency	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Ltd.	£2,745
2014/15	Libraries NI	Ballynahinch Library Running Costs	£81,765
2014/15	Libraries NI	Castlewellan Library Running Costs	£46,210
2014/15	Libraries NI	Downpatrick Library Running Costs	£136,994
2014/15	Libraries NI	Newcastle Library Running Costs	£93,545
2014/15	Libraries NI	Kilkeel Library Running Costs	£81,784
2014/15	Libraries NI	Warrenpoint Library Running Costs	£75,232
2014/15	Libraries NI	Rathfriland Library Running Costs	£38,296
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Happenstance Theatre Company	£2,000
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Marie-Claire Ferguson Bespoke Millinery	£9,548
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Mary Callan Knitwear	£10,000
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Mourne Textiles Ltd	£10,000
2014/15	Arts Council NI	Ballyrea Flute Band	£4,725

Year	Source	Organisation	Amount
2014/15	Department	Down District Council	£6,001
2014/15	Department	Glór Uachtar Tíre	£1,000
2014/15	Department	Craobh an Iúir	£1,000
2014/15	Department	Banbridge District Council	£6564
2014/15	Department	Down District Council	£3850
2014/15	Sport NI	Friends of St Patricks Primary School	£2,120
2014/15	Sport NI	Newry Basketball Club	£2,520
2014/15	Sport NI	Down District Council	£293,617
2014/15	Sport NI	Down District Council	£262,596
2014/15	Sport NI	Atticall Youth Club	£3,988
2014/15	Sport NI	Ballela GAC	£4,625
2014/15	Sport NI	Celtic Bhoys FC	£5,601
2014/15	Sport NI	Kilcoo GAC	£9,113
2014/15	Sport NI	Annaclone Summer Scheme	£1,434
2014/15	Sport NI	Tollymore United FC	£10,000
2014/15	Sport NI	Mourne Mountain Rescue Team	£18,000
2014/15	Department	Walkway at Lough Money and fishing stands at Lough Money and River Quoile.	£42,000

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

In Bound Volume 97, page WA 558 please replace AQW 35616/11-15 with:

Generic Drug Valuations

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of (i) the current system for determining the value of generic drugs which dictates the amount recuperated by community pharmacists who dispense them; and (ii) it is appropriate to continue to use cost predictions made in England in relation to generic drugs, given market differences and additional costs of transportation and delivery to Northern Ireland, in the context of a devolved health administration.

(AQW 35616/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Reimbursement prices for generic medicines are set by the Department of Health in England and listed in the English Drug Tariff. The Northern Ireland Drug Tariff has been informed by the English Drug Tariff since 1 April 2011.

In order to ensure that the Northern Ireland Drug Tariff provides fair and reasonable reimbursement for generic medicines, a collaborative investigation between Government and community pharmacy contractors into available profit margin from generic medicines, known as the Ongoing Margin Survey (OMS), has been ongoing since 2011. The results of the OMS show that the level of profits retained by community pharmacy contractors in Northern Ireland is in line with profit levels achieved by contractors in other parts of the UK.

Department of Justice

In Bound Volume 102, page WA 250 please replace AQW 42096/11-15 with:

Consultancy: DOJ

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to list the consultancy firms that provided financial services to his Department in each of the last five years; and the amount paid to each firm for these services.

(AQW 42096/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I am writing to provide additional information to that contained in my answer of 19 February 2015 to an Assembly question which you tabled in relation to consultancy firms that provided financial services to the Department, namely AQW/42096/11-15.

My response referred to total expenditure on consultancy. However, the Department is also able to provide expenditure on consultancy firms that provided financial services.

An updated response is attached.

I am copying this letter to the Editor of Debates and the Business Office.

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 9 March 2015

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 Death of James Molyneaux, Baron Molyneaux of Killead

Mr Mike Nesbitt, made a statement, under Standing Order 24 (3) (b), in relation to the death of James Molyneaux, Baron Molyneaux of Killead. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

3. Committee Business

3.1 Motion – Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA 224/11-16)

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on its Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA 224/11-16).

Chairperson, Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Final Stage – Welfare Reform Bill (NIA Bill 13/11-15)

A valid Petition of Concern was presented in relation to the Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill (NIA Bill 13/11-15), under Standing Order 28, on Monday 9th March 2015 (Appendix 1).

The Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill (NIA Bill 13/11-15) was not moved.

The sitting was suspended at 1.38 pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00 pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Environment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark H. Durkan.

5.2 Finance and Personnel

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton.

6. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 3.30 pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

9 March 2015

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 9 March 2015 in relation to the Final Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill (NIA Bill 13/11-15):

- Mr Martin McGuinness
- Ms Megan Fearon
- Mr Cathal Boylan
- Mr Gerry Kelly
- Mr Chris Hazzard
- Mr Cathal Ó Hoisín
- Ms Caitriona Ruane
- Mr Pat Sheehan
- Mr Phil Flanagan
- Ms Carál Ní Chuilín
- Mr Alex Maskey
- Ms Rosaleen McCorley
- Mr Oliver McMullan
- Ms Jennifer McCann
- Mrs Michelle O'Neill
- Mr Mickey Brady
- Ms Bronwyn McGahan
- Mr Seán Lynch
- Mr Barry McElduff
- Mr Declan McAleer
- Mr Máirtín Ó'Muilleoir
- Ms Maeve McLaughlin
- Ms Michaela Boyle
- Mr Ian Milne
- Mr Raymond McCartney
- Mr Daithí McKay
- Mr Fra McCann
- Mr John O'Dowd
- Mr Alban Maginness
- Mr Dominic Bradley
- Mr Fearghal McKinney
- Mr Patsy McGlone
- Dr Alasdair McDonnell
- Mr Joe Byrne
- Mr Pat Ramsey
- Mrs Dolores Kelly
- Mr Colum Eastwood
- Mr Seán Rogers
- Mrs Karen McKeivitt
- Mr Mark H. Durkan
- Mr Alex Attwood
- Mr Steven Agnew

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 4 March – 9 March 2015

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

Report on the Insolvency (Amendment) Bill NIA Bill 39/11-16 (NIA 227/11-16) (Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment).

Consideration of the Statutory Rule: The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8 (4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (NIA 236/11-16) (Ad Hoc Committee to consider an AGNI Statutory Rule).

Report on Sickness Absence in the Public Sector in Northern Ireland (NIA 237/11-16) (Committee for Finance and Personnel).

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2015/66 The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/70 The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/71 The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/74 The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/80 The Employer's Liability (Compulsory Insurance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DETI).

S.R. 2015/84 Planning (Trees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/87 The Paternity and Adoption Leave (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/88 The Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 (Application of Parts 12ZA and 12ZB to Adoptions from Overseas) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/89 The Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) (DEL).

S.R. 2015/90 The Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/93 The Shared Parental Leave Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/95 The Maternity and Adoption Leave (Curtailment of Statutory Rights to Leave) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/96 The Statutory Adoption Pay (Curtailment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/97 The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Application of Articles 107G and 107I to Adoptions from Overseas) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/98 The Shared Parental Leave and Paternity and Adoption Leave (Adoptions from Overseas) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

- S.R. 2015/100 The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) 1996 (Application of Articles 107A, 107B, 107G, 107I, 112A and 112B to Parental Order Cases) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
- S.R. 2015/101 The Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave (Parental Order Cases) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
- S.R. 2015/104 The Maternity and Paternal Leave etc. (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
- S.R. 2015/105 The Flexible Working Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
- S.R. 2015/106 The Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
- S.R. 2015/107 The Planning (Conservation Areas) (Demolition) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
- S.R. 2015/108 The Planning (Listed Buildings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
- S.R. 2015/111 The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/114 The Social Security Pensions (Flat Rate Accrual Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/115 The Occupational Pension Schemes (Levies) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/116 The Child Support (Modification, Miscellaneous and Consequential Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/117 The Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/119 The Automatic Enrolment (Earnings Trigger and Qualifying Earnings Band) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/120 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DHSSPS).
- S.R. 2015/123 The Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DFP).
- S.R. 2015/121 The Health and Personal Social Services (Superannuation Scheme, Additional Voluntary Contributions and Injury Benefits), Health and Social Care (Pension Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DHSSPS).
- S.R. 2015/122 The Health and Social Care Pension Scheme (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DHSSPS).
- S.R. 2015/124 The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/125 The Local Government (Transitional, Incidental, Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
- S.R. 2015/126 The Teachers' Pensions (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DE).
- S.R. 2015/128 The Plant Health (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DARD).
- S.R. 2015/129 The Plant Health (Wood and Bark) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DARD).
- S.R. 2015/130 The Health Services (Cross-Border Health Care) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DHSSPS).
- S.R. 2015/136 The Planning Fees (Deemed Planning Applications and Appeals) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (OFMDFM).
- S.R. 2015/137 The Planning Appeals Commission (Decisions on Appeals and Making of Reports) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015 (OFMDFM).
- S.R. 2015/138 The Jobseeker's Allowance (Extended Period of Sickness) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/139 The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

For Information Only

2015/86 (C. 7) The Work and Families Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (Commencement, Transitional Provisions and Savings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).

S.R. 2015/110 The Waiting Restrictions (Castlederg) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

Department for Social Development Disability Action Plan 2014 – 2017 (DSD).

Consultation on a revised Brucellosis Testing Regime (DARD).

9. Departmental Publications

An Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment – year five (DSD).

Publication of Guidance on Application of the Councillors' Code of Conduct with Regard to Planning Matters (DOE).

Home Accident Prevention Strategy 2015-2025 (DHSSPS).

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 10 March 2015

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 **Second Stage – Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill (NIA Bill 46/11-16)**

The Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd, moved the Second Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill (NIA Bill 46/11-16).

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.29 pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00 pm, with the Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr Newton) in the Chair.

3. Question Time

3.1 **Social Development**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Social Development, Mr Mervyn Storey.

3.2 **Justice**

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford.

4. Question for Urgent Oral Answer

4.1 **European Social Fund Application Process**

The Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry, responded to a Question for Urgent Oral Answer tabled by Mr Pat Ramsey.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

5. Executive Committee Business (cont'd)

5.1 **Second Stage – Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill (NIA Bill 46/11-16) (cont'd)**

Debate resumed.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill (NIA Bill 46/11-16) passed Second Stage without division.

5.2 **Motion – The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 Proposed:**

That the Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

Minister of the Environment

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5.3 Motion – The Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015**Proposed:**

That the Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

Minister of Finance and Personnel

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

5.4 Motion – The Draft Civil Legal Services (Appeal) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**Proposed:**

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Appeal) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister of Justice

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5.5 Motion – The Draft Criminal Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015**Proposed:**

That the draft Criminal Legal Aid (Disclosure of Information) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister of Justice

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5.6 Motion – The Draft Civil Legal Services (Disclosure of Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**Proposed:**

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Disclosure of Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister of Justice

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5.7 Motion – The Draft Civil Legal Services (Cost Protection) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**Proposed:**

That the draft Civil Legal Services (Cost Protection) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister of Justice

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6. Adjournment

Mr Peter Weir spoke to his topic regarding the 10th anniversary of the disappearance of Lisa Dorrian.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5:56 pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

10 March 2015

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 10 March 2015

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

S.R. 2015/141 The Superannuation (District Councils) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DFP).

S.R. 2015/143 The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Disclosure) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).

For information:

S.R. 2015/131 The Compulsory Right or Left-Hand Turn (Belfast) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

S.R. 2015/140 The Waiting Restrictions (Portadown) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

9. Departmental Publications

Presumption that a disease is due to the nature of employment: the role of rebuttal in claims assessment (DSD).

Department of Finance and Personnel Memorandum on the Twenty Sixth Report from the Public Accounts Committee, Mandate 2011-2016 - NI Courts and Tribunals Service Trust Statement for the year ended 31 March 2013 (DFP).

Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DFP).

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.

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills 11 March 2015

2011-2016 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	10.02.15 & 11.02.15	24.02.15		
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	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

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	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14	30.09.14	13.10.14	17.11.14
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14	08.10.14	11.11.14	24.11.14	02.12.14	08.01.15
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	27.03.15					
Education Bill 38/11-16	06.10.14	14.10.14	/	/	21.10.14	11.11.14	17.11.14	11.12.14
Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 39/11-16	07.10.14	10.11.14	13.03.15	03.03.15				
Off Street Parking Bill 40/11-16	13.10.14	21.10.14	09.12.14	08.12.14	13.01.15	26.01.15	03.02.15	
Food Hygiene (Ratings) Bill 41/11-16	03.11.14	11.11.14	08.05.15					
Pensions Bill 42/11-16	10.11.14	18.11.14	26.03.15	19.02.15				
Regeneration Bill 43/11-16	08.12.14	20.01.15	28.05.15					
Budget Bill 45/11-16	09.02.15	16.02/15	/	/	17.02.15	23.02.15	24.02.15	

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill 46/11-16	02.03.15	10.03.15	07.05.15					

2011-2016 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 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
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	11.04.14	20.10.14	01.12.14	09.12.14	13.01.15
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13	17.02.15	15.04.15					
Children's Services Co-operation Bill 44/11-16	08.12.14	26.01.15	03.07.15					

/ 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 16 March 2015

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 Royal Assent

The Speaker informed Members that Royal Assent had been signified on 12 March 2015 to the Off-street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and to the Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

3. Executive Committee Business

3.1 Motion – The draft Teachers' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Proposed:

That the draft Teachers' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister of Education

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried**.

3.2 Motion – The draft Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Proposed:

That the draft Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried**.

3.3 Motion – The draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Proposed:

That the draft Health Service Workers (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried**.

4. Committee Business

4.1 Motion – Report on the Statutory Rule laid by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland (NIA 236/11-16)

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Ad Hoc Committee to consider an AGNI Statutory Rule (NIA 236/11-16) on the Statutory Rule laid by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland entitled: The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee to consider an AGNI Statutory Rule

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried**.

5. Assembly Business

5.1 Motion – The Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015

Proposed:

That the draft Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2004 (Amendment of section 8(4)) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Mr P Weir

Ms C Ruane

Mr P Ramsey

Mr R Swann

Mr S Dickson

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried**.

6. Committee Business (cont'd)

6.1 Motion – Report on the extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General for Northern Ireland to participate in proceedings of the Assembly (NIA 232/11-16)

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee on Procedures (NIA 232/11-16) on its inquiry into the extent to which Standing Orders should permit the Attorney General for Northern Ireland (AGNI) to participate in proceedings of the Assembly: Part 1 – Impartiality of the Office of AGNI, Registration of Interests and participation of the AGNI in Assembly proceedings in respect of areas other than Statutory Rules.

Chairperson, Committee on Procedures

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried**.

7. Private Members' Business

7.1 Motion – Equality Legislation

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes, given the passage of the Equality Act in 2010, that Northern Ireland is now out of step with the rest of the UK in terms of equality protections; expresses concern that no progress has been made on introducing a Single Equality Act in this mandate; rejects the proposed Freedom of Conscience Amendment Bill; regrets the failure of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to introduce age discrimination legislation that covers under-16s; and calls on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to issue a fresh consultation paper to facilitate the speedy consideration of a Single Equality Bill by the Assembly.

Mr S Dickson

Ms A Lo

Mr C Lyttle

7.2 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out from 'rejects' to the first 'Bill;' and insert:

'notes the public debate generated by the consultation on a proposed Freedom of Conscience Amendment Bill and, recognising the differing views expressed, encourages the Assembly to consider a process to facilitate respectful consideration of these issues;'

Mr P Givan

Mr P Weir

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 1.54pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr Newton) in the Chair.

8. Question Time

8.1 Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Jim Wells.

8.2 Agriculture and Rural Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill.

8.3 Assembly Commission

Questions were put to, and answered by, Members of the Assembly Commission.

9. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

9.1 Motion – Equality Legislation (cont'd)

Debate resumed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Amendment was **made** (Division).

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **negatived**.

10. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 4.56 pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

16 March 2015

Northern Ireland Assembly

16 March 2015

Division

Motion – Equality Legislation – Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out from 'rejects' to the first 'Bill;' and insert:

'notes the public debate generated by the consultation on a proposed Freedom of Conscience Amendment Bill and, recognising the differing views expressed, encourages the Assembly to consider a process to facilitate respectful consideration of these issues;'

Mr P Givan

Mr P Weir

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 47

Noes: 44

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Devenney, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, 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 Ayes: Mr McQuillan, Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mrs McKevitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson, Ms Lo.

The amendment was **made**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 11 March – 16 March 2015

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
 - Waterways Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2013 (DCAL).
 - Northern Ireland Certification Officer for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations Annual Report 2013-2014 (DEL).
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
 - S.R. 2015/72 The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
 - S.R. 2015/73 The Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
 - S.R. 2015/85 The Planning (Management of Waste from Extractive Industries) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
 - S.R. 2015/91 The Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Administration) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
 - S.R. 2015/92 The Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay (Parental Orders and Prospective Adopters) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
 - S.R. 2015/94 The Statutory Shared Parental Pay (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
 - S.R. 2015/99 The Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Adoptions from Overseas) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
 - S.R. 2015/102 The Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Parental Order Cases) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
 - S.R. 2015/103 The Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Persons Abroad and Mariners) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
 - S.R. 2015/134 The A54 Ballymacombs Road, Portglenone (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).
 - S.R. 2015/144 The Fair Employment and Treatment Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (OFMDFM).
 - S.R. 2015/145 The Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (OFMDFM).
 - S.R. 2015/146 The Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Consequential Amendments to Subordinate Legislation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
 - S.R. 2015/147 The Valuation (Telecommunications, Natural Gas and Water) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DFP).
 - S.R. 2015/148 The Zoonoses (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DARD).
 - S.R. 2015/149 The Maternity Allowance (Curtailment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
 - S.R. 2015/150 The Statutory Maternity Pay (Curtailment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
 - S.R. 2015/151 The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Registration of Teachers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DE).
 - S.R. 2015/153 The Social Security (Invalid Care Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015/154 The Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015/155 The Occupational Pension Schemes (Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015/162 The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/163 The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015/164 The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment and Revocation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015 The Local Government (Transferred Functions Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

For Information Only

S.R. 2015/118 The Pensions (2005 Order) (Code of Practice) (Governance and Administration of Public Service Pension Schemes) (Appointed Day) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015/132 The Road Races (Croft Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

S.R. 2015/133 The Roads Races (Circuit of Ireland Rally) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

S.R. 2015/142 The Parking Places on Roads (Coaches) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

Proposals for a New Regulatory Framework for Social Housing Providers in Northern Ireland (DSD).

9. Departmental Publications

Consultation on Transition from the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation to Contracts for Difference and Grace Periods (DETI).

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.

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills 11 March 2015

2011-2016 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	10.02.15 & 11.02.15	24.02.15		
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	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

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	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14	30.09.14	13.10.14	17.11.14
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14	08.10.14	11.11.14	24.11.14	02.12.14	08.01.15
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	27.03.15					
Education Bill 38/11-16	06.10.14	14.10.14	/	/	21.10.14	11.11.14	17.11.14	11.12.14
Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 39/11-16	07.10.14	10.11.14	13.03.15	03.03.15				
Off Street Parking Bill 40/11-16	13.10.14	21.10.14	09.12.14	08.12.14	13.01.15	26.01.15	03.02.15	12.03.15
Food Hygiene (Ratings) Bill 41/11-16	03.11.14	11.11.14	08.05.15					
Pensions Bill 42/11-16	10.11.14	18.11.14	26.03.15	19.02.15	24.03.15			
Regeneration Bill 43/11-16	08.12.14	20.01.15	28.05.15					
Budget Bill 45/11-16	09.02.15	16.02/15	/	/	17.02.15	23.02.15	24.02.15	12.03.15

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill 46/11-16	02.03.15	10.03.15	07.05.15					

**2011-2016 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 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
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	11.04.14	20.10.14	01.12.14	09.12.14	13.01.15
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13	17.02.15	15.04.15					
Children's Services Co-operation Bill 44/11-16	08.12.14	26.01.15	03.07.15					

/ 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 23 March 2015

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 **Statement – North South Ministerial Council meeting Trade and Business Development Sectoral format**

The Minister of Enterprise Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting in Trade and Business Development Sectoral format, following which she replied to questions.

2.2 **Statement – North South Ministerial Council meeting Tourism Sectoral format**

The Minister of Enterprise Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting in Tourism Sectoral format, following which she replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

2.3 **Motion – The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

Proposed:

That the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be affirmed.

Minister for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

2.4 **Motion – The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

Proposed:

That the Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 be approved.

Minister for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

3. Committee Business

3.1 Motion – Extension of Committee Stage – Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill (NIA Bill 30/11-15)

Proposed:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended until 16 October 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill (NIA Bill 30/11-15).

Chairperson, Committee for Regional Development

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr Newton) took the Chair.

3.2 Motion – Report on the Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy (NIA 168/11-16)

Proposed:

That this Assembly approves the Report of the Committee for Regional Development (NIA 168/11-16) on its Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy; and calls on the Minister for Regional Development, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues and other relevant bodies, to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Chairperson, Committee for Regional Development

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Speaker took the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 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.

4.2 Regional Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr Newton) took the Chair.

5. Committee Business (cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Report on the Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the Economy (NIA 168/11-16) (cont'd)

Debate resumed on the motion.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 4.04pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

23 March 2015

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 18 March – 23 March 2015

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
 - Assembly Committee Priorities for European Scrutiny in 2015 (NIA 225/11-16) (OFMDFM).
 - Financial Assistance to Political Parties Scheme 2015 (NIA 241/11-16) (Assembly Commission).
6. Statutory Rules
 - S.R. 2015/135 The Agriculture (Student fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DARD).
 - S.R. 2015/161 The Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (Judicial Offices) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
 - S.R. 2015/165 The Pension Schemes Act 2015 (Transitional Provisions and Appropriate Independent Advice) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
 - For Information Only**
 - S.R. 2015/169 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
 - UK-Wide Consultation on Proposed Implementation of EU Regulation 165/2014 (DOE).
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 24 March 2015

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 Social Inclusion Work Sector

The junior Minister, Mr Bell, made a statement regarding the British Irish Council Social Inclusion Work Sector, following which he replied to questions.

2.2 Statement – North South Ministerial Council meeting held in Agriculture Sectoral format

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting held in Agriculture Sectoral format, following which she replied to questions.

2.3 Consideration Stage – Pensions Bill (NIA Bill 42/11-16)

The Minister for Social Development, Mr Mervyn Storey, moved the Consideration Stage of the Pensions Bill.

6 amendments were tabled to the Bill and selected for debate.

Clauses

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clauses 1 to 24 stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clauses 25 to 32 stand part of the Bill.

After debate, Amendment 1 to Clause 33 was **made** without division.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clause 33, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clauses 34 to 49 stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clauses 50 to 54 stand part of the Bill.

Schedules

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedules 1 to 11 stand part of the Bill.

After debate, Amendment 2 to Schedule 12 was **made** without division.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedule 12, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedules 13 to 16 stand part of the Bill.

After debate, Amendment 3 to Schedule 17 was **made** without division.

After debate, Amendment 4 to Schedule 17 was **made** without division.

After debate, Amendment 5 to Schedule 17 was **made** without division.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedule 17, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

After debate, Amendment 6 to Schedule 18 was **made** without division.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedule 18, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedules 19 to 20 stand part of the Bill.

Long Title

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that the Long Title stand part of the Bill.

Bill NIA 42/11-16 stood referred to the Speaker.

3. Private Members' Business

3.1 Motion – Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Proposed:

That this Assembly expresses concern that men outnumber women by nearly three to one in high level science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) posts; welcomes the statement by the Minister for Employment and Learning on 4 June 2013 reiterating the importance of women in STEM sectors; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning, in conjunction with his Executive colleagues, to publish a strategy and action plan that addresses specifically the issue of gender imbalance in the STEM sectors.

Ms B McGahan

Mr F McCann

Mr P Flanagan

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.31pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) in the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Culture, Arts and Leisure

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín.

4.2 Education

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd.

5. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (cont'd)

Debate resumed on the motion.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr Newton) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6. Adjournment

Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson spoke to her topic regarding the future of neighbourhood policing across Upper Bann.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 4.44pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

24 March 2015

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 24 March 2015

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
 - S.R. 2015/174 The Certificates of Alternative Development Value Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
 - S.R. 2015/175 The Planning (Avian Influenza) (Special Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
 - S.R. 2015/176 The Planning General (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
 - S.R. 2015/177 Planning (Conservation Areas) (Consultation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
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.

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills 25 March 2015

2011-2016 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	10.02.15 & 11.02.15	24.02.15		
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	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

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	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14	30.09.14	13.10.14	17.11.14
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14	08.10.14	11.11.14	24.11.14	02.12.14	08.01.15
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	27.03.15					
Education Bill 38/11-16	06.10.14	14.10.14	/	/	21.10.14	11.11.14	17.11.14	11.12.14
Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 39/11-16	07.10.14	10.11.14	13.03.15	03.03.15				
Off Street Parking Bill 40/11-16	13.10.14	21.10.14	09.12.14	08.12.14	13.01.15	26.01.15	03.02.15	12.03.15
Food Hygiene (Ratings) Bill 41/11-16	03.11.14	11.11.14	08.05.15					
Pensions Bill 42/11-16	10.11.14	18.11.14	26.03.15	19.02.15	24.03.15			
Regeneration Bill 43/11-16	08.12.14	20.01.15	28.05.15					
Budget Bill 45/11-16	09.02.15	16.02/15	/	/	17.02.15	23.02.15	24.02.15	12.03.15

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill 46/11-16	02.03.15	10.03.15	07.05.15					

**2011-2016 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 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
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	11.04.14	20.10.14	01.12.14	09.12.14	13.01.15
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13	17.02.15	16.10.15					
Children's Services Co-operation Bill 44/11-16	08.12.14	26.01.15	03.07.15					

/ 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 13 April 2015

The Assembly met at noon, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 Member Resignation

The Speaker informed Members that the Speaker's Office had received a letter from Mr Maurice Devenney giving notice that he intends to resign as a Member of the Assembly with effect from 5.00pm on Wednesday 25 March 2015. The Speaker advised that the Speaker's Office had notified the Chief Electoral Officer, in accordance with Section 35 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

2.2 New Member

The Speaker informed Members that he had been notified by the Chief Electoral Officer that Mr Gary Middleton had been returned as a Member of the Assembly for the Foyle constituency to fill the vacancy that resulted from the resignation of Mr Maurice Devenney.

Mr Middleton signed the Roll of Members on 13 April 2015 in the presence of the Speaker, Mr McLaughlin. The Speaker confirmed that the Member had signed the Roll and had entered his designation of identity.

3. Assembly Business

3.1 Motion – Financial Assistance for Political Parties Scheme 2015

Proposed:

That, as set out in section 2(4) of the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act (Northern Ireland) 2000, this Assembly approves the revised scheme NIA 241/11-15 laid before the Assembly on 20 March 2015 for payments to political parties for the purpose of assisting Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly who are connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties.

*Mrs J Cochrane
Mr S Gardiner
Mr P Ramsey
Mr P Weir*

Debate ensued.

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 Assembly Committees’ Priorities for European Scrutiny in 2015 (NIA 225/11-16)

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the Report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on Assembly Committees’ Priorities for European Scrutiny in 2015 (NIA 225/11-16).

Chairperson, Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

5. Private Members’ Business

5.1 Motion – Inequality in Teacher Employment

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the failure of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to repeal the exemption in fair employment law allowing discrimination on the grounds of religious belief in teacher appointments, as mandated by the motion Teachers: Employment Law which was approved by the Assembly on 22 April 2013; recognises that the teacher exemption, as well as the continuing requirement for a Certificate in Religious Education at nursery and primary level in the Catholic maintained sector, are unnecessary barriers to truly shared education; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to take action to remove these overt examples of inequality and discrimination.

Mr D Kinahan

Mrs S Overend

Mr R Swann

5.2 Amendment

Proposed:

Insert at end:

‘; and further calls, as an interim measure until this action is implemented, on St Mary’s University College to provide access to the teaching of the Certificate in Religious Education to students from other teacher training institutions, including Stranmillis University College.’

Mr T Lunn

Ms A Lo

Mr C Lyttle

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Speaker took the Chair.

6. Question Time

6.1 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.

6.2 Employment and Learning

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry.

7. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

7.1 Motion – Inequality in Teacher Employment (cont'd)

Debate resumed.

Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Amendment was **negatived**.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division).

8. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 4.55pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

13 April 2015

Northern Ireland Assembly

13 April 2015

Division

Motion – Inequality in Teacher Employment

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the failure of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to repeal the exemption in fair employment law allowing discrimination on the grounds of religious belief in teacher appointments, as mandated by the motion Teachers: Employment Law which was approved by the Assembly on 22 April 2013; recognises that the teacher exemption, as well as the continuing requirement for a Certificate in Religious Education at nursery and primary level in the Catholic maintained sector, are unnecessary barriers to truly shared education; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to take action to remove these overt examples of inequality and discrimination.

Mr D Kinahan

Mrs S Overend

Mr R Swann

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 51

Noes: 38

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Mr Middleton, Lord Morrow, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Storey, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Kinahan and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, 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 M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr Ó Muilleoir, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Maeve McLaughlin and Mr Sheehan.

The motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 25 March - 13 April 2015

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

The Effectiveness of Youth Conferencing March 2015 (DOJ).

DFP Minute on the Direction of Accruing Resources (DFP).

Southern Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Annual Report and Accounts of the Trust Funds Held by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust for Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Loughs Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2012 (DARD).

The Pollution Prevention and Control (District Councils) Charging Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

Insolvency Service Annual Report and Account for year ended 31 March 2014 (DETI).

5. Assembly Reports

Report on Excess Votes (Northern Ireland) 2013-2014 (NIA 243/11-16) (PAC).

Report on the Justice Bill (NIA Bill 37/11-15) NIA 240/11-16 (Committee for Justice).

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2015/152 The Whole of Government Accounts (Designation of Bodies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DFP).

S.R. 2015/159 Disqualifications Provisions – for Bankruptcy Restrictions Orders (DETI).

S.R. 2015/160 The Local Government (Transferred Functions Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/181 The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DFP).

S.R. 2015/182 The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/183 The Local Government (Constituting a Joint Committee a Body Corporate) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/184 The Social Security (Members of the Reserve Forces) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015/185 The Employment and Support Allowance (Repeat Assessments and Pending Appeal Awards) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).

S.R. 2015/186 The Recovery of Health Services Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DHSSPS).

S.R. 2015/187 The Planning (Modification and Discharge of Planning Agreements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

S.R. 2015/188 The Planning (Simplified Planning Zones) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).

- S.R. 2015/189 The Planning (Inquiry Procedure) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
- S.R. 2015/191 The Common Agriculture Policy Basic Payment and Support Schemes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DARD).
- S.R. 2015/192 The Common Agricultural Policy (Control and Enforcement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DARD).
- S.R. 2015/195 The Civil Legal Services (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
- S.R. 2015/196 The Civil Legal Services (Financial) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
- S.R. 2015/198 The Civil Legal Services (Costs) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
- S.R. 2015/200 The Civil Legal Services (Statutory Charge) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
- S.R. 2015/201 The Civil Legal Services (Remuneration) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
- S.R. 2015/204 Registered Rents (Increase) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/205 The Health and Social Care (Disciplinary Procedures) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DHSSPS).
- S.R. 2015/208 The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (Disclosure of Patient Registration Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) (DFP).
- S.R. 2015/211 The Social Security (Maternity Allowance) (Earnings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/213 The Time Off to Attend Adoption Appointments (Prospective Adopters) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DEL).
- S.R. 2015/XXX Energy (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DETI).
- S.R. 2015/XXX (C) The Legal Aid Coroners' Courts (2014 Act) (Commencement no. 1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).

For Information Only

- S.R. 2015/171 The Road Races (Cookstown 100) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).
- S.R. 2015/172 The Road Races (Tandragee 100) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).
- S.R. 2015/173 The Road Races (Craigantlet Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).
- S.R. 2015/179 The Social Security (Contributions) (Republic of Chile) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/180 The Pensions Increase (Review) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DFP).
- S.R. 2015/190 (C.11) The Serious Crime (2015 Act) (Commencement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
- S.R. 2015/194 The Access to Justice (2003 Order) (Commencement No. 7, Transitional Provisions and Savings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
- S.R. 2015/206 (C.14) The Pensions (2012 Act) (Commencement No.5) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/207 The Social Security (Application of Reciprocal Agreements with Australia, Canada and New Zealand) (EEA States and Switzerland) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2015 (DSD).
- S.R. 2015/209 (C.15) The Local Government (2014 Act) (Commencement No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
- S.R. 2015/210 The Local Government (Boundaries) (2008 Act) (Commencement, Transitional Provision and Savings) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOE).
- S.R. 2015/212 The Road Races (Drumhorc Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

8. Consultation Documents

Consultation on General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Grading (DE).

CFD Implementation in NI – Strategic Issues Discussion Paper (DETI).

Consultation on Amending the Financial Provision for Waste Management Activities in Northern Ireland (DOE).

Consultation on a Revised Community Festivals Fund Policy and Guidance Framework (DCAL).

Proposal for the Public Passenger Transport (Service Agreements and Service Permits) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DRD).

9. Departmental Publications

Statistical Review of Northern Ireland Agriculture 2014 (DARD).

District Rate Convergence Scheme for Ratepayers Departmental (DFP).

Technical Adjustments to Sustainability and Reporting Provisions for Biomass – Government Response (DHSSPS).

The Northern Ireland Police Fund, Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DOJ).

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 14 April 2015

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 – North South Ministerial Council meeting held in Education Sectoral format

The Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting held in Education Sectoral format, following which he replied to questions.

3. Private Members' Business

3.1 Motion – UDR Four

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the miscarriage of justice in the case of the UDR Four; recognises the particular circumstances of Mr Colin Worton in relation to the case and that he served over two and a half years in custody on remand before the case against him was dropped and he was released; further notes the Minister of Justice's comments on the miscarriage of justice, the innocence of Mr Worton and the significant detrimental impact on Mr Worton; and calls on the Minister of Justice to seek urgently to address this miscarriage of justice by exercising his discretion to provide redress for Mr Worton.

*Mr W Irwin
Mrs A Foster*

3.2 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'further notes' and insert:

'the previous comments of the Minister of Justice that Colin Worton was found by the proper authorities of the law to be not guilty of any crime associated with the death of Adrian Carroll; and concludes that the inability of the Minister of Justice to provide compensation in no way undermines Mr Worton's innocence.'

*Mr S Dickson
Mr T Lunn*

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Amendment was **made** (Division).

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried**.

The sitting was suspended at 12.21pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Mrs Arlene Foster.

4.2 Environment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark H. Durkan.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr Newton) took the Chair.

5. Private Members' Business (cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Block Grant

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the estimated reduction of £1.5 billion from the block grant; further notes the declared intention by the current Tory led government to make further swingeing cuts of many millions over the next mandate; notes the devastating effect this has had on the funding of public services; declares its opposition to the austerity policies at the root of all of this; calls on the British government to pursue, in the immediate term, a policy of economic stimulus; and further calls on the Executive to continue to defend the core public services of health and education and appeal to civic society, employers, trade unions, and the voluntary and community sector to unite in lobbying the British government on this basis.

Mr D McKay

Mr A Maskey

Ms M McLaughlin

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 4.49pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The Speaker

14 April 2015

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 21 April 2015

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
Addendum to the Report on the Reservoirs Bill (NIA 234/11-16) (DARD).
6. Statutory Rules
S.R. 2015/215 The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2015 (DOJ).
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.

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills 15 April 2015

2011-2016 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	10.02.15 & 11.02.15	24.02.15		
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	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

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	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14	30.09.14	13.10.14	17.11.14
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14	08.10.14	11.11.14	24.11.14	02.12.14	08.01.15
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	27.03.15					
Education Bill 38/11-16	06.10.14	14.10.14	/	/	21.10.14	11.11.14	17.11.14	11.12.14
Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 39/11-16	07.10.14	10.11.14	13.03.15	03.03.15				
Off Street Parking Bill 40/11-16	13.10.14	21.10.14	09.12.14	08.12.14	13.01.15	26.01.15	03.02.15	12.03.15
Food Hygiene (Ratings) Bill 41/11-16	03.11.14	11.11.14	08.05.15					
Pensions Bill 42/11-16	10.11.14	18.11.14	26.03.15	19.02.15	24.03.15			
Regeneration Bill 43/11-16	08.12.14	20.01.15	28.05.15					
Budget Bill 45/11-16	09.02.15	16.02/15	/	/	17.02.15	23.02.15	24.02.15	12.03.15

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill 46/11-16	02.03.15	10.03.15	07.05.15					

2011-2016 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 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
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	11.04.14	20.10.14	01.12.14	09.12.14	13.01.15
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13	17.02.15	16.10.15					
Children's Services Co-operation Bill 44/11-16	08.12.14	26.01.15	03.07.15					

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.